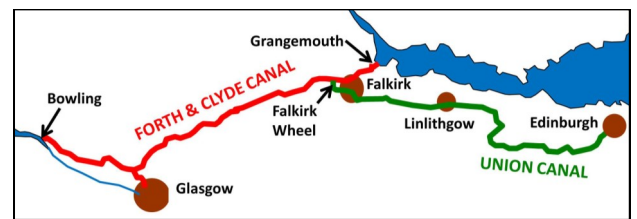




By canal betwixt Linlithgow and the Falkirk Wheel

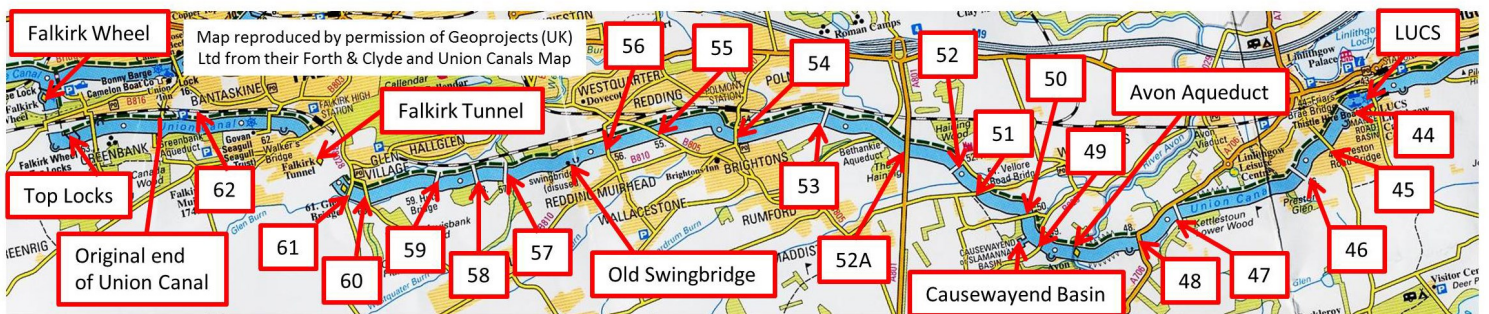


Your journey today is possible because of the £85 million Millennium Link project to restore Scotland’s lowland canals. The Falkirk Wheel was part of this project. It cost £18 million and opened in 2002. In doing so it reinstated the canal connection between Edinburgh and Glasgow by connecting the Forth & Clyde and Union canals.

Construction of the Forth and Clyde canal started in 1768. It opened in 1790. The canal is a sea to sea canal and all its bridges were moveable to allow the passage of sailing ships. It was closed in 1963. The re-opened canal can no longer take tall ships and has an air draft of 9 ft 10 inches. It is relatively large and can accommodate boats 6 ft deep and 19 ft wide. It is 35 miles long, has 39 locks and runs from Bowling on the River Clyde to Grangemouth on the Firth of Forth. It has a 2 ½ mile branch to Port Dundas in Glasgow.

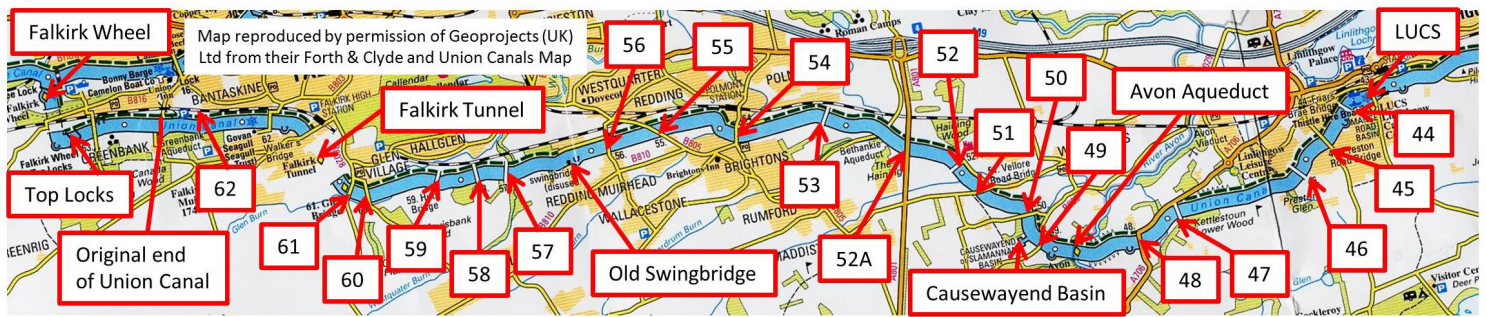
The Union canal took four years to build and opened in 1822. It is 31 miles long running from Edinburgh to Falkirk where a set of eleven locks used to connect it to the Forth and Clyde (F&C) canal. It has no locks, other than those at the Falkirk Wheel and follows the 240 feet contour throughout, something made possible by its significant structures such as the Avon aqueduct. It can take boats 3 ½ ft deep and 11 ½ ft wide so is a much smaller canal than the F&C. After commercial traffic ceased in the 1930s the locks to the F&C were filled in. In 1965 it became a “remainder waterway” and so could be blocked by new roads such as the A801 (Bridge 52A).

The Union canal has two significant claims to fame. In 1834, shipbuilder John Scott Russell first noticed a wave on the canal that maintained its shape at constant speed. This phenomenon is the soliton which is now the basis of long-distance communication in fibre optic cables. On a more grisly note Burke and Hare worked as navvies on the canal before their murdering spree and used the canal to dispose of their victim’s clothing.



