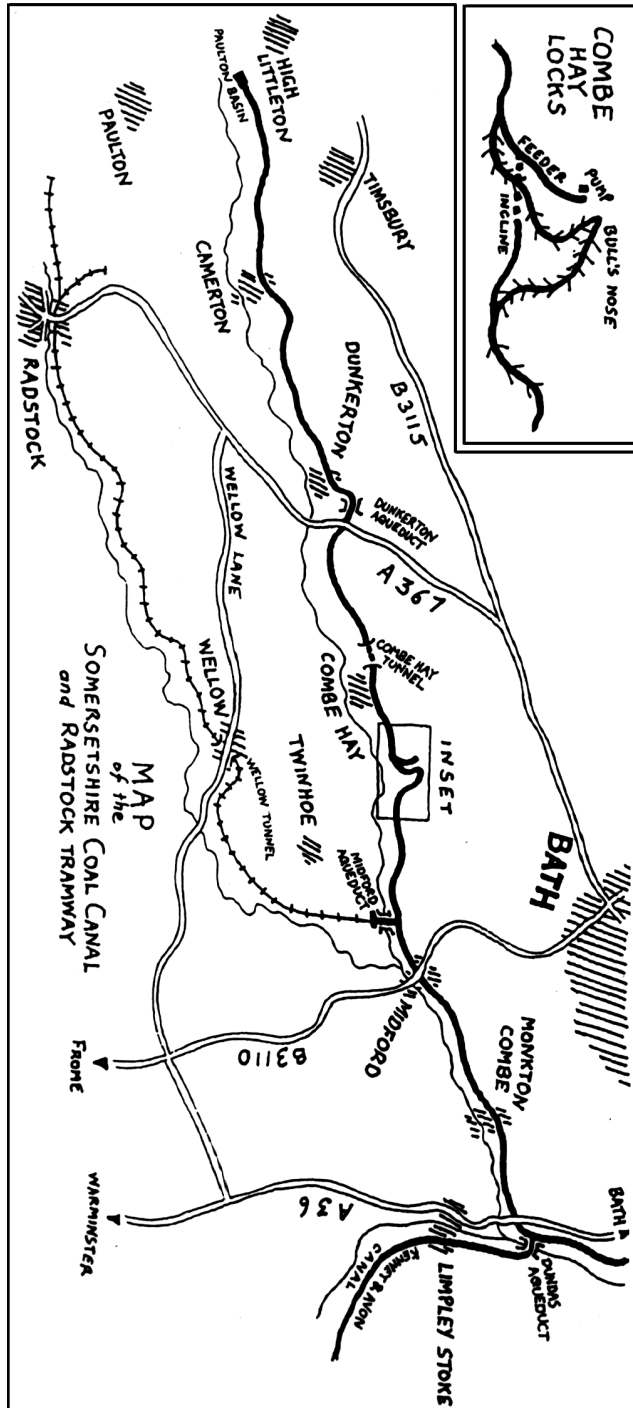


WEIGH-HOUSE

THE MAGAZINE 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 aims to preserve the remaining structures of the canal (Midford Aqueduct, Combe Hay Locks *etc.*) and to protect the line of the canal from decay, dereliction and vegetation.

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Affiliated to the Inland Waterways Association N^o 0005276
Inland Revenue reference code for tax purposes: CAD72QG

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, Patrick Moss at:
IMA Transport Planning 11, Kingsmead Square, Bath BA1 2AB
E-mail: PMoss@ima-tp.com

Society Website: <http://rtjhomepages.users.btopenworld.com/scc2.html>

THE VIEWS AND OPINIONS EXPRESSED IN THIS MAGAZINE 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):* adrian@poppyrecords.co.uk

Sunday 17th August — 10:00

WALK — MIDFORD BASIN †

Meet: Twinhoe Lane, Midford. (Do not take up parking space at the Hope & Anchor)

For further details please contact:

Mike Chapman ☎ 01225 426948

Sunday 7th September — 10:00

WORK PARTY — Location to be advised

For further details please contact:

Bob Parnell ☎ 01225 428055

These are all circular walks unless otherwise noted. You only need to arrange your transport to and from the meeting point. Any marked † 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.



TEA BREAK AT LOCK 12 — March 2008
Richard Hignett downwind of the kettle

WEIGH - HOUSE N^o 50

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EDITOR'S NOTES

When this magazine celebrated its twenty-fifth issue, the Editor, Roger Halse, gave the publication a distinctive smart cover in recognition of the event; so for this, the fiftieth issue, it was felt that here was another 'anniversary' which should be marked in some similarly appropriate way. For some time now the magazine has been typeset with many of the photographs in colour, but because of the high cost of colour printing, these have only appeared in the published edition in black and white. Sadly, even for this special occasion, the Society's finances do not stretch to producing a full-colour issue, but we felt that a colour center-fold would be a good opportunity to show just how attractive our canal really is.

