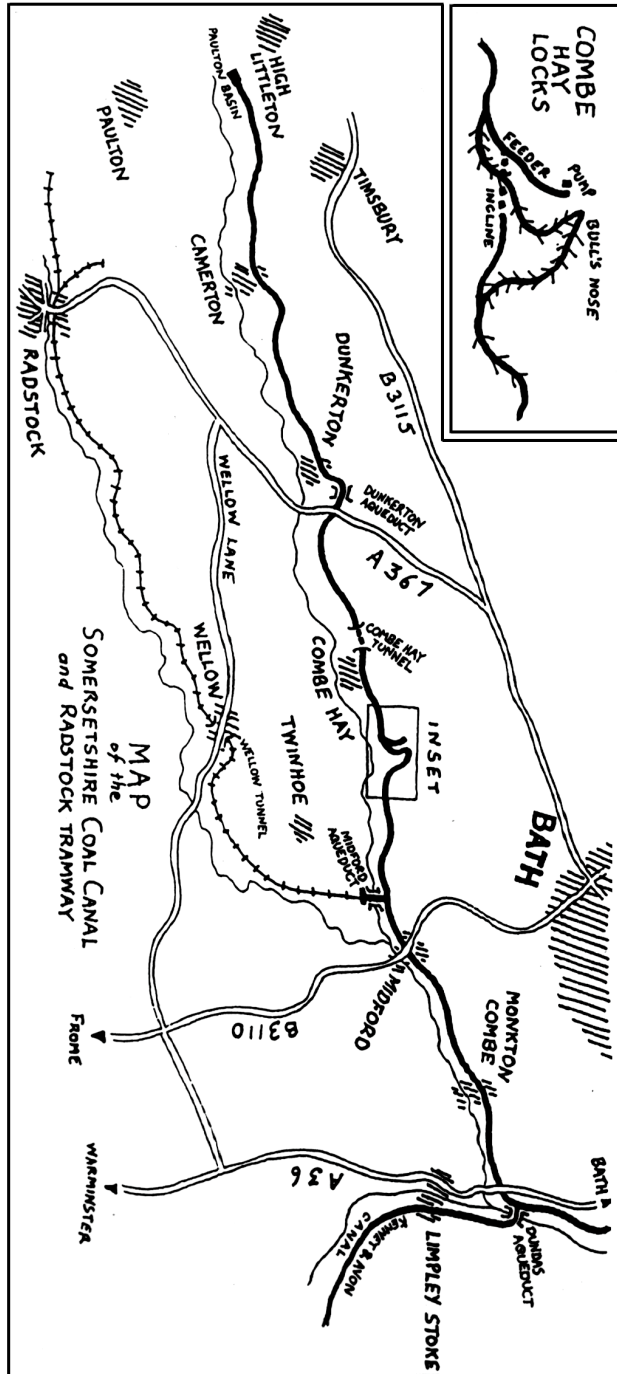


# WEIGH-HOUSE

THE MAGAZINE OF THE  
SOMERSETSHIRE COAL CANAL SOCIETY



Website: <http://www.coalcanal.org>

Nº 60

AUGUST 2011

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*Website:* <http://www.coalcanal.org>

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The Somersetshire Coal Canal Society was founded in 1992 to:

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

The Society became a registered charity in 1995 and now has the  
Objects:

- 1) To advance the education of the general public in the history of the Somersetshire Coal Canal
- 2) The preservation and restoration of the Somersetshire Coal Canal and its structures for the benefit of the public

\*\*\*\*\*

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  
Inland Revenue reference code for tax purposes: CAD72QG

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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, **John Bishop**  
73, Holcombe Green, Upper Weston, Bath BA14HY  
☎ 01225 428738 *E-mail:* cesjtb@bath.ac.uk  
*Society Website:* <http://www.coalcanal.org>

\*\*\*\*\*

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

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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 6<sup>th</sup> November— 10:00

**WORK PARTY — Location to be advised**

For further details please contact: *Derrick Hunt* ☎ 01225 863066

Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> November — 19:30

**SOCIAL EVENING — “THE HOUSE OF LORDS’ AND OTHER ARCHIVES”**

by Derrick Hunt and Roger Halse

*Meet:* The Radstock Working Mens’ Club.

For further details please see website or contact: *Derrick Hunt* ☎ 01225 863066

Saturday & Sunday 19 - 20<sup>th</sup> November

**WORK PARTY with “Bit in the Middle” Waterways Recovery Group**

For further details please contact: *Patrick Moss* ☎ 07736 859882

Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> November — 10:00

**WALK —WELLOW AREA, Fullers Earth & the Canal Tunnel**

*Meet:* Wellow car park

For further details please see website or contact: *Mike Chapman* ☎ 01225 426948

Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> November— 10:00

**WORK PARTY — Location to be advised**

For further details please contact: *Derrick Hunt* ☎ 01225 863066

Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> December — 19:30

**SOCIAL EVENING — “THE SITES AND SIGHTS OF THE S.C.C.”**

by Patrick Moss, Derrick Hunt, Roger Halse & Adrian Tuddenham.

*Meet:* The Radstock Working Mens’ Club.

For further details please see website or contact: *Derrick Hunt* ☎ 01225 863066

Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> December — 10:00

**WALK —RADSTOCK & WELTON**

*Meet:* Radstock Public Car Park, Waterloo Road.

For further details please see website or 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. Any walks 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.

Check the website for any last minute changes: [www.coalcanal.org](http://www.coalcanal.org)

**Work Parties**

Venues are often arranged at short notice, always check with Derrick Hunt ☎ 01225 863066

**WEIGH - HOUSE N<sup>o</sup> 60**

EDITOR’S NOTES .. .. .	3
CHAIRMAN’S NOTES .. .. .	4
NEW MEMBERS .. .. .	4
A SOMERSET NAVIGATION and Other Curiosities by David and Mary Byrne .. .. .	5
NAVYING NOTES — Work at the Lower Locks; Two Major Work Parties; Allen Scythe Stolen. .. .. .	6
MIDFORD & MURTRY AQUEDUCTS .. .. .	7
SHAREHOLDERS OF THE S.C.C. — WILLIAM MEYLER by Mike Chapman .. .. .	8
A TRIBUTE TO WILLIAM SMITH — An information board near Midford ..	10
MENDIP ROUND BARROWS AND THE REV. JOHN SKINNER Notes on a guided walk by Dr. Jodie Lewis .. .. .	11
CANAL TRADERS’ PERMITS & TICKETS — Part 1 by Roger Halse.. .. .	16
BOOK REVIEW — <i>Chippenham and the Wilts &amp; Berks Canal</i> .. .. .	20
DATES FOR YOUR DIARY .. .. .	21
HERITAGE OPEN DAYS .. .. .	21

**EDITOR’S NOTES**

Articles in *Weigh-House* stem from the most unlikely beginnings. When Derrick Hunt began browsing some of the Kennet & Avon Canal archives, little did he think he would unearth documents which would start a train of events shedding light on an aspect of the S.C.C. that hardly anyone knew existed. The documents were small slips of paper generally known as Boat Tickets. They give us an insight into the day-to-day workings of the canal, its tolls and the people who used it and worked on it. The discovery was followed-up by Roger Halse and the results of his research will be presented in a series of articles which begin on Page 16 of this issue. Coincidentally, the book chosen for our Book Review also includes some information on Boat Tickets.

