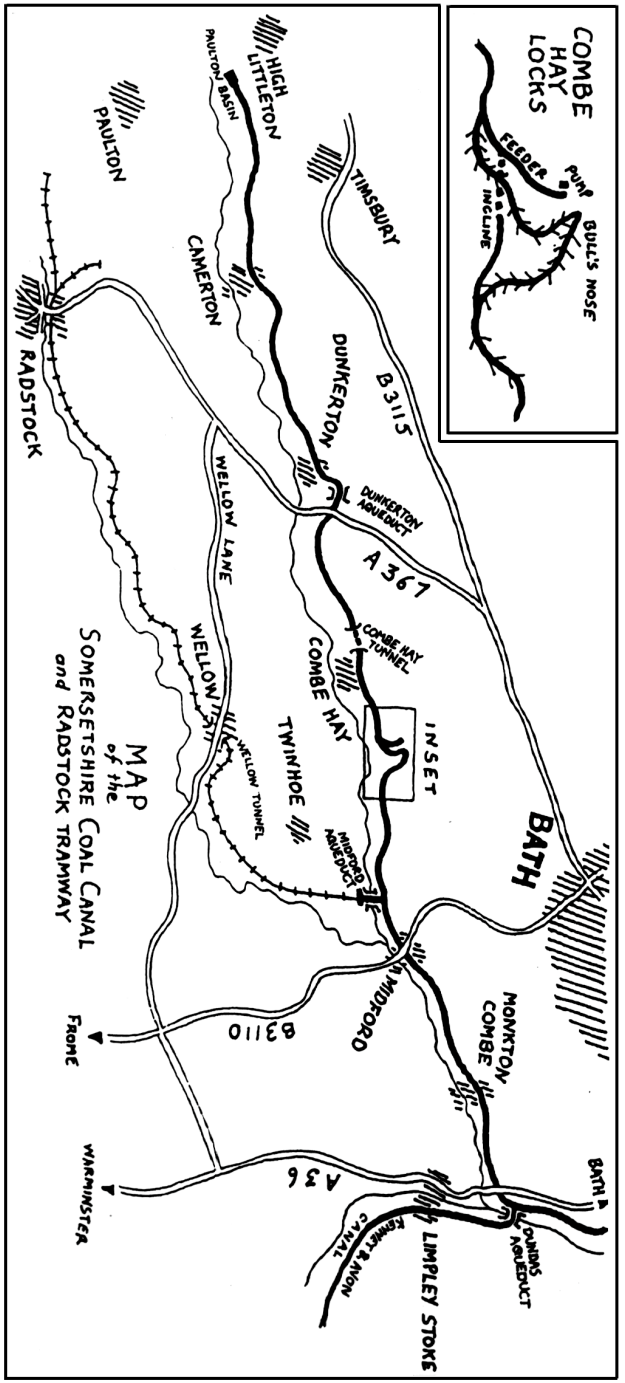
WEIGH-HOUSE

THE MAGAZINE OF THE SOMERSETSHIRE COAL CANAL SOCIETY

Nº 73 SEPTEMBER 2017



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Website: http://www.coalcanal.org

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

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MEMBERSHIP

Membership Application Forms are available from
the Membership Secretary, Steve Page,
36, Lower Whitelands, Radstock, Bath BA3 3JW
☎(01761) 433418 *E-mail:* **membership@coalcanal.org.uk**
and on the Society Website: **http://www.coalcanal.org**

The Editor welcomes 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 necessary. Author's guidelines are available at:
http://www.coalcanal.org/wh/guidelines.htm.

Please send articles and correspondence to:
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☎ 01225 335974 *E-mail (not HTML):* **adrian@poppyrecords.co.uk**

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

Sunday 3rd December —10:00

WORK PARTY — Location to be advised

For further details please contact: *Adrian Tuddenham* ☎ 01225 335974

Tuesday 19th December —10:00

WORK PARTY — COMBE HAY LOCKS

For further details please contact: *Richard Hignett* ☎ 01793 855631 engineering@coalcanal.org.uk

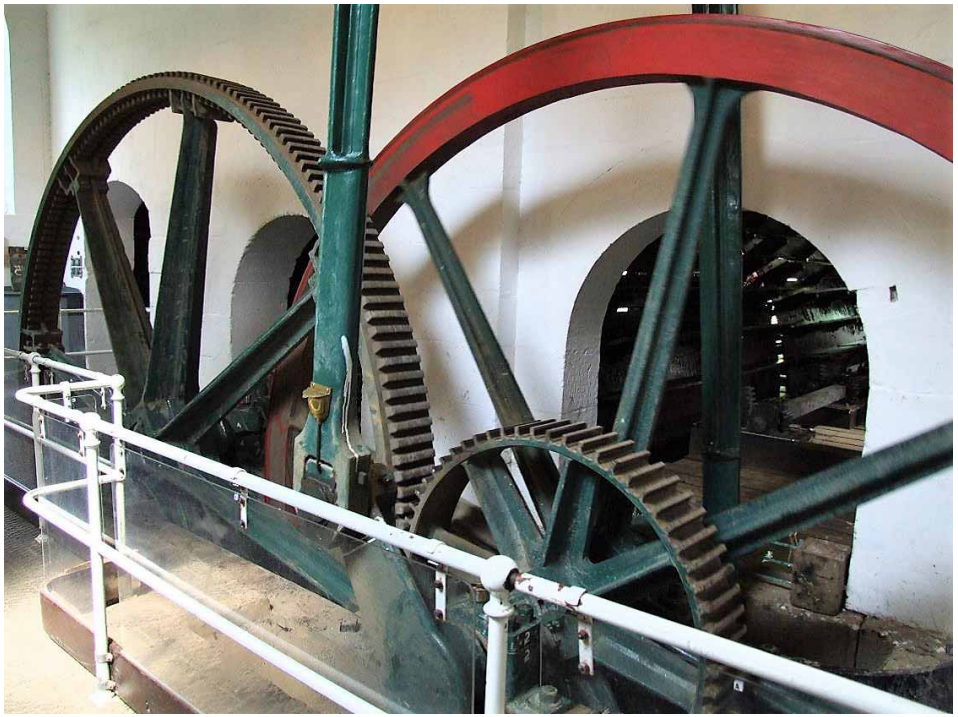
Please note there is no Social Evening in December

Walks

These are all circular walks unless otherwise noted. You only need to arrange your transport to and from the meeting point. Where the distance is not shown, the walks tend to be in the form of detailed explanations of short sections of the canal and its relationship with the locality; as such,they 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: http://www.coalcanal.org for last-minute changes



THE PIT WHEEL AND CRANK AT CLAVERTON PUMPING STATION

See *Dates for your Diary* 17 September (*Page 21*) for details of a Society visit to the pumping station

WEIGH - HOUSE Nº 73

EDITOR'S NOTES

For those of you who look forward to Mike Chapman's erudite and comprehensive articles on the S.C.C. and other historical matters, this issue will be something of a disappointment; sad to say, Mike has recently been ill and has had to reduce his workload during his convalesence. Not only does this mean that he has been unable to write any articles for us, but it has also put a temporary stop to the guided walks he usually leads. We wish him well and are confident that he will soon make a complete recovery and be fit enough to lead some more walks in the near future.