Much of this edition is devoted to two articles on similar subjects: the final part of "Some Technical Aspects of the Somerset Coal Canal Tramways" by Gilson and Quartley, which gives details of the area around Paulton and Timsbury as the authors found it in 1968 — and a description by Mike Chapman of a recent exploratory walk in the same area earlier this year. Many of the photographs, maps and drawings are relevant to both articles, so it becomes an interesting exercise for the reader to switch back and forth between the pages to gain a fuller understanding of both articles.

ADRIAN TUDDENHAM

CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

With the forthcoming AGM in view, it is worth noting that two related items of significance will need to be considered at the meeting, the first being a proposal to make a change to the constitution. As discussed at the last AGM, this will put the Society in a better position to attract funding for restoration work, and the Committee was therefore authorised to find the appropriate wording. This has now been done, and the final proposal will be put to the membership at the meeting for approval.

The second item relates to the restoration project involving Lock 15 and repairs to the adjoining railway bridge, for which a technical survey was completed a year ago. Unfortunately, considerable difficulties have since arisen owing to the unexpectedly high estimated cost of the project, combined with temporary restrictions on grant funding that would customarily be available in these cases. To maintain momentum, the Steering Committee has therefore been considering ways of reducing the cost to a practical level by modifying the initial restoration plan. Indeed, on reflection, it would appear that the revised plan now in preparation will not only be feasible within funding limits, but will also provide even greater advantages than those envisaged in the original proposal.

In the meantime, preparatory work has already been carried out by the Work Party on the control of the Rowley Bottom stream which flows through the line of locks above lock 15. As reported elsewhere in this issue, considerable progress has already been made in this direction. It should be remembered that in whatever scheme is adopted, water management will remain a key element, and despite various uncertainties about the sufficiency of supply, etc., this work has already removed some of the obstacles confronting the project.

However, it was decided that the AGM would serve as an ideal opportunity to explain these developments to the membership before any new plan is finalised. There are still a variety of details that need to be discussed in which the opinions and ideas received from the membership would be welcome. To this end, a walk around the site has been arranged soon after the AGM - as detailed below in 'Dates for Your Diary'. Although primarily intended for those directly involved in the project to review the plan 'on the ground', this event will also provide the opportunity for members in general to familiarise themselves with the technical details of the new proposals.

Mike Chapman

DONATIONS

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

Mr. Steven Goff
Mr. G. Pickford
Mr. and Mrs. Gosland
Mr. R. Barwise

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

WORK PARTIES

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

Sunday 18th May — 10:00

WALK — GREYFIELD - and the tramway that wasn't (3 miles)

Meet: Goosard Bridge/Paulton Sewage Works

For further details please contact:

Mike Chapman ☎ 01225 426948

Sunday 1st June — 10:00

WORK PARTY — Location to be advised

For further details please contact:

Bob Parnell ☎ 01225 428055

Sunday 15th June — 10:00

WALK — THE LOCKS and FOOTPATHS of ROWLEY BOTTOM (3 miles)

Meet: The Avenue, Combe Hay

For further details please contact:

Mike Chapman ☎ 01225 426948

Sunday 6th July — 10:00

WORK PARTY — Location to be advised

For further details please contact:

Bob Parnell ☎ 01225 428055

Sunday 20th July — 10:00

WALK — BASSKNOCKER TO MIDFORD (3 miles)

Meet: Brassknocker Canal Centre car park

For further details please contact:

Mike Chapman ☎ 01225 426948

Sunday 3rd August — 10:00

WORK PARTY — Location to be advised

For further details please contact:

Bob Parnell ☎ 01225 428055

disappearing into the damaged puddling clay of the pound below Lock 10. For our work parties in the lock chambers, this has been a great advantage and has resulted in relatively civilised working conditions (although we have had the occasional accidental soaking).

Now we have been told that the water will again be needed at Lock 15, to show the lock to its best advantage for whatever restoration plan is finally decided upon. During the recent work parties in the Bulls Nose, we diverted the stream back onto its original course down the lock flight; but found that it seemed to be soaking away into the pounds long before it reached Lock 15. It is not clear whether this is due to the stream becoming less vigorous or whether the pounds have become more porous than they were in 2000. To speed up the progress of the water, it was decided to dig channels across each pound. Not only would this reduce leakage by minimising the area over which the water could seep away, but it would help to drain some of the excess water from the quagmire of mud and rotting vegetation which makes working in some parts of the pounds an unpleasant and exhausting exercise.

The stream is now once again beginning to reach as far as Lock 15, although not in such quantities as to flood it to a navigable depth. With sufficient water in the locks, the rapid summertime growth of brambles, which do not make good companions when working in the confined space of a lock chamber, may also, at last, be inhibited.