The walk in the footsteps of Skinner, led by Dr. Jodie Lewis, attracted a large crowd from both the S.C.C.S. and other interested groups. I have included her notes in full, so as to give those who were unable to attend the walk a chance to read exactly why we have to both thank Skinner and deplore his methods at one and the same time.

Although the Summer has not yet ended, the Committee has been planning well ahead and our Diary Dates page includes a fascinating programme of talks and events for the coming Autumn - so don’t forget to mark them on your calendar

**Adrian Tuddenham**

## CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

“An impossible dream” was how the Droitwich canal’s plans for re-opening were described 40 years ago — I attended the opening ceremony on 1<sup>st</sup> July this year. By the time restoration began to be seriously considered, the canal was in a similar state to the present-day S.C.C. with long dry and infilled sections. Worse than that, it suffered the indignity of a railway over-bridge being replaced by an embankment and a motorway being built across it. Our canal doesn’t have such major problems, so we should be able to restore it at least five years quicker — book your tickets now for the opening ceremony in the year 2046, or sooner if we can manage it.

In the shorter term, things are moving forward faster than we expected. As reported on Page 6, we have not just one, but two external work parties offering to spend a weekend helping us with clearance work. At Combe Hay we are working with the landowner to establish a work programme to take forward the projects we have already started and a similar process is just beginning to get under way at Paulton and Timsbury Basins, where we are working with the Local Councils and the landowner.

On the publicity side, we are currently talking to the Western Daily Press about the possibility of them running a feature on the S.C.C. and the S.C.C.S. With luck, that should generate a lot of interest and boost our membership figures, which have remained more-or-less static for several years. Great efforts are still necessary to discover more about the history of the canal, but we are now also looking to broaden our outlook so as to attract additional members who may have an interest in supporting restoration or actually working on the canal. Among your friends and relatives, you probably know of people whose might join us if they were given a little encouragement — now is a good time to give them that gentle push.

The eagle-eyed amongst you may have noticed that my address is not shown in the Executive Committee list on Page 2; this is because I am in the throes of moving house. I will publish my new address in the next edition of Weigh-House; in the meantime please contact me by telephone or e-mail.

Patrick Moss

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## NEW MEMBERS

The Society welcomes the following new members:

Ruth Makin	High Littleton
Tom Baldwin	La Garde Freinet (France)
John Van den Broeck	Wolvertem (Belgium)
John Gunner	Milford, Surrey
Roger and Stella Wain-Heapy	Bath
Geof Barfoot	Devizes
Peter Shirley and Maggie Stephens	Bath
Abigail Newton	Chippenham

## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY — 2011

Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> August — 10:00

**WALK —UPPER LOCK FLIGHT AND INCLINED PLANE, COMBE HAY**

*Meet:* Laybys near Bridge Farm, Combe Hay. BA2 7EE

For further details please see website or contact: *Mike Chapman* ☎ 01225 426948

Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> September— 10:00

**WORK PARTY — Location to be advised**

For further details please contact: *Derrick Hunt* ☎ 01225 863066

Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> & Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> September— 10:00

**HERITAGE OPEN DAYS at COMBE HAY LOCKS & ENGINE SITE**

**A series of guided tours — To volunteer see below**

To volunteer your services please contact: *Derrick Hunt* ☎ 01225 863066

Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> October— 10:00

**WORK PARTY — Location to be advised**

For further details please contact: *Derrick Hunt* ☎ 01225 863066

Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> July — 10:00

Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> October — 10:00

**WALK —DORSET & SOMERSET CANAL, EDFORD & COLEFORD**

*Meet:* The Duke of Cumberland, Edford.

For further details please see website or contact: *Derrick Hunt* ☎ 01225 863066

Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> October — 19:30

**SOCIAL EVENING — “QUEEN OF WATERS”**

by Kirsten Elliott [See book review: *W-H 59, P19*]

*Meet:* The Radstock Working Mens’ Club.

For further details please see website or contact: *Derrick Hunt* ☎ 01225 863066

Saturday & Sunday 22 - 23<sup>rd</sup> October

**WORK PARTY with London Waterways Recovery Group**

For further details please contact: *Patrick Moss* ☎ 07736 859882

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## HERITAGE OPEN DAYS — 10<sup>th</sup> & 11<sup>th</sup> September

With the permission of the landowners, we are throwing open part of the lock flight and engine site at Combe Hay as part of Heritage Open Days <http://www.heritageopendays.org.uk>

We need a team of members who can help us to organise guided tours, act as guides and answer questions from the public. Even if you are not keen on walking the footpaths, we would still be grateful for your help in manning the static exhibition which we plan to establish underneath the railway arch adjacent to the site of Lock 16. The event is spread over a weekend, so we are looking for anyone who might be able to spare a few hours during this time to help the Society. If you think you might be able to help, please contact Derrick Hunt on 01225 863066.

## BOOK REVIEW

### Chippenham and the Wilts & Berks Canal

This delightful new book is a 'must read' for those with an interest in the workings of the S.C.C.. We frequently discuss the S.C.C. itself and the sources of the coal, but we rarely examine the markets which provided the demand for it. Chippenham was a major market for Somerset Coal and this book by Ray Alder provides a lot of new information. For example, Ferdinando Stratford, an engineer from Gloucester, presented a proposal in 1765 to the Worshipful Society of Merchants in Bristol for a "Navigation between Bath and Chippenham" *i.e.* to canalise the River Avon.

I really like the approach of this book. It is not a rehash of previous works on the Wilts & Berks Canal; it is the story of the canal in Chippenham and the surrounding villages. Appendix 1 gives information on the Boatmen and other Canal Workers of the Chippenham area.

