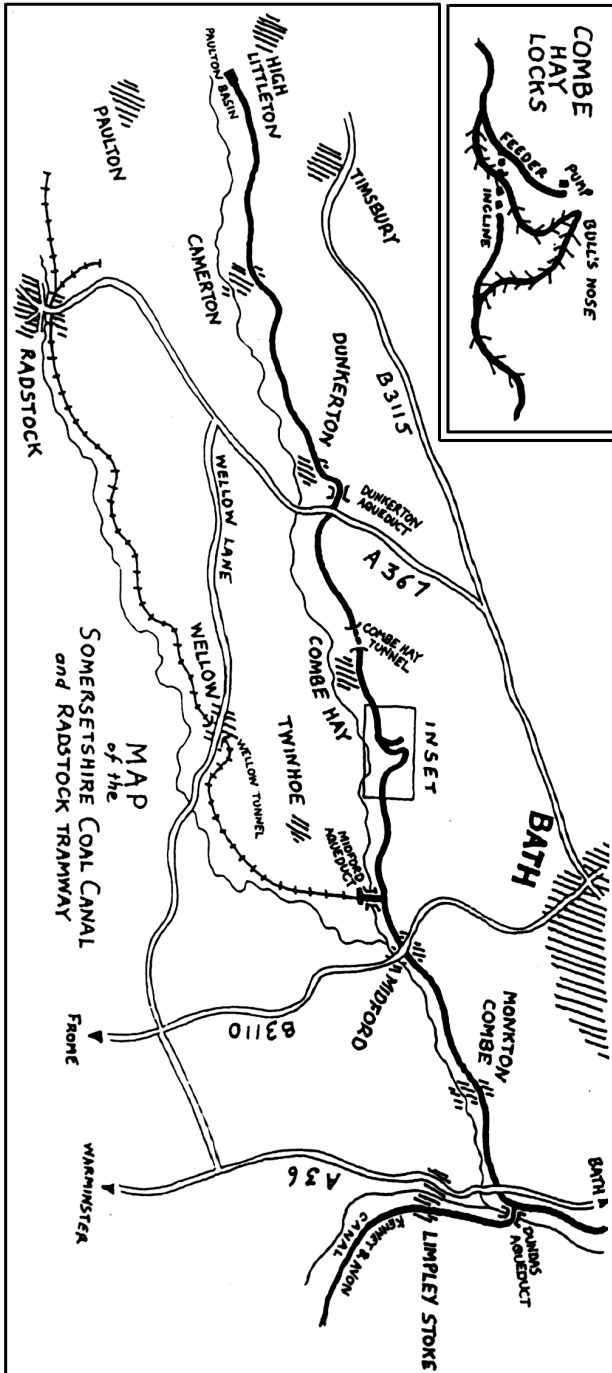


WEIGH-HOUSE

THE MAGAZINE OF THE
SOMERSETSHIRE COAL CANAL SOCIETY



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



Nº 66

OCTOBER 2013

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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° 1047303

Registered under the Data Protection Act 1984 N° A2697068

Affiliated to the Inland Waterways Association N° 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, **John Bishop**

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

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:

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2014

Sunday 5th January —10:00

WORK PARTY — Location to be advised

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

Thursday 16th January— 19:30

SOCIAL EVENING — THE DORSET & SOMERSET CANAL & FUSSELL'S BOAT LIFT

by Derrick Hunt

Meet: The Radstock Working Men's Club.

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

Sunday 19th January —10:00

WALK — THE TWIN TUNNELS

Meet: Bear Flat, Bath.

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

LOCK POUND IN WATER



THE REFILLED POUND BETWEEN LOCKS 5 & 6 OF THE COMBE HAY FLIGHT with Caisson House in the Background

The course of the S.C.C. through the private grounds of Caisson House has recently undergone an astonishing transformation, part of it having been put back in water. This is the culmination of the efforts of work parties by the S.C.C. and the Waterways Recovery Group and the tremendous exertions and determination of the landowner who had to overcome many obstacles in order to make this 'impossible' the dream come true.

WEIGH - HOUSE N^o 66

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EDITOR'S NOTES

Our first major article of this issue is described by its author as "a note", but this does scant justice to a remarkable work of research on the history of Paulton Dry Dock. Although there is generally supposed to be little historical documentation available concerning this feature, Mike Chapman has proved that, by intelligent use of old maps, it is possible to deduce a large amount of information. Our next archaeological excavation is being planned in that area and it promises to reveal a lot more about the dry dock, now we have some firm foundations on which to build our knowledge.

For our second major article, the research would be described more accurately as 'painful' rather than 'painstaking', for Terry Paget has braved aching muscles and other cycling-related ailments of the more unmentionable kind in order to bring us a report, direct from the saddle, on the new cycleway which is opening up the Cam Valley to two (and three)-wheeled tourism.

Two shorter articles may encourage our members to venture a little further afield: the Matthew Boulton Museum in Birmingham is well worth a visit, and the Swansea Waterfront Museum will be of particular interest next year when their boat weighing machine — almost identical to the Midford one — is finally put back into working order. I hope to include updates on the Swansea machine in future issues of Weigh-House.

ADRIAN TUDDENHAM

CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

These, the first Chairman's Notes after our 2013 A.G.M., set an unusual precedent: they are being written whilst on a boat on the Somersetshire Coal Canal. Perhaps this could be the start of a new trend.

