



AW5. Tiverton and Halberton via canal and railway.

- 8.5 miles, gentle ascents and descents of 125 metres. 3 hours continuous walking, allow at least 4 hours.

Terrain: Straightforward paths and lanes.

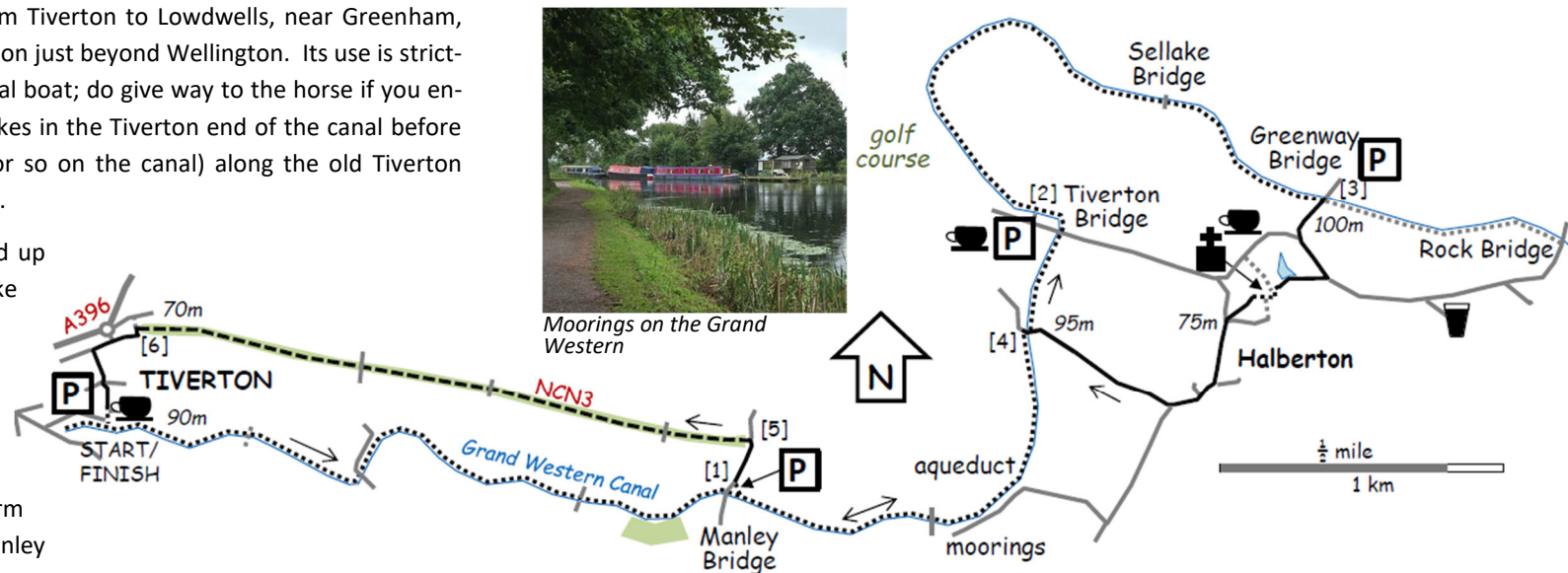
Access: Park off Canal Hill in the Grand Western Canal Country Park car park in Tiverton (SS 963 125, EX16 4HP, £), or alternatively at one of the other parking areas along the canal: Manley Bridge (SS 987 122, small), Tiverton Bridge (SS 998 131) or Greenway Bridge (ST 008 135). The start is half a mile from Tiverton bus station; several buses connect Tiverton and Halberton.

Map: Most of the walk is on OS 114 Exeter and the Exe Valley, Halberton is on 128 Taunton and the Blackdown Hills.

Refreshments: At the start there is a tea garden and a floating café, both seasonal. There is also a café at the Halberton farm shop just off the route and often a mobile kiosk at Tiverton Bridge. Out of season there are plenty of other options in Tiverton town centre.