Photograph: P. Hucklebridge
A SEA OF MUD — Richard Hignett digging a channel across the pound between Lock 11 and Lock 12

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

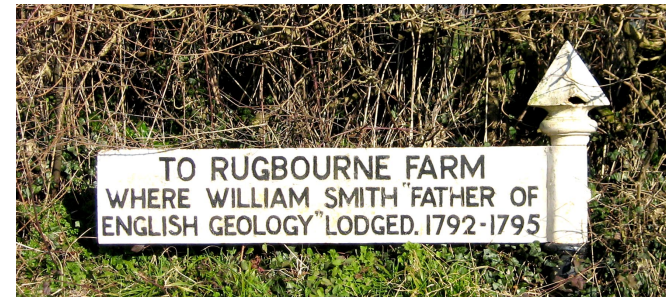
The next Annual General Meeting of the Somersetshire Coal Canal Society will be held on Tuesday 10th June at the Radstock Museum, Waterloo Road, Radstock, commencing at 7.30 pm.

*Following the A.G.M., **Elizabeth Devon** will give a talk entitled:*

Strata Smith puts Bath on the Map

This is the story of the life of William Smith, “Father of English Geology”. It is a story of his constant battle against prejudice, his final recognition and of his amazing abilities in producing the first geological map.

Elizabeth Devon is a part-time lecturer in the Dept of Education, University of Bath teaching Earth science for the secondary science graduate teacher trainees. She also gives in-service training workshops for science staff in local secondary schools for the Earth Science Education Unit at Keele University, promoting Earth Science in Education, leading many field trips and helping with children’s activities.



A SIGNPOST NEAR RUGBOURNE FARM - one of the few signs commemorating William Smith to display correct information.

A WALK ALONG THE ROUTE OF THE CANAL TRAMWAY TO THE TIMSBURY AND HIGH LITTLETON COLLIERIES

Sunday 17 February 2008

Initially, most of the coal carried along the main line of the canal came from numerous small pits located in the parishes of Paulton, Timsbury and High Littleton, each pit linked to a tramway which led down to the wharves. Delivery was by means of single gravity-operated tipper-wagons under the control of a brakeman, the empties being towed by horses back up to the pits in trains. Since coal had been mined in Timsbury and High Littleton from at least the 17th century, recent Ordnance Survey maps still show a multitude of old shafts and wells scattered across the hillside to the north of the canal terminus at Timsbury Basin. However, no coal has been worked here since the mid-1870s, and it is now difficult to recognise any above-ground remains of the pits themselves. Nevertheless, most of the tramway route and its subsidiary branches has survived as a series of footpaths which can still be followed today.



TIMSBURY BASIN - 1870 A busy industrial scene with several boats visible on the canal.

Weigh-House 50

NAVYING NOTES

Water has always been a worry for people who get involved with canals. The problems fall into two main categories: a lack of it if you want to keep the canal navigable, or an excess of it if you happen to be working on the canal in poor weather conditions. Until recently, our work parties have only been bothered by an excess of water during the occasional downpour, but a lack of water has never really concerned us at all.

When the Great Western Railway Company began building their railway branch line from Limpley Stoke to Camerton in 1907, fears had been expressed that, with lack of maintenance, a derelict canal which was simply left to fall into genteel decay would sooner or later suffer some sort of collapse and cause a great deal of damage to property on the downhill side. The G.W.R. took their responsibilities seriously and made an excellent job, not only of draining the canal, but of ensuring that it would stay drained — indeed, during periods of prolonged rain we have commented that some sections of the towpath become wetter than the adjacent canal bed. Although the G.W.R. left plans of their major drainage works which involved the construction of culverts, we have not been able to discover the fine details of other smaller drainage arrangements they may have made, such as holes dug in the waterproof puddling clay lining at intervals along the canal bed.

At the 'Bulls Nose', between Locks 10 and 11, a small stream flows into the canal from Southstoke. Until about the year 2000, it regularly coursed down through Locks 11 to 15 and, after heavy rain, became sufficiently vigorous to flood the pound between Lock 15 and the railway embankment. Since the summer of 2000, this has no longer been the case; the course of the stream changed towards a more westerly direction at the Bulls Nose and it flowed off away from the downhill lock flight, rapidly →



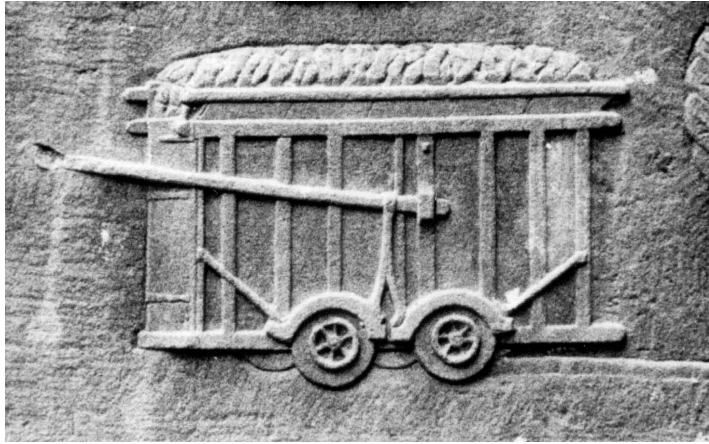
Photograph: R.N. Davis

THE POUND BELOW LOCK 15 — 24 April 2000

Weigh-House 50

Waggons

It is too much to hope to find any part of the early waggons in use on these tramways, but we were lucky enough to find, on a short branch line behind the goods yard in Radstock, what we believe to be the remains of a host waggon for the small trains from a nearby colliery. Its dimensions certainly rule out its use in the small colliery shafts in the district.



