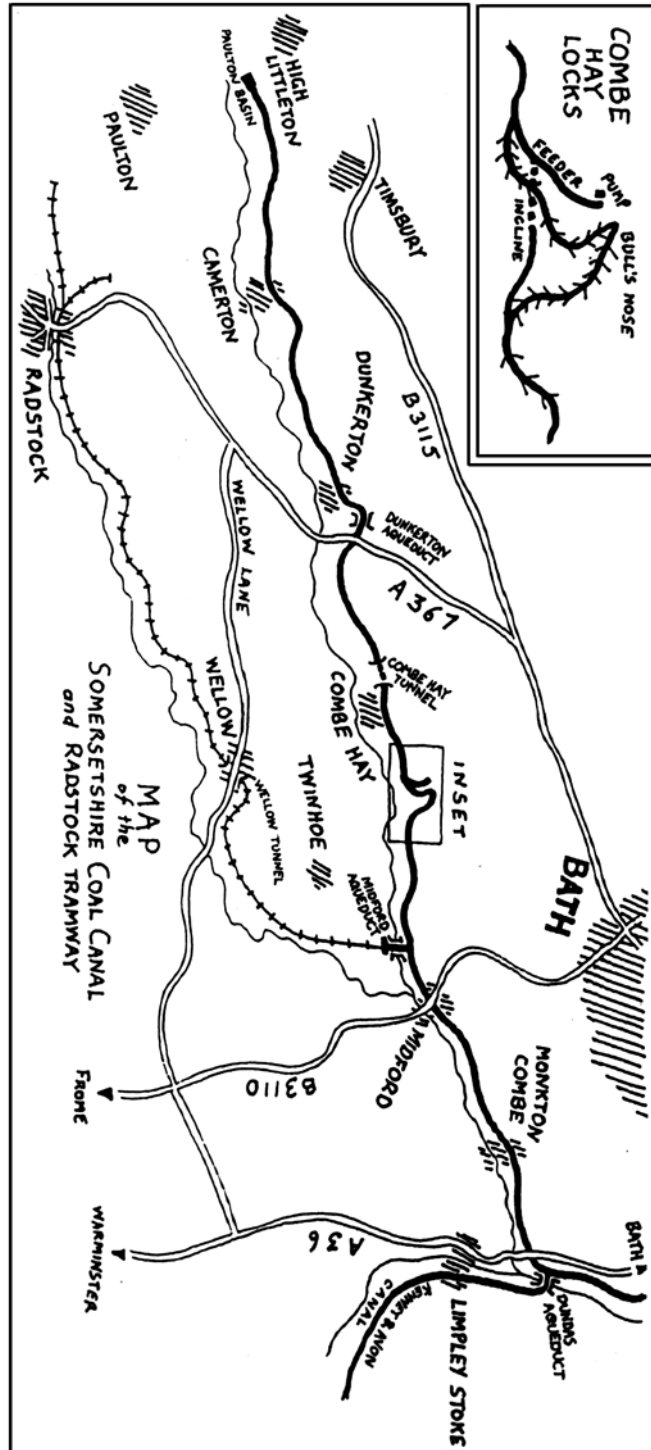


# WEIGH-HOUSE

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE  
SOMERSETSHIRE COAL CANAL SOCIETY



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\*\*\*\*\*

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 N<sup>o</sup> 1047303  
Registered under the Data Protection Act 1984 N<sup>o</sup> A2697068  
Affiliated to the Inland Waterways Association N<sup>o</sup> 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  
*E-mail:* [laurie@lgibney.freemove.co.uk](mailto:laurie@lgibney.freemove.co.uk)

*Society Website:* <http://rtjhomepages.users.btopenworld.com/SCC2.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 *E-mail (not HTML):* [sccs@poppyrecords.co.uk](mailto:sccs@poppyrecords.co.uk)

## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

### WORK PARTIES

Venues may change at short notice, always check with Bob Parnell before turning up.

Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> July — 10:30 *Note: This is a week later than usual*

### **WALK – CROFTON PUMP Admission £4.50 (£3.50 seniors)**

Meet at Crofton Pump car park. Crofton is near Great Bedwyn, south of the A4 between West Kennett and Hungerford

*Please contact Mike Chapman ☎ 01225 426948 if you wish to attend* (to give some idea of the numbers involved). *Note: Pets are not allowed inside the building.*  
You may also wish to visit nearby **NEWBURY CANAL FESTIVAL** .

Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> August — 10:00

### **WORK PARTY — Location to be advised**

*For further details please contact:*

*Bob Parnell ☎ 01225 428055*

Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> August — 10:00

### **WALK — KENNET AND AVON CANAL — Grosvenor meadows**

Meet by the M.O.D. premises, Warminster Road (A36), Bath

*For further details please contact:*

*Mike Chapman ☎ 01225 426948*

Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> September — 10:00

### **WORK PARTY — Location to be advised**

*For further details please contact:*

*Bob Parnell ☎ 01225 428055*

Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> September — 10:00 *Note: This is a week later than usual*

### **WALK – CLAVERTON PUMP Admission £3.00**

*For further details please contact:*

*Mike Chapman ☎ 01225 426948*

Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> October — 10:00

### **WORK PARTY — Location to be advised**

*For further details please contact:*

*Bob Parnell ☎ 01225 428055*

Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> October — 10:00

### **WALK – DEVIZES LOCK FLIGHT**

*For further details please contact:*

*Mike Chapman ☎ 01225 426948*

### WALKS:

*These are all circular walks unless otherwise noted. You only need to arrange your transport to and from the meeting point. They tend to be in the form of detailed explanations of short sections of the canal and its relationship with the locality; and, as such, are less suitable for young children. Dogs are normally welcome (except where indicated) and must be kept on leads at all times.*