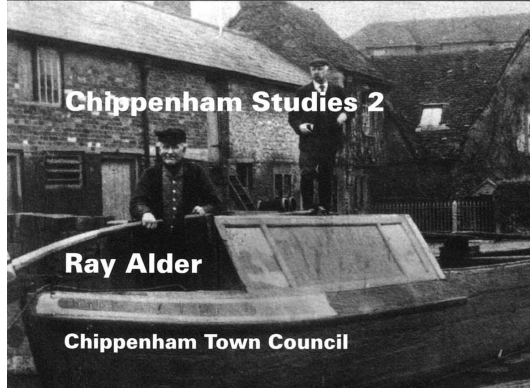
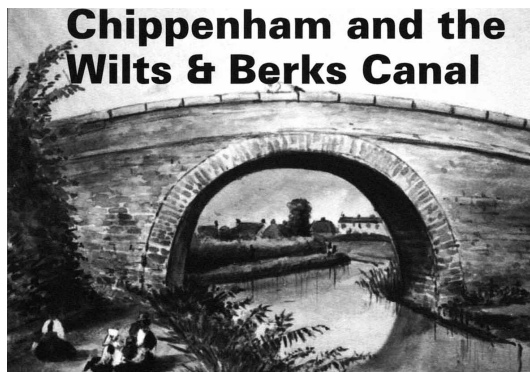
Of special interest is the list in Appendix 2 of Chippenham shareholders and their locations. One person in particular is Ralph Hale Gaby, a landowner on the route of the canal and Bailiff of Chippenham in 1798, 1812 & 1826. He was also a shareholder in the Wilts & Berks Canal, the Kennet & Avon Canal and the S.C.C..

It had been anticipated that coal would be the principal commodity to be transported on the canal. The W&B Canal Company stated that "The demand for Somerset Coal had now become so great ....Such is the superior quality of this coal..."

In 1877 W. H. Brinkworth's advertisement said that the quality of "Best Somersetshire Coal" brought by canal was superior to "that had by rail" !

The exhibition to accompany this book is well worth a visit. It is planned to be at the Chippenham Museum until the end of August 2011, where the book will be on sale.

By coincidence, page 26 of the book carries an illustration of a Permit issued to George Freegard for carrying 28½ tons of coal; this nicely ties-in with the article by Roger Halse on Canal Permits, which begins on page 16 of this issue of Weigh-House.



Chippenham and the Wilts & Berks Canal  
Chippenham Studies 2  
Author: Ray Alder  
ISBN 9780946418893  
Price £6.95

## A SOMERSET NAVIGATION AND OTHER CURIOSITIES

*Meetings organised by the Somersetshire Coal Canal Society do not generally conform to stereotypes and the April 2011 meeting was no exception to this rule.*

In order to celebrate the 200th anniversary of the building of the Somersetshire Coal Canal in 1796, the Society commissioned the distinguished scriptwriter, Jeremy Gibson, who lives near Bath, to write a short entertainment on the history of the canal, with songs and drama. The result was *A Somerset Navigation*\*. This was duly completed and performed with great distinction in the 1990s by Jeremy himself, and by Martin Horler, a great local amateur actor, singer, carriage driver, mover and shaker!

Around the time of its presentation, the "entertainment" was filmed by a local college and it was a video of this performance, introduced by Jeremy himself accompanied by Martin, which was the centrepiece of the evening. Although filmed without the benefit of an audience, the video was highly entertaining and brought back many memories for those who had been privileged to view the production "live" all those years ago. Signed copies of Jeremy's book containing the script of this and other material sold briskly during the interval as a result.

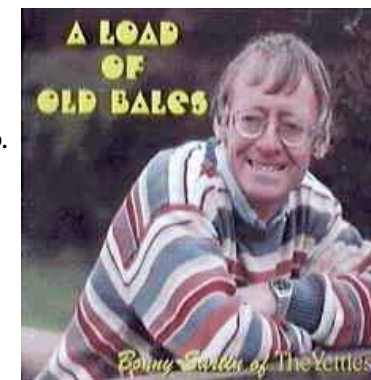
During the second part of the evening Derrick Hunt, our own great "mover and shaker", introduced and presented a video featuring Bonny Sartin, lead singer of the well known folk singing group "The Yetties" from Dorset. Derrick had somehow managed to persuade Bonny, a Dorset man through and through (although only living a couple of miles from the Somerset border), that the Dorset and Somerset Canal was something that had great relevance to his County even though not a single sod of the canal was ever cut there!

As such he had persuaded Bonny to be filmed performing three of his own original compositions. The two songs were "Silly Old Fussell"† and "From Channel to Channel" together with the poem "Dear Sirs" which imitates correspondence contemporary with the planning of the D&SC.

As always this was an evening of entertainment and enlightenment.

David & Mary Byrne

†A later version of "Silly Old Fussell" is available on the C.D.  
*A Load of Old Bales* by Bonny Sartin (YETCD 3014).  
See their website for details: <http://www.theyetties.co.uk>



\*See the article entitled "A Somerset Navigation or No Caisson to Answer" by Jeremy Gibson in Weigh-House 56 pages 16 & 17.  
Copies of the booklet are still available from Jeremy at: [jeremy\\_gibson@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:jeremy_gibson@tiscali.co.uk)



## NAVYING NOTES

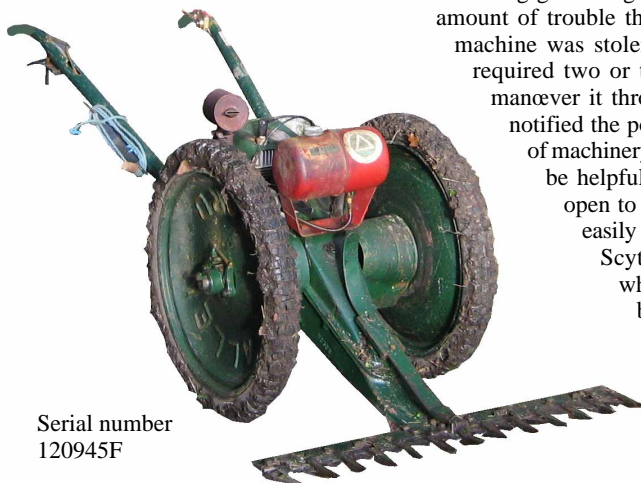
### *Work at the Lower Locks ~ Two Major Work Parties ~ Allen Scythe Stolen*

Work has continued as usual on the lock flight at Combe Hay, but we have discovered that the faster the weeds in the pounds are cut back, the faster they grow. Inside the lock chambers, we have been pleased to find that each year the growth is becoming a little lighter and easier to remove. With the end of the bird nesting season, work parties can return to the upper part of the lock flight, where there is plenty of heavy clearance work still to be done.

