

WEIGH-HOUSE

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE
SOMERSETSHIRE COAL CANAL SOCIETY



EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

CHAIRMAN – Vacant

SECRETARY – Vacant

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☎ 01225 428055

PUBLICITY – Vacant

EVENTS ORGANISER – Vacant

MINUTES SECRETARY – PHILIP WEST

☎ 0117 968 6159

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COMMITTEE MEMBER – DAVID FRY

14, Monkton Road, Hanham, Bristol BS15 3JG
☎ 0117 961 4687

The Somersetshire Coal Canal Society was founded in January 1992 with the aim:

'TO FOCUS AN INTEREST ON THE PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE OF THE OLD SOMERSETSHIRE COAL CANAL'

The Society is aimed at those people who are interested in finding out more about the history of the canal, preserving what is still there and walking the parts that are still accessible to the public.

The Society does not aim to restore the canal, but to protect the remaining structures (Midford Aqueduct, Combe Hay Locks etc.) and line of the canal from decay, dereliction and vegetation.

Registered Charity No 1047303

Registered under the Data Protection Act 1984 No A2697068

Affiliated to the Inland Waterways Association No 0005276

MEMBERSHIP FEES

(as at 1st June 2003)

£7.50 (Family / Individual) £5.00 (Senior Citizen / Student)
£150.00 (Life) payable by lump sum or four annual instalments

Membership Application Forms are available from the Membership Secretary at:

1, Hillcrest Close, Nailsea, Bristol BS48 2HP ☎ & Fax: 01275 798479
Email: laurie@lgibney.freemove.co.uk

Society Website: <http://www.homepages.enterprise.net/rtj/sccs2.html>

THE VIEWS AND OPINIONS EXPRESSED IN THIS NEWSLETTER DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OR CONVEY THOSE OF THE SOCIETY

The Editor welcomes any letters, articles, photographs etc. for inclusion in WEIGH-HOUSE and will try to include them in full, but reserves the right to shorten them if space is limited.

Please send articles and correspondence for the next edition of WEIGH-HOUSE to:
Adrian Tuddenham 88, Mount Road, Southdown, Bath BA2 1LH
☎ 01225 335974 Email (not HTML): sccs@poppyrecords.co.uk

Sunday 19th October — 10:00

WALK – WELLOW TO SINGLE HILL (6 miles)

Meet at Wellow Church

For further details please contact Mike Chapman ☎ 01225 426948

Sunday 2nd November — 10:00

WORK PARTY — Location to be advised

For further details please contact Bob Parnell ☎ 01225 428055

Sunday 16th November — 10:00

WALK – SINGLE HILL TO RADSTOCK (6 miles)

Meet at the Village Hall (Miners' Welfare) in Single Hill

For further details please contact Mike Chapman ☎ 01225 426948

Sunday 23rd November — 10:00

**WORK PARTY — LIME KILNS, Mells Valley
DORSET & SOMERSET CANAL STUDY GROUP**

Park by bridge in Great Elm and walk down the valley about half a mile.

For further details please contact Derrick Hunt ☎ 01225 863066 (not after 9pm please)

Sunday 7th December — 10:00

WORK PARTY — Location to be advised

For further details please contact Bob Parnell ☎ 01225 428055

Note: No walk planned for December

A collection will be made at the end of each walk to help raise funds for interpretation boards

SOUTH WEST CANAL SOCIETIES DAY

National Waterways Museum Gloucester, Llantony Warehouse, Gloucester Docks, Gloucester
Saturday 27th September 2003, 11 am to 4 pm (museum is open 10 am to 5:00pm)

Contact name: John Henn 0117 9681303 Email: J.Henn@ipresent.co.uk

Canal societies of in the south and west of England and Wales are getting together at the National Waterways Museum. Visitors will be shown the latest restoration plans and progress through talks and displays. In addition, visitors will be free to explore the museum exhibits.

If canal societies members produce proof of membership – a membership card or a recent society magazine, they will get in for the 'special' reduced rate of £2 for adults and £1 for children (just for the day) This applies to all canal societies, not just the ones participating.

EDITORIAL

After 10 years of editing, producing and mailing all of the 35 previous issues of Weigh-House I am finally standing down from the post. Starting with a simple two-sided, A4 single sheet in 1992 the newsletter has grown to the now familiar 24 page A5 booklet. Production has not always been easy, and sometimes production of an issue has been missed and has had to be substituted with an interim news-sheet. I have enjoyed (if that is the right word) working on the newsletter, despite the problems, as it is very satisfying to see all your hard work in print, even if it is only 250 copies!

I would like to take this opportunity to thank firstly Terry Paget for his help with the photographs for inclusion in the newsletter, to all of those who have contributed articles: from the regular Work Party Reports of Adrian Tuddenham and Bob Parnell, to the Walks Reports from Mike Chapman and others, to the members contributions of photographs, snippets of information and other items for Weigh-House. Although I may have not been able to use them all, they were highly valued. A large number of the unpublished items, some dating back quite a few years, but still of interest, are being handed over to the next editor who may use them in future issues.

Thank you and goodbye.

Roger Halse
Retiring Editor

PS. Future issues will be edited by Adrian Tuddenham and I am sure that Adrian would welcome any help.