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

## WEIGH - HOUSE N<sup>o</sup> 39

EDITORIAL .. .. .	3
CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTS .. .. .	4
CAISSON LOCK APPEAL and TAX MATTERS by David Chalmers .. .. .	4
NEW MEMBERS & DONATIONS .. .. .	5
THE RÔLE OF THE HONORARY ARCHIVIST by Roger Halse.. .. .	5
NAVYING NOTES Dando's Bridge — Combe Hay Cemetery .. .. .	6
WALKS ALONG THE CANAL: MIDFORD — WELLOW — SINGLE HILL — RADSTOCK by Mike Chapman .. .. .	8
TWO RADSTOCK HERITAGE WALKS by Mike Chapman .. .. .	10
AN ACCIDENTAL REDISCOVERY — A PERSONAL STORY by Daniel Brown with additional comment from Hugh Torrens .. .. .	14
FROM THE ARCHIVES by Roger Halse.. .. .	17
THE S.C.C. CONSERVATION AND ACCESS STRATEGY by Roger Halse.. .. .	18
FUSSELL'S BALANCE LOCK TRIAL SITE DISCOVERED First photograph of lock pit .. .. .	21
DATES FOR YOUR DIARY .. .. .	22

## EDITORIAL

We thought we understood most of what there was to be gleaned from William Smith's maps of the canal and its surroundings, but two recent events have sent us scurrying back for a closer look at the originals: the work party's investigation of Dando's Swivel Bridge site [P6] and Daniel Brown's high-quality photographic record of the maps of the Combe Hay area [P15]. The latter sheds light on the proposed location of all three Caisson Locks in a way which no other maps or plans have done.

The theme of putting the canal into context, which was one of the cornerstones of the recent Conservation and Access Strategy continues this issue. Mike Chapman rounds-off his series of walks based on Niall Allsop's book "The Somersetshire Coal Canal Rediscovered" and moves on to the Radstock Heritage Trail, taking a wider view of the sort of industrial landscape in which the canal operated.

The Dorset and Somerset Canal had been the subject of several archaeological investigations in which this Society played a key part. Now it has finally begun to yield some of its secrets and the photograph on Page 21, of the stunning sight which greeted the latest work party, shows what happens when you are lucky enough to find an almost-intact boat lift chamber.

## A NOTE FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Details have been included in this issue from the recently published SCC Conservation and Access Study, the final stage of the HLF project which started with the restoration of Midford Aqueduct. Although less spectacular than the works on the Aqueduct, the results of the Study are just as far-reaching. Behind the report lies the Structures Audit (a weighty document which itemises every surviving structure along the canal), together with a detailed update of the local Sites & Monuments Record.

More importantly however, the canal has now been put into its rightful place as a significant regional amenity, and the public response to the Study draft, together with the photographic survey, has shown that there is a growing interest in the canal from communities in the neighbourhood. This change of status will lead to further projects in which the Society will play an important role. Already the project partners are looking at some of the proposals identified in the Study which need to be tackled soon, such as the preservation of Midford Accommodation Bridge and the appointment of a Countryside or Canal Officer to co-ordinate further work.

MIKE CHAPMAN — Chairman

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## CAISSON LOCK APPEAL

In the last Issue of Weigh Hose we included an appeal to help pay for the costs of our special investigation of the Caisson Lock. We had a great response from members and we would like to say a big 'Thank You' to all who sent a donation. We received donations from 31 members totalling £560. In addition we were able to recover tax on most of the donations. So we more than reached our target. As the appeal said if the response exceeded the target then any additional funds would be put towards the work of the Society which is what has happened. A further bonus for the Society was that a number of you who made a donation had not previously signed forms enabling us to recover tax on your subscription and we are now able to do so. So there will be on-going benefit to the Society. Thanks once again to all who supported this appeal.

DAVID CHALMERS — Treasurer

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## TAX MATTERS

Over £3 billion was repaid to three million self assessment taxpayers last year. This is good news for charities, which can be nominated to receive part or all of your tax repayment from April 2004. It will be paid with Gift Aid tax refund as well. Higher rate taxpayers might consider donating the rebate they personal receive as a result of giving through the Gift Aid scheme. As a charity the Society can benefit from this repayment scheme: our reference code to be quoted on the tax return is CAD72QG. For further details visit [www.inlandrevenue.gov.uk](http://www.inlandrevenue.gov.uk).

DAVID CHALMERS —Treasurer

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**THE LOCATION OF FUSSELS TRIAL BALANCE LOCK HAS BEEN CONFIRMED BY THIS SPECTACULAR EXCAVATION ON THE DORSET & SOMERSET CANAL**  
A full report follows in the next issue.



### 13. ACTION PLAN

The proposals outlined in this Strategy vary in their complexity and the time it will take to deliver them. Some proposals can be implemented relatively quickly, or be progressed by partnership organisations and volunteers. Other schemes could take a number of years to achieve, particularly projects involving large-scale structural works. For the strategy to be achievable it needs to identify priorities, set out a programme of action and highlight which elements of the partnership should lead on implementation. How achievable this programme is, will of course, depend on the success of future funding bids and the establishment of an effective partnership.

Project proposals are prioritised into four categories. These are:-

- \*\*\*\* Proposals that require immediate action to protect the heritage, structures and fabric of the canal (i.e. listing to protect endangered structures, measures to safeguard collapsing structures).
- \*\*\* High priority proposals requiring early action (e.g. structural surveys and negotiations with funding bodies such as the Heritage Lottery Fund).
- \*\* Medium priority proposals requiring further research and survey work and further support and advice.
- \* Proposals for lower key projects that may be suitable for 'in-kind' project support (i.e. community groups carrying out consultation, monitoring, research and management).