I returned to full duties at the A.G.M. and I think it's fair to say that whilst the format of the evening was familiar, its content was not. We welcomed a new publicity officer, David Jessep, and confirmed the rôle of Tim Richardson who had previously been co-opted to the Committee. We are now very much a society focused on making quite radical changes to our canal; changes for the good that will see increasing benefits to communities from our rôle and the presence, and enhancement of the Somersetshire Coal Canal. Tim Richardson is working hard on various aspects we have never touched before, such as including the canal in the planning authority's strategic thinking [*See opposite page*]. Meanwhile, we have taken part in our third Heritage Open Day at Combe Hay, an event the success of which has led to much publicity and new members. This has been the work of Tony Yates and Veronica Bucknell and is now growing to the stage where it really is a freestanding project in its own right.

This autumn sees WRG return to our canal, this time with the focus at Timsbury and Paulton where we continue our work to restore these basins. Aside from the very presence of these work parties which have now become a feature of our annual calendar, the work at Paulton and Timsbury is stretching our rôle well beyond previous limits, involving as it does two parish councils, three landowners and bodies such as the Environment Agency. The ongoing works here are already becoming the most complex project this society has ever undertaken, and as the scale increases, so will the complexity.

I am grateful for everyone's good wishes whilst I was so ill, and whilst it is pleasing to me and many others that I am back at the helm, it also speaks volumes for our strength that so much has been achieved whilst I was laid low. Thank you to everyone.

Patrick Moss
"Juno"
Brassknocker Basin
Somersetshire Coal Canal

NEW MEMBERS

The Society welcomes the following new members:

Mr. D. Lee,	Paulton	Mr. N. Turner,	Peasedown St. John
Ms. J. Grudgings,	Tytherington	Mr. R. M. Spain,	Midsomer Norton
Mr. C. Paul,	Stony Littleton	Mr. S. Laurenson,	Bath
Mr. P. Evans,	Radstock	Mrs. J. V. Penney,	Pensford

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY — 2013

Sunday 6th October — 10:00

WORK PARTY — Location to be advised

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

Thursday 17th October — 19:30

SOCIAL EVENING — PLANNING & CONSTRUCTION OF THE S.C.C. Part 1

by Patrick Moss

Meet: The Radstock Working Men's Club.

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

Sunday 20th October — 10:00

WALK — CARRYING COALS FROM RADSTOCK — 3. Single Hill to Wellow

Meet: Shoscombe Sports Ground, Barn Hill, Shoscombe

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

Sunday 3rd November — 10:00

WORK PARTY — Location to be advised

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

Sunday 17th November — 10:00

WALK — CARRYING COALS FROM RADSTOCK — 4. Wellow area

Meet: Wellow Village Car Park

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

Thursday 21st November — 19:30

SOCIAL EVENING — THE SOUTHERN BRANCH OF THE S.C.C. & THE CONVERSION TO THE SOMERSET & DORSET RAILWAY

by Duncan Harper

Meet: The Radstock Working Men's Club.

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

Sunday 1st December — 10:00

WORK PARTY — Location to be advised

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

Sunday 15th December — 10:00

WALK — CARRYING COALS FROM RADSTOCK — 5. Wellow to Midford

Meet: Wellow Village Car Park

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

Thursday 19th December — 19:30

SOCIAL EVENING — THE BEGINNING OF THE BEGINNING OF THE RESTORATION OF THE S.C.C.

by Tim Wheeldon

Meet: The Radstock Working Men's Club.

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

BOOK REVIEW

THE SOMERSET COAL CANAL
by Jesse Russell and Ronald Cohn
Published by Bookvika Publishing (2012) Price: £18.45



Some of us always want to know more about the Somersetshire Coal Canal, and I was surprised to find a book currently on eBay by a couple of people who I do not recall seeing at recent meetings — Jesse Russell and Ronald Cohn. Intrigued, I delved further and discovered that these two authors have several other books to their name — in fact by the last count this prolific pair have published over 185,000 titles! †

So what is the secret to their success? Quite simple really, they nick everything verbatim from Wikipedia (including the photo above), print a copy on demand, stick on a front and back cover, and sell it.

So forget about the book but remember the name of Bookvika Publishing; I shall not be purchasing anything else published by them and, if this book is representative of their products, I would advise others to follow my example.

T.J.R.

† http://speedydeletion.wikia.com/wiki/Bookvika_Publishing

W.R.G. VISITS

The Waterways Recovery Group of the Inland Waterways Association will be sending two parties to work on the Paulton end of the S.C.C. this Autumn. The first will be London W.R.G. during the weekend of 19th and 20th October, followed by B.I.T.M. (“Bit in the Middle”) W.R.G. on 16th and 17th November.

These work parties, involving up to 20 ‘navvies’ and extending over a whole weekend, have been responsible for some major cleanups during the past few years, which were far beyond the capabilities of our own resources. This year we hope to refurbish the towpath between Paulton Basin and Radford, clean up the wharfsides of Paulton and Timsbury Basins and reconstruct the stop-plank point at the entrance to the Paulton Dry Dock to prevent flooding and allow us to undertake an archaeological excavation in the near future.

Anyone wishing to take part should contact Adrian Tuddenham for the first work party or Derrick Hunt for the second.

LANDOWNER DATABASE

For many years now, Roger Halse has maintained an informal record of landowners along and around the route of the Somersetshire Coal Canal. This has proved immensely useful for making contact — for example, when we needed to ask permission for walks on private land or to let the landowner know of anything interesting we may have discovered relating to his property.

With the move towards restoration, the need to develop a database on a formal basis has become more and more pressing and the imperative need for action in this direction was brought home to us during the talk on the restoration of the Wilts & Berks Canal given to us by Chris Coyle in March 2013. Fortunately Tim Richardson, who had just joined the Society and was present at the meeting, realised the importance of this and offered his services to develop a landowner database. At the following A.G.M. he was duly appointed to the Committee and given the more comprehensive title of “Community & Landowner Liaison Officer”.

