

## GRAND UNION CANAL, BORDESLEY TO SALTLEY GATE (AREA 2)

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This route starts down a small flight of steps from the Coventry Road, near Bordesley Station. We walk down a series of locks to a footbridge with deep grooves in the cast iron caused by the ropes used on horses pulling boats well over 100 years ago. The Grand Union Canal turns under this bridge. Straight on is the Digbeth Branch of the Birmingham Fazeley Canal. I took my little Panasonic camera for this path rather than my Olympus so as not to attract attention as there are great opportunities for crime on the secluded tow paths: evidence of this was my discovery of a baseball bat thrown over a bridge near St Andrews. OK, so there may have been a budding Babe Ruth in the Small Heath area but it is still best to take a little care and be aware of your environment!

Most of the buildings we pass are industrial but there are two areas of housing each side of Garrison Lane. The first is 1990s built and just under the bridge 1960s. After more locks there is an old industrial building that has long fascinated me as part of its foundations are old mill stones (pictured). There was a water mill in the area powered by the River Rea, but Duddeston Mill last produced flour in 1744 before being used for the more profitable industry of gun making. I believe that these stones could date back as far as the 1500s but can find no reference to this. I love the decaying workshops that back right onto the water and was surprised when suddenly three bars of Queen's Bohemian Rhapsody was played very loudly on a staccato factory intercom system.

The walk ends when we reach Saltley Gate Bridge. *The Battle of Saltley Gate*, was a stand-off between striking miners and the police in 1972 that resulted in the police backing down, giving in to the miners' demands and locking the gates to a coke depot at Nechells Gas works just this side of the bridge.

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