There are 42 proposals in the Strategy and some of these are listed below:

- \*\*\*\* Secure the Future and Structural Integrity of Midford Accommodation Bridge.
- \*\*\*\* Listing and Protection of Coal Canal Structures.
- \*\*\*\* Establish a Somersetshire Coal Canal Partnership.
- \*\*\*\* The Main Point of Contact and Support for the Partnership should be provided by B&NES Countryside Officer, or a New Post of Somersetshire Coal Canal Officer.
- \*\*\* Compile an Information Source for the Somersetshire Coal Canal and Undertake Further Research.
- \*\*\* Undertake a Comprehensive Assessment of Key Structures.
- \*\*\* Combe Hay Lock Flight: Develop an Integrated Project to Stabilise Canal Structures, Restore Selected Features and Improve Access and Interpretation.
- \*\*\* Implement the Recommendations of the Somersetshire Coal Canal Access Audit.
- \*\*\* 'Discover the Somersetshire Coal Canal': Publish a Walks Booklet or Series of Leaflets to Promote Access and Public Understanding.
- \*\*\* Develop a Project to Interpret the Links between William Smith and The Somersetshire Coal Canal.
- \*\*\* Improve Access to the Coal Canal Corridor for People with Limited Mobility or in Wheelchairs.
- \*\*\* Promote Brassknocker Centre and Radstock Museum as 'Gateways' to the Somersetshire Coal Canal.
- \*\*\* Develop a Central Habitats and Species Records Information Source for the Somersetshire Coal Canal Corridor.
- \*\*\* Local Contractors, Craftsmen and Suppliers of Materials should be used wherever possible, to implement Coal Canal Projects.
- \*\*\* Design and Install New Interpretation Panels at Key Locations along the route of the Coal Canal.
- \*\* Develop an Annual Programme of Guided Walks and Supervised Access.
- \*\* Develop a Project to Map and Manage Scrub Habitats.

Full copies of the 100-page document can be obtained from the Society. A small donation to the Society to cover the costs of photocopying and postage may be required (contact Roger Halse for details).

*The Heritage Lottery Funded Somersetshire Coal Canal Photographic Project can be seen on display at the Radstock Museum, Waterloo Road, Radstock or at the Somersetshire Coal Canal Visitor Centre at Brassknocker Bottom. The display will also be available for public viewing at some local libraries and dates and venues will be given in Weigh-House when known.* — ROGER HALSE

### NEW MEMBERS

The Society welcomes the following new members:

Mr. R. Newland	Feckenham, Redditch
Dr. P. S. Cossham	Weston Super Mare
Ms. R. M. Macdonald	Wellow, Bath
Mr. & Mrs. R. H. Denyer	Dauntsey, Wilts
Mr. B. D. Castle	Marlborough, Wilts
Mrs. J. Kennedy	Llansoy, Mon
Mr. & Mrs. J. Webb	Combe Down, Bath
Mr. M. Barratt	Bristol
Miss. L. Burgess	Cowplain, Hants
Ms. S. Fergusson	Chorley, Lancs

### DONATIONS

The society wishes to thank the following members who have generously made donations:

Mr. & Mrs. N. P. Hicks & family	Enfield, East Hants, Nova Scotia, Canada
Mr. C. Axon	Brislington, Bristol
Mr. C. S. Goff	Windsor, Berks

### THE RÔLE OF THE HONORARY ARCHIVIST

One of the strengths of the Society is that, through various contacts and the hard work of individual members, it has managed to acquire a substantial number of historical documents, photographs, maps and plans of the canal. This is especially important to our understanding of the canal's history, as the detailed records, which would have been contained within the minute books of the Somersetshire Coal Canal Navigation Company, have long since been lost or destroyed.

As Honorary Archivist I see my rôle not merely as the keeper of these records, but to expand the collection and therefore increase our knowledge of the SCC. To this end I am eternally grateful to two members. Paul De'Ath, who through efforts to increase his immense collection of old photographs of Bath, keeps finding more views of the SCC, including recently new views of the canal at Tucking Mill and Monkton Combe. Daniel Brown has also been of great help, partially through his research into the former employment of the canal company's engineer William Hill, which has revealed some interesting family documents, and through his help at copying records held at the Public Record Office at Kew.

ROGER HALSE — Honorary Archivist

## NAVYING NOTES

### Dando's Swivel Bridge

A long time ago, whilst leading a walk in the Dunkerton area, Mike Chapman spotted an interesting piece of canal wall on a site where a swivel bridge was believed to have existed. This might have been the first occasion on which a phrase — which has since become familiar on many a walk — was uttered : “Bob, this could do with a work party!”. It has certainly earned its place in the Society's history as being the first site where one was undertaken in response to the cry ...albeit many years later.

The route to the site is an interesting one, from the nearest parking alongside Dunkerton Sewerage Works, past the scrapyards, through the remains of the long-derelict “Boatman's Arms” and along the canal bed. A distance of nearly a quarter of a mile, carrying bags of heavy tools because the route was too overgrown for a wheelbarrow.

We spent many hours clearing away vegetation from what looked like just an ordinary piece of canal walling until, by the end of the day we were able to see that what we had uncovered was — just an ordinary piece of canal walling. There was no sign whatever that a swivel bridge had been built there, no projecting abutments or narrowing of the cut, nothing.

At this point one of the locals made his way through the undergrowth and enquired what we were doing. He immediately grasped the situation and gently broke the news to us that there had indeed been a bridge in the field near that site, a metal one which had probably been the replacement for the original wooden swing bridge. He remembered hearing that someone was clearing the remains of it from the field, but that was probably some time in the 1950s.

We sadly gathered up the tools and returned along the dried-up canal bed, through the Boatmans Arms, past the scrapyards and back to the Sewerage Works. It was only later that Mike Chapman told us we had indeed done a fine job — by discovering a long-forgotten wharf wall which was probably the loading point for a small quarry which pre-dated Dunkerton Pit.

### Combe Hay Cemetery Wall

The wall on the northern side of Combe Hay Cemetery supports the remains of a short stretch of canal embankment. When it began to fall apart, Combe Hay Parish Council contacted SCCS and the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers to see if it could be repaired by voluntary labour. It was agreed that our work party would clear the area of vegetation and BTCV would then follow-up by rebuilding the dry stone wall. In a remarkably short time, the first work party stripped the wall of the worst of the unwanted growth; but when we arrived for a second, clearing-up, operation, a massive piece of tree was lying across part of the cemetery, victim of a recent gale.

Luckily we had brought with us our secret weapon — and he had brought his chain saw. By the time members of the Parish Council arrived to see how we were getting on, Richard Hignett had reduced the giant branch to a large quantity of firewood and they had been spared the headache of getting someone to deal with it. Their goodwill towards the Society was further enhanced by discovering that we had not only prepared the northern canalside wall for the rebuilding, but we had also worked our way along an adjoining roadside wall, clearing that too and generally tidying up the area.