The project has now taken on another dimension. Not only does it include the landowners of the historic route of the canal, but it has expanded to include information on other landowners of surrounding properties who need to be kept informed of our plans. Furthermore, when the restoration is considered in more detail, the need for possible alternative routes at certain key points may become apparent, so it will then be essential to know who owns the neighbouring land.

Tim has already had a number of meetings with Bath & North East Somerset Council, which has resulted in them providing a full set of Geographical Information System data. This allows him to extract information from the Land Registry and to compile it so as to generate a comprehensive database. One objective of the S.C.C.S. is to ensure protection of the historic line of the S.C.C.; this level of collaboration with B.&N.E.S. will further that aim.

Another part of the project will involve final year geography students of Bath Spa University, who plan to use the S.C.C. for their dissertations and would like to gain practical experience by surveying sections of the canal route. One of our problems in the past has been lack of comprehensive or accurate surveys of certain key areas, partly brought about by the inaccessibility of many of the overgrown sites. Now these sites are becoming cleared, the students’ survey will provide us with an extremely valuable record and allow future plans to be based on accurate measurements instead of estimates.

DERRICK HUNT

WEIGHING MACHINE ON THE MOVE

The last surviving canal boat weighing machine in the country has been removed from Stoke Bruerne Canal Museum and is currently undergoing restoration at the workshops of Penybryn Engineering Ltd. of Ystrad Mynach. By the end of October 2013 the National Waterfront Museum at Swansea hopes to have it installed in working order as the centrepiece of a new feature.

The machine was originally used on the Glamorganshire Canal, but in 1963 it was removed and placed in a disused lock on the Grand Union Canal at Stoke Bruerne. Several major parts of the mechanism were damaged and the machine was assembled incorrectly, so it was not just out of context in that setting, but out of order too.

In its new setting at the National Waterfront Museum, the restored machine will initially be functional but without any water or boats to weigh. The next stage of the project will be to construct a replica boat which will allow parties of school children to be weighed, thus demonstrating the original purpose of the machine.

NAVYING NOTES

Whenever we extend our activities to a new work site, the question of how we maintain the old sites must be answered. In theory, maintaining a site which we have already cleared should be easier than the initial task of fighting our way into an area with long-established heavy growth, but sometimes it seems as though everything is conspiring against us.

Our first work party of this year on the lower locks at Combe Hay, was hampered by the need to allow time for some of the more desirable plant species to flower and set seeds; unfortunately this delay also allowed the decidedly undesirable species, which were present in much larger quantities, to gain a foothold. By the time of our second work party, the lock pounds were waist high in nettles and the Allen Scythe crew anticipated a few nasty stings before the day was out. The Allen Scythe must have sympathised with them, for it broke down in the middle of the first pound they tackled and refused to re-start. An Allen Scythe is a heavy beast at the best of times, but its weight is far more obvious at the worst of times, such as when trying to haul a dead one out of a lock pound on one of the hottest days of the year. Some wayside surgery revealed that the machine, despite being one of the youngest members of our work party at only 49 years old, had succumbed to the heat before the rest of us and wouldn't be doing any more work that day.



HIMALAYAN BALSAM AT PAULTON DRY DOCK

By the third work party, complete with a new ignition coil, the machine was fit and well and ready to tackle a hard day's work — and a hard day's work it proved to be. By this time the nettles, and a number of other equally unwelcome species, had reached above shoulder height, meaning that the driver could not see where he was going and had to navigate by distant landmarks. This led to a higher than usual number of collisions with tree stumps and other immovable objects, which would normally be spotted and avoided. The operator's manual suggests that saplings up to $\frac{3}{4}$ " in diameter may be tackled at full speed with no detrimental effect on the machine, but it omits any mention of the detrimental effect on the operator when the machine cannons off a 6" tree stump and one of the handlebars comes into contact with the more vulnerable parts of his anatomy. ↗

I then entered the 400 yard long Devonshire tunnel, climbing at 1 in 50 on a slight curve to the left. The central 9' is tarmacadam, with 3' gravel at the sides. The tunnel is lit by LED lights in two strips along the roof. It was chilly in the tunnel, but I soon emerged into the warmth and sunlight of Lyncombe Vale.

COMBE DOWN TUNNEL

I pedalled over the brow and into the 1850 yard long Combe Down tunnel, descending towards Midford. This tunnel is lit and surfaced similarly to Devonshire tunnel, and curves to the right. The lighting failed in early May, and from all accounts it was 'very black indeed'. Most cyclists carry lights, so no-one came to any harm, but it was frightening.

In the middle of the tunnel there was specially composed music by violin, cello and flute, and a light show, provided by United Visual Artists. All very clever, but it failed to impress me, and others have spoken similarly of it. The Bath end of the cycleway is much the busiest part, and in the tunnel with me were other cyclists, family groups, folk walking dogs, and even a man on an invalid tricycle.

Like the down Pines Express of yesteryear, cyclists emerge from the tunnel and into the beauty of the Cam Valley. Tucking Mill viaduct has been cleaned up, and there are steps down to Wessex Water property below the viaduct allowing me to appreciate the splendid structure. Midford Castle on my right, followed by posters on trees advertising the various beverages available at the Hope and Anchor, welcomed me to Midford. I passed the old Midford goods yard and the short tunnel before Midford station, which still has its platform.

GET ME HOME

By this time my legs wanted to be home again. They still functioned, but not with the enthusiasm shown earlier. The saddle seemed harder too. There is an interesting plaque on Midford viaduct telling me what it crosses, and a fine monument to William Smith before Wellow, with a display board and a pillar of all the major rocks in the strata beneath it.

