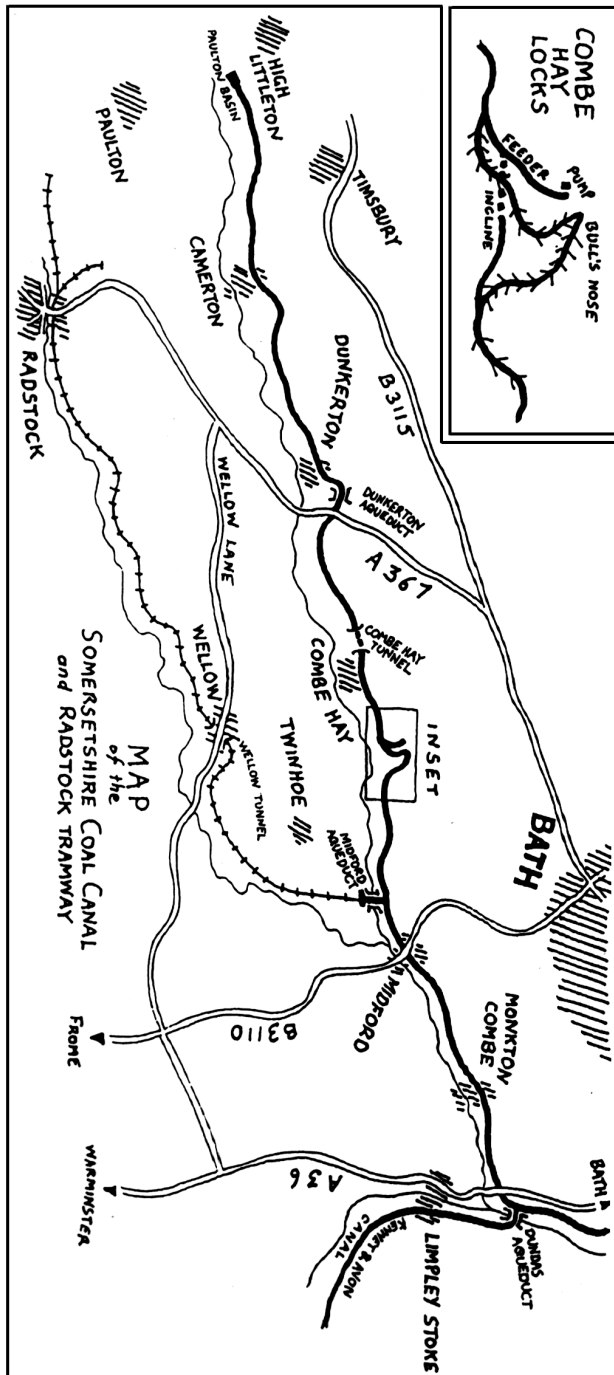


WEIGH-HOUSE

THE MAGAZINE OF THE
SOMERSETSHIRE COAL CANAL SOCIETY



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^o 1047303

Registered under the Data Protection Act 1984 N^o A2697068

Affiliated to the Inland Waterways Association N^o 0005276

Inland Revenue reference code for tax purposes: CAD72QG

MEMBERSHIP

Membership Application Forms are available from
the Membership Secretary, Steve Page,

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☎ (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:

Adrian Tuddenham 88, Mount Road, Southdown, Bath BA2 1LH

☎ 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 2nd June —10:00

WORK PARTY — Location to be advised

For further details please contact: *Mark Sherrey* ☎ 07973 918467

Tuesday 11th June — 19:30

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2019

Meet: Radstock Museum

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

Sunday 7th July —10:00

WORK PARTY — Location to be advised

For further details please contact: *Mark Sherrey* ☎ 07973 918467

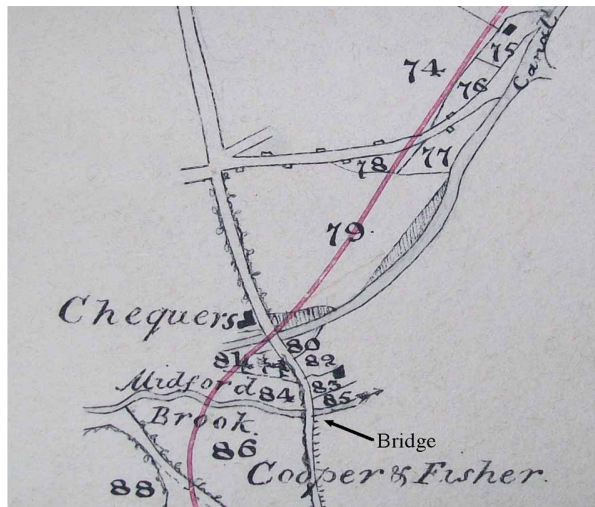
Walks

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

BRIDGE MYSTERY



I have been trying to discover the name of the bridge shown arrowed on the attached map, which pre-dates the construction of the Black Dog Turnpike Road (now known as the A36 Warminster Road). The bridge had a carved stone panel on one of the parapets which might have shown the name, but has been chiselled away. Can anyone help me to identify it?