COMMITTEE BUSINESS

At the 2003 Annual General Meeting, which took place at Radstock Museum on 17th June, Roger Halse explained that, due to pressures of work, he was unable to continue in the posts of Chairman and Newsletter Editor and was offering his resignation. He would, however, continue to serve on the Committee in other capacities. At the same meeting, David Fry, a stalwart of our work parties, volunteered to join the committee with a rôle yet to be decided.

Derrick Hunt resigned from the Committee earlier this year, also due to the pressures of work, but he will continue to be a member of the Society and will offer support in other ways. He was responsible for many of our contacts with landowners and other people with an influence over the future of the canal – he also arranged our Committee meeting venues.

Ron Brake, our Project Officer, has resigned because of family commitments and Philip West was taken ill shortly before the A.G.M. and was unable to act as minutes secretary (we are pleased to hear that he has now recovered and will soon be able to resume that rôle).

YOUR COMMITTEE NEEDS YOU

With so many vacancies, particularly in key posts, the Committee is facing a difficult period. The Society is now just beginning to reap the benefits of long and often apparently fruitless campaigning. With the restoration of Midford Aqueduct and recent discoveries around Combe Hay, we are in a better position to move forward towards our goals than we have ever been. It would be a pity to lose the momentum simply because there is insufficient man-power (within a society of 200 members) to follow-up the opportunities now being opened to us.

Committee work isn't often fun, it certainly isn't glamorous and it doesn't often earn much gratitude, but it is worthwhile if you really believe in what the Society is trying to do — If you think you might have a skill which would be useful, now would be a good time to volunteer it.

CHAIRMAN'S PAGE

This is my last piece for Weigh-House as after nine years as Chairman I stood down from the post at the AGM in June. I could fill this page with numerous reports on what the Society has achieved during my Chairmanship, but most would be repeats of what has been previously reported in the newsletter. So I will keep this report as brief as possible so not to bore you too much!

At the time of writing the appointment of a new Chairman has not been made. My resignation as both Chairman and Newsletter Editor (see Editor's Notes), and the resignation of Ron Brake as Project Officer, with only one new member being elected to the Executive Committee, has left the committee with a large number of vacancies. If any member feels that he/she could help, (some of the rôles only involve as little as an hour or two a month!), you would be most welcome.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the members of the Society's Executive Committee, both past and present, and also the rank and file membership, for all their hard work and help during my chairmanship. Sometimes the rôle has not been easy but I could not have undertaken the job without their valued support. Thank you.

ROGER HALSE
Retiring Chairman

Roger will continue to be a member of the Executive Committee and has offered to serve as 'Honorary Archivist'. Could anyone who discovers any documents, maps, photographs etc. relating to the canal, please get in contact with him at the address shown on P 2.

ANNE GARFITT

The Society was sorry to hear that one of its founder members Anne Garfitt passed away in July 2002 following a battle with bowel cancer, our sympathy is extended to her husband John, family and friends.

Anne always had a special affection for the Somersetshire Coal Canal Society, of which she was a founder member and committee member taking responsibility for "publicity". Friends Peter Smith and Josie Fisher were "introduced" to the Coal Canal during weekend visits to John & Anne, and following one of these Peter wrote an article about the canal in the Waterway Recovery Group's "Navvies" magazine. That article was one of the sparks which kindled interest in the formation of the society.

A steering committee was formed in 1992, of which Anne was a member; she was later elected to the committee at the first AGM of members in 1994. John her husband was in his own words "roped in" as Membership Secretary. By 1997 her busy life which included Choral Work and work as a director of the Somerset Federation of WIs reached a peak, and something had to go. Unfortunately the Somersetshire Coal Canal Society was the loser of the talents of both Anne and John, who decided to retire from active society work.

The "Publicity" post on the committee has never been filled since, and I was recruited to take over from John as Membership Secretary.

LAURIE GIBNEY

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Note: Work Party venues may change at short notice, always check with Bob Parnell before turning up.

Sunday 17th August — 10:00

WALK — CAMERTON TO TIMSBURY (5 miles)

Meet at the entrance to the Camerton Heritage Centre at bottom of Redhill Park in Durcott Lane

For further details please contact Mike Chapman ☎ 01225 426948

Friday 22nd August to Monday 25th August

NATIONAL WATERWAYS FESTIVAL

Beale Park, Pangbourne (North West of Reading, Berkshire)

Sunday 7th September — 10:00

WORK PARTY — STONY LITTLETON AQUEDUCT

For further details please contact Bob Parnell ☎ 01225 428055

Sunday 21st September — 10:00

WALK — MIDFORD TO WELLOW (6½ miles)

Meet opposite the Hope & Anchor
Please do not use pub car park

For further details please contact Mike Chapman ☎ 01225 426948

Saturday 27th September — 11:00 to 16:00 (museum is open 10:00 to 17:00)

SOUTH WEST CANAL SOCIETIES DAY

National Waterways Museum Gloucester, Llantony Warehouse, Gloucester Docks, Gloucester

See P17 & P22 of this issue for further details

Sunday 5th October — 10:00

WORK PARTY — BALANCE LOCK TRIAL SITE, near Mells. SCCS / DORSET & SOMERSET CANAL STUDY GROUP JOINT ACTIVITY

For location details please contact:

Bob Parnell ☎ 01225 428055 Derrick Hunt ☎ 01225 863066 (not after 9pm please)

GIFT AID

When the Society started 10 years ago the canal was virtually unknown. Now we can look back on a canal that is much better known and a Society that is well respected and well established.