We have heard that BTCV has now rebuilt the canalside wall and Combe Hay Parish Council is extremely pleased with the outcome of this co-operative venture.

## CONTENTS

### INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1. INTRODUCTION
2. HISTORIC CONTEXT
3. PLANNING POLICY

### THE STRATEGY – PROJECT PROPOSALS

4. THE CANAL TODAY
5. HERITAGE
6. STRUCTURES AND ASSOCIATED FEATURES
7. ACCESS AND INTERPRETATION
8. WILDLIFE
9. LANDSCAPE
10. RURAL ECONOMY AND SUSTAINABILITY

### MAKING IT HAPPEN

11. IMPLEMENTING THE STRATEGY
12. PROJECT FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES
13. ACTION PLAN

### 4. THE CANAL TODAY

Since the closure of the canal in 1898 there have been many changes and pressures affecting it. The most damaging of these was the construction of railway lines along its northern and southern arms, which resulted in the loss of many of its features and structures. Many surviving sections of the canal were later taken into private ownership and returned to agriculture through infilling, or were lost to the construction of housing and the expansion of the colliery sites. The line of the canal is now very fragmented. In some areas there are numerous structures remaining, in others the canal has disappeared altogether. This fragmentation and loss gives added importance to the structures that do survive and it is critical that these are protected and conserved for future generations to appreciate. The canal is of major importance from an industrial archaeological perspective, providing a link with the economic, social and cultural history of the North Somerset Coalfield.

Threats to the canal resource continue to this day, through agriculture and development, neglect, thoughtless damage and natural processes.

#### 4.1 THE VALUE OF THE CANAL

Canals are valued as part of our national heritage, and for their environmental and landscape attributes. Despite pressures for development and change, the Somersetshire Coal Canal forms an important industrial archaeological feature and a valuable resource for wildlife and recreation within the wider countryside. Remaining sections of the canal act as a green corridor, linking community spaces, heritage parks, wooded gorges and rural canal side habitats. The canal is of international importance to geologists because of the connections with William Smith, and his famous discovery that strata can be identified by fossils. The canal corridor has also been utilised by the Limestone Link, a strategically important long-distance walking route that follows much of the course of the former canal. Consultation and research work carried out for this Strategy has revealed the importance attached to the canal by local people, who wish to see it properly protected and conserved for future generations.



## SOMERSETSHIRE COAL CANAL CONSERVATION AND ACCESS STRATEGY

*For the past year a steering group consisting of representatives of the Somersetshire Coal Canal Society (Chairman Mike Chapman and former Chairman Roger Halse), Avon Industrial Buildings Trust and Bath & North East Somerset Council have been overseeing the preparation by consultants Rural Environment Practice, of a Heritage Lottery funded Conservation and Access Strategy for the Somersetshire Coal Canal. Earlier this year a draft study was produced and sent out for consultation to landowners, parish councils and other interested groups for their comments and following receipt of these a final strategy document has been produced. The following are brief extracts from this document.*

### SUMMARY

The Strategy sets out a vision and framework for the future management of the Somersetshire Coal Canal. The framework takes the form of a series of project proposals to conserve and manage the industrial archaeology of the canal, and its wildlife, landscape and recreational resources.

The Strategy recognises that the Somersetshire Coal Canal is a complex and intricate industrial monument, supporting a multiplicity of uses, users and interest groups. The most important conclusion of the Strategy is the need for a well co-ordinated, multi-disciplinary approach to implementing the project proposals, and this can only be achieved by effective partnership working. A first priority, therefore, is to establish an inclusive partnership for the Somersetshire Coal Canal.

An essential component of developing this Strategy has been to encourage local communities to identify problems and issues affecting the Coal Canal and develop ideas for practical projects and future initiatives. This has been successfully achieved through a photographic survey project, and the results of this have been incorporated into the project proposals. Many of the community groups, parish councils and schools involved in the project have used the photographic display to raise awareness of the profile of the Coal Canal and why it is important to conserve and protect what remains today. In addition a wider consultation has also taken place with parish councils and special interest groups.

This Strategy sets out a suite of topic based project proposals, focusing on heritage, structures, access and interpretation, wildlife, landscape and the rural economy. These proposals recognise the need for further research into the history and significance of the canal and the setting up of a central information source. They also set out the case for the listing and protection of important canal structures as an immediate priority, to prevent future loss and damage. Projects to stabilise, conserve and restore important structures also need to be implemented, to arrest deterioration and ensure that the canal can be enjoyed by future generations.

Finding a sustainable approach to improving access and public understanding of the canal has also been a major priority, in ways that benefit landowners and local residents, as well as tourists. Various projects are proposed, including improvements to the public rights of way network, publishing walks and interpretive materials, development of key 'gateway' and recreation sites, promotion of links with William Smith, developing the canal as an educational resource and improving access for people with limited mobility.

Research carried out for this Strategy has established that people are attracted to the canal corridor for quiet enjoyment of its heritage features and its rich landscape and wildlife resource. The Strategy therefore includes a number of project proposals to conserve and enhance the canal's wildlife and landscape; it is worth emphasising again, that these will only be achieved by working in partnership.

The Somersetshire Coal Canal is a unique industrial archaeological feature and its careful and sustainable management can benefit the local economy in many ways. An important part of this management will be to ensure that local materials, products and skills are used to implement canal projects, and that local businesses are supported wherever possible.

The challenge now is to establish an effective Somersetshire Coal Canal Partnership and begin submitting high quality applications for Heritage Lottery and other sources of funding. Only then will it be possible to begin achieving the vision for the Somersetshire Coal Canal:-

'To maintain an accessible and welcoming environment within the canal corridor that is safe and managed sustainably; where canal structures and features are safeguarded and conserved for future generations to enjoy; providing opportunities for learning, relaxation and exercise, raising and maintaining quality of life for local residents, landowners, businesses and visitors'.