The B.I.T.M work party on the upper locks last Autumn was so successful that they have asked if they can be let loose on the job again; an offer which the Society and the landowner were more than happy to accept. Last year a heavy burden fell on the Society, and particularly on Patrick, as we had to find accommodation for twenty volunteers from all over the country at relatively short notice. This year we have a little more time to make the necessary arrangements and to give our own members a chance to take part. Compared with our usual somewhat spartan arrangements, these work parties are the height of luxury, with somewhere to sit during meal breaks and even a nearby flush toilet. If you have been hovering on the brink of joining in, this is an ideal opportunity to come along and experience your first work party.

The popularity of the S.C.C. as a place for navvies to practice their skills is beginning to spread. We have now been contacted by London Waterways Recovery Group to ask if they, too, could have a weekend working on our canal. We can't turn both groups loose on the same site at the same time, as they would finish up getting in each others' way, so we are looking at the best way to deploy them. Once again this is an opportunity for members of our usual work parties and for beginners to come along and join in. The dates of both work parties are listed in our Diary Dates on Page 21. No venues can be given at this stage as arrangements are still not finalised; please ring the contact number a few days beforehand to find out where to turn up.

Turning up for the August work party, we were dismayed to find that the stable at Combe Hay where we store the Allen Scythe had been broken into and the machine stolen. The thieves had ripped a substantial bolt out of the woodwork of the door and then by-passed a locked farm gate by removing the kissing-gate alongside it, complete with hinges. The amount of trouble the thieves took suggests that the machine was stolen 'to order'; and it would have required two or three strong men to shift it and manoeuvre it through the kissing-gate. We have notified the police, other groups and a number of machinery auction houses, but it would also be helpful if our members kept their eyes open to see if they can spot it. It is very easily distinguished from any other Allen Scythe by the brass throttle control which we fitted. The police have been warned that it can be a dangerous machine in unskilled hands and they are keeping an eye on local hospitals in case the new 'owner', or portions of him, turn up at the Casualty Department.



Serial number  
120945F

The tolls for passage along the canal cut to and from the top and the bottom of the lock flight were payable as a separate fee to the S.C.C. Navigation Company.

For the cargo from Paulton, George Freegard would have had to pay one toll to the S.C.C. for the 5 1/2 miles from Paulton to Combe Hay and the 3 miles from Combe Hay to the junction with the K&A at Dundas, plus the separate toll to the 'Lock Fund' for passage through the lock flight. The K&A would then ask for a toll for the 10 miles from Dundas to Semington and the junction with the W&B. The W&B then charging their toll for the 16 miles from Semington to Dauntsey.

At its peak in 1858 the SCC carried 165,740 tons of goods, which, despite railway competition on the Radstock branch, gave a revenue of £8,558 and a dividend to subscribers of £4,613.

**PAULTON  
ENGINE COAL-WORK.**

No. May 21st 1860

Mr George Freegard

**Bought of EVANS & Co.**

Tons.	Cwts.		Tons.	Cwts.
26	13	of Rubble } Coal, full Tonnage.....	27	1
		of Small		
		of Coke		

By Boat, No. 2 named the Leviathan

Wm Batt

Copyright: Kennet & Avon Canal Trust - DZSCC:K1942

### A COAL RECEIPT

PAULTON  
ENGINE COAL-WORK

May 21st 1860

Mr George Freegard

Bought of EVANS & Co.

26 Tons. 13 Cwts. of  
Rubble Coal + 8 Cwt small  
coal = 27 Tons 1 Cwt full  
tonnage

Boat No. 2 Leviathan

William Batt(?)

Paulton Engine Coal-Work originally consisted of two collieries, Paulton Upper Engine connected *via*. a tramroad to the southern side of the Timsbury basin, and Paulton Lower Engine connected *via*. a separate tramroad to the Paulton basin a few hundred yards further east.

It is not known from which of these pits the coal came from. 'Paulton Coal-Work' had ceased working by 1869 and by 1873 was only used for pumping water from the nearby Timsbury Collieries

Paulton Lower Engine pit was adjacent to the Paulton Foundry which opened in 1810. The foundry were suppliers of various iron work to the S.C.C., including a cast-iron footbridge erected over the canal at Monkton Combe in 1811. William Evans and the Paulton Coal Company occupied the foundry in 1839 and trade continued until closure in the mid 1880's.

*To be continued in Weigh-House 61*

**SOMERSET COAL CANAL LOCKS.**

**Trader's Permit, No. 16**

No. of Boat.	Cargo.	From whence		
1	Coal	Paulton		
Owner's Name.	Steerer's Name.			
Freegard, Geo.	Geo.			
No. of Tons.	At One Shilling per Ton .....	Lockage.		
28		£	s.	d.
		1	8	=

Canal Office, Midford,  
May 22 1860

Tuckwell Toll Clerk.

Copyright: Kennet & Avon Canal Trust - DZSCC:K1939

**A LOCK FUND TRADER'S PERMIT**

Somerset Coal Canal Locks  
Trader's Permit, No. 16

Coal from Paulton.

George Freegard, Owner and Steerer of the boat.