I had been gone seven hours, and when I arrived home my wife was pleased to see me, giving me a round of applause. I walked unsteadily into my house, my legs strangely stiff, and collapsed into a chair. It had been quite an adventure. I must do it again some day.

TERRY PAGET

CONTRACTOR'S RAILWAY an appeal for information

On page 38 of Roger Halse's book *The S.C.C., A Second Pictorial Journey*, there is an interesting photograph taken between Locks 19 and 20, near Southstoke Bridge. It shows part of the temporary contractor's railway which was used to transport materials to the various work sites along the course of the Camerton to Limpley Stoke railway during its construction. This was the first evidence to come to light that the contractors railway ran as far as lock 20 and possibly beyond. Several other photographs taken at points along the line of the canal give tantalising glimpses of the railway, but very little is known about where it ran for most of its length between those locations.

Research is now under way to try to find out more about this short-lived railway, so if anyone has any photographs, press cuttings, anecdotes or memories that might help to fill in the gaps, the Editor would be very pleased to hear about them.



Photograph: Terry Page

STEEL STATUES AT THE WESTERN PORTAL OF DEVONSHIRE TUNNEL

BATH

I crossed Bath on roads, happily crossing Pulteney Bridge, where my wife was once fined £60 for not being a bus, rejoining the river towpath opposite the Avon Street multi-storey car park. I followed the towpath under the S&D railway bridge by Green Park station, then under the Dredge suspension bridge, leaving the towpath at Windsor Road bridge. I shamelessly cycled along the pavement to the A4, crossing the road at the Royal Oak where a bridge used to carry the S&D above the road. The first road on the south side leads to the north end of the cycleway, following the S&D trackbed up to the southern portal of Devonshire tunnel.

DEVONSHIRE TUNNEL

Here there are three splendid vandal-proof statues laser cut in 22mm steel sheet. One depicts a Roman centurion, one depicts a slim young lady in Lycra carrying a toboggan, apparently Amy Williams, a Bath-based Olympic bobsleigh gold medallist. The other defeated me, it looks like a man in a trench coat and blazer, and could be anybody, but certainly not Beau Brummell or Jane Austen or any other Bath figure I could imagine. I later learned it was meant to be Harry Patch, whose grave I had seen in Monkton Combe cemetery.

There is a seat at this point, where I have twice met interesting old men. On the first occasion we spent a happy half hour exchanging anecdotes on the afflictions of old age. On the second occasion I met an old railwayman, and we discussed shovelling coal, the foul conditions in Combe Down tunnel, the train that ran away into Bath with its crew overcome by fumes, and the two famous accidents on this section of the S&D. Obviously we had both read L.T.C. Rolt's *Red for Danger*.

MATTHEW BOULTON MUSEUM

When the need became apparent for a pumping engine to supply the lock flight at Combe Hay, the S.C.C. engineers placed an order with Messrs. Boulton & Watt of Soho Foundry, Birmingham for one of their engines based on James Watt's designs.

Although James Watt is remembered as a steam engine pioneer, his partner, Matthew Boulton, is less well known. Now that state of affairs is being redressed following the opening of the Matthew Boulton Museum in Boulton's original home, Soho House, in Handsworth, Birmingham B18 5LB.



SOHO HOUSE, BIRMINGHAM

The museum follows the story of Matthew Boulton, who inherited the family metal manufacturing business, known in those days as "Toy Making", and developed it into the largest and most prestigious steam engine business in the World. Visitors will be surprised to learn the extent of the enterprises and the business methods employed, many of which seem surprisingly modern. Boulton's membership of "The Lunar Society" brought him into contact with other forward-thinking people, such as Erasmus Darwin, Josiah Wedgwood and Joseph Priestley.

Birmingham City Archives at Birmingham City Central Library also has an extensive collection of papers relating to the Boulton & Watt enterprises; and the oldest surviving example of their pumping engines, which used to be located at Smethwick, is now on display (and is occasionally steamed) at "Thinktank", Millenium Point, Curzon Street, Birmingham B4 7XG

Useful web resources:

Matthew Boulton Museum:	http://www.bmag.org.uk/soho-house
Birmingham City Archives:	http://www.libraryofbirmingham.com/archivesofsoho
Thinktank:	http://www.thinktank.ac/page.asp?section=1071

DERRICK HUNT

Continued from P6

Thanks to sterling work by the trimmer operators, over and above the call of duty, the lost work time was made up and the lock flight was finally restored to a tidy condition in time for Heritage Open Days. For the first time in its known history, the towpath, which is on the opposite side of the locks from the public footpath, was cleared by Allen Scythe and made ready for our visitors.

Meanwhile the area around Paulton Dry Dock, which we had cleared last year, had to be left to its own devices. That was a bad move, because Himalayan Balsam had invaded the site and, left unchecked, had run riot. By the time we realised what was happening, it had set seed and there was nothing we could do to prevent it from springing up again next year.

We appear to have reached the limit of what we can do with the the present size of the work party, so any future progress will depend on whether or not we can recruit more volunteers.

A NOTE ON THE DRY DOCK AT PAULTON

The discovery of remains of the dry dock at Paulton Basin has suddenly provided us with information about a feature which, up to now, has remained a mystery. Hitherto, the only documentary reference to it has come from maps, and even these, drawn at small scale, needed to be interpreted with some caution. It was therefore thought useful to reassess all the map evidence in the light of these findings.

The earliest ('pre-Cruise') map [Fig.1], drawn up before the canal was fully opened in 1805, does not show the dock, which was evidently not required during the construction of the canal.