As important have been the changes over the years in Government policy about returning tax money to charities. Gradually the amount of paper work required has been reduced thus making it easier for charities to claim back (hopefully more) money each year. For all sorts of reasons people were unwilling to sign covenant forms. This signing was necessary to release money the Government was prepared to give to the Society. Over the years the Society has lost hundreds of pounds because covenants remained unsigned. Think how much work on the canal could have been funded from that money.

Then in 2000 we saw the most dramatic change of all as covenants were done away with and the Gift Aid scheme completely overhauled. Now all we ask of you is that you complete a simple form with your name, address and signature which tells us we can recover tax on any money you have or will pay us. Under the old scheme, covenants only applied to money received after they were signed; but under the new scheme we can recover money from the past as well as the future. So, if you signed a Gift Aid Declaration at any time, we can go back to 7th April 2000, even if you sign it in January 2006, because we are allowed to go back 6 years. Also the Government now recognises that communication comes in other ways than writing, so electronic (i.e. e-mail) and even verbal are acceptable. Whilst the old style covenant in force when the Gift Aid scheme came into effect are accepted as Gift Aid Declarations, they only cover any payments specified in the covenant. If you were to make a further gift to the Society then we would need a Gift Aid Declaration signed to enable us to recover tax on that gift. So we would encourage everyone to sign one or contact the membership secretary to tell him that you want us to recover the tax.

In the year 2000 our claim to the Inland Revenue was for £173.55, in 2001 it was £237.89 and in 2002 was £277.82. This is a sizeable sum but if 190 of our members are taxpayers and paying an average subscription of £7.50 and had all signed covenants or Gift Aid Declarations we would have recovered about £400.00. This underlines my point earlier about the huge financial loss to the Society. So how do we recover the tax? On the form submitted to the Inland Revenue to support our claim we list the persons name, the amount they paid and when. We then quite quickly get a cheque back.

As I mentioned earlier with the new Gift Aid Declaration a verbal statement is acceptable so we may in the future telephone each member who does not either have a covenant or Gift Aid Declaration to ask if we can recover the tax on their subscription. So it would be a great help if you could indicate as soon as possible your willingness for use to recover tax on your subscription, as it would save us a phone call.

There was a phrase used about canals which said 'Use them or lose them'. The same could be applied to the Gift Aid Declaration - "Use them or lose money". It would be great if next year I could report that we had received back £300 from the tax man. It is easily achievable with very little effort from each of you, so please let us know if we can recover tax on your subscription.

DAVID CHALMERS
TREASURER

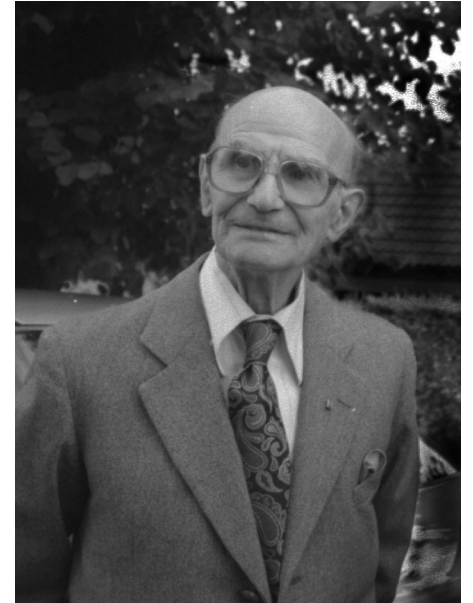
You can contact David at:
'Shalom' 40 Greenleaze, Knowle Park, Bristol BS4 2TL
☎ 0117 972 0423

LEN BAMPFYLDE

The Society was saddened to hear of the sudden death of member Len Bampfylde, Great Grandson of Charles Bampfylde, Engineer in Charge of the Dunkerton pumping engines on the Somersetshire Coal Canal.

Len was, in former years, a keen attendee on the Society's walks and an enthusiastic collector of photographs of the canal.

The Society was represented at his funeral by members and neighbours Terry and Lyn Coles and a floral tribute was sent by the Society.



Photograph: Lyn Coles

LEN

The death has occurred of a well-respected local historian at the age of 87.

Leonard Bampfylde died, suddenly, at his home in Old Fosse Road, Odd Down, Bath.

Apart from much local knowledge Len had traced his family tree back to 973. With the help of one of his brothers Len spent many hours in Records' Offices, interviewing present family members and taking pictures of some of the many properties which once belonged to the family.

His family owned large tracts of land in Somerset and relations still own property and land in Devon. When the "Lost Gardens of Hestercombe", Taunton was officially opened, Len was invited as it had been Bampfylde property. The Bampfylde Hardington church is always decorated by the family and opened for a Harvest Festival service each year. The family plan to continue this practice. Because of close family ties to the Somerset Coal Canal Len had also studied it. He was very knowledgeable in many aspects of history and will be greatly missed.

Len was born at Single Hill, Shoscombe, one of four children. His father died when he was only seven and his Mother took them to live in Walcot, Bath

He married his wife, Doris Hole, during the war. Sadly she died young in 1970. Doris's father had a cycle repair shop in Lower Bristol Road and Len went to work for him. Later he went to Avon Rubber at Melksham.