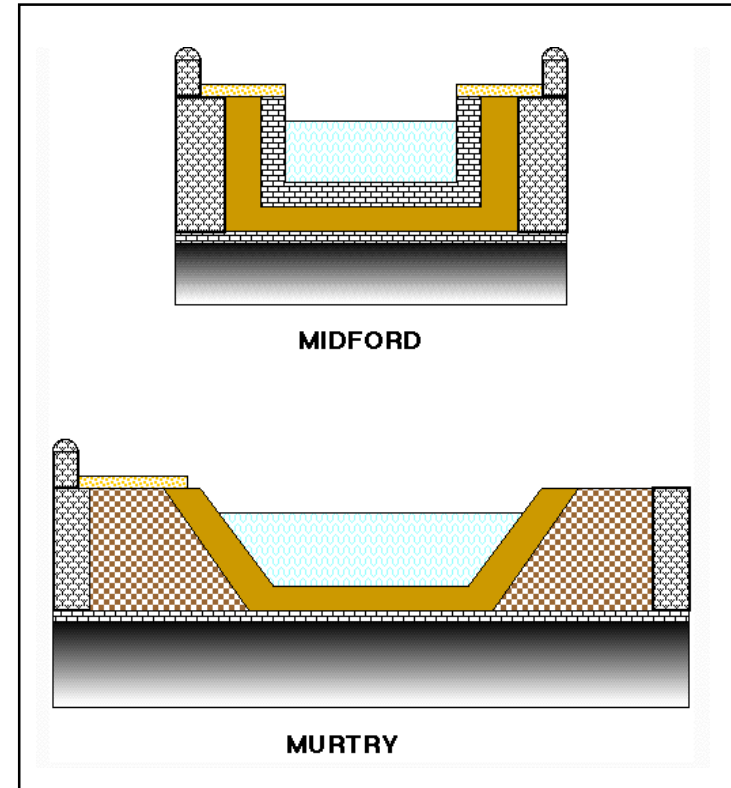
Carrying 28 Tons

Charged at a rate of One Shilling per Ton for 'Lockage' (i.e. passage through the flight of locks) at a cost of £1. 8s. 0d.

Signed W. Tuckwell, Toll Clerk,  
Canal Office, Midford, May 22 1860.

**MIDFORD AND MURTRY AQUEDUCTS**

*In the course of his talk to the Society last Autumn, Derrick Hunt compared Midford Aqueduct with its counterpart on the Dorset and Somerset Canal, Murtry Aqueduct. Both are low three-arched structures, but their internal constructions are completely different and give an interesting insight into their two different design philosophies.*



**MIDFORD AND MURTRY AQUEDUCTS**  
Sections along the centre line of one arch

The sides of the trough of Midford Aqueduct are stone lined and vertical, with a waterproof backing of puddle clay, whereas those of Murtry are made from the puddle clay and 'battered' outwards at an angle, so that they stay in place without the need for retaining masonry. The Murtry trough construction would have been much cheaper to build than Midford, but has the disadvantage of requiring a wider aqueduct structure with a much greater length of masonry in the arches. By extending the width of the structure still further, the designer of Murtry Aqueduct has allowed room for a soil infill which he probably intended to take much of the pressure of the water away from the outer walls, whereas the walls at Midford have to take the full pressure of any slump in the puddling.

It is interesting to note that the outer walls of Midford Aqueduct collapsed rapidly once deterioration set in, whereas the Murtry outer walls have retained their integrity.

Why was there a separate permit for the lock flight? By 1802 the Caisson Lock at Combe Hay had been abandoned and a temporary Inclined Plane had been installed to allow the canal to begin operations. The failure of the Caisson had depleted the company's funds but the originally-planned flight of nineteen conventional locks at Combe Hay, plus a further flight of nineteen locks on the Radstock branch (between "Twinney", Twinhoe, and Midford), still needed to be built in order to complete the canal. These were to be financed by a separate Act of Parliament known as 'The Lock Fund'.

'The Lock Fund' was to be jointly managed and financed by the Somersetshire Coal, Kennet & Avon and Wilts & Berks Canal Companies. These three companies would each subscribe up to £15,000 towards the Fund, which would then be used to build the locks. The interest to be repaid back to the subscribers would be financed by an additional tonnage (toll) of 'One Shilling per Ton on all Coals, & Coke' passing through the locks.



## SHAREHOLDERS OF THE SOMERSETSHIRE COAL CANAL

### WILLIAM MEYLER (1755-1821)

Shareholding: £100

*A well-known and successful bookseller and publisher, who played a prominent and popular rôle in the cultural life of Georgian Bath*

Born of a respectable family in Newburgh (Niwbwrch) on the Isle of Anglesey, William Meyler was educated by his uncle Rev. Thomas Meyler, then master of the Free Grammar School in Marlborough. Although originally only fluent in Welsh, he quickly showed talent for the classics and the commercial arts, and was therefore apprenticed as bookbinder to Andrew Tennent, a prominent bookshop owner in Milsom Street in Bath. On finishing his apprenticeship in the early 1770s, Meyler opened his own bookshop business in partnership with the artist and drawing master Joseph Sheldon\*, based in a well-established subscription lending library in the Orange Grove which they acquired in 1776.



The Bath Chronicle

#### THE ABBEY CHURCH YARD IN THE 1880s

Showing Meyler's later bookshop and library, then occupied by James Davies, to the left.  
This row of shops was demolished in 1892 to make way for the present concert hall.

Even while still learning his trade, Meyler was already attracting attention as a talented poet, particularly at Lady Miller's poetry salon at Batheaston Villa where he formed lasting friendships with several of the leading literary figures of the day. He went on to write many poetical addresses and

\* Mentioned in our previous issue on Charles Spackman. Possibly related to S.C.C. shareholder William Sheldon.

The census does not say how many of his employees worked on the farm, or how many worked in the coal merchant's side of the business. It also omits to say if he was still the Innkeeper of the Peterborough Arms, as he was so-listed in the 1851 census.

Looking at the permits and tickets themselves they all offer a variety of important historical information:

**Somerset Coal Canal.**  
**Trader's Permit, No. 1**  
From whence.

219  
No. of Boat. ✓

Radford New Wharf

Owner's Name.  
Freegard Geo.

Tons.	Rate per Ton.	Tonnage.		
		£	s.	d.
28½	9½	1	2	7

Aug 20 1860  
W. Tuckwell Toll Clerk.  
Midford.

Persons paying in Local Notes or Cheques will be held responsible for the same for 14 days afterwards.

#### A TRADER'S PERMIT

Somerset Coal Canal.  
Trader's Permit. No. 1

Boat number 219

From Radford New Wharf

For George Freegard, Owner.

Cargo is 28½ Tons at a

Rate per Ton of 9½<sup>d</sup> at a cost of  
£1. 2s. 7d.

Aug 20 1860

W. Tuckwell, Toll Clerk,  
Midford.

Cargo details not given but this was highly likely to have been coal.

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The rate per ton of 9½<sup>d</sup> equates to just over 1<sup>d</sup> per ton per mile for the 8¼ miles from Radford to Dundas, but it does not include a toll for the lock flight (which will be explained later).

It was originally thought that the coal came from the Radford Colliery originally described as 'Radford New Coal Work' when opened in 1793. This was connected to the S.C.C. at 'Radford Wharf' via a tram road incline which included a bridge crossing over the Cam Brook. However this pit closed in 1847.