We do, however, have an event planned for Sunday 17 September: in place of a walk, the Society will be paying a visit to Claverton Pumping Station (See: *Dates for your Diary, P. 21*). We also have a variety of articles in this issue, covering the past, present and future. The past is represented by Roger Halse's article on the provenance of pictures, the present by a study of the frogs at Paulton and the future by the Society's participation in the B&NES Water Space Study. Although restoration on the ground has temporarily slowed down, the forward march of the Society definitely has not.

ADRIAN TUDDENHAM

CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

Autumn 2017 draws on, and I am writing this from my narrow boat, "Lutine Bell" moored at Hungerford on the Kennet and Avon. By the time you read these words, Lutine should be at Brassknocker Basin, having travelled from Manchester over two summers to get here. It has been a voyage through the heart of our canal system, but also through the history of both its creation over two hundred years ago and its revival in the last half century. It seems hard to imagine now, but when Lutine was built in 1972, not only was much of the Kennet and Avon canal ruinous but the northern-most point of her journey, Hyde, on the Peak Forest Canal, was also inaccessible; Marple Locks were derelict and Marple Aqueduct had just survived threatened demolition by British Waterways. Even harder to imagine perhaps is that the delightful Oxford Canal was under threat in the 1950's and a campaign rally at Banbury in 1955 had the objective of saving the canal from closure and infill — if one sees the canal there now, lined with shoppers and coffee drinkers, it seems unimaginable that it was nearly lost.

There is a link between Banbury and our own canal: the lift bridge over the entrance at Dundas was once over the tail of Banbury Lock, and was rescued from being scrapped by Tim Wheeldon, for a new life in Somerset. The parallels are stronger than that: 50 years ago the idea that Hyde or Hungerford would thrive on the back of a new canal age, that Banbury would celebrate its canal, that towns and cities might find their canals almost overwhelmed with boats and visitors, was laughable ...but it has happened.

And more importantly, it has happened in Bath, hence the Bath Water Space Study which is bringing the restoration of our own canal to the attention of government. This study (described on Page 6) seeks ways in which Bath and North East Somerset can continue to benefit from its waterways, and identifies that much needed capacity can be added by restoring the S.C.C.. For the first time in the history of waterway regeneration a favourable policy is being driven by capacity not just simple desirability. We, as a society, must adapt to this new found focus, and work out how to engage with our new audience. Our new found status is even being presented to the World Canals Conference in New York this September. The eyes of the world are upon us: watch this space.

PATRICK MOSS

For more information about the Water Space Study see:
http://www.waterspacebath.org.uk

NEW MEMBERS

The Society welcomes the following new members:

Mr. N. Adams	Holcombe	Ms. J. Pleace	Midsomer Norton
Mr. C. Tincknell	Midsomer Norton	Mr. J. Coates	Burnham-on-Sea
Mr. J. Harrison	Peasedown St John	Mr. P. Moloney	Carlingcott
Ms. L. Swan	Clutton	Mr. M. Bonson	Emersons Green
Mr. C. Mather	Bristol	Ms. A. Northcote	Paulton
Ms. E. Shirley	East Harptree	Mr. G. Lane	Woolscott, *nr* Rugby

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY — 2017

Sunday 17th September —10:00
WALK — A VISIT TO CLAVERTON PUMP
A guided tour by Pete Dunn
Meet: At Claverton Pump
For further details please see website or contact: *Pete Dunn* ☎ 07719 911421
(*Photograph on Page 22*)

Tuesday 19th September —10:00
WORK PARTY — COMBE HAY LOCKS
For further details please contact: *Richard Hignett* ☎ 01793 855631 engineering@coalcanal.org.uk

Sunday 1st October —10:00
WORK PARTY — Location to be advised
For further details please contact: *Adrian Tuddenham* ☎ 01225 335974

Tuesday 17th October —10:00
WORK PARTY — COMBE HAY LOCKS
For further details please contact: *Richard Hignett* ☎ 01793 855631 engineering@coalcanal.org.uk

Thursday 19th October— 19:30
SOCIAL EVENING — THE CONTRACTOR'S RAILWAY — The story so far...
by Adrian Tuddenham
Meet: The Radstock Working Men's Club
For further details please see website or contact: *Steve Page* ☎ 01761 433418

Sunday 5th November —10:00
WORK PARTY — Location to be advised
For further details please contact: *Adrian Tuddenham* ☎ 01225 335974

Thursday 16th November— 19:30
SOCIAL EVENING — A PICTORIAL JOURNEY — CONTINUED
by Roger Halse
Meet: The Radstock Working Men's Club.
For further details please see website or contact: *Steve Page* ☎ 01761 433418

Tuesday 21st November —10:00
WORK PARTY — COMBE HAY LOCKS
For further details please contact: *Richard Hignett* ☎ 01793 855631 engineering@coalcanal.org.uk

Sunday 19th November —10:00
WALK — CANAL RESTORATION AT BRADFORD ON AVON
Meet: K&A car park at end of Baileys Barn, (off Moulton Drive)
Bradford on Avon, BA15 1BX
For further details please see website or contact: *Derrick Hunt* ☎ 01225 863066

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THE LOCK CHAMBER FULL OF VISITORS

A further bonus of the work was the decision to throw the lock open to visitors. The response was somewhat overwhelming: as the news spread, people streamed in from far and wide. Only a limited number could be accommodated in the lock chamber at any one time, so queues soon formed and, as is usual on these sorts of occasions, a festive atmosphere soon prevailed, The media also attended, giving a further publicity boost to a splendid example of volunteers and professionals working together for the benefit of both.