**CARVING OF A COLLIERY WAGGON
ON A GRAVESTONE IN CAMELEY CHURCHYARD**

It had a long towbar under the bed with a hook on each end, overall length 8 ft 4 in, and crude U-shaped axle bearings. From tie bolts found in the rotten timbers we deduced the width to have been something under 3 ft, the length of the bolts, which corroborates the rail gauge of 3 ft 2 in between flanges. The wheels and axles were missing.

Since this article was written, more detail has come to light. A conversation with an aged inhabitant has enabled us to trace a further section from Grove Works (659584), where the steepness of the land had led us to believe that the limit of the tramway had been reached. But we were told that a stone block had been unearthed at 659589, and investigation on the site of Hayeswood coalworks (658591) revealed stone blocks of the Grove type. From here the line is visible as a cutting in the hillside (659587) leading to Tying coalworks. There is no indication of the route from here to Grove, and how the steep drop was overcome is a mystery.

We have also found another type of plate rail on the site of the Paulton engine colliery (658575); this was generally similar to the other cast-iron plates, being 3 ft in length, but had one end convex and the other concave, no doubt to locate it more firmly with its neighbours. It also had a groove cast into the running face similar to that on the wrought-iron rail type 'A', and the letter N cast into the top surface.

All grid references given are from the One Inch Ordnance Survey sheet 166.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank Mr C. Knowles, of Manor Farm, Welton, and Messrs D. S. Hart and S. R. Ryan, of Western Region, British Railways, without whose permission excavation would not have been possible. Also Dr M. J. T. Lewis, for assistance in identifying many of our finds.

This article first appeared in *Industrial Archaeology* magazine — 1968. Vol V. p.140 -161

Starting from the sewage works at Goosard Bridge, the walk proceeded to Timsbury Basin where the terminus of the tramway is indicated by a gap (formerly a bridge) through the embankment of the abandoned Camerton Branch railway, built about 1880. Although coal traffic had ceased by then, the railway still had to allow access to the canal. Originally however the tramway branched out into several sidings at it approached the wharf in the field beyond, close to edge of Timsbury Bottom stream where fragments of the retaining wall in the bank still remain. Old maps and photographs [*Pages 6-7, 11, 15*] show a small building nearby, possibly a weigh-bridge, and beyond that, the junction of the branch line from High Littleton which followed the stream. The main line itself descended from the fields higher up, crossing the Timsbury to High Littleton Lane by a level crossing, although this is now no longer obvious as the cuttings adjoining the road have been infilled in recent times. Several passing loops are shown above and below the Lane on the 1840 Timsbury Tithe map, suggesting that this was the busiest section of the line.

In the field on the north side of the lane a junction was later made to connect with Old Grove Pit (mentioned below), opened a few hundred yards away on the opposite slope to the west, but the main line itself entered from Loves Hill Lane in the northern corner of the field where a two-hole sleeper block can still be seen lying in the undergrowth [See photograph on Page 16].

→



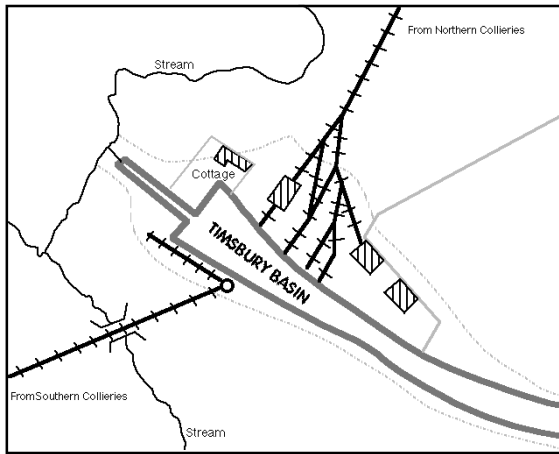
Loaded waggons can be seen waiting on staites, ready to tip their contents directly into the boats.

A few yards along the road, on the northern corner of the junction of Prior's Hill Lane, was the site of Grove Pit, sunk in about 1765. Although this pit, the lowest along the line, was no longer used for raising coal by the time the canal was built, it was retained for its unusually long drainage adit which led out to the Cam Brook at Radford Bridge nearly a mile away. The tramway, having descended very steeply through various paddocks higher up, had to do a sharp turn into the road in front of the pit, but nothing of the site now remains, being occupied by several modern houses.