**THE WHARF WALL NEAR DANDO'S SWIVEL BRIDGE**



**THE OVERGROWN WALL AT COMBE HAY CEMETERY**



## WALKS ALONG THE CANAL

Completing our update earlier this year of the walks described in Niall Allsop's book "The Somersetshire Coal Canal Rediscovered - A Walker's Guide", three more routes were reviewed - along the southern (tramway) branch to Radstock. Since Niall's book does not cover the canal tramway system around Radstock, the opportunity was also taken to try out two of the four 'Radstock Heritage Trails' around the neighbourhood, publicised in attractively illustrated pamphlets by Radstock Museum.

### Midford to Wellow (*Walk 6 in Niall's book*)

With one notable exception, this route remains virtually unchanged since Niall's book was first written in 1988. Although to some extent this is unfortunate (it is still the most inaccessible and obscure part of the canal), there is at least the consolation that little interference has occurred to the remains of the canal and tramway itself. However, the access situation should soon improve dramatically when the S&D railway track is converted to a cycle path. In this case almost the entire route of this stretch of the canal will become visible without straying from the public roads and footpaths. The abovementioned exception is, of course, the site of the northern portal of Wellow Tunnel which, in Niall's time, was still walled up and buried in rubbish. Since then it has been re-opened and repaired by the present owners, who are quite happy to allow visitors to view what might be regarded as one of the most important of the remains of the whole canal.



**A THREE-ARCHED STRUCTURE UNDERNEATH THE CANAL  
RECENTLY UNCOVERED BY THE LANDOWNER AT St JULIAN'S WELL**  
Can anyone suggest what purpose it might have served?

## FROM THE ARCHIVES

### CENSUS of THE POPULATION - 1861

#### SOUTH STOKE PARISH

2 boats about 30 tons each used upon the Somerset Coal Canal coupling up as Coal traders between Midford & Pewsey. William Rabbits (Master)

About 30 tons Coal boat carrying Coals between Midford & Lechlade. John Simmonds (Master)

*Although no exact location is given, the above boats were probably moored somewhere between the lower end of the flight of locks, (no boats were allowed to moor up in the lock flight overnight), and near to the Midford interchange basin. Midford village is part of South Stoke Parish.*

*The basin itself is within Wellow Parish. The Cam brook marking the boundary between the parishes.*

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### FIRE IN THE ENGINE HOUSE

*From records held in the Public Record Office at Kew:*

SCC Lock Fund - Half-Year's Statement, December 1880

To Expenses of the half-year, viz.  
Steam Engine Working &c. £233. 11s 6d.

'Exceptionally heavy (as in the preceding half-year) through the partial destruction of one of the Engine Houses and damage to the Engine by Fire.'

*Accounts for the preceding half-year (June 1880) are not available, but the half-year accounts for December 1879 show that the running costs for the engine(s) were only £80. 2s. 4d. The above seems to suggest that both pumping engines were working in 1879, and that repairs were being undertaken to the fire damaged one. It is not known which engine this was.*

*The monies received through tolls in this period was £852. 13s 9d less drawbacks of £351. 19s 11d giving a total of only £500. 13s 10d. If the above tolls were the only income received, then the fire repairs were costing almost half of the total revenue for the SCC Company.*

*To be spending this amount of money, at a time of decreasing trade, shows it was essential to have the engine working in order to keep the water levels sufficient for boats.*

ROGER HALSE (Honorary Archivist)

breakthrough discovery. The blue dotted line showing the supposed route of the inclined plane has, snaking around it, a much fainter solid blue line following a completely different course and rejoining the canal proper past Rowley Bottom towards South Stoke.

'My' discovery caused a surprising amount of excitement, the view being that this route accommodated the planned locations of the second and third caissons, were they to have been completed. Certainly the change in levels would support this latest theory. Except it wasn't the latest theory.

My detailed sweep of articles on the canal introduced me to the lifetime work of Hugh Torrens. Incredibly, whenever I became interested in a new subject, I found he had written an authoritative article on it. Stothert and Pitt, Batheaston Coal Pit, William Smith and even the two stroke engine to name but a few. His 1975 analysis of possible locations of the one caisson lock known to have been built was confirmed by the discovery of the 1804 map at the P.R.O. and published in the Roger Halse and Simon Castens book. Whenever I thought I had discovered something, I would find he had been there first. I had even tracked down the descendants of Thomas Walters, proprietor of the Batheaston Coal and Mining Concern in Devon only to find out Hugh had long since paid a visit and published his findings.

"Early Maps of the Somersetshire Coal Canal" a pamphlet by Torrens found in the Bath Reference Library didn't disappoint. Without the modern day luxuries of digital imaging, he had correctly recognised the deviation and applied his expert insight to it many years ago. A subsequent follow-up paper "Further Comments on the Maps of the Somersetshire Coal Canal" provided additional detail. I encourage those interested to study these papers; with the benefit of 30 additional years thinking since they were written, they are an excellent resource to challenge current thinking.

I can therefore only claim to have played a supporting role in this re-discovery, the true credit must go to Hugh and members of the SCCS. We can all dream of the day the location of the first and other planned caissons are physically proven, until then the search must go on.

DANIEL BROWN

*Post Script* : I decided to make contact with Hugh Torrens before submitting this article and he has suggested adding the following by way of update to his work on Maps of the Somersetshire Coal Canal published 30 years ago. He has also offered to publish some of his work in future additions of Weigh-House. He adds:

- 1) When I wrote up this 1795 plan I recorded that the other Smith/SCC map listed as 1794 by Cox (1942 p.97) was still missing. Well it is no more, as a copy has turned up.
- 2) I have produced a new paper, which relates to Smith and the SCC and will be published before this article can appear. The water-related work of William Smith, in 200 Years of British Hydrogeology (ed. J.D. Mather), Geological Society of London, Special Publication, 225, pp.15-30, 2004. It has some new information in it of much relation to the SCCS.
- 3) As for the location of the one caisson built, I would say that my 1975 BIAS article has now been completely confirmed by the discovery of the 1804 PRO map published in Halse R. & Castens S., 2000, The SCC: A Pictorial Journey p. 36. So I hope this is no longer 'authoritative' but proven!
- 4) I doubt much of the caisson is still there. So much highly cut stone would have been much too valuable to leave in the ground, so the physical proof may never come.