DERRICK HUNT

[Left] MAP OF THE PROPOSED BLACK DOG TURNPIKE (WARMINSTER ROAD)



[Right] THE DEFACTED CARVING ON THE BRIDGE PARAPET

WEIGH - HOUSE N^o 75

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EDITOR'S NOTES

I am very pleased to say that Mike Chapman has returned to these pages with an extraordinary article on the subject of Pleasure Outings, which I don't think has been covered before — certainly not in the context of Industrial Archaeology. Nevertheless, some of the buildings along the Canal would not be there if it were not for this important aspect of commerce and the infrastructure of food production and brewing which supplied it.

Another building, whose relationship to the S.C.C. is not immediately apparent, is the Rotunda at Scarborough. Derrick Hunt came across this edifice on his holidays and has offered us the benefit of his subsequent research.

There is a tendency, when resources are scarce, to concentrate on just the canal and its structures and to neglect the wildlife that makes itself at home whenever we provide a suitable environment. Shelagh Hetreed's amazing collection of photographs is a reminder to those of us who can spare a moment to drag our noses away from the mud and weeds, of just what it is that we are creating and must conserve for the benefit of human and animal visitors, both present and future.

ADRIAN TUDDENHAM

CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

In over ten years as Chairman I have known us on the cusp of exciting times before, but never quite so much as we are now. There has been a gradual shift over the last two years that is now beginning to build up a head of steam, if I may borrow the term from our railway colleagues. The Waterspace Study has opened the door at B&NES, whilst the Society's own initiative saw the launch of the Coal Canal Way just before Christmas. This is a continuous walk from Bath to Paulton and Timsbury Basins that follows the canal as closely as possible using existing rights of way — the walk has always been possible, but for the first time it is now interpreted and promoted *via* a booklet published and sold by the Society. This is a major step forward.

The significance of the walk can not be overstated, we are a small society of limited means so our main rôle is to persuade others of the value of the canal and, ultimately, funding agencies to pay for it. The Coal Canal Way is as much an exercise in building enthusiasm and support as it is exercise of the more conventional type. The walk puts the Canal on the map; with only the booklet (the walk is not yet waymarked, watch this space) in less than three months we have had people tell us by email and on Facebook that it has opened their eyes and shown what restoration can do — the same message is coming from B&NES, "more please".

We now quite literally are on the map, as *Canal Routes*, publishers of online mapping, have now included the Somersetshire Coal Canal in their selection. *Canal Routes* sells downloads of navigable canals, but maps of restoration projects are free.

When you include the progress at the Paulton end of the Canal, we really are beginning to move at last.

PATRICK MOSS

NEW MEMBERS

The Society welcomes the following new members:

Shoscombe Local History Group

Mr N. Clements,	Paulton	Mr C. Lowe,	Desborough, Northants
Mr J. Clutterbuck,	Midsomer Norton	Mr N. Nicholds,	Tasburgh, Norfolk
Ms J. Copeland,	Easton-in-Gordano	Mr H. Meerdink,	Swansea
Mr R. Crowley,	Saltford	Mr M. Miner,	Timsbury
Ms M. Farnie,	Wedmore	Mr M. Sherrey,	Hallatrow
Mrs C. Fitzpatrick,	Paulton	Mr J. Vincent,	Odd Down
Mr S. Grudgings,	Laverstoke, Hants	Ms M. Westcott,	Upper Radford

DONATIONS & SPONSORSHIP

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

Mr S. Ashman,	Mr B. Roe,
Mr C. Axon,	Mr J. Smith,
Mr J. Davison,	Mr D. Sumner,
Mr C. Hargreaves,	Mr G. Taylor,
Mr S. Panahinejad,	Mr G. Woodward.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY — 2019

Sunday 3rd February —10:00

WORK PARTY — Location to be advised

For further details please contact: *Mark Sherrey* ☎ 07973 918467

Sunday 17th February —10:00

WALK — PAULTON AND TIMSBURY BASINS

Meet: Paulton public car park.

