

*Harecastle's Canal and Railway Tunnels*. Allan C Baker and Mike G Fell OBE. ISBN 978-1-911038-62-7, RRP £25.00. The book is an A4 sized hardback with 208pp and many monochrome and colour illustrations, maps and plans.



It is available from Lightmoor Press, Unit 144B, Harbour Road Industrial Estate, Lydney, Gloucestershire, GL15 4EJ. Tel. 01594 840641 or 01993 77397, email: [info@lightmoor.co.uk](mailto:info@lightmoor.co.uk).

Copies can be obtained locally via the Biddulph & District Genealogy and Historical Society – see details on the Society's website: [www.bdghs.org.uk/index](http://www.bdghs.org.uk/index).

Allan Baker and Mike Fell have collaborated to research and write a unique history tracing the planning, construction and operation of the six tunnels that were bored through Harecastle hill to enable and sustain the industrial development of North Staffordshire.

The two canal tunnels are the subject of the first part of the book.

Legislature and planning stages have been recorded through meticulous research of source material and cartography. The personalities involved in promoting and realising the various schemes come to life through biographical details of the Brindley dynasty and Thomas Telford's associates, with insight into the iron masters, coal owners and potters who influenced and stood to benefit from the various schemes. Vested interests that surrounded the ventures are also referred to.

Other chapters present an in depth study of the building and operation of the two main railway tunnels and the third cut and cover North Tunnel which was opened out as part of 1960s realigned electric railway.

That scheme, which more or less followed the route proposed by Stephenson and involved the boring of a new sixth tunnel, is also well covered.



Subsequent chapters discuss proposals for a diversion of the canal that would have avoided the canal tunnels altogether, and the operation of electric tugs through the Telford tunnel. The tunnels under NSR and national ownership are separately documented; sections on coal and iron stone mining along with field work and archaeological study bring the reader up to date.

This book is really two books in one that is both eminently readable and a source of reference for the serious student of industrial history.

Academic norms are scrupulously adhered to, the book is generously illustrated with images, maps and diagrams and fully referenced and sources acknowledged.

It is impossible in a brief review of this book to do justice to this new pinnacle of writing from Allan C Baker and Mike G Fell OBE.

I unreservedly commend *Harecastle's Canal and Railway Tunnels* to canal and railway enthusiasts, local historians and to a wider readership of students of the Industrial Revolution.

Roland Machin MBE. December 2019