THE GRAND WESTERN CANAL was intended to connect the Bristol Channel with the English Channel. The first section between Tiverton and Westleigh opened in 1814, and by 1838 the canal had reached Taunton, with its connection to the Bristol Channel. Its main use was to carry coal and limestone. However it was never profitable enough to justify continuing beyond Tiverton, and the Taunton section only lasted 27 years, with all commercial traffic ceasing by 1925. Nowadays the canal itself runs from Tiverton to Lowdells, near Greenham, and a footpath follows part of the abandoned section just beyond Wellington. Its use is strictly for leisure, including trips on a horse-drawn canal boat; do give way to the horse if you encounter it. This pleasant and almost level walk takes in the Tiverton end of the canal before exploring Halberton and returning (after a mile or so on the canal) along the old Tiverton branch railway, now part of National Cycle Route 3.

From the canalside car park in Tiverton steps lead up to the canal. Your way on is to the left, but take some time to explore here first and look into the small visitor centre. Start the walk by strolling along the towpath through suburban Tiverton. A few minutes after the first road bridge the houses run out and the canal continues through open country. The second road bridge carries a farm track. As you approach the third bridge (Manley



Bridge) a plaque and information board mark a plane crash in 1961. The first short walk returns just after the bridge (35mins, [1]).

Continue along the canal. After East Manley Bridge there is a short aqueduct over the former railway. A few minutes later head left up to the next bridge, cross the canal and continue along the towpath on the other side. Another five minutes brings you to Tiverton Bridge, with a larger parking area and seasonal coffee trailer across a footbridge (1hr, [2]). To continue the walk don't cross over the footbridge; you seem to be walking in the wrong direction, but the canal gradually turns around to the right. In under a mile come to Sellake Bridge, carrying a farm track, then a little further on Greenway Bridge (1hr35mins, [3]). Ascend here and turn right on to the road. Soon arrive into Halberton and turn left at a T-junction; this used to be the main road to Tiverton, and it is still quite busy. Pass the village hall then take the next right, Pond Hill. The lane drops to a large pond, then it becomes a path between houses and walled gardens. Continue to the churchyard, bearing left. Keep right around the churchyard and rejoin a narrow lane, passing a small school. The lane arrives at a larger road; turn left here. Follow the road for about five minutes then turn right into Crown Hill. Climb slightly to arrive back at the canal. Cross the bridge and turn left on the towpath to rejoin your outward route (2hrs, [4]) (the second short walk turns right *before* the bridge).

Go over the aqueduct and under East Manley Bridge. Just before the next bridge (Manley Bridge) turn right into a parking area, then right on to the road. In two or three minutes turn left on to a signposted, but almost hidden, cycle path (2hrs25mins, [5]). This is part of the old branch line to Tiverton town station, closed in 1967. The first part is narrow but the path soon opens out to become a wide track beneath trees, with ample room for walkers and cyclists. After 25-30 minutes of walking you will come to a gate with a National Cycle Network



Moorings on the Grand Western

signpost (2hrs50mins, [6]). Turn left on a path, then right on to the road. Cross a short road that takes traffic to a large roundabout, then take the next left, Lewis Avenue. Continue ahead at a staggered junction and keep uphill until the road almost runs out; a path on the right brings you back to the car park and tea garden.

Short walk 1: Tiverton canal and railway (● 3.5 miles, gentle ascents and descents of 50 metres). Follow the main walk to Manley Bridge ([1]). Immediately beyond it turn left into the parking area then right on to the road. In two or three minutes turn left on to the signposted cycle path, rejoining the main walk at the 2hr35min point ([5]).

Short walk 2: Halberton (● 3 miles, gentle ascents and descents of 60 metres). Park in the Tiverton Bridge car park by the canal (SS 998 131). Cross the footbridge and turn left to join the main walk along the towpath at the 1hr point ([2]). Walk through Halberton village as on the main walk, but when you come to the bridge (the 2hr point, [4]) turn right through a gate just before it to rejoin the towpath. This will soon bring you back to Tiverton Bridge and the car park.

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