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

Thursday 21st February— 19:30

SOCIAL EVENING — SALT FORD BRASSMILL

by Tony Coverdale

Meet: The Radstock Working Men's Club.

For further details please see website or contact: *Steve Page* ☎ 01761 433418

Sunday 3rd March —10:00

WORK PARTY — Location to be advised

For further details please contact: *Mark Sherrey* ☎ 07973 918467

Sunday 19th March —10:00

WALK — PAULTON TO RADFORD

Meet: Paulton Public Car Park

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

Thursday 21st March— 19:30

SOCIAL EVENING — THE GLASTONBURY CANAL Including Railways

by Dick Osborne

Meet: The Radstock Working Men's Club.

For further details please see website or contact: *Steve Page* ☎ 01761 433418

Sunday 4th April —10:00

WORK PARTY — Location to be advised

For further details please contact: *Mark Sherrey* ☎ 07973 918467

Sunday 21st April —10:00

WALK — RADFORD TO CAMERTON

Meet: Camerton Heritage Site (Park in Durcott Lane)

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

Sunday 5th May —10:00

WORK PARTY — Location to be advised

For further details please contact: *Mark Sherrey* ☎ 07973 918467

Sunday 19th May —10:00

A VISIT TO SALT FORD BRASS MILLS

by Tony Coverdale

Meet: Saltford Brass Mill

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

THE BATH ROYAL LITERARY AND SCIENTIFIC INSTITUTION and the SOMERSETSHIRE COAL CANAL

For a long time a copy of the Cruse Map of the Somersetshire Coal Canal, northern and southern branches, has hung on a wall in the basement of the B.R.L.S.I.. It fascinated me and I was annoyed that the one time it was unrolled I wasn't informed about it — after all, I was Chair of the Trustees at the time! Since then its ownership has been claimed by Bath & North East Somerset Council, but they don't seem to want to take possession of it. So there it hangs, rolled back into its box, never to be unrolled again unless it can be conserved at the same time.

As Chair of B.R.L.S.I. Publications I have wanted to produce a booklet about the map — and perhaps, in time, a book on the canal. The S.C.C.S. is supportive of such a venture, so I am slowly getting under way with it. I am assembling information about the canal, the history, investigations, ideas, false trails and aspirations, which is initially being gleaned from Weigh-House, and extracting and collating articles and notes. Of course, members of the S.C.C.S. will be involved, as will Professor Hugh Torrens. Finance for the preservation of the map should come from local and national government — perhaps even the owners of the map? — and also from the canal societies around the country, in particular the S.C.C.S. and the Kennet & Avon Canal Trust. The Royal Geographical Society is also interested. There are several specialists in such preservation and photography, but I have yet to explore the various suggestions that I have received.

The S.C.C. booklet (and the later book) will be joining an established brand with a reputation for quality both of presentation and of subject matter (<https://www.brlsi.org/node/87988>) and sold through outlets across most of the West of England plus, of course, specialists such as canal societies. The launch party for the book is at least a year off, but we are planning for it already.

JULIAN VINCENT

CLAVERTON PUMPING STATION'S LISTING



WORK IN PROGRESS ON THE CLAVERTON PUMP
SHOWING THE IMMENSE SIZE OF THE FITTINGS

Claverton Pumping Station which supplies water to the Kennet and Avon Canal near Bath is currently a Grade 2 listed building, which means that although the building and bridge and hatches are protected, the pumping machinery is not. As the machinery is at least as historically important as the building, the Claverton Pumping Station Group has decided to apply for Grade 1 listing, so that the machinery can be included in the higher level of protection. They are being supported in this by the Canal & River Trust.

The station is open to the public every Saturday from 27 April 2019.

MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS

Thank you to all who have renewed their membership during 2018 — your continued support is appreciated. Those of you who pay each year by cash, cheque, or on-line, and have not already renewed for 2018, please do so as soon as possible. If you have chosen not to renew, then you will not receive any further issues of Weigh-House. It is possible to renew on-line *via* the link in our website: <http://www.coalcanal.org> or if you prefer, cheques can be posted to me at the address inside the front cover of Weigh-House. Your annual subscription remains at the rate at which you joined, as a reward for your loyalty, but you may, of course, add something more as a donation if you wish!

STEVE PAGE
MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY

BOB PARNELL

We were saddened to hear that one of the stalwarts of the S.C.C.S. Work Parties died at the end of November 2018 at the age of 75. Bob was our Work Party Manager from the earliest days until quite recently; it was under his guidance that the lock flight at Combe Hay was cleared from the initial jungle of vegetation to the view of the locks which we see from the public footpath today.