CORRECTION

Unfortunately, on Page 10 of *Weigh-House 72*, the caption to Mike Chapman's drawing of the adit at Combe Hay was incorrect. The corrected version is shown below.

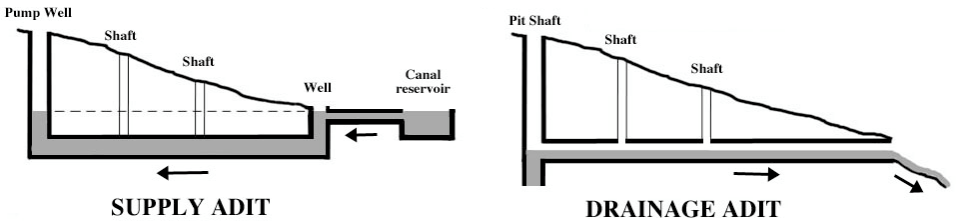

Fig.6 Comparison of adits for supply to Engine Wood pump [*left*] and drainage [*right*].

DONATIONS & SPONSORSHIP

The Society wishes to express its thanks to the following for their generous donations:

Mr. J. Davison
Mr. D. Ahlberg
Mr. D. Ramsbottom
Mr. D. Francis
Mr. G. Parker
Mr. J. Henn
Mr. N. Butters
Mr. S. Lovering
Mr. P. Collins
Mrs. J. Copeland

S.C.C.S. RESPONSE TO THE B&NES WATER SPACE STUDY

The Bath Water Space Study was launched by Bath and North East Somerset Council on 14 March 2016 "to identify opportunities to deliver enhancements to the waterways and adjoining land". Initially the study was intended to focus on the River Avon and the Kennet and Avon Canal from Hanham to Dundas, but by the time the Draft Report was published in April of 2017, the brief had been widened to include a submission by the S.C.C.S..

In Summer 2016, members of the S.C.C.S. committee were invited to a meeting with B&NES Officers to submit a project document and discuss the possibilities for the future. This had to be undertaken independently of our Chairman, who would otherwise have had a conflict of interest. Our proposal was for the restoration of the Northern branch of the S.C.C. from Dundas to Paulton in an historically and environmentally sensitive way for the regeneration of the Cam Valley. The first step would be the appointment of a Project Officer to oversee the restoration of 750 metres of the S.C.C. from the existing moorings at Brassknocker towards Monkton Combe.

Until recently any restoration proposal of the S.C.C. has been open to the objection that, until the short section of canal below the Viaduct Hotel was restored to navigation, none of the rest of the canal could be reconnected to the national network. That section posed some engineering problems which many people believed were insurmountable and amounted to a complete barrier to restoration. Investigation by our engineering advisor has shown that this is not the case, and with appropriate engineering work, the canal could be brought through this section to link up with the moorings at Brassknocker.

Restoration of the "Viaduct Hotel" section would be the key to unlocking the rest of the canal, which is why this was considered a priority for any future funding. Sadly the summary which appeared in the Draft Report did not include this proposal, however, we pointed out the omission and we hope our plans will be now be taken further.

The reports and appendices can be downloaded from:

`http://www.bathnes.gov.uk/services/environment/river-safety/rivers-canals/water-space-study`

The background to the study is explained on pages 6 & 7 →

BATH WATERSPACE STUDY AND THE SOMERSETSHIRE COAL CANAL

Canal restoration is a curious mix of long term planning and taking opportunities as they arise, mixing the immediate prospect of works on the ground where conditions are favourable with the need for a vision or strategy to complete the whole scheme, or a significant part of it. Just occasionally, the two combine and the opportunity to have a long term plan with real teeth arises; such an opportunity has arisen for the S.C.C.S. in the form of the Bath Waterspace Study.

The Waterspace Study was commissioned by Bath and North East Somerset Council, who sought consultants to examine the use of, constraints on and opportunities for the navigable waterways in their area. This consists of three separate water bodies being considered:

1) The Kennet & Avon Canal between Dundas and Widcombe Bottom Lock where it joins the River Avon.

2) The River Avon within the B&NES area and under Canal and River Trust (C.R.T.) control, that is between Widcombe Bottom Lock and Hanham Lock, where the navigation leaves B&NES and passes into Bristol Harbour Authority control.

3) The River Avon within B&NES area but not under C.R.T. control, that is between the confluence with the Cam and Widcombe Bottom Lock. This length is navigable by a variety of craft but mostly isolated from C.R.T. waters by Pulteney Weir.

At an early stage of the study, the Somersetshire Coal Canal Society contacted B&NES Council and drew the Council's attention to the presence of another former navigation in their area, the Somersetshire Coal Canal.

A process of competitive tender was undertaken; the study was awarded to Atkins, a multi-national consultancy who were to run the project from their Bristol offices. As a former employee of Atkins, and a specialist in waterway restoration and regeneration, I was invited to join the Atkins team for the duration of the work.

Although the navigable waters were the subject, the study was not just about navigation; indeed the navigations are in many ways the thread upon which many other land uses and activities are strung. A key point from the study, though, is that these navigations form an entity that connects activities and land uses along their banks, and the study seeks ways to build on that connection. As a result, I found myself on site visits to Dundas, to the Shallows at Saltford, to Kensington Meadows and to Bathampton Water Meadows, amongst many other places, looking at the relationship between these places and the canal and river.

Within this, came lesson number one for the Society: our canal is an entity that links places. If our canal is to have value for the communities that it passes through, and for the people that use it (on foot at present) then these connections need to be made, not just on the ground, but in the minds of the community and the user. On the Kennet & Avon Canal, many people do not realise that one can walk from the canal to Kensington Meadows and Grosvenor, yet this is possible; furthermore, many people would like to walk from Kensington Meadows to the middle of Bath, but they cannot do this down the river although they could if they were to take the canal towpath. Thus it is identified that links, where they exist, should be promoted, and where they do not, they should be created.

BRADFORD ON AVON LOCK STOPPAGE

With restoration of the S.C.C. now firmly on the agenda, it is helpful to look at our nearest working canal, The Kennet and Avon, for examples of the sort of work that might be expected when a canal is open and in use. The K&AC has been open to through traffic since 1990 and Lock 14 at Bradford on Avon hasn't been cleared since then. It became apparent that the lock was in need of some major repairs, so an official 'stoppage' notice was posted and in Feb 2017 it was closed to traffic and drained ready for the work.