Len was called up into the Somerset Light Infantry during the war. He saw service in Burma and was at Dunkirk. Due to an earlier leg injury, he served in the Catering Corps. In later years he said he was upset at the end of the war to learn that his brother had been killed in action and he did not learn of it until more than a year later.

In the early days Len used to ride a BSA Bantam motorcycle. He later rose to a bigger BSA complete with sidecar. His family say they can remember being taken all over the place, including to Weston-Super-Mare, in this combination.



They also say that, though their father was strict, he was also fun. Len has always kept a lively mind, mastering the computer, emails and the internet in recent years, with a lot of help from the family. He was still keen to go places and see things. Last year he booked up to go to Normandy to see the war graves. Unfortunately he had to cancel but had hoped to go this year.

Len leaves five children, Patricia, John, twins Robert and Valerie, and Cynthia (Cindy), ten grandchildren and six great-grandchildren.

His funeral service took place on Friday March 14th at the Salvation Army Temple, Oolite Road, Odd Down followed by burial at Haycombe.

LYN COLES

Reproduced from the Bath and West Evening Chronicle, Thursday, January 12, 1984

MEMORIES OF WHEN COAL WAS KING
by Kenneth Goodman

REVIVAL OF INTEREST in the old Somerset Coal Canal with the announcement of plans to restore the first section at Dundas, Monkton Combe, has stirred memories for Mrs Evelyn Ford, of Lyndale Road, Oldfield Park, Bath.

Mrs Ford, the widow of Mr Howard Ford, was born in the pump station cottage alongside the old canal at Dunkerton. The year was 1898 when the waterway was still functioning. Her father Mr. Alfred Bampfylde, was the engineer in charge — a post held for many years by his father.

“The pumping station was a most pleasant place to live,” Mrs Ford, who spent her early childhood years at Dunkerton, recalls.

“It was a beautiful walk along the tow-path to Combe Hay, and father often took us for strolls when we were children”. The years have passed, the canal has closed, the cottage has disappeared, but Mrs Ford still has her memories of days by the canal, where barges carried coal to the Monkton Combe Wharf and the Kennet and Avon Canal.

“It is a pity it was ever filled in,” she said with a nostalgic smile. The reflection on a period 75 years ago reminded Mrs Ford of the old Sunday school treat, a train ride from Dunkerton to Limpley Stoke for a tea meeting.

But it was the pumping station machinery which dominated her thoughts. She talked of the pride her father showed in the two beam engines which, fired by Dunkerton coal, pumped water from the Cam Brook pound up to the canal. “He always kept those engines polished,” she said. Among her souvenirs is a book inscribed “A. Bampfylde, Engineer, Dunkerton,” in which her father listed the daily record of his activities.

Unfortunately, he tore out most of the pages, leaving only brief references to “work done by me on roof of New Bridge House in the year 1889, January 25, consisting wiping up 2 joints. The house was occupied at the time by Mr. Alfred Hillier.

Mrs Ford's mementoes include a 1906 photograph of the pumping station and canal, and a copy of the 1870 Somerset Coal Canal Navigation Bye Laws. They were drawn up at a general assembly of the company held at 7 Charlotte Street, Bath. and repealed the previous rules.

The 1870 regulations were ‘for the good and orderly carrying on, maintaining, and using the said Canal, and the Rail or Carriage ways, and other Works and Things connected therewith, and

There are plenty more fascinating stories, on the map (and many more besides). Further information will gradually appear at www.ba-west.org.uk. All schools with BA postcodes have received (unfolded) free copies as a teaching resource, and many other local societies have been given enough copies for their members. The Trail is not a commercial venture, but it available in the Tourist Information Centre and some of the museums around Bath for 75 pence – all ‘profits’ are being put towards a second print run. The project was also supported with grants from COPUS and the Institute of Physics, whilst members of the Bath Royal Literary and Scientific Institution helped with part of the information gathering exercise.

COLIN AXON



The K and A through Sydney Gardens



No. 4 Bloomfield Crescent was the home of William Smith.

FROM STONEHENGE TO STEAM

The Somersetshire Coal Canal became the subject of intensive study during June 2003, when students from the University of Minnesota spent a fortnight in Bath on an extra-curricular course run by Professor Kim Stelson. The course was entitled “From Stonehenge to Steam: The Ascent of British Technology from Prehistory Through the Victorian Era.” and was intended to give students from a wide range of scientifically-based disciplines an insight into the materials and methods of technological development in Britain.

Professor Stelson chose Bath as the base for his course because of the easy access it gave to many sites of interest to the industrial historian. He was particularly impressed by the Coal Canal after visiting it during a previous sabbatical year at the Department of Mechanical Engineering, University of Bath. It demonstrated how, with a limited range of constructional materials, new technologies were being pushed forward during the Industrial Revolution. Two features of particular interest were the adaptation of a steam mine-pumping engine to supply, or possibly back-pump, the lock flight at Combe Hay and, of course, Robert Weldon's Hydrostatick Caisson Lock.

Adrian Tuddenham gave an illustrated lecture on the technology of the canal and led the students on an evening walk around Combe Hay. With permission from the landowner, Felix Pole, the party visited the lock flight, the possible Caisson site, the inclined plane and the engine site — rounding off the evening with a visit to The Wheatsheaf public house.

Professor Stelson says that the students reported favourably on every aspect of their visit and he is putting forward proposals to run the course again next year.