Follow your progress along the canal by the features on the map which are described below

Miles from LUCS	Miles from Wheel	Feature	Details
0	11.2	LUCS Basin	When built around 1820 the canal basin was originally a coal depot with two cottages and two stables for four horses. The iron pillar in front of the tea room was part of an old crane
0.2	11	Bridge 44 - Friarsbrae	East of the bridge north of the canal is a house with a false window from the days of Window Tax. West of the bridge is a winding hole to turn boats around. The term is thought to be derived from the use of the wind to assist turn the boat
0.5	10.7	Bridge 45 - Preston Road	A new bridge opened in 1992 replacing a culvert. As the road above is on a slope there is a dogleg in the canal here to give sufficient height under the bridge
0.8	10.4	Bridge 46	An accommodation bridge that enabled farmers to get to their fields when the canal was built
2.1	9.1	Bridge 48	Carries the A706, Linlithgow to Lanark road, East of the bridge north of the canal is an old canal stables which is now used by Sea Scouts
2.5 to 2.6	8.7 to 8.6	Aqueduct	The Avon aqueduct is the second largest in the UK, with 12 arches 810 ft long and 86 ft above the River Avon. Built to a Thomas Telford design and carries water in an iron trough. At east end of aqueduct is a staging stone to mark the division "betwixt the third and fourth stages.
2.7	8.5	Old Dry Dock	On the south side of the canal. This contains an old canal barge abandoned when the canal was closed in the 1930s
2.9	8.3	Bridge 49	Carries to B825 road to Muiravonside Park. West of this bridge on south side of the canal is the Bridge 49 bistro
3	8.2	Transshipment Basin	Causewayend (Slammanan) Basin is south of the canal. Built in 1836 as a transshipment basin for passengers and coal. it is 150 ft square. West of the basin is the remains of an embankment of the railway which was closed in 1964. On the canal west of the abutments of the dismantled railway bridge can be seen.



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Miles from		Feature	Details
LUCS	Wheel		
3.5	7.7	Bridge 51 - Vellore Rd	A new bridge to replace a culvert. It has the marking MM to denote that it was built as part of the Millenium project to re-open the lowland canals.
3.8	7.4	Bridge 52	An accommodation bridge known as Kirk Bridge, the canal took part of the graveyard of the adjacent Muiravonside Kirk requiring some of its graves to be moved
4.2	7	Bridge 52A - Lathallen Rd	Another MM bridge which has suffix A because it was not one of the original canal bridges. It carries the A801 from Jnc 4 on the M9 to the south. The road is on a slope requiring a dogleg in the canal
5.5	5.7	Bridge 54	Carries the B810, Station Road, the main road through Polmont
6.1	5.1	Bridge 55	This replaced the original canal bridge and carries the B805, Redding Road. West of the bridge is the Polmont Young Offenders Institution to the south and Tesco's Redding is to the north
6.5	4.7	Bridge 56	Between here and the old swing bridge was a Coal Mine, Explosive Factory and Gas works (the site of the new Tesco store)
6.8	4.4	Old Swing Bridge	This led to Nobel's explosives factory which was closed in 1969.
7.3	3.9	Bridge 57	Carries the old drove road. From about 1750 up to 150,00 cattle and sheep were traded at the Falkirk Trysts in Shieldhill, 3/4 mile south of this bridge.
8.3	2.9	Bridge 60	Carries B8028 from Falkirk to Shieldhill
8.4	2.8	Bridge 61	The "laughin" and "greetin" bridge. On the east side the keystone has a laughing face with the keystone on the west a scowling face. One story is this is because at this point those seeing the greetin face faced a long and hard journey, whereas for those seeing the laughin face their journey was almost complete. Another is that the faces relate to the respective difficulties of constructing sections of the canal on either side of the bridge
8.6 to 9	2.6 to 2.2	Falkirk Tunnel	The tunnel was required because the landowner, Mr Forbes of Calendar House (open to the public) persuaded Members of Parliament that the canal must not be visible from his estate. It is 696 yards long and was one of the first tunnels in Scotland.
9.3	1.9	Bridge 62	The most westerly of the original canal bridges, immediately west of this bridge is the boathouse of the Falkirk Branch of Seagull Trust Cruises who provide free canal cruising in Scotland for people with special needs. Their boats are equipped with lifts to accommodate wheelchairs.
9.8	1.4	Old top locks	The entrance to the original flight of eleven locks to the Forth and Clyde canal at Port Downie where the Union Inn is today. Virtually no trace remains of these locks
10.1	1.1	Greenbank Aqueduct	This is the start of a new section of the canal to extend it to the Falkirk Wheel as part of the Millenium link project. To the south is the original western end of the union canal which was extended 600 yards beyond the locks to give those changing canals on passenger boats a shorter distance to walk. Before the Edinburgh to Glasgow railway opened in 1842, there were canal passenger boats that took 7 hours between the two cities.
10.5	0.7	Station House Bridge	Under the bridge are detectors to detect boats approaching the top locks
10.8	0.4	Falkirk Wheel Top Locks	These are a two lock staircase with the bottom gates of the top lock also being the top gates of the bottom lock. They raise / lower boats by 36 feet to the canal pond that leads to the Falkirk Wheel which goes under the railway and a new tunnel under the Roman Antonine wall
11.2	0	Falkirk Wheel	The wheel raises / lowers boats by 79 ft. Find out how the boats stay level and why it doesn't leak water as it does so.