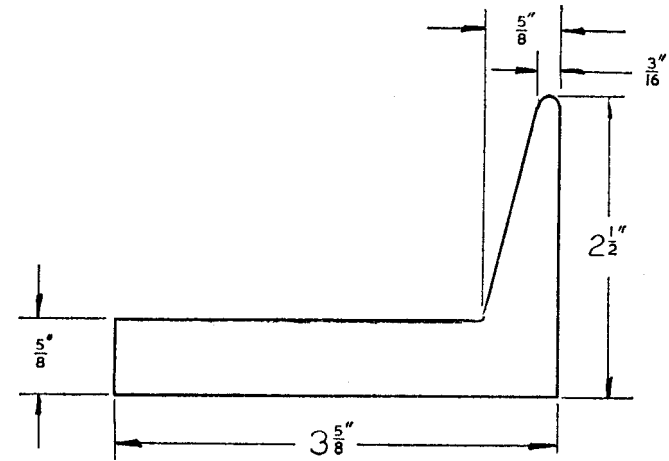
To rejoin the tramway further up, a short detour is necessary along Prior's Hill Lane, allowing a good view on the south side of the site of Old Grove Pit, mentioned above, where the heapstead and various spoil-heaps and walls are still visible. Despite its name, this was the last pit to be sunk in this area (in 1838) as well as the last to close (in the mid-1870s), and the only one to reach the very deep coal measures known as the Farrington Series. Higher up, the tramway emerged from the track to Amesbury on the left, crossing the lane into the paddocks above Grove Pit. A little further up the lane, now the site of a dwelling house, was another coalwork, known as New Grove or Prior's Pit, which replaced the Grove and was mainly used as a ventilation shaft from 1792 up to the 1840s. A short branch from this pit also crossed the lane into the paddocks, where it joined the main line.

Before reaching the junction with Prior's Hill, the main line followed the northern verge of the track to Amesbury, which it joined by means of a sharp left turn from a steep field on the north side called the Tynning. In the middle of the Tynning was New Tynning Pit, opened in 1791, replacing Old Tynning Pit sunk some fifty years earlier somewhere near the top of the field. The older pit was linked to the Grove adit, but New Tynning also had a Newcomen pumping engine which remained in operation until 1860, four years after the closure of the pit itself. None of the buildings have survived, but the site is easily identified by the large spoil heaps on the west side of the field, together with various miners' cottages overlooking it at the end of Tynning Lane. The tramway ran in a straight line from the northeast corner of the field through the colliery yard, dropping down steeply from the more level ground in the field above (now a garden) which adjoins the main B3115 road below Timsbury Sleight.

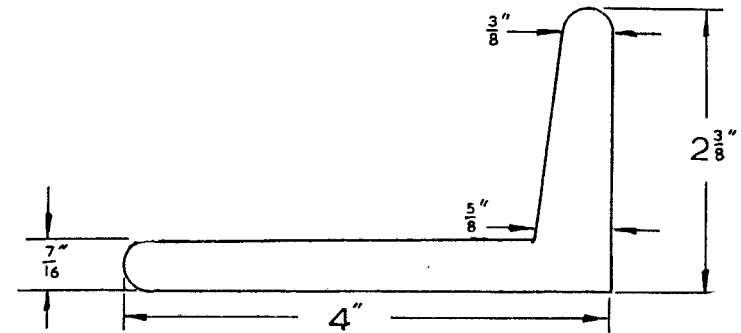
Here the tramway crossed the road diagonally from the field opposite, on the western side of which was Heyswood Colliery (now the site of Hayeswood Farm), sunk in about 1750. This pit, the highest at the head of the line, had coke ovens and a pumping engine, and although it was troubled by accidents and flooding in which miners were killed, did not close until 1862. At the entrance to the farm is a sculptured memorial to the pit and its miners, and the owner, Mrs. Young, was most happy to show us the various features which still remain, including the large spoil-heap, the capped shafts and the pumping engine house. The latter, now converted to a dwelling and in good condition, is of considerable interest, being one of the two last remaining pumping engine houses in the North Somerset Coalfield.



LAYOUT OF TRAMWAYS AT TIMSBURY BASIN
(Based on information from Down & Warrington)



CAST IRON RAIL SECTION
Broken piece — End detail and length not known



end of it. The cutting from the colliery and under the road, with its fine stone walling, will soon be invisible under tipped rubbish.

A line also led south near here, on a slight embankment, to serve what was known as Radford new coal work (667574) but the only technical detail we could find was one single-holed stone sleeper.

The last feeder tramroad investigated was that to the Dunkerton and Dunkerton new coal works, at approximately 691588, the only detail of which we could definitely identify being the embankment between the two.



Some Technical Aspects of the Somerset Coal Canal Tramways

by R.G. Gilson and G.W. Quartley

Part 3

— Continued from Page 18 of Weigh-House 49 —

The eastern branch is clearly defined where it crosses the High Littleton-Timsbury road as a cutting. As it crosses the side of the hill towards the Grove coalworks we found the ground disturbed by drainage works, saving the necessity of excavation but also destroying any detail. However, we have uncovered a line of sleepers at the top of the hill where the tramroad passes between the old tips.

Here we found that all stone sleepers had two holes in them and that the spacing between the sleepers was 4 ft as opposed to the 3 ft spacing found elsewhere. They were also several inches larger than usual. This indicates that the plates used here were 4 ft long and had a hole in each end, being pegged down independently of adjacent plates.