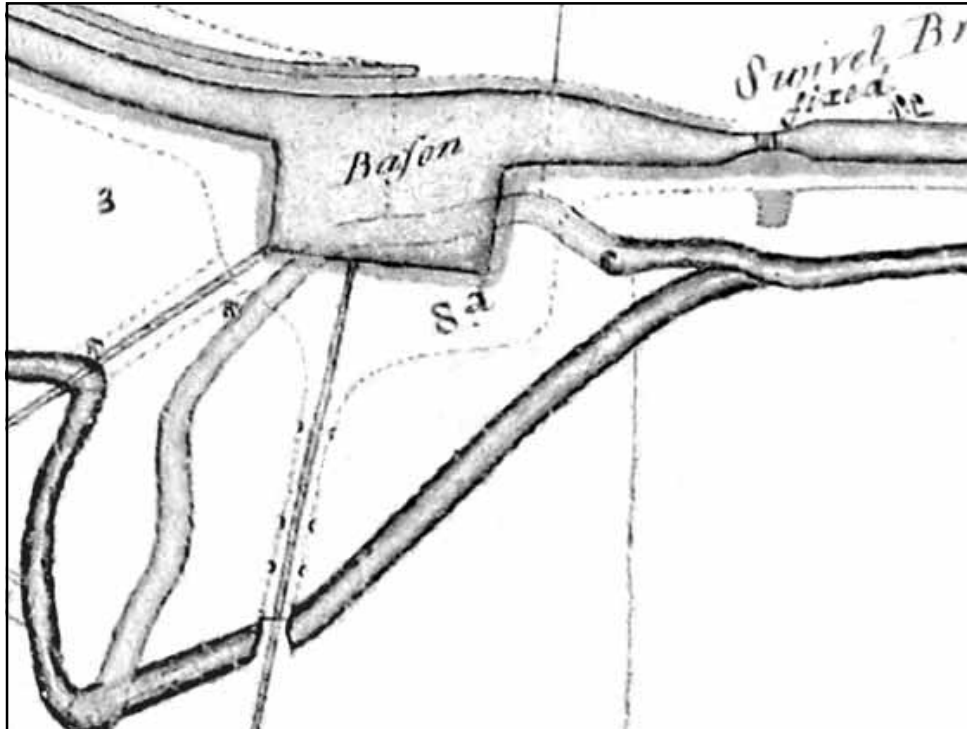


Fig.1 — EXTRACT FROM THE 'PRE-CRUISE' MAP
showing the area of Paulton Basin before the construction of the dry dock.

At this stage the wharf of Paulton Basin had not yet been brought up to its final level, and the connecting tramways are shown running along temporary embankments, one of which appears to have been provided with a series of drainage culverts in the event of flooding by the Cam Brook. More importantly, it shows the original alignment of the brook before it was diverted along a straighter course to the east side of the wharf. Originally it turned sharply across the middle of the wharf as far as the basin where it turned eastward through the dock area to its junction (shown here not yet completely filled in) with the new cut. However, since the brook marked the ancient boundary between the parishes of Paulton and Timsbury, the original administrative boundary line had to be preserved and remained unchanged, being always indicated (by a line of dots) on later maps, through to the 20th century.

SOMERSETSHIRE COAL CANAL

The cycleway took me under the road junction at the bottom of Brassknocker Hill and into Tim Wheeldon's S.C.C. Centre. Here was the only section of the S.C.C. still in water and full of boats, some claiming 'Somerset Coal Canal' as their port of origin.. I cycled along a quarter of a mile of

S.C.C. to Dundas aqueduct, where I crossed the S.C.C. entrance lock by a lift bridge to the west bank tow path.



Photograph: Terry Paget

BOATS MOORED AT BRASSKNOCKER BASIN

KENNET & AVON CANAL

The next four miles along the K&A Canal were lined with moored boats, most modern steel house boats, but some curious older wooden craft, converted from other uses. The canal runs around the hill and through Bathampton, with the railway alongside it, and one hears many trains, but rarely sees them. It passes through the Bath boating centre, then through Sydney gardens, with some picturesque overbridges. It led me under Cleveland House, which used to be the headquarters of the K&A Canal Company, and was rumoured to have a hole in the floor through which mail could be lowered to passing boats. On an S.C.C.S. visit some years ago, we found that this rumour was false, the only hole in the bottom of the building being a boiler air intake and possibly an ash disposal chute.



[Below] CLEVELAND HOUSE
straddling the K&A Canal in Bath





**STONEY LITTLETON
AQUEDUCT — 2013**
Overgrown again despite
two work party clearances
in the past.

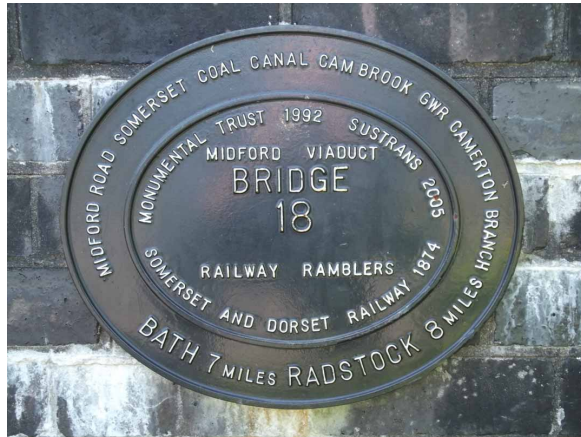
After visiting the canal tunnel east portal at Wellow, still spick and span, I then rattled down a very steep hill under the railway viaduct before rejoining the S&D trackbed at the Wellow Trekking Centre. This section is a permissive path, which I understand means that it may be closed at certain times of the year when shoots take place. The

Photograph: Terry Paget

surface here is gravel pressed into mud, which is fine in dry weather but I gather can get muddy when it rains. The path leads to Midford, crossing the splendid viaduct above the the river Cam, the S.C.C., the Camerton branch and the Bath to Frome main road, arriving at Midford station. This is now a large car park, though signs proclaim that it is only for the use of customers of the Hope and Anchor.