The plan included major repair work to the top and bottom gate liners, replacement of the lock gearing and fenders on the bottom gates and repairs to the leaks around the paddle frames. In addition there was an opportunity to repaint the gates, cill markers and beam signage. In common with all the locks on the K&A Canal, this one was back-pumped, but the automatic monitoring system had indicated that repairs to the pumps would be needed, so this work was planned at the same time. The intakes to the pumps were also getting blocked by debris which would have to be removed.

[Above] VOLUNTEERS WORKING TO CLEAR THE LOCK

As the water level fell, it became apparent that the lock had accumulated a huge quantity of debris over the years, far more than had ever been expected, and this would need to be removed. As no budget had been put aside for this work, it was undertaken by a group of volunteers who normally work on vegetation clearance along the canal banks. They removed tons of rubbish, including a number of items which might prove interesting to the local constabulary.

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[Right] TONS OF REMOVED RUBBISH BEING STORED IN A TEMPORARY COMPOUND

I now had a confession to make, I had actually used John's photograph in my book: The *Somersetshire Coal Canal, A Second Pictorial Journey* — and I had not asked John's permission to do so!

Whilst looking for photographs of Dunkerton I decided that one of Dunkerton 'Little' (or 'small' as Ken had called it) Aqueduct would be suitable for publication. Not knowing who John Weeks was, or how to contact him, I had credited the photograph jointly to both Kenneth R. Clew and John Weeks.

I always try to acknowledge the original source of the photographs, even if I am not quite sure where they had come from. A copy of my book was quickly dispatched to John Weeks with thanks for the use of his photograph, even if at the time of publication he did not know I was using it!

At last the mystery of the origin and dates of some of the archive photographs had been resolved.

I have included some of John's photographs with this article as they show structures along the Canal that either are no longer standing: the aforementioned Dunkerton 'Little' Aqueduct and Bisham's Bridge; or are physically different: the Combe Hay lock gates showing the balance beams that have long since rotted away. I hope that readers will find these photographs as interesting as I have. They are a welcome addition to the Society's archive. Thank you John!

John Weeks collection.

Dunkerton 'Little' Aqueduct c.1950

If anyone else has photographs of the canal from the 1950s or 1960s, or maybe earlier, then they will always be welcomed for the archive.

ROGER HALSE
Honorary Archivist

John Weeks collection.

Lock near Caisson House, Combe Hay c.1950

From that comes the question of the continuity of our own canal. A significant part of the canal can be followed on foot along the canal banks, and other parts of it can be followed at a distance along the Limestone Link, but that still leaves awkward lengths where the canal follower must walk on minor roads, and much more difficult gaps where there is effectively no parallel route. Further, the canal may link Dundas to Monkton Combe, Midford, Combe Hay, Dunkerton, Camerton, Paulton and Timsbury, but how practical are those connections and does anyone unfamiliar with the canal know they exist?

However, for us, the big news of the Waterspace Study relates to navigation. The Waterspace study sought to identify the number of boaters on the C.R.T. navigations within B&NES and the facilities available. This led to a survey of how those boaters used the navigation and what facilities they would like to see (and what they would be prepared to pay for them).

The summary of the findings was that: (a) the sixteen miles of canal in B&NES has a very high proportion of boats which do not have home moorings; (b) there are at present no spare moorings in Bath or in the neighbouring length of canal in Wiltshire as far as Devizes locks; (c) provision of basic facilities such as waterpoints and sewage disposal are woefully inadequate, and, in the midst of this, over 60 holiday hire boats regularly make their way to Bath from bases west of Devizes, some are based in Bath itself; and (d) B&NES in general, and the Kennet & Avon Canal between Bath and Bradford in particular, have very few sites where new moorings can be created, and those few sites can only provide large lagoon type marinas which are increasingly unpopular with boaters, often characterised as being sterile and faceless.

Even with such provision, these boats would still have access only to a very limited length of canal and river. In short, demand for navigable waterspace in the Bath area outstrips supply by some margin, to the extent that the number of boats seeking to base themselves between Bath and Bradford, a distance of 9 miles, would stretch for about 3½ miles if moored nose to tail. These facts led to a discussion with B&NES whereby the S.C.C.S. pointed out that the Northern branch of the S.C.C. is ten miles long and lies entirely within their area, never more than 7 miles from the centre of Bath. Therfore our strategy should be to extend navigation along the S.C.C. from the Kennet & Avon Canal at the earliest opportunity – in short, the S.C.C. is the answer to their problem.

As a brief aside, at this point I would mention that a few canal enthusiasts, including me, have discussed, over coffee, a longing for more waterways west of Devizes, to make our own network closer to the pattern of the Midlands and the North West, where a variety of routes is on offer. Our starting point for that dream is the full restoration of the Wilts and Berks Canal, the Dorset and Somerset Canal to Frome, and the Somersetshire Coal Canal to Paulton. With the W&B Melksham Link progressing and B&NES interest in our canal, two out of three of these are now looking realistic.

So, where does this leave us ? It leaves us with a golden opportunity to promote the restoration of our canal in two ways: firstly, the absolute necessity of restoration to navigation, extending the navigable waters of Bath and North East Somerset and west of Devizes, a large and growing market for all types of boating. Secondly, we add to the opportunities for new businesses to flourish whilst restoring a major heritage asset. In support of this we already have the backing of "Visit Somerset" as well as B&NES. We also have the opportunity, with the support of B&NES, to follow "advance restoration" works which will link the route of the S.C.C. to the communities along the canal and to the Kennet & Avon Canal. Such works will include a footpath following the canal, interim restoration to beneficial use of sites along the canal, perhaps creation of a heritage attraction at Paulton and Timsbury Basins. The Waterspace Study opens up opportunities for us to restore the canal as a scheme rich in built and natural heritage, to the benefits of the communities on the route, to the benefit of the local economy, and ultimately to the benefit of boaters.

PATRICK MOSS

NAVVYING NOTES

Several people have recently commented that work on the canal appears to have ground to a halt and in terms of construction work, this is true. The very visible and exciting efforts of last Summer have been replaced by more mundane but equally important maintenance and background work.

The sight of hordes of eager 'navvies' descending on the meadows around Paulton and Timsbury Basins to undertake exciting building work was an almost daily occurrence during parts of last Summer; this year it has been noticeably absent. Instead a small but dedicated workforce has been turning up regularly throughout the Winter and Spring to keep the towpaths clear and to dredge out the silt and vegetation that threaten to block the water flow. This is work which had to be neglected last year, with the result that the towpath between Terminus Bridge and Withy Mills became so overgrown as to be almost impassable. This year we have tried to keep on top of it, with regular towpath and hedgerow maintenance during the peak growing season.