H.S. TORRENS

May 2004

### Wellow to Single Hill (Walk 7)

Again, there have been no alterations to the route described by Niall although, for convenience, we would now recommend that the walk starts at the car park by the old station. The most spectacular change on this section of the canal since then has been at Shoscombe Aqueduct, now completely cleared of vegetation by the Society's Work Party. Much of Niall's return route, between Gray's Hill and Wellow, which continues along the south side of the Wellow Valley, had not been previously used on former Society's walks, so we were pleasantly surprised to find that it not only presents some breathtaking views, but provides a good perspective of the line of the canal, despite later interruptions by the railway and the plough. It also provides the opportunity to view the Stony Littleton Long Barrow and various historical farmsteads along the way. →



**WELLOW TUNNEL NORTHERN PORTAL**  
Restored by the owner



### STONY LITTLETON LONG BARROW

The line of the canal is on the opposite side of the valley, hidden behind the barrow. It passes through the dense clump of trees on the left of the picture.

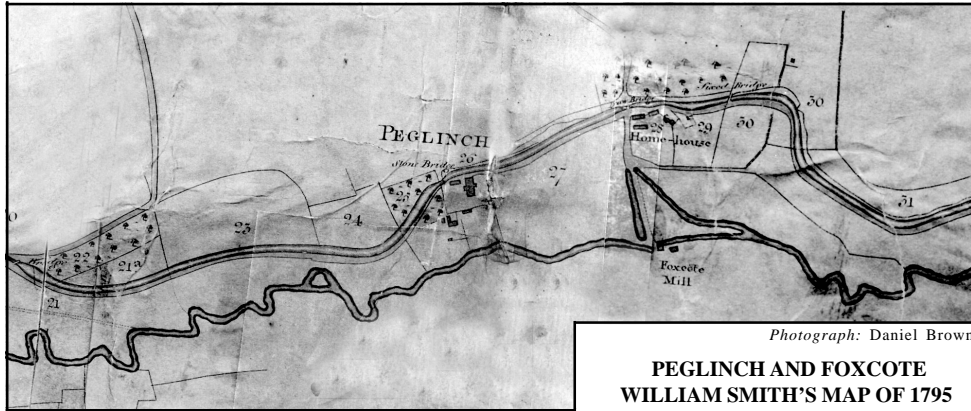


Right —  
**TERRY PAGET EXPLORES THE LONG BARROW**



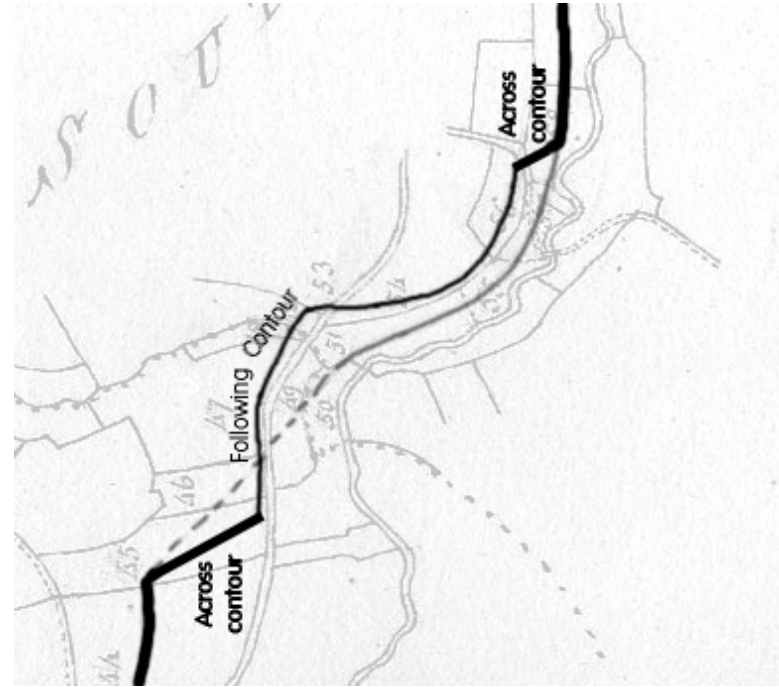
**Single Hill to Radstock (Walk 8)**

Parking is still difficult at Single Hill, but there is generally room in the car park of Shoscombe Community Hall. Although remains of the canal are difficult to find along this section, Niall's route follows the original line very closely, and only at Braysdown Lane does he diverge along the pathway below Woodborough Batch. We did not know then that the inclined plane tramway tunnel between Braysdown pit and the canal still lies under this pathway. However, for those who do not wish to make this arduous detour, the trackbed of the S&D railway from Lower Writhlington to Woodborough Basin provides a more direct route now that it seems to have been adopted (presumably unofficially) as a popular footpath and cycle track. Niall's return route from Radstock, along the south side of the valley, still provides a most interesting view of several old colliery sites connected to the canal, particularly at Foxcote where remains of the old tramway and inclined plane can still be found in the undergrowth.