CANALS, CLOCKS AND CURES: THE BATH SCIENTIFIC HERITAGE TRAIL

With a recent issue of Weigh-House, you will have received a copy of the Bath Scientific Heritage Trail, a new publication to celebrate the achievements of local scientists, engineers, and medics. As members of the Somersetshire Coal Canal Society, we have first-hand knowledge of some wonderful parts of Bath's scientific and engineering history; sadly not everyone realises what else is on their doorsteps! But that is now being put right by the West of England Branch of the British Association for the Advancement of Science with the publication of this new map and guide identifying and celebrating some of the characters and the places in which they lived.



The Victoria Suspension Bridge designed by James Dredge

These unsung local heroes are people such as Sir John Harrington, who lived at the original Kelston Manor and invented the flushing toilet mechanism in the mid 1590s; George Cawardine, the engineer who invented the anglepoise lamp (patented in 1932); the first balloon launch in the South West was made by the first-rate medic Dr. Caleb Hillier Parry; James Dredge patented a unique design of suspension bridge (the Victoria Suspension Bridge); Thomas Malthus who ideas on population dynamics so greatly influenced Charles Darwin; and botanist Rev. Leonard Jenyns who turned down the passage on the Beagle, and suggested young Darwin in the first place!

And then there are two most influential and important scientists of all time, namely Williams Herschel and Smith. Herschel, together with his sister Caroline made the most comprehensive catalogue of the stars, discovered the planet Uranus, and infra-red radiation. Smith was the first person to link palaeontology with geology, thereby fundamentally changing the way we think about our planet. He realised the rocks and sediments were laid down in ordered layers (strata) and that the fossils trapped in these strata were therefore an indicator of the age of the layer – so rocks in different parts of the country could easily be compared. Smith went on to produce the first geological map.

So why the title? Well, I could hardly leave out canals for an article in Weigh-House. You will notice that I took the picture for the map of Midford aqueduct before restoration, but it will give visitors a pleasant surprise to see that local history is not standing still. The impressive edifice of Dundas, the sleek elegance of Claverton, and the lovely walk along the start of the K and A to Sydney Gardens are also highlights of the Trail. Why clocks? – Gustav Horstmann was a watchmaker and he set up shop in 13 Union Street. One of his inventions was a self-winding mechanism, which wasn't a great success, however, his son Sydney went on to form the very successful Horstmann Car Company. And there were plenty of cures (and quackery) connected with the baths. The aforementioned Parry and his colleague William Falconer were amongst the best medics and thinkers of their generation. They conducted many experiments together, but also branched out, respectively, into agricultural and environmental science. Dr. William Oliver was at the more dubious end of the scale, and was responsible for the Bath Oliver biscuit as an aid to his patients attending the Mineral Water Hospital hoping for a cure from rheumatism.



'The Min', where Falconer, Oliver, and Parry were physicians.

concerning the Vessels, Boats, Barges, Waggons, and other Carriages navigated and drawn thereon respectively, and the well-governing of the Bargemen, Boatmen, Waggoners and others conveying goods thereon.”

“In pursuance of the several powers and authorities contained in an Act of Parliament, made and passed in the thirty-fourth year of the reign of his late Majesty King George the Third, entitled ‘An Act for making and maintaining a Navigable Canal with certain Railways and Stone Roads from several Collieries in the County of Somerset, to communicate with the intended Kennet and Avon Canal, in the Parish of Bradford, in the County of Wilts’.”.

The bye laws, which laid down fines or forfeiture of pay, covered a wide variety of subjects. They stipulated: The use of one horse or beast for pulling; restriction of navigation — unless special consent had been given — to sunrise to sunset; commanders of empty vessels to give way to loaded vessels; no person to navigate two vessels; no mooring along-side another barge; horse or other beast to be kept to a walking pace.

And continued: No fishing unless legally authorised; no bathing without the consent of the company engineer; no vessel to pass through any lock before five in the morning or after seven o'clock in the evening March to September, or between sunset and sunrise October to February in every year; no business to be done on Sundays, Christmas Day or Good Friday.

The other bye laws include a warning that any person throwing filth, rubbish, dead animals, or other matters into the canal or washing or cleansing animals, “shall forfeit and pay for every such offence”. Big Brother, it seems, was watching over the coal canal.

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DUNKERTON PUMPING ENGINES c. 1880

Len Bampfylde Collection

NAVYING NOTES

"Sellar's Stile? Where's that?"

By the end of 9 months of work parties, that was a question that no-one asked any more – we were all too familiar with where it was and with every inch of hard- won canal bed and towpath we had managed to expose.

For the benefit of those who have never been to the area, the Sellars Stile section is a length of canal between Camerton and Dunkerton, nestling along the hillside opposite Carlingcott Mill. The name is taken from a nearby house, which in turn took it from an actual stile alongside the canal.

Access to the area had become very difficult, almost impossible in places, because of fallen trees and heavy undergrowth. About 4 years ago, the local farmer had made a start on clearing the worst of it with some heavy machinery – we had then offered to complete the task by hand. Unfortunately, due to the demands of other work, we were delayed long enough for a considerable amount of re-growth to have taken place.