Lower Conygre (or Conigre as it is sometimes spelt) Colliery opened in 1858 with a tramway incline laid from the pit to a new wharf on the S.C.C. just to the east of Radford. This is probably the 'Radford New Wharf' written on the permit. →



## CANAL TRADERS' PERMITS & TICKETS — Part 1

*The Society has recently added to its document archive copies of two Somerset (sic) Coal Canal Trader's Permits and three Colliery Tickets, courtesy of the Kennet & Avon Canal Trust Archive. As far as we know, these are the only surviving ones for the Somersetshire Coal Canal.*

What was a Trader's Permit? The S.C.C., like every other canal in the country, charged each boat a toll based on the tonnage carried and distance travelled along the canal. In 1802 the S.C.C.'s toll was 2<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub><sup>d</sup> per ton per mile for all Coal, Coke *etc.*; 3<sup>d</sup> per ton per mile for all Stones, Tiles, Bricks, Slate, Timber, *etc.*; and 4<sup>d</sup> per ton per mile for all Iron, Lead, Ores, Cinders, *etc.* The permit recorded the type of cargo carried, its origin, its weight and the toll to be paid. Boats were not allowed to use the canal without a permit; if they did they would be fined for infringing the Canal Company's Bye Laws.

It is not known what the S.C.C.'s overall toll rates were in 1860 when these permits were issued. The S.C.C., along with the Kennet & Avon and the Wilts & Berks Canals, altered their rates at various times to encourage trade and/or to increase income. For example, in 1844 the S.C.C. raised its toll from 1<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub><sup>d</sup> to 2<sup>d</sup> per ton per mile and in 1847 to 2<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub><sup>d</sup> per ton per mile.

Each boat travelling along the S.C.C. had to pass the Weigh-House at Midford. Here, any boat new to the canal was measured and weighed, and the information, including the boat's weight when un-laden (empty), recorded in a ledger. Each time the boat passed through Midford it would be weighed again. The difference between the weight of the empty boat and the weight with cargo, gave the weight of cargo carried. This figure was multiplied by the distance travelled along the S.C.C. in order to calculate the tolls to be paid. Permits were issued by the Canal Company's Toll Clerk, William Tuckwell (and later his successors), from his office next to the Weigh-House.

The surviving permits originally came from the records of George Freegard, a Coal Merchant at Dauntsey on the Wilts & Berks Canal. The 1861 census for Dauntsey (Wootton Bassett parish) shows George Freegard, 38, residing at The Peterborough Arms\*; occupation: "Farms 118 Acres & Coal Merchant, Employing 10 Men, 1 Boy".



**THE WEIGH-HOUSE AT MIDFORD**

\* The Peterborough Arms at Dauntsey Lock is still in existence.

lyrical works performed at the theatre at Bath and widely published, as well as gaining a reputation as an amateur actor. He was later also a member of the prestigious Bath Harmonic Society, a glee-club for catch-singing which the Prince of Wales himself joined in 1799. All these activities naturally contributed to the success of his business. After acquiring sole ownership of the shop in 1781, Meyler was able to branch out as a publisher himself, including, from 1783, maps of Bath produced in association with another bookseller, William Taylor, who published the Bath Guide.

### Biographical Details

Born: 13 December 1755,  
Newborough, Anglesey

Married: 1. c.1781 Elizabeth Salway  
2. 1786 Mary Hyatt of Minchinhampton

Died: 10 March 1821 at Bath

Family: Eldest son: Thomas Salway Meyler  
& 3 other children

Like other booksellers at that time, Meyler's shop served as an information bureau for a rapidly expanding literate population (lettings, lost property, &c), and as an agency for local voluntary organisations such as the 'Bath Guardians for the Protection of Persons and Property from Felons, Forgers, Cheats, Receivers of Stolen Goods, Swindlers, Highwaymen &c'. By 1790 Meyler was not only agent for the State Lottery, but also secretary of such insurance societies as the Bath Five Years Tontine Society, the Militia Society and various charitable associations. He became particularly busy from 1792 onward, following the revolution in France, serving as secretary of the Bath branch of the

Association for Preserving Liberty, Property and the Constitution of Great Britain, and, after war broke out, for raising subscriptions for a County volunteer defence force and for clothing for British troops abroad.

By 1792 the literate population of Bath had grown to such an extent that Meyler was sufficiently confident to launch a new newspaper, the Bath Herald and General Advertiser, in competition with three others including the Bath Chronicle owned by Richard Cruttwell (SCC shareholder mentioned in our previous issue). This proved sufficiently popular for an amalgamation in 1793 with the Bath Register and General Advertiser (becoming the Bath Herald and Register), and for Meyler to buy out his partners in 1795 and set up own printing business in Kingston Buildings. In the meantime, Taylor and Meyler continued to produce maps, and it was the 1799 edition of their Map of Five Miles round the City of Bath which William Smith used as a base for his first geological map, exhibited to the Bath and West of England Society that year. More curiously perhaps, like many other printers and newspaper owners in Bath at that time (including Richard Cruttwell), Meyler also sold the new proprietary medicines as a sideline, since the manufacturers could now make use of their advertising and distribution facilities to reach the city's wealthy and health-conscious clientele.

Now accepted as a prominent citizen, Meyler was duly elected onto the City Council in 1801, performing the duties of Constable and Bailiff over the next decade. At some earlier stage he had also become a freemason, and there is mention of him in 1805 serving as Deputy Provincial Grand Master of Somerset under his close friend Col. Leigh-Smith of Combe Hay, then Grand Master. This has a bearing on the Coal Canal, as it was evidently Col. Smith who, as friend and equerry to the Prince of Wales, arranged for the Prince to attend the demonstration of the Caisson Lock at Combe Hay during his visit to Bath in 1799. On being informed by Col. Leigh of the publication of one of Meyler's own works entitled *Poetical Amusement on the Journey of Life* (1806), the Prince 'who had seen and admired the author' was pleased to have the book dedicated to him. →

In 1808 Meyler moved his business to No.5 Abbey Church Yard, immediately next to the newly re-built Pump Room, with his son Thomas then aged 16 as partner. However, like all Bath shopkeepers, he had always rented out other parts of his premises for lodgings, and it was at Meyler's shop in the Abbey Church Yard that the poet Shelley and Mary Godwin (while completing her work on *Frankenstein*) lodged during their stay in Bath in 1816/17.