MIDFORD TO LIMPLEY STOKE

Just beyond Midford there is a signposted diversion to Limpley Stoke, following the line of the S.C.C., and the canal bed can be seen clearly around Tucking Mill. The route passes William Smith's house, and the smaller dwelling incorrectly labelled as his residence. The milestone opposite this second house appears to have disappeared ...pity, that.



Photograph: Terry Paget

**COMMEMORATIVE PLAQUE ON MIDFORD
RAILWAY VIADUCT**

I was pleased to find that the signposted cycleway then dropped down through the grounds of Monkton Combe school to the trackbed of the Camerton branch railway, which follows the course of the S.C.C.. The young ladies of the school in their summer dresses enjoying the sunshine was a sight which further raised my spirits — but they were promptly dashed again when my silly chain became derailed and jammed my rear wheel. I was only carrying one spanner, and found I needed two to remove the wheel, but happily another cyclist happened along, he too had a spanner, and with the two of them I was able to remove the wheel and replace the chain

On the 'Cruse map' [Fig.2], produced about 1809 when the canal was fully operational, the original line of the brook/parish boundary is still shown, but by this time the dock has been built and appears on the south side of the line in the form of a rectangle which appears a little narrower than the excavated remains.

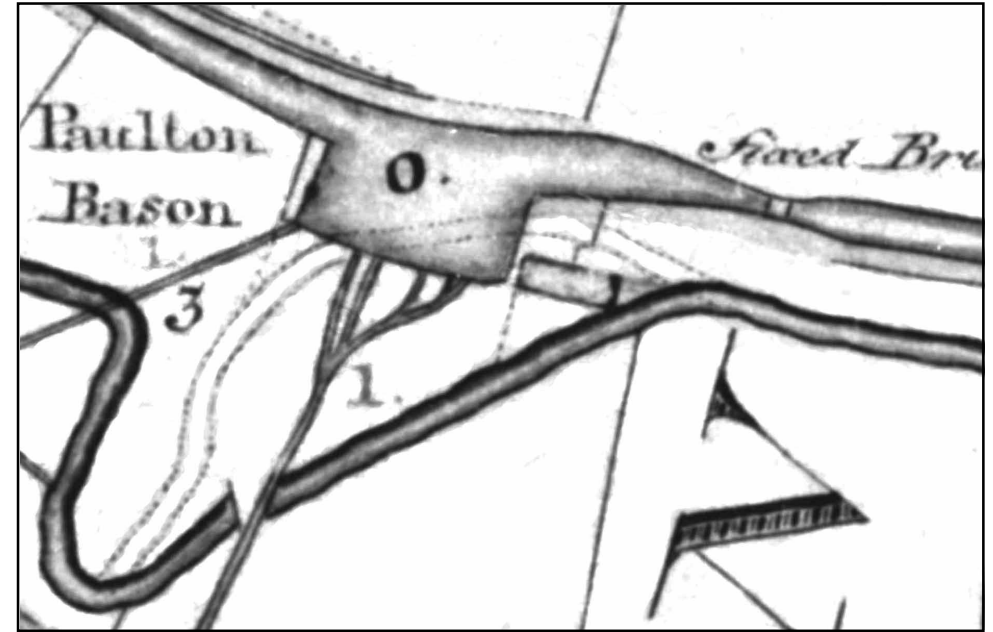


Fig.2. — EXTRACT FROM THE 'CRUSE' MAP
showing the same area soon after the construction of the dry dock.

However, when the dock next appears, on the Paulton tithe map of 1838 [Fig.3], the boundary line is shown passing through the dock itself, which raises the question whether it had been widened on the north side in the intervening period.

The present remains suggest a widening at some stage, not only from its proportions (large enough to take three boats), but also from irregularities in the masonry on each side of the entrance arch, and the asymmetrical splay of the side-walls of the entrance itself.

It is unfortunate that, though the dock is also shown on the tithe map for Timsbury [Fig.4], no indication is given there of the exact line of the boundary, nor is the dock given an apportionment number, all of which implies that it was still regarded as lying wholly within Paulton parish.

Another new feature appearing on the Paulton tithe map is a cottage (or row of cottages) built on the south side of the dock, the foundations of which are still clearly visible today. These, together with the dock and the adjoining strip of ground lining the brook are shown as being under to the same ownership, perhaps occupied by personnel associated with the operation of the dock, either on behalf of the Canal Company or Paulton Engine Colliery. This will need to be confirmed from the tithe schedule and perhaps also from the 1841 census return. We understand from local residents that the building may have had pointed-arch windows, in the 'Gothick' style popular in the early 19th century, as can be seen for example in William Smith's cottage for the miller at Tucking Mill.

→

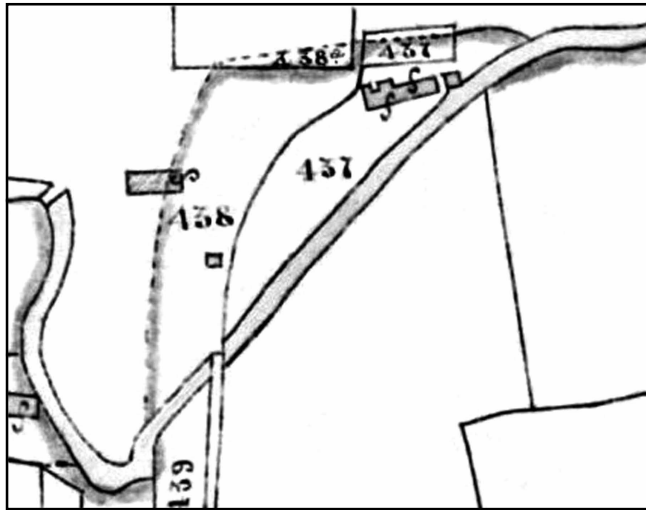


Fig.3 — DETAIL FROM THE PAULTON TITHE MAP, 1838.