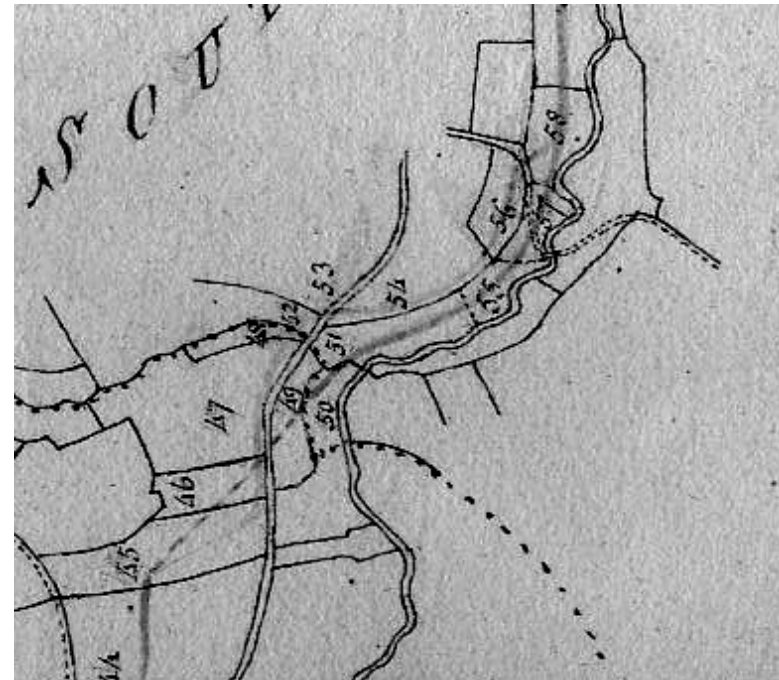


**Radstock Heritage Trail  
(The 'Fosseway Walk')**

This walk starts at the terminus of the canal at what was (until recently renamed) the Waldegrave Arms. Continuing up Coombend, it passes the site of Middle Pit and Old Pit to the base of the tramway incline from Clandown Colliery. Turning left, it follows a track - the remains of the original Roman Fosseway - which cuts across the top of the hill. From here there is a magnificent view of the coalfield southward before dropping down again into the Wellow Valley. Crossing the brook (and the course of the canal tramway to Welton), the walk continues up the other side, past the remains of Wellsway Pit, to return to the centre.



**... RE-DRAWN TO SHOW THE LINE MORE CLEARLY**  
The line follows the contours for most of its length but has two sections which cross the contours where caissons might have been planned.



**WILLIAM SMITH'S MAP OF COMBE HAY — 1795 ...**  
The inclined plane is shown as a faint straight dotted line, but a fainter line can be seen crossing it and following the contour of the hillside.

## AN ACCIDENTAL REDISCOVERY — A PERSONAL STORY

By Daniel Brown with additional comment from Hugh Torrens

My interest in the Somersetshire Coal Canal was a happy accident. Despite enjoying the Brassknocker Basin and Kennet and Avon for the odd leisure activity, I had no idea, like many, that the SCC extended beyond that point, nor of the many hidden secrets that it contained. Joining a running club however started to take me on regular routes through Monkton Combe, Tucking Mill, Midford, South Stoke and Combe Hay with the odd lung-busting run up to Twinhoe. Natural curiosity was aroused when the route regularly crossed the scars of canal, railway and viaduct, clearly a legacy of a once proud industrial past.

Living in Batheaston, we are lucky to benefit from an excellent local history archive as well as an exhaustively researched book written by a resident in the 1960s. Batheaston also enjoyed a brief but significant industrial past; a couple of paragraphs in the book referred to “an industrial misadventure” and “attempts to find coal in the estate of a landowner”. Unlike the SCC, all traces of this adventure have disappeared, being buried under the Elmhurst Estate, however a few months off work between jobs gave me the chance to find out more. During this time I discovered the rich and random archives at the Bath Reference Library and the knowledgeable and resourceful Guildhall archives and started to learn more.

Here the connection with the SCC became strong. William Smith had been recruited to provide expert advice to the coal company and effectively give credibility with his progress reports to the campaigns to raise money through numerous share issues. Smith brought in William Hill (the elder) to take charge when things started to become difficult, William Hill the younger was born in Batheaston, all before taking up residence in Caisson house when the project failed in 1813.

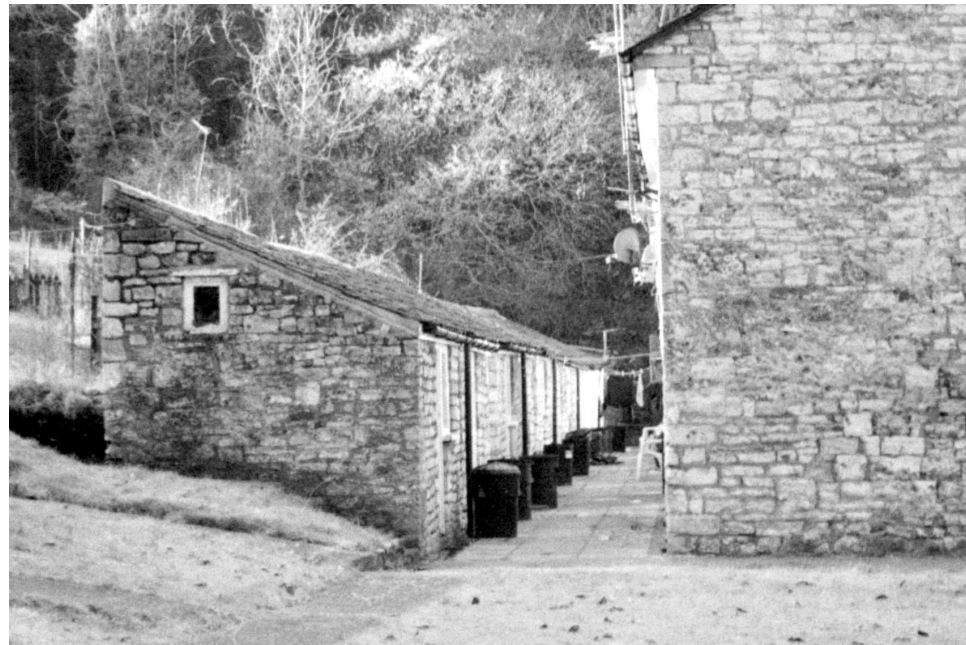
As I started to circulate, I became acquainted with several like-minded enthusiasts, both academic and amateur, all sharing the love of picturing how things once were, the detective work in uncovering something new and piecing all the available information together to make sense of it all. As I didn't feel able to add much academic value, I became more interested in collecting images of the source material, a surprising amount being freely available to the public. Digital cameras and scanners have now replaced the photo copier and hand written notes, I was lucky enough to be given permission to copy at will some beautiful and important documents, amassing a sizable collection that I am having trouble putting boundaries on. It is too easy to become sucked into different subject matter, for me Batheaston has lead to William Smith who introduced me to the world of geology and the SCC with Industrial Archaeology and now steam engines being the current focus. All of these things of course are relevant to the SCC as the fascinating articles in Weighhouse back issues attest.

