

## **An Early Description of the Shrewsbury Canal**

*[The following description comes from ' The Commercial Power Of Great Britain; Exhibiting A Complete View Of The Public Works Of This Country, Under The Several Heads Of Streets, Roads, Canals, Aqueducts, Bridges, Coasts, And Maritime Ports' by The Baron Dupin and published in 1825.]*

### **Canal of Shrewsbury.**

Its utility will become much greater when the Ellesmere canal is finished; at present it serves to convey coals to Shrewsbury, a commercial and manufacturing town, with a population of 20,000 inhabitants, enriched by the traffic, both on the Severn and on the principal roads from Birmingham and London to Dublin.

Leaving Shrewsbury, to follow the line of the canal, we proceed towards the east end, pass, first a tunnel 970 yards in length; after going twelve miles, as far as Langdon, we traverse the Turne on an aqueduct bridge of iron\* ; it was the first that was built in England, and was executed by Mr. Telford, in 1795 and 1796. Those persons who always prophecy ill success to works of a new kind did not fail to affirm, that in winter the ice would warp the walls of the canal; they pretended that the variations of the temperature causing the iron alternately to dilate and to contract would produce rupture, and soon render the metal aqueduct unserviceable. Experience has proved the contrary.

Setting out from this aqueduct, we ascend nearly eighty feet, by several locks, on an extent of four miles and a half. At this distance we are at the foot of an inclined plane, which also rises eighty feet, on a length of 610 feet; this inclined plane renders it necessary to employ very short boats; they carry only eight tons. We shall describe the manner of working them, when we treat of conveyances.

In order to avoid the loss of water which would arise from the passage of such short boats through long locks, each of them is divided into four parts by three inner gates, which turn like the safety-gates previously described on a horizontal axis, lining at the bottom of the lock. The water may be introduced in each of these compartments, and drawn out of it independently of the three others.

Towards its eastern extremity, the Shrewsbury canal divides into two branches: one ascends to the north as far as Newport; this branch, upon which there is an inclined plane, is the work and the property of the Marquess of Stafford; it is above six miles in length. The southern branch is very short, but it has been prolonged by the Shropshire canal, the essential object of which is the exportation of the produce of the quarries, mines, foundries, &c., of iron, lime, and coal.

\* It is 186 feet long, and stands fifteen feet and two-thirds above the water in the Turne. The towing path is outside.