Meyler reached the peak of his civic career in 1818, when he was elected a Justice of the Peace, but by this time his health was in decline. He died in 1821 and was buried in Bath Abbey, where his memorial tablet can still be seen. He left the considerable sum of £4,000, much of which was in Government Securities, to his family who successfully carried on the business until the 1870s.

Mike Chapman

Sources:

Kevin Grieves: *A Literary Entrepreneur: William Meyler of Bath*, Bath History XII, Bath Preservation Trust 2011.  
 Trevor Fawcett: *Georgian Imprints: Printing & Publishing in Bath 1729-1815*, Ruton 2008.

The Priddy Nine Barrows \*

There are 9 barrows in this group, forming a linear cemetery. 7 are bowl barrows, 1 a bowl with a pronounced ditch and outer bank and 1 seemingly a ring cairn, unusual for this landscape. 2 of the barrows are separated from the main alignment of 7 by a gap of c.150m. The average diameter of the barrows is c.21m.

There is only a record of one excavation at the Priddy Nine Barrows:

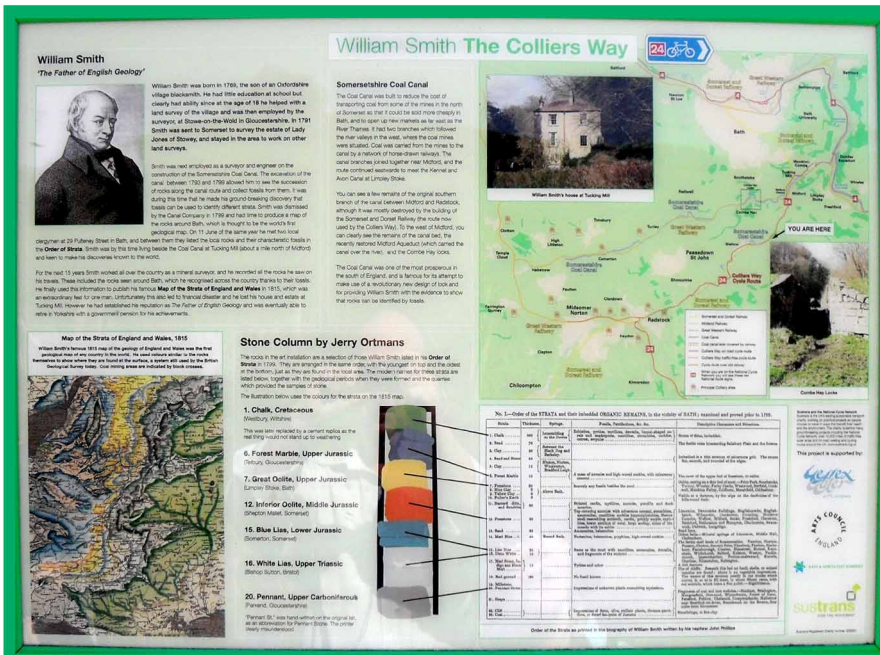
Priddy 28: excavated by Skinner in 1815, the smallest of the barrows in the cemetery. He discovered ashes and charcoal at a depth of 3 feet. However, other barrows in this group have hollows in their centres, suggesting unrecorded excavations.

Glebe Barrow and St Lawrence Church

There are at least 3 round barrows and perhaps as many as 6 in the area around the church at Priddy. The only recorded excavation was at the

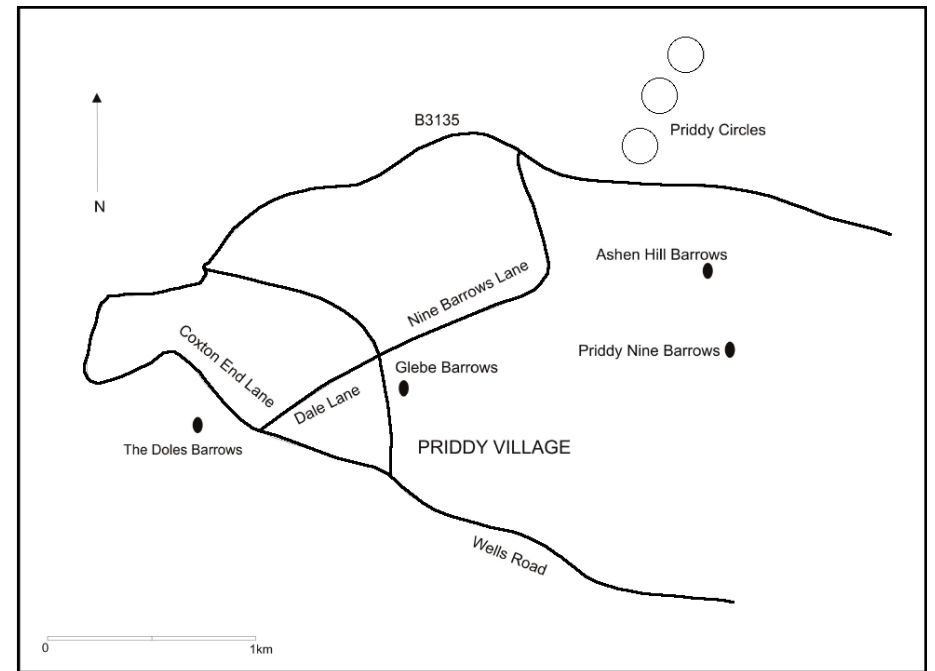
Glebe Barrow: excavated in 1895 by Rev. J. Palmer, Vicar of Priddy. He found a rare primary contracted interment, with head to the west and facing south. A secondary cremation with a bronze dagger, an awl and some worked flints

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A TRIBUTE TO WILLIAM SMITH

An information board recently installed alongside the cycle path between Midford and Wellow



LOCATION OF ROUND BARROW CEMETERIES

## The Doles Group\*

At least 6 round barrows, and possibly a further 2, make up this area cemetery. They are all bowl barrows and have an average diameter of c.17m.

At least 4 of the group were opened by Skinner in August 1816 and he found:

Priddy 20b: called by Skinner the Limekiln Barrow.

Found a secondary cremation below an inverted urn with a bronze razor but did not reach primary deposits.

Priddy 21: "not properly opened" and hence no finds

Priddy 22: rude cist and burnt bones at a depth of 6ft

Priddy 23: opened with no result

Just to the west of the group is the Priddy long barrow. This was also opened by Skinner in August 1816 but "no cist was found as it was not properly opened". Later excavated by UBSS and reinterpreted by Lewis.

In the area are numerous lithic scatters, a dew pond, spoil heaps and some quarries on Burrington oolite limestone.