Note the line of the parish boundary passing through the middle of the dry dock. The dock, together with the new adjoining cottages and ground, all share the same number (no. 437) in the tithe schedule.

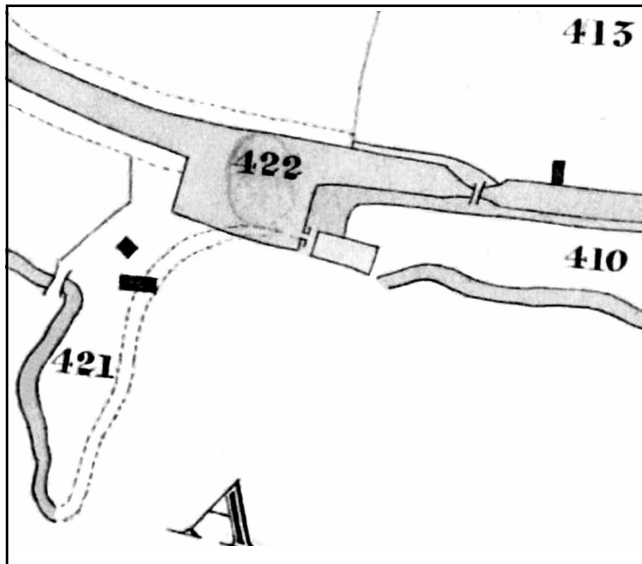


Fig.4. — DETAIL OF THE SAME AREA FROM THE TIMSBURY TITHE MAP, 1840.

A comparison can also be made with another contemporary map (or rather, plan) of the area, copied from colliery records by Down & Warrington in their *History of the North Somerset Coalfield* [Fig.5], which shows the layout of the Paulton Engine Collieries and their connection to the canal and dry dock. In fact, the dock is not identified as such, but is merely labelled 'overflow from canal basin'. The plan also suggests a tramway crossing over the dock entrance to a 'possible site of siding'. This may well have been possible if the original towpath bridge was a wooden trestle, later replaced by a stone arch.

The most detailed (and presumably most accurate) description of the site is on the OS 25-inch series map of 1883, [Fig.6] which shows the canal in its final days, when all the collieries in the neighbourhood had already been closed and their tramways to the canal lifted. Although the wharf was practically redundant by this time, the outlines of the dock are clearly shown and labelled, suggesting that it was still operational. Its proportions are noticeably larger than previous maps, similar to those found on the site today, with the parish boundary passing through the centre. It even shows the rounded corners of the walls, instead of the crude rectangle on earlier maps.

THE TWIN TUNNELS CYCLEWAY

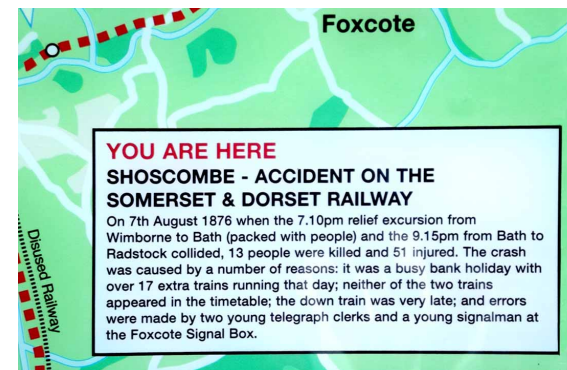
In April 2013, Sustrans opened the Twin Tunnels cycleway. The two single track tunnels of the Somerset and Dorset (S&D) railway between Midford and Bath have been re-opened as part of this cycleway, which now extends from Midsomer Norton to Bath. Both tunnels are lit, and the longer Combe Down tunnel has music and a light show in the middle. Combined with the Kennet and Avon (K&A) canal towpath, the cycleway offers a splendid chance to view various old railway and canal scenes from the saddle. Cycling, like walking, allows one to hear birdsong and other fascinating sounds, and smell wild garlic and other scents along the way and is an ideal way to explore the countryside in Summer. Terry Paget reports his experiences of this new tourist attraction, which is bringing hundreds of extra visitors to the valley of the River Cam and is bound to raise public awareness of the Somersetshire Coal Canal.



Photograph: Terry Paget

TERRY PAGET AND VELOCIPEDE IN COMBE DOWN TUNNEL

My circular route began from Midsomer Norton and took me first to Radstock. From there, I followed the Southern branch of the S.C.C. to Dundas and then took the K&A Canal towpath into Bath. My journey through the tunnels began at the western end of the shorter Devonshire Tunnel, from Bear Flat to Lyncombe Vale, which then led to the longer Combe Down Tunnel. After emerging above Tucking Mill, I returned *via* Midford to Midsomer Norton.



A NEW INTERPRETATION BOARD AT PAGLINCH

tricky to find, and the SCC tramway can be seen on this section here and there, the most obvious bit being a wall made up of large cut stones between Stoney Littleton and Wellow, which I imagine supported the canal.