Mutual Repulsion

Before we could even get onto the site, however, some large fallen tree trunks had to be cleared from the western end of the canal bed – a job for Richard Hignett and his chain saw. This took the best part of the day and we would have expected it to tax even Richard's stamina. It was quite a surprise, therefore, when at the end of this exhausting endeavour, he suddenly departed from the work area at a sprightly pace. All was explained later, when we heard that he had just seen a large adder departing from his log pile at an equally smart pace – but fortunately in the opposite direction.

Bonfires ... and More Bonfires

The work parties which followed were all very similar: We would arrive on site with wheelbarrows full of tools and one group would begin cutting away at the scrub. A bonfire would be started in the canal bed and another group would feed it with material of gradually increasing size as it became more and more vigorous. Towards the middle of the afternoon, some of the bonfire heaps were the size of a bus and fallen trees were being thrown in virtually complete. The analogy with buses was taken even further when, on several occasions, we had two bonfires at once.

With bonfires of that size, there is always a risk that surrounding vegetation could dry out and catch fire later. When there is any likelihood of this happening, Bob always comes back later to check that all is well. This proved to be a sensible precaution on one occasion when he found the nearby bank beginning to smoulder and had to carry several gallons of water from a nearby house to dampen everything down safely.

Brunel's Legacy

As the towpath began to emerge, we discovered that it had been used for the line of the boundary fence of Great Western Railway branch line which ran parallel with the canal a little further down the hillside. Parts of this fence still remained but had to be removed because of the havoc the iron wire wrought with cutting tools when lengths of it were encountered. The wooden fence posts were relatively easy to remove but the ones made from lengths of Brunel's 'bridge' rail were definitely best left *in situ*.

Some large areas of grass remained uncut, but Bob was unhappy about using a powered strimmer on sloping banks. At this point, Richard appeared with a traditional scythe and proceeded to demonstrate that, correctly handled, this was just as effective as its modern counterpart – and a good deal quieter.

We have now left the canal at Sellars Stile in a much better state than it had been for many decades. Walkers are able to enjoy using it again and a photograph of it has even appeared in the Bath Chronicle.

THE NATIONAL WATERWAYS MUSEUM

The National Waterways Museum was opened in 1988. It is housed in and around Llanthony Warehouse, a listed building constructed in historic Gloucester Docks in 1873. The museum is owned by The Waterways Trust, a charitable trust established in 1999 to ensure that our waterways resources are supported, valued and enjoyed by all sections of the community.

The theme of the museum is the story of how Britain's network of waterways was created, and explores the lives of those who lived and worked on them. The collection is designated as being of national importance.

In addition to the historic artefacts there are touch-screen computers and other interactive displays, and also various family activities which change throughout the year. In addition, visitors can make use of the café and shop and can enjoy a 45-minute boat trip along the Gloucester and Sharpness Canal (from Easter to October) on board 'Queen Boadicea II', one of the 'little ships' of Dunkirk. Pay and Display car parking is available adjacent to the museum in Gloucester Docks.

See P22 for South West Canals Society Day at the Museum

FRIENDS OF THE MUSEUM OF BATH AT WORK **— 25TH ANNIVERSARY APPEAL**

This year the Museum of Bath at Work will celebrate 25 years as the city's museum of working life.

A key part of the celebration will be the opening of an exhibition at the Museum entitled "Bath at Work -2000 Years of Earning a Living", chronicling the industrial and commercial social history of Bath since Roman Times. This will be a permanent exhibition, but the displays will be easily changed and updated to accommodate new developments as they happen. The exhibition will have an important educational role, and will clearly show that Bath has been, and remains, a thriving and innovative centre of industrial and commercial activity.

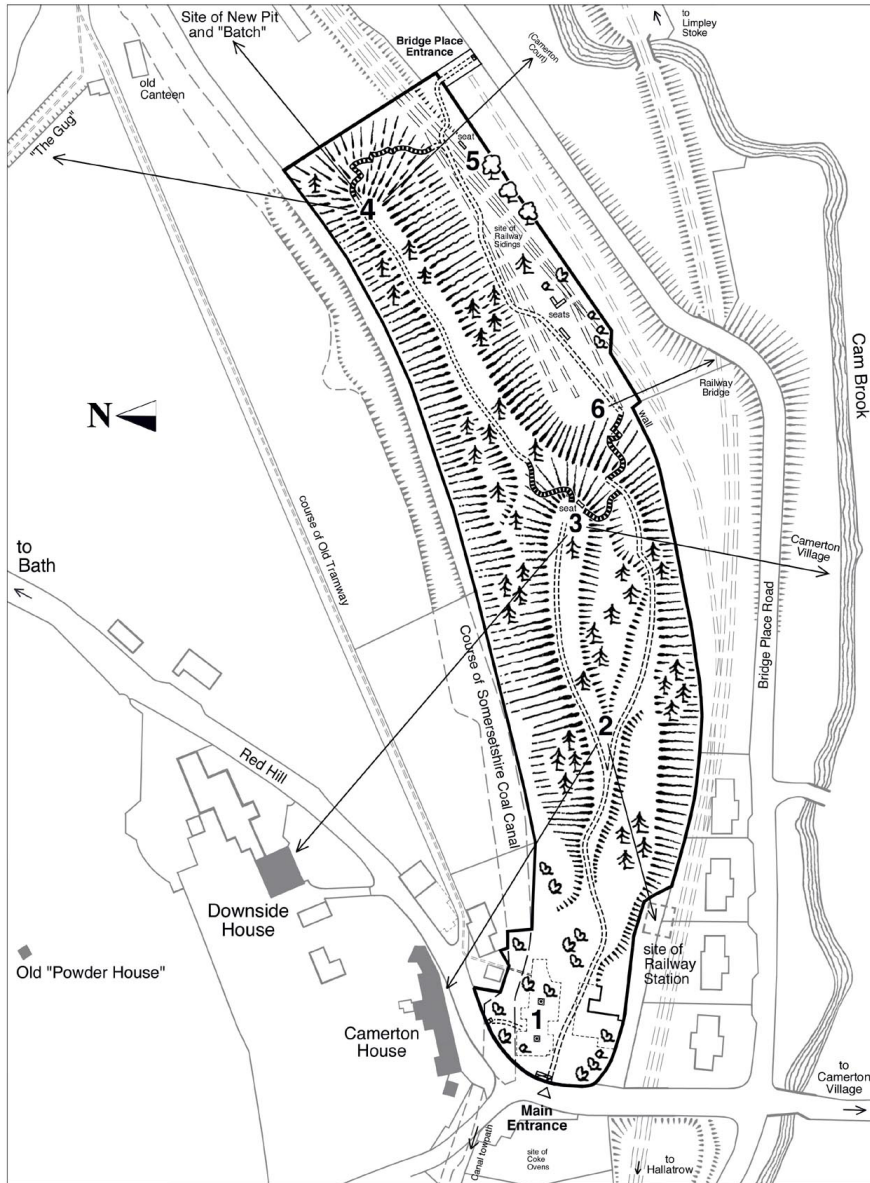
The Museum has a large archive and reserve collections to enable it to tell the story of the city's industrial and commercial past, but now we are seeking information, material and financial support from successful local companies to bring the story up to date, and to demonstrate in an attractive and informative way. The Trustees estimate the cost of the project to be £25,000.