## The Ashen Hill Group\*

There are 8 (or possibly 9) round barrows in this group, forming a linear cemetery. 5 are bowl barrows and 3 are said to be bell barrows though this is debateable. The average diameter is c. 20m.

All of the barrows were opened by Skinner in 1815 and he found:

Chewton Mendip 5: deposit of burnt bones

Chewton Mendip 6: burnt bones, charcoal and part of a bronze blade

Chewton Mendip 7: burnt bones, a broken urn and charcoal found in a cist, that was itself covered by a 3ft high cairn

Chewton Mendip 8: Skinner opened this but found nothing. Then excavated by Balch in the late 19th century who found 4 cremations placed in a pile of stones with a few flint flakes, a scraper and an arrowhead.

Chewton Mendip 9: burnt bones with a bronze dagger and the remains of a wooden sheath, beneath a 4ft high cairn

Chewton Mendip 10: large quantities of burnt bones found with or beneath an inverted urn in a cist of loose stones. A secondary deposit of burnt bones was found higher up in the mound, in a cavity covered by a small slab

Chewton Mendip 11: burnt bones in a cist covered by a cairn. Accompanying the bones were 1 faience bead, 5 amber beads, a grape cup accessory vessel and part of a bronze dagger

Chewton Mendip 12: burial with an urn (cremation?) in a small cist. Two secondary cremations from the mound.

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\* In these descriptions the barrow "names" are taken from Leslie Grinsell's 1971 barrow list: Grinsell, L 1971. 'Somerset Barrows, Part 2' in Proceedings of the Somerset Archaeology and Natural History Society, 115, pp. 44-137.

## MENDIP ROUND BARROWS AND THE REV. JOHN SKINNER

A GUIDED WALK BY DR JODIE LEWIS — 17TH APRIL 2011

*Dr Jodie Lewis is Senior Lecturer in Archaeology at the University of Worcester who specialises in prehistoric Mendip. Her work has brought her into contact with the late Rev. John Skinner of Camerton who, in addition to his well-documented interest in the S.C.C., was the first person to open many of the historic barrows around Priddy. It was fascinating to hear about Skinner's activities in the area and the walk was well-attended by members of the S.C.C.S. and other local historical societies.*

### Round Barrows

Round barrows are burial monuments that date to the Early Bronze Age, though Neolithic examples are known. They were mainly built between c.2300 – 1500 cal BC and go through "fashions" in monument design, burial rite and grave goods.

However, to generalise we can identify the following typical features:

A circular round mound (of varying design), sometimes with an enclosing ditch

A central, primary burial of one individual

The insertion of secondary burials around the primary interment or in the "body" of the mound

Burial "containers" e.g. stone cists/pits/pots/wooden coffins

The inclusion of grave goods: pots/beads/metalwork/lithics

There are around 400 of these monuments on the Mendip Hills, making this one of the most important barrow landscapes in Britain. Research suggests that most of the excavated monuments in this area date to post-1800 cal BC, demonstrated by the predominance of cremation and the types of artefacts found in the graves.

Round barrows can occur individually or in groups. A "round barrow cemetery" is held to be 4 or more barrows occurring in close proximity (less than 100m and often considerably less than this) to each other. Cemeteries are described as being organised into:

Linear cemeteries: barrows in a straight or curved line

Nuclear cemeteries: barrows arranged in a close group, often clustering around a given barrow or other central focus

Dispersed cemeteries: containing elements of both the above

Area cemeteries: barrows occurring in ones or twos placed 200-400m apart

Round barrows are described by their physical form:

Bowl barrows: the most common form, being a pudding shaped earthen mound or cairn, with or without a ditch

Bell barrows: again pudding shaped mounds but with the addition of a berm between the mound and surrounding ditch

Disc barrows: one or small mounds placed on a circular or oval platform surrounded by a ditch and external bank

Saucer barrows: low mounds (c. 1-2feet) enclosed by a ditch and outer bank

Pond barrows: excavated hollows with the material placed around the circumference to form an embanked rim.



## The Rev John Skinner (1772-1839)

The Rev. John Skinner held the living of Camerton, Somerset from 1800 until 1836. He was a great friend of many of the local antiquaries including Sir Richard Colt-Hoare by whom he was heavily influenced. Encouraged by Colt-Hoare and others, Skinner embarked upon a programme of archaeological investigation concentrated in the south of England, though Somerset and its neighbouring counties were his main focus. The investigations took the form of detailed descriptions of archaeological sites and excavations at many of them. All were recorded in his journals, along with records of tours and parochial matters. All his tours were planned for archaeological purposes. The journals are profusely illustrated with water-colour drawings, and in a few instances with engravings, of the places visited and antiquities discovered. Skinner bequeathed his journals to the British Museum, on the condition they were to remain unopened for fifty years. The 98 volumes of notes, sketches and diaries have never been published and are now held in the Department of Manuscripts at the British Library.

It is difficult to underestimate the contribution Skinner made to Neolithic and Bronze Age archaeology in Somerset. It appears that he may have excavated between one-fifth and one-quarter of the round barrows on Mendip, as well as excavating many of the long barrows. His excavations began

around 1803 and continued until shortly before his suicide in 1839. His archaeological work was not as good as Colt-Hoare's: his excavations were usually carried out by miners who were told to halt once they found ashes, urns or bones; the excavations themselves often lasted only a few hours; he did not make adequate plans of his excavations and his operations seemed to be tinged with treasure hunting fervour. Indeed, this is often what they were as in later years Skinner was involved in collecting antiquities for Bishop Law who, around 1826, founded a private museum in the crypt of the Bishops Palace in Wells. He urged Skinner to collect material for him and thus many important sites such as the Priddy Nine Barrows and the Beacon Batch round barrows were "plundered" for artefacts and bones. Upon Law's death the contents of the museum appear to have been dispersed and it has not proved possible to trace them.

The work of Skinner is somewhat of a mixed blessing to scholars of Somerset prehistory. His work may have been haphazard but his journals do at least contain much valuable information about the excavations and detailed accounts of the sites he visited. His interpretations may have been wild – he attempted to prove that Camerton was Camulodunum and that Temple Cloud was named from a temple of the Emperor Claudius (*Grinsell* 1971: 30). Skinner's remarkable journals and diaries are his redeeming grace.

→



**FOLLOWING IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF JOHN SKINNER** — On one of the Ashen Hill barrows during the walk led by Dr. Jodie Lewis