MIDSOMER NORTON TO MIDFORD

The route from Thicket Mead, Midsomer Norton, follows the Bristol & North Somerset Railway trackbed to Radstock, and affords glimpses of the Somersetshire Coal Canal (S.C.C.) Weldon tramway. From Radstock to Paglinch Farm, where a signboard describes the 1876 accident, it follows the S&D trackbed, but between Shoscombe and Wellow the trackbed is broken up so the cycleway proceeds through Stoney Littleton on lanes, some of which are steep. The Stoney Littleton aqueduct is still there, though



Photograph: Paul Rossiter collection

THE ARCH OVER THE DRY DOCK ENTRANCE c.1960
The rebate in the stone blocks is clearly visible

courses of Bath stone blocks which formed a door-post with a rebate cut along the edge. A wooden board could have been fitted into this, in the manner of a simple 'stop gate', which would be held in place by the water pressure in the basin when the dock was emptied. Much therefore still needs to be learned, but there is every possibility that we will eventually have sufficient information after further excavation if it is decided to restore the dock to its original state.

From the structural remains found so far, it would seem that the top courses of the dock walls were removed, together with all the better quality stone from the inside face. As anticipated, the rough outer face was found undisturbed with its backing of stiff impermeable clay, but the interior had been infilled with clean soil, without human debris, probably to serve as a garden bed for the adjoining cottages. Below this, from the small trench made in the south-east corner to locate the sluice, the dock floor appears to have been roughly metallised with stone, and it is hoped that the complete clearance of the floor will not only provide information about modifications to the structure but, more importantly, how the boats were managed once inside the dock.

Now that the drainage sluice is being restored, the next step will be to isolate the dock from the main basin. This will allow it to dry out, so that the entrance can be examined in more detail. On each side of the entrance opening, facing the basin, there are still several

MIKE CHAPMAN

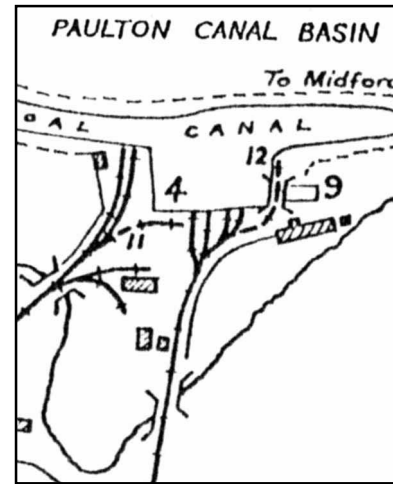


Fig.5 — EXTRACT FROM A PLAN OF THE PAULTON ENGINE COLLIERIES
in Down & Warrington's *History of the North Somerset Coalfield*.

The number key shows:
4 'Wharves';
9 'Overflow from canal basin';
11 'Siding connection not established';
12 'Possible site of siding'.

How soon after the closure of the canal that the dock was filled in and the cottages demolished has not yet been ascertained, so it would be useful to consult later editions of the OS 25-inch maps of 1904 and the 1930s. → P14

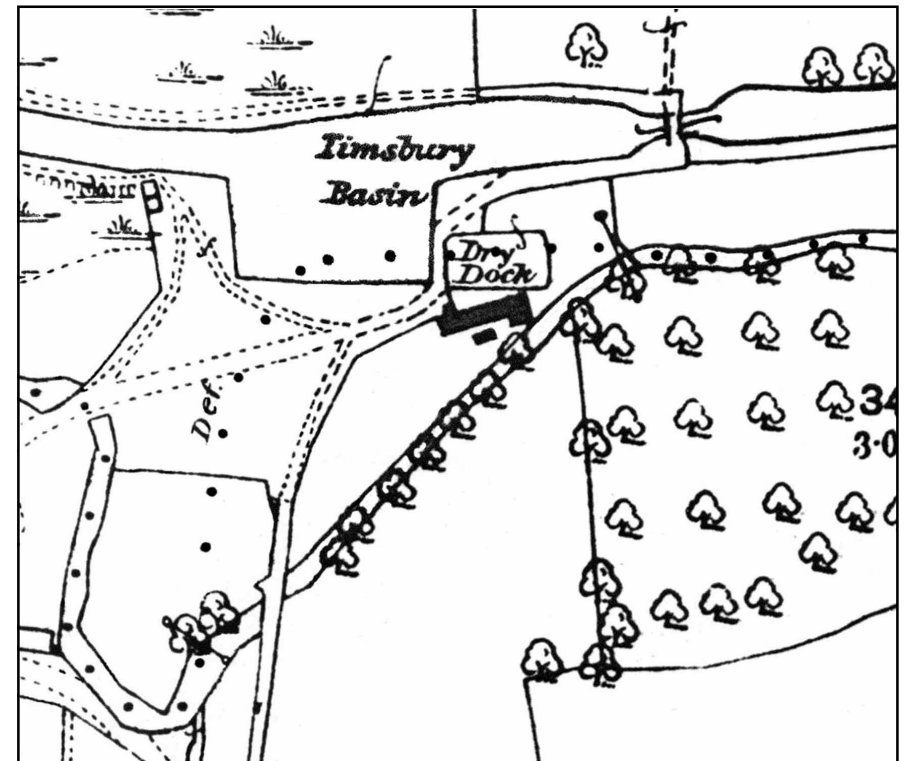


Fig.6 — DETAIL TAKEN FROM THE OS 25-inch MAP SHEETS OF THE DOCK AREA, 1883.



View 1 — THE NORTH WALL OF THE DRY DOCK EXPOSED DURING EXCAVATIONS
The inner face [left side in this picture] was found to be much rougher than the outer face, probably having been robbed of its good quality facing stone



View 2 — THE SOUTH-EAST CORNER OF THE DRY DOCK showing the inside of the dock wall pierced by the drainage sluice. The wet (darker in appearance) area is the rough stone floor of the dock. A trench on the alignment of the culvert leading to the Cam Brook can be seen in the background.

[Below] — A SKETCH PLAN OF THE DRY DOCK. The three darker areas represent possible positions of boats under repair.
(All dimensions approximate)