The footpath alongside Locks 11 to 15 at Combe Hay was another casualty of reduced maintenance because of lack of manpower. Although the pathway itself was well-used and stayed open, the locks and pounds almost disappeared under the vegetation which sprung up unhindered. This year we were determined to do something about it, so extra work parties were fitted into the calendar on the third Tuesday of each month. This also answered a criticism that our Sunday work parties weren't always convenient for some people and a weekday would suit them better.

The Combe Hay work parties got off to a shaky start, with only two volunteers turning up. However, the situation has since improved with several more volunteers, all of whom are competent Allen Scythe operators. We could do with a few more hands, though, because the work so far has concentrated on clearing the pounds and lock tops, but the lock chambers have had to be neglected because we couldn't spare anyone to deal with them.

Meanwhile, back at Paulton, the holiday season has been taking its toll. With such a small band of helpers, it only needs a few to be ill or on holiday for the whole system to collapse. This began to occur in July, when no volunteers turned up at all; luckily one of the local landowners stepped forward to help us out and the most important work of towpath clearance still went ahead. The e-mail calling for volunteers for the August work party received only negative replies, so that work party was cancelled altogether — and the most recent work party, for which only one person volunteered, was cancelled due to the weather. A proposed construction project to finish off the Intake at Timsbury Basin this Summer has had to be put on hold because there were insufficient volunteers to even begin the work and no prospects whatsoever of completing it.

Routine maintenance doesn't have the same degree of glamour as excavating lost structures and rebuilding them, but it is an important part of canal work and we mustn't neglect it. As we get more and more of the canal cleared and put back in water, the amount of maintenance work required will increase. On some fully-restored canals, almost the entire volunteer workforce effort is devoted to maintenance because there is very little archæological or reconstruction work needed — indeed, we are lucky to have so much of this interesting work still to do. This puts us in a difficult situation, because we cannot go on reconstructing things if there is no viable maintenance scheme to take care of the structures once we have completed them.

We have recently received several enthusiastic offers from members of the public, who said they would love to join our Society and work on the canal, but every one of them has failed to follow it up and make contact with us. If anyone thinks they can see a way forward, please contact a member of the Committee and let us know.

I like photographs! Those of you who have ever attended any of my talks, or had a guided walk with me, will know how passionate I am about old photographs. Ideally, I like photographs that show the Canal in use, or at least in water, and these mainly tend to cover the 1870 to 1910 period. But any photographs are welcome for the archive, and John's 1950s photographs did not disappoint.

John Weeks collection.

Bisham's Bridge, South Stoke c.1950

The first to grasp my attention was Bisham's Bridge, Combe Hay (near the bottom of Hodshill). The small (just over 2 x 3 inches) black and white photograph showed the former packhorse bridge between South Stoke and Twinhoe, which used to cross over the Canal between Locks 19 and 20.

I already had two photographs showing the bridge with the canal in water from c.1890 and c.1900, along with a photograph of the bridge over a disused canal in 1960. John's photograph was 10 years earlier. Very interesting. Further photographs featured: The Bulls Nose; Lock near Caisson House (1); Lock near Caisson House (2); Bisham Bridge (2); Lock Near Caisson House (4); Aqueduct Camerton; Aqueduct Camerton (Railway Viaduct Beyond); and Aqueduct Camerton. There were more, nearly 50 in total, too many to list here, but all of interest. The three entitled Camerton Aqueduct particularly stood out to me, but why? I knew them to actually be views of the two aqueducts at Dunkerton. But one view looked very familiar; did I already have a copy this photograph? If so, why would I have a copy of a previously unknown, and to my knowledge unpublished photograph, from a private collection taken by a schoolboy in the 1950s?

A quick look at my archive of canal photographs of the Dunkerton area provided the answer: yes; I did have a copy of the same photograph! A look at the back of the photograph showed that it had come from the collection of the late Kenneth R. Clew. John had mentioned in his letter accompanying the notebooks, that Ken Clew had borrowed his material when researching his book *The Somersetshire Coal Canal & Railways* in 1970. "J. Weeks" appears in the list of acknowledgments.

Ken must have obtained a copy of the photograph with the intention of publishing it in his book, but never actually used it. Ken Clew's book is widely regarded as the definitive history of the SCC. It is the one that I always refer to when researching the canal. →

1950s PHOTOGRAPHS AND HOW THE TRUE ORGIN OF A PHOTOGRAPH CAME TO LIGHT

I often receive requests for information about the former Somersetshire Coal Canal, to which I am always keen to provide answers. Occasionally the opposite happens, and people offer me material.

Never refusing such offers, I am always interested in what others have found. One such offer brought an excellent collection of 1950s photographs to the Society's archive.

In 1950-52 John Weeks was a schoolboy at the City of Bath Boys' School living in the Combe Down area of Bath. Close to the Midford valley, it was probably inevitable that during one of his many walks and cycle rides in the area, John would come across the remains of the disused Somersetshire Coal Canal. I myself had 'found' the canal whilst out on a pleasant countryside walk with a local girl from South Stoke. This stirred an interest in the history of this long abandoned piece of industrial history.

A visit by John to the former Bath Reference Library in Queen Square, now the home of the Bath Royal Literary and Scientific Institution (B.R.L.S.I.), and a look at the c.1812 Jeremiah Cruse map of the S.C.C. prompted further interest. Notebooks were subsequently written, photographs taken, and maps drawn. There was even the thought of producing a book about what had been found, but as often happens with the passage of time, thoughts of this were forgotten and the research material filed away until a later date.

Forward 60 years, and the notebooks reappear; but what do to with them? By now there was much more interest in the subject of industrial history, and in particular, canals. A society had been formed with its interest... " IN THE PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE OF THE OLD SOMERSET COAL CANAL". Perhaps the Society would be interested in John's notebooks? A letter was sent offering the material to the Society, which the Honorary Archivist was only too keen to accept. I never turn down the offer of anything related to the canal, and later railways, of the Cam and Midford valleys. Those of you who have seen my 'office' full of maps, plans, photographs, *etc.* will confirm this!

A few days later a package arrived from Glasgow. Ignoring all the other mail, I rushed to see what John had sent me; I was very pleasantly surprised. Two blue Foolscap Quarto* sized BATH Education Authority school notebooks headed "SOMERSET CANALS, COAL *etc*. 1952" along with a bundle of hand-drawn maps and plans.