Which takes us at last to the subject of this article — An Accidental Rediscovery:

As the SCC started to suck me in as it has so many others, I became acquainted with the maps of Carey and Cruse and during a visit to the Country Archives in Taunton, was allowed to scan several relating to the canal. Naturally a detailed (and coloured) scan allows further examination at leisure, revealing far more than a photocopy could ever do. One such map was the “Plan of the proposed deviations of the Somersetshire Coal Canal, surveyed by William Smith”, dated 30 Sept 1795.

Whilst appearing at first glance to be a fairly general view of both lengths of the planned canal, curiosity was aroused inevitably at Combe Hay in the vicinity of Caisson House. A dotted line marked what I believed to be the route of the inclined plane, the initial thought was that despite the date of the plan there was no evidence of the location of any of the planned caisson locks.

It was only after sharing the scans with the society that a re-assessment made what was heralded as a



**OUTHOUSES BEHIND WELLSWAY PIT COTTAGES**

*Photograph: John Wilton*



**THE ENGINE HOUSE AT WELLSWAY PIT**

*Photograph: John Wilton*



**VICTORIAN HERITAGE IN RADSTOCK**  
**The Victoria Hall**



**1940s HERITAGE IN RADSTOCK**  
**A wartime pillbox converted into a patio**





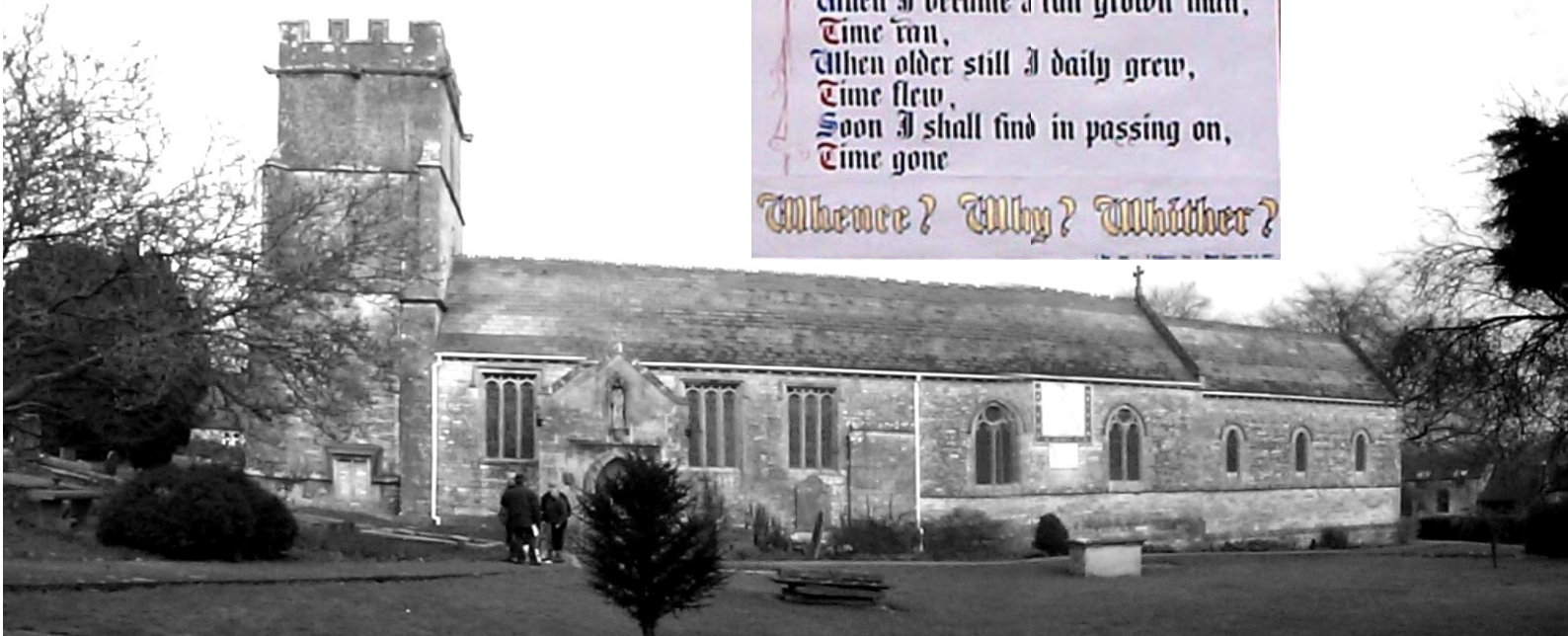
THE TRACK OF THE RAILWAY BRANCH USED TO DUMP SPOIL FROM KILMERSDON COLLIERY



DISUSED SIDING AND OLD COLLIERY BUILDINGS AT LUDLOW'S PIT, RADSTOCK

When as a child I laughed & wept,  
 Time crept,  
 When as a youth I thought & talked,  
 Time walked,  
 When I became a full grown man,  
 Time ran,  
 When older still I daily grew,  
 Time flew,  
 Soon I shall find in passing on,  
 Time gone

Whence? Why? Whither?



**Radstock Heritage Trail**  
 (*The 'Haydon Walk'*)

Starting at the same point, this walk heads south through the village, past the Marcroft railway wagon repair sidings, along the Kilmersdon Road. At the top of the hill, it passes the site of Haydon Pit before turning off right along the summit of the colliery spoil heap where, again, there are fine views of the coalfield to the north. The footpath then descends into Waterside Valley which it follows along the northern slope above the stream. Overlooking the footpath are the remains of several WWII pillboxes, a continuation of the defensive line which ran along the course of the canal through the Wellow Valley. Passing the old open-air swimming pool, and through the interesting parish church yard, the walk continues back through the village to the start.

MIKE CHAPMAN

**St. NICHOLAS CHURCH, RADSTOCK**  
*Inset: The inspiring motto beneath its sundial*