At Conygre, north of Radford (674583), the coal was carried down an inclined tramroad to a wharf on the canal, and here again we found single-hole sleepers, and also a broken, short piece of cast-iron rail, unidentifiable as to type. This incline must have gone out of use before the colliery as the tip covers the top

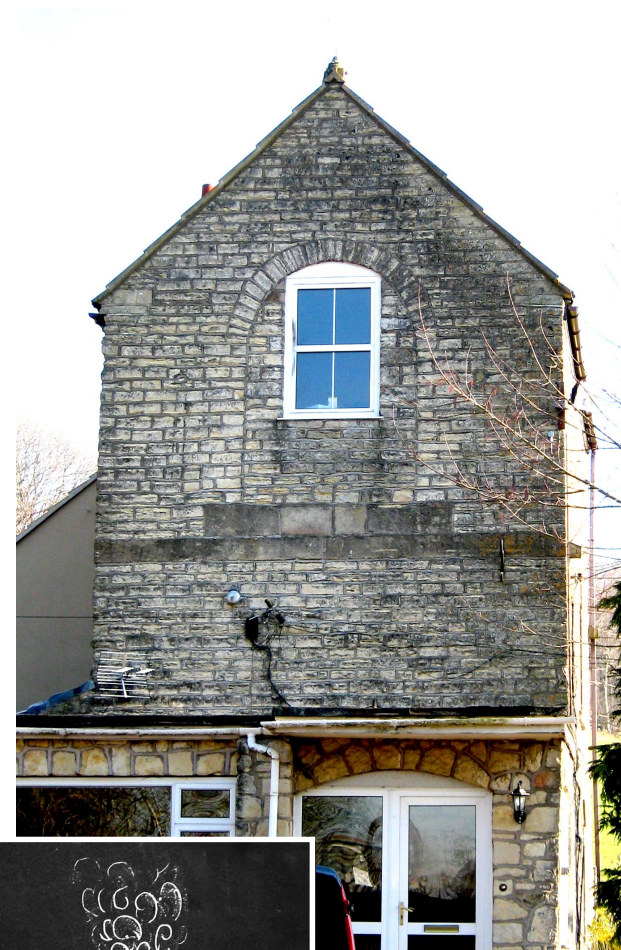


A STONE SLEEPER BLOCK
Found near Grove Coal Works

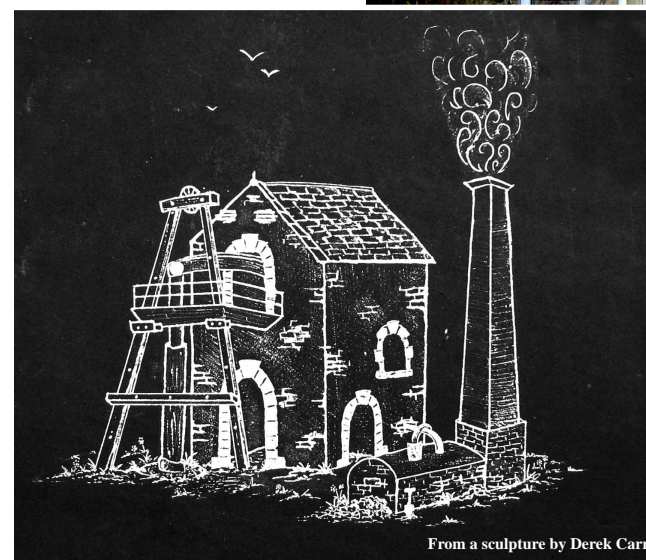


RAILS FOUND DURING BUILDING WORK BETWEEN MEARNS AND AMESBURY PITS
Now on display in the garden of a private house

From here it is possible to link up with the course of the High Littleton branch of the tramway by returning to Tynning field where a footpath leads westward down to the isolated group of houses known as Amesbury, formerly the site of Amesbury's Pit. Because this was a very early mine (sunk before 1701, in the days when the water was pumped by hand or horse power) it was not connected with the tramway, and had fallen out of use by 1820. However, the capped shaft and small heapstead (now a lawn) are still visible, and its entrance track leads down to a neighbouring coalworks known as Allen's Pit, or Brombells' Colliery. This pit was connected to the High Littleton branch of the tramway (though still in the parish of Timsbury), but little seems to be otherwise known about it. Although opened some time before 1793, this too had closed by 1820. The heapstead is clearly defined in the garden