We have already received over £8000 from Friends, trusts and companies, but there is still a long way to go. The need for such an exhibition has been shown by the letters of support we have received from Bath Heritage Services department of the local authority, and numerous other companies and organizations.

Please support us in this venture, which we believe will prove to be a lively and valuable addition to the Museum's facilities, and one that will help to set the record straight by showing another vitally important side to the story of this very special city. -Thank You

FRIENDS OF THE MUSEUM OF BATH AT WORK

For further information or to make a donation (cheques payable to the "Friends of the Museum of Bath at Work") contact the Hon. Treasurer, Friends of the Museum of Bath at Work, Julian Road, Bath BA1 2RH



Drawn by: Mike Chapman

PLAN OF CAMERTON HERITAGE TRAIL on OLD PIT BATCH

Mike's next walk, on 17th August (see P 21), begins at the Camerton Heritage Centre and will be following the route shown in Niall Allsop's book "The Somersetshire Coal Canal Rediscovered". It will cover the westernmost stretch of the Northern Branch of the canal, through Radford to the Paulton & Timsbury Basins – a total distance of 5 miles.



Photograph: Adrian Tuddenham

ONE OF MANY BONFIRES AT SELLARS STILE



Photograph: Adrian Tuddenham

AN EVENING STROLL ALONG THE FRESHLY CLEANED-UP CANAL BED

WALKS ALONG THE AVON NAVIGATION BETWEEN BATH AND WESTON LOCK

26 January and 16 February 2003

The connection of the SCC to the Kennet & Avon Canal not only provided access to other canals in the waterways system, but was also an outlet into the River Avon. Indeed the river itself could be regarded as a canal, since it was not originally navigable by boats, and was only made so by artificial means. Light craft could 'jump' the mill weirs along its length by means of 'flash-locks' or sluices, but there were still numerous shallows, sand-banks, shoals and fords between Bristol and Bath which made heavier freight impossible.

It was not until 1727, after the formation of the Avon Navigation Company led by local entrepreneurs such as Ralph Allen (who could see the advantage of exporting Bath Stone), that these obstacles were removed by dredging and the construction by-pass locks at the weirs. Even when the link with the K&A canal was made in 1810, there was still no towpath along the Avon, and it is not surprising that this was quickly remedied a few years later by the K&A Company (after acquiring majority shares in the Navigation Company) in order to relieve them of the need to extend their canal all the way to Bristol. Previously the only way to get up to Bath was either under sail or, if the wind was unfavourable, by hiring a band of ruffians known as 'bow-hailers' who would tow the boats by hand.

Although the link with Bath and the River Avon turned out to be less important to the SCC than anticipated, these waterways had a significant influence on local trade, and it was to examine sites associated with this traffic that a walk, in two stages, was arranged.

The appropriate place to start was at the Pulteney Bridge in Bath, or rather, the weir below it, which formed the head of the Navigation, although a by-pass cut and lock was originally intended here, next to the site of old Bathwick Mill (demolished for the the present floodgates), which would allow passage onward to Bradford on Avon. This part of the river was important to the building of Georgian Bath, as it was along here that stone from Ralph Allen's quarries was brought by boat for transport to the building sites.

A little further downstream, on the site of the entrance lock and pound of the K&A canal, was Ralph Allen's riverside wharf, where the stone was brought down from the quarries by tramway. A 'roll-on, roll-off' system was then used to transport the wagon-loads of stone onto boats, which brought them up somewhere near the weir. In the 1730s the city still had its medieval wall overlooking the river (now represented by the Grand Parade above the Parade Gardens), but this obstacle was overcome by the construction of an inclined plane, so that the wagons could be winched up from the river onto the top of the wall. The designer of this system, Richard Jones (Ralph Allen's clerk of works) was evidently ahead of his time.

