



Bruce Tunnel

The Bruce Tunnel, north-east of the village of Burbage, is the only tunnel on the Kennet and Avon Canal.

Built of brick, 502 yards long and wide enough to cater for the 60-ton “Newbury” barges which used the canal, it is a remarkable feat of engineering.

Because there was no towpath for the horses to haul the barges, chains were fixed to the walls of the tunnel to enable the crews to drag the barges along it.

Completed in 1809, the tunnel was built because the 1st Earl of Ailesbury (**see Savernake Forest**) refused to have what would otherwise have been a deep cutting on his land at a high point in the canal’s route. Despite what must have been a major imposition for the canal’s constructors, there is a plaque at the eastern entrance of the tunnel inscribed with a fulsome tribute to the Earl for his support for the building of the canal, and the tunnel bears his family name of Bruce.