I quickly looked through the first notebook, and found that John had undertaken lots of research: Information on Population Statistics for the Villages along the route of the canal; Table of Distances between bridges; chapters on Fuller's Earth; Social History; The Industrial Revolution in Somerset; History of Canals in the Industrial Revolution; Wilts & Berks Canal; Thames-Severn & Stroudwater Canals. Hand-written copies of extracts from previously published magazine articles on the Canal (photocopiers did not exist in the 1950s). At the end, a Bibliography listing many of the published books that researchers still refer to today.

John had done his homework well, but more was to come in the second notebook. The first thing that drew my attention was that the second notebook was thicker. Could this contain the photographs that John had mentioned?

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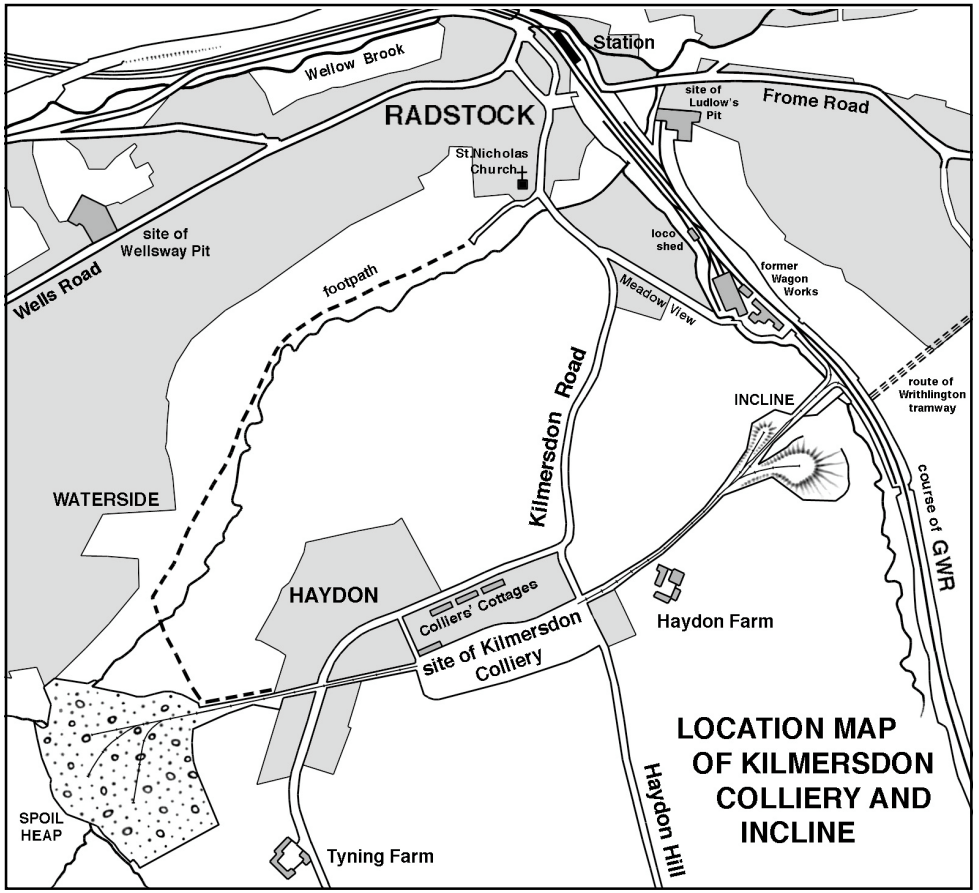
*Note: Those old enough to remember (like myself) the 1950s, 60s and 70s may recall the myriad of different paper sizes known as British Imperial (BI). These included some wonderful names such as Albert, Duchess, Duke, Small Post Quarto and Large Post Quarto. Foolscap Quarto ($6\frac{1}{2}$ x 8 inches) was a commonly used size for school notebooks. In the 1970s the United Kingdom changed to the International Standards Organisation (ISO) 'A Range' of paper sizes that we use today. Foolscap Quarto was roughly the same size as A5, the size of this newsletter.

When I started in the print industry in 1972, I was using both the BI and ISO paper sizes and for many years some of the old paper sizes continued to be in demand. Foolscap Folio (8 x 13 inches, 203 x 330 mm) was still being used in the 1980s. Book printing still uses some of the old British Imperial book sizes to this day.

KILMERSDON COLLIERY CONDUCTED WALK
Sunday 18 September 2016

Around a dozen people assembled in the Waterloo Road car park adjacent to Radstock Museum for another conducted walk, led by Mike Chapman, Historical Advisor to the S.C.C.S.

We set off across Sheepwash Bridge, along the newly constructed link road past the Victoria Hall, along Church Street to St Nicholas' Church, then onto the footpath which leads up the Waterside Valley. We paused below the graveyard to look at the site of the one-time open air swimming pool in the Snails Brook, the subject of a possible restoration project (not by the S.C.C.S.!).



Mike Chapman

Proceeding up the valley we noted a WW2 pillbox high up on the valley side. Now adorned with fencing around the top, it has been incorporated into an adjoining garden as a very substantial patio. It was built as part of "Stop Line Green", an outer defence line for Bristol. There are two similar pillboxes nearby, but at this time of year they are well hidden by undergrowth. →

Continuing up the valley, we crossed the stream by means of a footbridge, then through woodland until we started to climb up the slopes of the spoil heap, or batch, of Kilmersdon Colliery. The material was brought in standard gauge railway wagons to be tipped down the side of the valley. The railway was then replaced by a concrete road, which is still visible today, for use by tipper lorries. A concrete tunnel was constructed to allow the stream to flow under the batch, which eventually extended a significant distance across the valley.

Photograph: **Steve Page**

KILMERSDON COLLIERY BUILDINGS NOW CONVERTED TO HOUSES

We followed the course of the railway through a modern housing development, to the site of the colliery, passing an interpretation board at the site of the level crossing over Kilmersdon Road in Haydon. Although situated in Haydon, the colliery was named Kilmersdon as it was in the Parish of Kilmersdon.

Little remains of the colliery infrastructure, except a stone wall with remains of railings on top which was possibly part of the tub route at the pithead. However, the Colliery Manager's cottage has survived, alongside the approach road to the colliery, giving a reference point with the past.