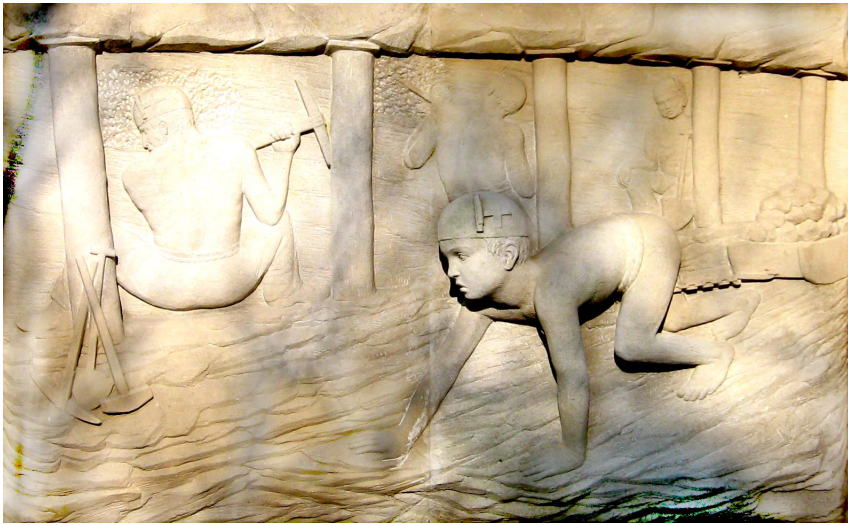


Above: THE BOB WALL OF HEYSWOOD PUMPING ENGINE - 2008



Left: CARVING ON A SLATE TABLET AT HEYSWOOD COLLIERY
DEPICTING THE PUMPING ENGINE

From a sculpture by Derek Carr



Sculpture by Derek Carr

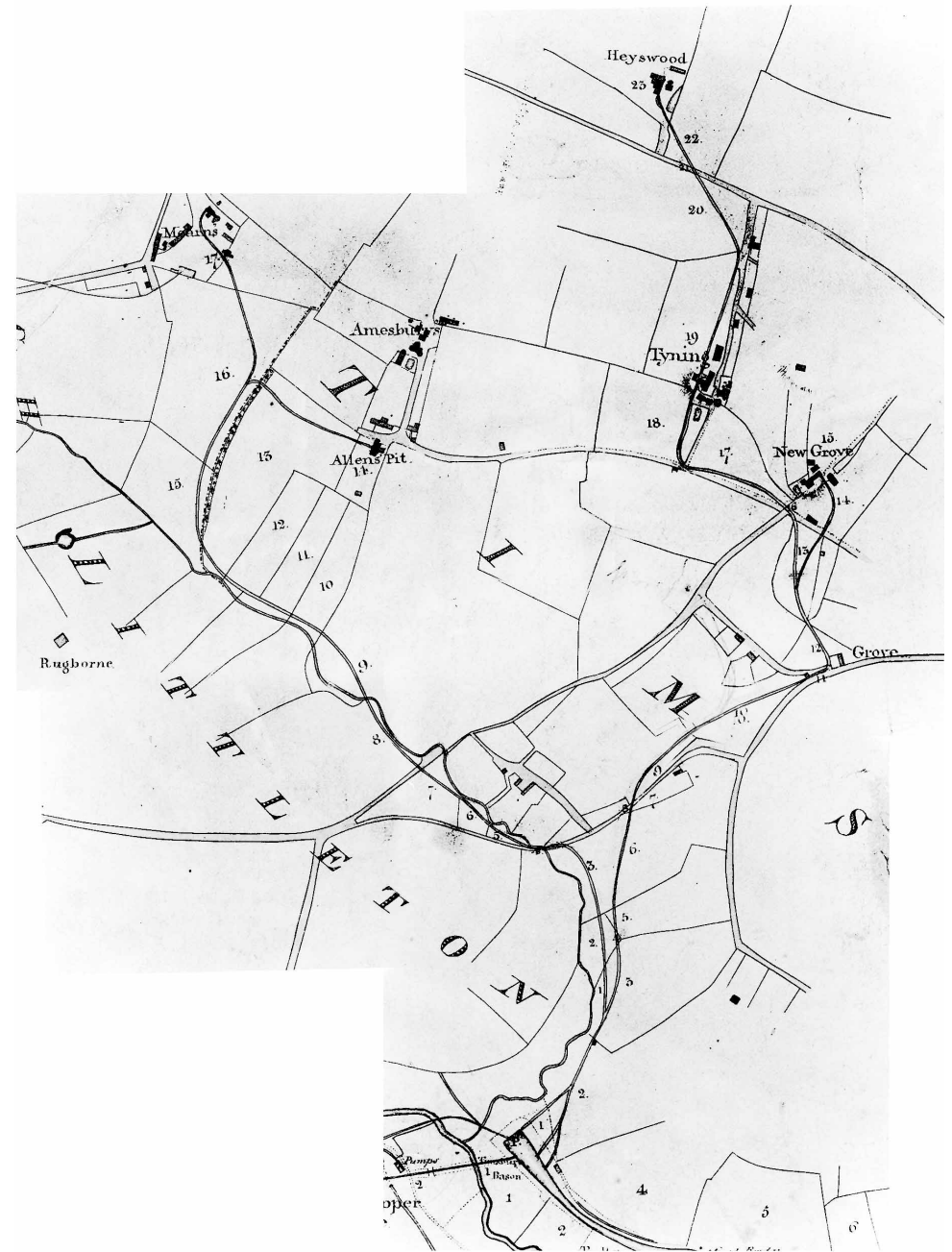
A SCULPTURE AT THE ENTRANCE TO HAYESWOOD FARM SHOWING THE WORKING CONDITIONS IN SOMERSET MINES

behind the cottage that still occupies the site, and a fine display of tramway artefacts found in the neighbourhood have been gathered together in the front garden by the owner, Mr. Fred Wedlock, who was happy to explain their significance to us.