Another difference between then and now was the number of bridges over the river into Bath. There are now 16 (including railway and footbridges) between the Pulteney weir and Weston Lock, but except for a few ferries ('Boatstall Lane' behind the Guildhall is a reminder of this, as also the steps that can still be seen below South Parade) the only way into the city at that time was by the medieval St. Lawrence's Bridge (later called the Old Bridge), sited just a little upstream from the present Churchill Bridge. It was not until the 1830s that other bridges start to appear, some of which, such as Dredge's 'Victoria' Bridge, are now of considerable historical interest, being pioneer suspension bridge designs.

When the Navigation was first opened, a wharf called Broad Quay was built just below the Old Bridge, a factor which contributed to the adjoining area of Avon Street later becoming a notorious 'dockland' slum. At the beginning of the 19th century however, many other quays started to appear along this stretch of

A VISIT TO CAMERTON OLD PIT BATCH

17 November 2002

From previous walks, members are already aware that there are some interesting remains of the canal which lie along the north side of the spoil heap (or 'batch') of Old Pit Colliery at Camerton. On one of these occasions, considerable effort was made to climb to the top of the neighbouring spoil heap of Camerton New Pit which provides a splendid view of the course of the canal and the whole of the Cam Valley. However, unlike New Pit, which consists of a high conical mound produced by modern electrically driven tippers, Old Pit is not only lower (produced in earlier times, when tipping was by horse and cart), but was later landscaped with conifers by Sir Frank Beauchamp, the colliery magnate, and has since become entirely hidden under vegetation. Nevertheless a proposal by the Coal Board in 1986 to recycle the waste shale on Old Pit Batch met with great opposition from the Camertonians, who instead acquired the site for themselves in order to preserve it as a nature trail. Help in setting up this project (entitled 'Camerton's Heritage'), was provided by Avon Industrial Buildings Trust in the form of a site survey and historical research carried out by Neil McMillen and Mike Chapman.

Since then, much work has been done in laying out the trail, but a walk was arranged to see the alterations and improvements that have been made recently with the assistance of grants provided by B&NES and the Forestry Commission. At the entrance, in the pit-head area at the bottom of Red Hill, the visitor is greeted by the fibreglass statue of a miner which, until a few years ago stood outside the Jolly Collier pub nearby. Beneath his feet the capped mine-shafts can still be seen, but the canal wharf which (unusually) stood only a few yards away was filled in long ago. However a new interpretation board erected behind the statue explains the role of the canal and other features that have disappeared, as well as pointing out those that have survived.

Near the beginning of the trail, the trees have been cleared at certain points to give views of the area surrounding the pit-head, which still includes the colliery offices, the overseer's house and, at a safe distance, the famous powder house on the side of Red Hill. The trail then continues to the eastern end of the batch, along the ridge formed by the tipper carts, where further tree clearance is intended to give better views of the pit-head area of New Pit. A steep flights of steps then leads down to the site of the railway sidings, which is perhaps the most curious part of the trail. Once an open area, it has now become a woodland glade, but with rows of sleepers and the odd rail chair still showing through the turf. From here several routes can be taken back to the entrance, the best being via the ruins of the New Pit screens and railway embankment to the old tramway path overlooking Old Pit Batch and the bed of the canal.



Photograph: Adrian Tuddenham

**THE CAMERTON MINER
(with Terry Paget for comparison)**

MIKE CHAPMAN



DESTRUCTOR BRIDGE – 2003

Photographs: Adrian Tuddenham



MIDLAND BRIDGE – 2003

Photograph: Adrian Tuddenham

the river, mostly, it would seem, dealing in the importation of grain and timber, with their own flour mills and saw mills. Several wharfs had a particular association with the SCC, such as the one belonging to the city 'Scavenger's Yard' which then occupied a site on the south side of the river in Twerton at the end of the present Midland Road.

Even in those days, much of the refuse, such as rags, bones, iron and metals was recycled, and stone hardcore was burnt in a limekiln on site, but the majority, mainly coal-ash, road dust sweepings, and organic refuse, was a useful fertiliser and therefore exported in boats along the waterway system to the surrounding farmlands. By the 1880s however, the city was producing 50 tons of waste per day, much more than could be disposed of in this way, so that landfill sites accessible by boat came to be seen as a better alternative. As described in previous issues of Weighhouse, an arrangement was made to use the abandoned wharfs at Midford for this purpose which was strongly opposed by the inhabitants.

As a result, the government stepped in with a loan to build an incinerator, or 'Destructor', which was duly erected on the opposite side of the river from the yard. The Destructor was a success and continued in use until after WWII, when it was demolished and replaced by the present 'Refuse Amenity Site'. An interesting relic of this episode is the 'Destructor Bridge', built to connect the old scavenger's yard with the new incinerator. This structure started life in 1870 as a road bridge built by the Midland Railway to provide access into their new station at Green Park, but when later found to be insufficient, was sold to the Corporation and replaced by the present Midland Bridge in 1905.

A little further downstream from the Destructor was the site of the Bath Gas Light & Coke Company's works, established in 1818, which always used coal from the Somerset Coalfield, →