We followed this road, then along the main road through Haydon to skirt round the industrial estate which now occupies the site of the pithead area, and rejoined the route of the railway where it crossed Haydon Hill on a level crossing, pausing en route to look at another interpretation board at the roadside. The "home-made" level crossing gate is still in situ, and from there we followed the course of the railway to the top of the incline, where the line descended to join the former Great Western Railway line. This was a "self-acting" incline, whereby the weight of a loaded wagon of coal descending pulled an empty one up. Either side of the incline are the original tipping areas for the spoil from the colliery. Cautiously descending the incline ourselves, we followed the cycleway through the new housing development which now occupies most of the former GWR railway land, to return to our starting point.

STEVE PAGE

In school biology lessons we were taught that frogs lay eggs called "spawn"; inside the eggs, little tadpoles develop, which eventually grow a bit bigger and then turn into baby frogs. This occurs as an annual cycle, which means that tadpoles will only be found for a short while during Spring. That may be true of the Common Frog, but these uncommon ones have tadpoles which aren't really in any hurry to grow up; instead, some of them take a sabbatical year and defer adult development until late in the Summer of the following year. During that time they just enjoy the tadpole lifestyle, eating and resting and doing whatever else tadpoles do ...and becoming bigger and bigger with no sign of changing their ways or their morphology. Eventually they finish up as the monster tadpoles, as big around as a human thumb, which were caught by the RAGS biologists.

BIOLOGISTS AT WORK
Liam Russell, John Dickson and André Blacker inspect their 'catch'

So what exactly are these frogs and where do they come from? That was the question the biologists were attempting to answer. The initial guess, based on appearance, is that they are Pelophylax Lessonæ, otherwise known as the Pool Frog (the same genus as the Green Frog and the Water Frog) — a species which was once native to a specific area of Norfolk. The original Norfolk colony became extinct in the 1990s, but has now been re-established in that area by importing similar frogs from Sweden. Recently, new colonies of Pool Frogs have begun appearing in various other places across Britain, but these are very slightly different from their Norfolk relatives and seem to have their origins in southern Europe. Their spread is aided by the movement of fish stocks around the country; there is some concern that this rapid spread may bring with it some diseases specific to certain amphibians, but the general consensus is that it is causing no harm to the environment or to the other species.

There is, however, a complication. The Pool Frog often co-exists with other species, such as the Marsh Frog; they interbreed to produce hybrids which can propagate a 'new' species, such as the Edible Frog, or revert back to the parent stock after several generations. Some of these variations may have been present in the original stock which formed the present colony, so although they look like Pool Frogs, other species may suddenly start to appear as their hidden genetics emerge in later generations. To check on this, the biologists took swabs from inside the mouth of each frog, to be analysed for the D.N.A. profile and reveal the true genetic origins of the colony. Tadpoles often lose bits of their tails in nature without any detrimental effect, so the researchers clipped tiny pieces of tissue from their tail tips to send off for similar analysis. The results are expected in a few months, so a report on this will be included in a later edition of Weigh-House as soon as it is available.

All the creatures were returned to the basins at the end of their adventures, to continue their noisy existence unharmed.

ADRIAN TUDDENHAM

UNUSUAL FROGS AT TIMSBURY AND PAULTON BASINS

Timsbury and Paulton Basins are home to a variety of wildlife. Of all the usual species that you would expect to find in or around a body of fresh water, there is one in particular at the basins which draws attention to itself more than all the rest: on any warm evening in late Spring or early Summer, nobody with functioning ears can fail to notice the frogs. The air is filled with a variety of croaks, squeaks, grunts and chattering noises that seem to come from all parts of the canal banks.

Trying to track down the source of all that noise proves to be surprisingly difficult, because as soon as you approach any part of the bank, that section falls sullenly silent, whilst the racket continues unabated a short distance either side of it — tantalisingly just far enough away for the perpetrators to be well hidden by the reeds. 'Those who know' say it is the frogs, but these are unlike any common British frogs; the quantity and quality of the noises they make are worlds away from from the occasional gentle croak that comes from the traditional village duckpond or a stagnant wayside pool. On a warm Summer evening, the residents up to quarter of a mile away from Paulton Basin have to shut their windows to keep out the noise, so they can get some sleep.

TINY FROG FOR SUCH A BIG NOISE

With frogs as unusual as that, it was inevitable that news of their existence would spread and eventually reach the ears of wildlife specialists and interested biologists, in particular the Reptile and Amphibian Group for Somerset, RAGS, who arranged to visit the area in July this year to see what they could discover about this unusual isolated frog population. Armed with nets and dressed in waders, John Dickson, André Blacker and Liam Russell set about tracking down these noisy but elusive creatures in their own muddy habitat. This was no easy task; in warm weather the frogs are very active and can easily hop away at the slightest hint of movement — it was a cause for celebration when the first one was eventually caught and successfully manœvered into the holding box. Tadpoles are less easy to spot, but much easier to catch, so they, too, were added to the collection.

COAL CANAL MILESTONES

A recent enquiry about milestones on the Radstock line of the S.C.C., has prompted a fresh look at an article previously published in Weigh-House 41 (April 2005), reviewing the milestones on the Dunkerton line of the Somersetshire Coal Canal.

For many a bargee travelling along the nineteenth century canals of England and Wales, distances played an important part of their everyday life. The knowledge of how many miles they had already travelled told them how far they had to go to their destination, and, far more importantly, how much they or their employers would have to pay for the goods carried. Carriers were charged a toll of so many pence per mile, the rates varying for different types of cargo. On the S.C.C. the 1802 Act of Parliament authorised rates of 2^{d} per ton per mile for coal and coke, 3^{d} per ton per mile for stone, tiles, bricks, slate and timber, rising to 4^{d} per ton per mile for iron and lead. So that bargees would know their location on the canal, and in order to calculate the tolls to be paid, the Canal Company sited at every half-mile along the canal a milestone, affixed with a distinctive cast-iron plate. These indicated the distance from the junction of the S.C.C. with the Kennet & Avon Canal at Dundas Aqueduct.