Of particular interest was a reconstructed length of tramway track consisting of cast-iron rails fixed to two-hole sleeper blocks, complete with an (imported) side-tipper waggon. The rails, which came to light whilst laying the foundations of a porch in front of the cottage, were of the bar type with interlocking ends, as encountered on previous walks at the Conkwell Incline and Dunkerton Colliery. David Pollard also reported rails of this type in this neighbourhood in the 1980s, which tends to confirm that this part of the canal tramway system was not a plateway as previously thought. It was presumably this type of rail, mentioned in 1860, which was purchased for repairs by Old Grove Pit from Seend Ironworks in Wiltshire.

Leaving Allen's pit, the tramway ran down across a field to a drainage gully which marks the parish boundary between Timsbury and High Littleton. Here it crossed a small bridge, still used as a footbridge, although in poor condition and almost buried in silt. On the far side it immediately joined the main branch which descended from Mearns Pit at the top of the field. It was this pit, opened in 1783, which was surveyed in 1792 by William Smith, father of English Geology, providing him with information on the stratigraphy of the North Somerset coal measures. However, it did not remain in use long after 1817. Houses have since been erected on the site and only the spoil tip now remains. From the junction of the two branches, the tramway then continued down the western side of the gully, crossing several small bridges over the field drains. These have since disappeared, although the track formation can still be identified. At the bottom of the field, where the gully joins the main stream to Timsbury bottom, the tramway turned eastward, following the stream, which it crossed and re-crossed in several places before reaching the Timsbury to High Littleton road and the field towards Timsbury Basin. Unfortunately this section of the line was not adopted as a public footpath, and for this reason has never been examined in any detail.

As a result, the walk took a detour along another footpath which leads up to Rugbourne Farm



PART OF THE CRUSE MAP
Showing tramways to the North of Paulton Basin



TWO ENDS OF THE SOMERSETSHIRE COAL CANAL

Above: Timsbury Basin

Below: Junction with the K&A at Dundas



Weigh-House 50



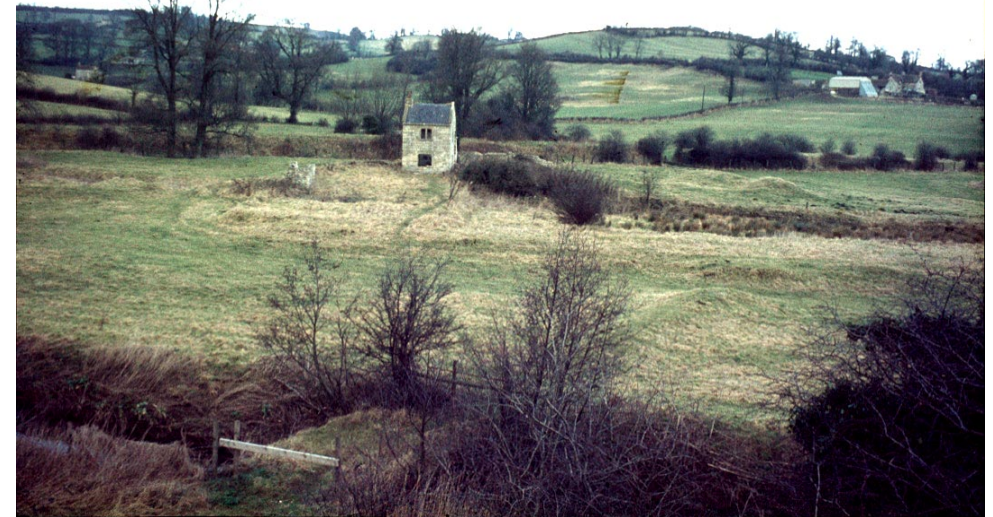
Left: FRED WEDLOCK STANDING IN FRONT OF THE PORCH WHERE THE RAILS WERE DISCOVERED

Below: AN 'IMPORTED' WAGGON ON DISPLAY IN Mr. WEDLOCK'S GARDEN
[See Page 16 for details of the rails]



where William Smith stayed whilst surveying Lady Jones' properties and Mearns Pit. Although this fine house is no longer a farm and had fallen into disrepair, it is now being refurbished by new owners, and the lady of the house was (once again) most willing to stop work and explain to us its history and connection with William Smith. Leaving by the entrance track and passing the old signpost to the farm, the walk was able to return to Goosard Bridge by taking the footpath across the fields from Bungay's Hill.

Mike Chapman



TIMSBURY BASIN — 13 Feb 1965

Photograph: Don Browning

Weigh-House 50



HEYSWOOD COLLIERY PUMPING ENGINE HOUSE



RUGBOURNE FARM

Below: AERIAL VIEW OF DUNKERTON AQUEDUCT

