

## Great Central Railway trackbed description

### Woodford Halse to Rugby - part 5 of 6

**After crossing Onley Lane the trackbed is part of the Great Central Way, a popular and well-maintained cyclepath and footpath, for the next 3km. The line of the former railway is unbroken north of here until the point that Abbey Street, Rugby is reached, just before the West Coast Main Line.**

The railway would have crossed Onley Lane at SP 5166 7252 on a bridge. The bridge is now missing, and the Great Central Walkway starts on the north side of Onley Lane. There is a ramp up from the road, in order to reach the level of the old railway, as shown in Figure 1. Once the trackbed level is reached, the walkway/cycleway continues northwards, firstly on an embankment, but gradually, as the surrounding land rises towards Hillmorton, in an ever-deepening cutting. Before the cutting begins there is access to the east from the grounds of the crematorium on Ashlawn Road. The depth of the cutting is evident from Figure 2, which shows the Ashlawn Road overbridge and the access point for walkers.



*Figure 1 Looking north from Onley Lane at the start of the Great Central Walkway (SP 5166 7252).*



*Figure 2 Looking north towards Ashlawn Road overbridge from the bottom of the access point to Ashlawn Road (SP 5162 7289).*

The trackbed runs under the Ashlawn Road overbridge at SP 5159 7319, and from this point until the West Coast Main Line is reached at SP 5160 7569 it is part of National Cycling Network Route 41. Continuing just west of north from Ashlawn Road in a deep cutting (Figure 3) the trackbed passes under the footbridge between Pytchley Road and Catesby Road at SP 5148 7394 (Figure 4). After this the trackbed approaches the site of the former Rugby Central Station. The surface has been well-maintained throughout this walkway, but until a few years ago it had been very muddy in places. Much work has been done to improve the drainage, so now we have good walking/cycling surfaces with areas of wetland to the sides (Figure 5). In places the footpath/cyclepath meanders slightly to move around the wet areas on opposing sides of the path, even though the line of the trackbed is very straight (Figure 6). There are numerous access points for walkers along this stretch.



*Figure 3 Looking south along the Great Central Walkway, with the B4429 Ashlawn Road overbridge ahead (SP 5155 7353).*



*Figure 4 Looking south along the Great Central Walkway, towards the footbridge connecting Pytchley Road and Catesby Road (SP 5147 7400).*



*Figure 5 Looking north along the Great Central Walkway, showing some of the nearby wetland (SP 5145 7406, or close).*



*Figure 6 Looking south along the Great Central Walkway at the southernmost extent of the raised station platform. It shows how the walkway has been created to meander with vegetation and wetland in pockets on each side (SP 5139 7445).*

At SP 5141 7438, shortly before Rugby Central Station is reached, the cutting widens out slightly. I think this was probably railway sidings. At the station site itself, the central island platform is still in evidence, and the footpath/cyclepath is carried along the length of the platform while the trackbeds on either side are mainly full of water and vegetation (Figure 7, Figure 8, Figure 9).



*Figure 7 Detail of the wetland that has been established in part of the trackbed at the site of Rugby Central Station (SP 5137 7461).*



*Figure 8 Looking north towards Hillmorton Road bridge from the platform at Rugby Central station (SP 5137 7461).*



*Figure 9 A closer look at the platform at the former Rugby Central station. Looking north from the trackbed (SP 5139 7447).*

The trackbed passes underneath Hillmorton Road bridge at SP 5137 7464. It is at this point that there would have been passenger access to Rugby Central Station, although the only access now is via switchback footways on the north side of Hillmorton Road bridge.

At various points on this stretch the local Rotary Club has carried out maintenance on self-seeded and dead trees, as well as installing some short stretches of old railway track in order to add to the interest on this section.

Just north of Hillmorton Road bridge the footpath drops down to track level as the northern end of the island platform is reached (Figure 10). The trackbed continues in a cutting towards Abbey Street and the West Coast Main Line, passing under bridges at Lower Hillmorton Road (SP 5137 7490), Clifton Road (SP 5142 7523) and Bridge Street (SP 5146 7535).



*Figure 10 Looking south at Hillmorton Road bridge and the northern extent of the Rugby Central station platform (SP 5137 7467).*

North of Bridge Street the surrounding land falls away and the cutting becomes shallower. The trackbed passes between rows of houses until it reaches Abbey Street at SP 5160 7570. At this point the trackbed is above street level and this section of the Great Central Way comes to an end. A bridge would have taken the track across Abbey Street and further north across the West Coast Main Line, but the bridge has been removed (Figure 11). It is possible to view some of the bridge supports that are still in place when looking north across the West Coast Main Line from the point at which the Great Central Way comes to an end (Figure 12).



*Figure 11 Remains of the bridge taking the GCR across Abbey Street just before it reaches the West Coast Main Line (SP 5161 7570).*



*Figure 12 Looking at the gap across Abbey Street to the bridge support before the West Coast Main Line is reached by the GCR. Taken from the raised trackbed, at the northernmost walkable extent of this portion of the Great Central Walkway, looking north (SP 5161 7570).*