List of Somersetshire Coal Canal Milestones (August 2017)

Dunkerton Line

Miles	*Location*	*Stone*	*Plate*
½	Between Viaduct Hotel & Monkton Combe	In situ	Missing
1	Between Monkton Combe & Tucking Mill	Missing	Missing
1½	Tucking Mill Wharf	Survives (not in situ)	Missing
2	Near Midford Weigh-House	Missing	Missing
2½	South of Midford Accommodation Bridge	In situ	Missing
3	By Lock 21, Combe Hay	In situ	Missing
3½	By Lock 13, Combe Hay	In situ	Survives (elsewhere)
4	By Lock 4, Combe Hay	In situ	Survives (elsewhere)
4½	Between Lock 1 & Combe Hay Tunnel	Survives (not in situ)	Survives (affixed to stone)
5	West of Combe Hay Tunnel	Survives (not in situ)	Survives (affixed to stone)
5½	Between Combe Hay Tunnel & Dunkerton	In situ	Missing
6	East of Dunkerton Wharf	In situ	Survives (elsewhere)
6½	Near Dunkerton Little Aqueduct	In situ	Missing
7	Withyditch	Missing	Missing
7½	East of Dando's Bridge (Dunkerton Colliery)	Missing	Missing
8	Between Stoneage Lane & Bengrove	Survives	Missing
8½	East of Camerton	Missing	Missing
9	Camerton (Rear of Jolly Collier Public House)	Missing	Missing
9½	Radford	Missing	Missing
10	Dunford	In situ	Survives (elsewhere)
10½	Timsbury Basin	Missing	Missing

Radstock Line

Miles	*Location*	*Stone*	*Plate*
3½	Twinhoe Basin	In situ	Survives (elsewhere)

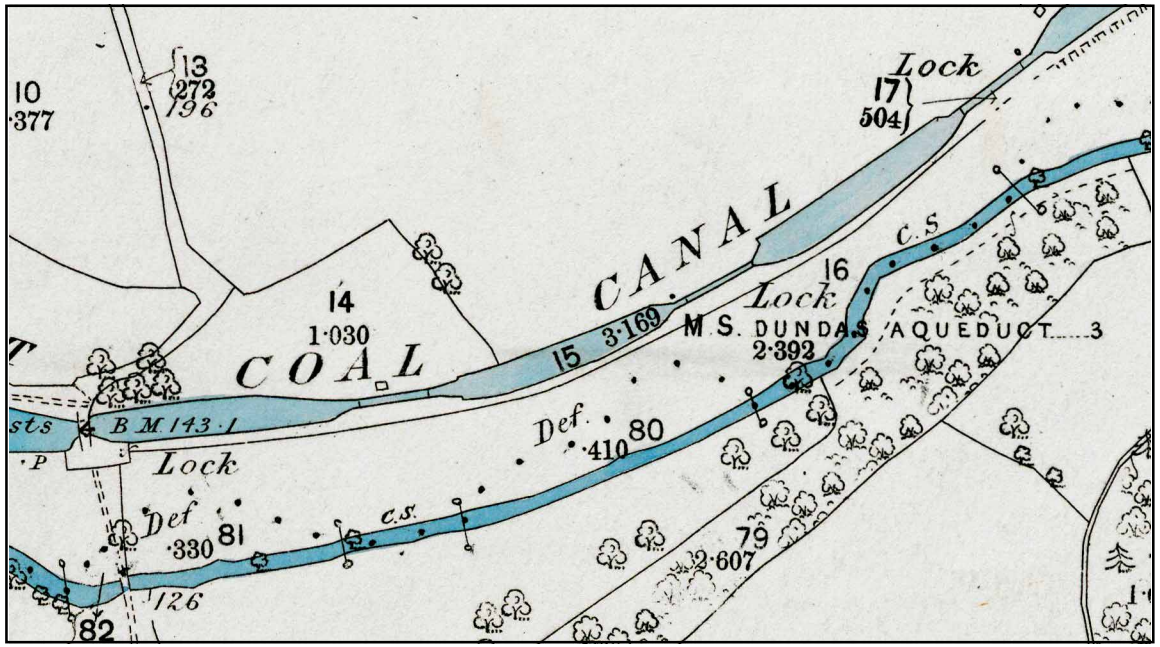
→

On the northern arm of the canal (sometimes referred to as the 'Dunkerton Line ') there were, between Dundas and the terminus basin at Timsbury, 21 such milestones. Following the abandonment of the canal in 1904 these milestones began to disappear. Some of these were lost during the construction, over parts of the canal, by the Great Western Railway's Camerton to Limpley Stoke branch line between 1907-10. After the railway had been completed the remaining sections of canal were sold off to the neighbouring landowners, and a few more were probably lost when changes in farming practices required larger field sizes. Following the closure of the railway in 1951, the route of the railway was sold off and more milestones were lost under landfill. However, many milestones survived and fortunately for the Society these were photographed by society member Terry Paget in 1960.

In 1987 the location and condition of all the surviving milestones, some still with cast-iron plates, were recorded by Mike Chapman. Unfortunately in the intervening years between Terry's photographs and Mike's survey some milestones had seen the arrival of the 'collector' who removed some of the cast-iron plates. The stones themselves were far too heavy and bulky to move easily. In 2016 only 13 of the original 21 milestones survived, alas only two complete with cast-iron plate. Four other plates survive separately from their stones. The list on page 11 shows where the milestones were sited and their condition, if known.

A TYPICAL MILESTONE ON THE DUNKERTON LINE OF THE CANAL

A CIRCULAR MILESTONE PLATE ON THE RADSTOCK LINE OF THE CANAL



A SECTION OF THE 1886 O.S.MAP showing the 3-mile milestone (a dot below the first letter "A" of the word "CANAL") on the offside of Lock 21 between Combe Hay and Upper Midford.

The southern arm of the canal and later tramway, sometimes referred to as the 'Radstock Line ', also had a milestone. Sited at Twinhoe Basin at the end of the original canal cut from Radstock, the 3½ mile plate was different from its northern counterpart, being of a smaller, rounded design. If these were also sited every half-mile then there would have been 13 covering the distance between Twinhoe and Radstock. But we just don't know if these additional milestones existed, as none appear on any maps!

Some years ago the S.C.C.S. had replicas made of three of the exising plates with the intention that these might be installed in the original locations at some future time. As they were only copies, the loss would be a relatively small one if they were unscrewed and stolen. Various modern materials were considered for making the copies, but eventually it was discovered that the original material, cast iron, was the most satisfactory, easiest and cheapest.

For those who are interested the 1886 Ordnance Survey 25 Inch to 1 Mile scale maps show the location of almost all of the milestones on the Dunkerton line. Indicated on the maps as "M.S. DUNDAS AQUEDUCT" . . . (then the mileage).

ROGER HALSE

The Milestones at 2½, 3½ and 8 miles are adjacent to public footpaths, but most of the other surviving ones are on private land; please do not trespass.