Bob's first encounter with the S.C.C.S. was quite unconnected with canal restoration: he rang Derrick at work one Friday regarding job vacancies and financial advice. Derrick provided him with the advice he required and told him about the Canal. On the following Sunday he came on Mike Chapman's walk around the Dunkerton Colliery area and joined the Society. From there he volunteered himself for the job of Work Party Manager — not the sort of job he had initially intended — and proved to be very good at it.

He put in an immense amount of unrecognised work behind the scenes, maintaining tools and tidying up sites in his spare evenings between work parties. This, and a lot of planning and preparation which we were not aware of at the time, ensured that when the work parties took place they always ran smoothly.

Bob's management style meant that he never needed to give direct orders or give anyone a ticking off — things just seemed to get done the right way because we were all happy to please him. When he retired from active service with the Society some time ago, we felt a great sense of loss, but he left us a legacy of well organised work parties.

The cleared sections of the lock flight at Combe Hay and other places along the line of the Canal are a lasting tribute to him. — Thank you, Bob.

SITES OF PLEASURE OUTINGS ON THE KENNET & AVON AND SOMERSETSHIRE COAL CANALS — Part 1

by Mike Chapman

The S.C.C. is not usually associated with pleasure boating (except perhaps for Rev. John Skinner's excursion to Combe Hay), but towards the end of its existence it shared a popularity with the K. & A.C. for outings to the junction with Dundas Aqueduct, centred on two sites nearby; The Viaduct Inn above the S.C.C. in Monkton Combe, and Bassett House above Dundas Wharf in Claverton.

The Chequers Inn

Although we still do not know exactly when the Viaduct Inn was first built, contemporary maps show that this was not until the late 1820s, and that it was originally called 'The Chequers'. Situated just above the canal at the bottom of Brassknocker Hill, its main purpose was to serve traffic along the Bath to Bradford on Avon Road (now the B3108). From 1757 this road was administered by the Bath Turnpike Trust as far as the county bridge which crossed the 'Combe Brook' (the Midford Brook) about a hundred yards South of the inn site; the rest of the road to Bradford on the opposite side of the bridge was under the control of the Bradford on Avon Trust.

Here the inn was able to provide a respite for horses and riders on their way to or from Bath before the daunting climb (or after the hazardous descent) of the steep and tortuous Brassknocker Hill leading up to Claverton Down. At the summit was the 'Brassknocker Inn' (originally known as the 'Crown', now a private house) built in the early 18th century, which served a similar purpose there until

the 1870s. Passengers would have had to leave their coach and walk up (or down) the hill, but the coach itself still had to struggle on, and it is possible that a 'banker' horse was kept at the inn stables for the climb, perhaps in arrangement with the Brassknocker Inn at the top. In any case, passengers in either direction would have stopped for a reviving drink before rejoining the coach.

However, although not specifically a 'canal-side' inn, the Chequers was nevertheless also ideally situated to provide overnight lodgings for the large number of passing boatmen trading in the North Somerset Coalfield — like many other local inns and public houses elsewhere along the waterway. When the S.C.C. was constructed in 1801 a bridge was built to carry the Brassknocker road over the canal at this point, together with a wharf next to the bridge. Although it is doubtful whether the wharf had much subsequent use, it would certainly have provided convenient access to the inn for boatmen. In recent years it has become the site of the Brassknocker Canal Visitors Centre which serves the short stretch of the waterway brought back into use for a marina.

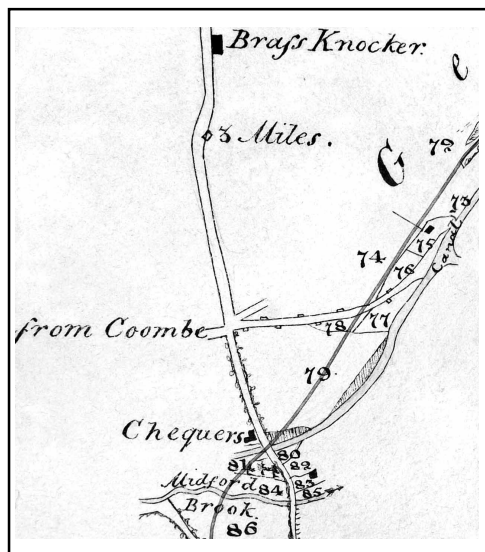
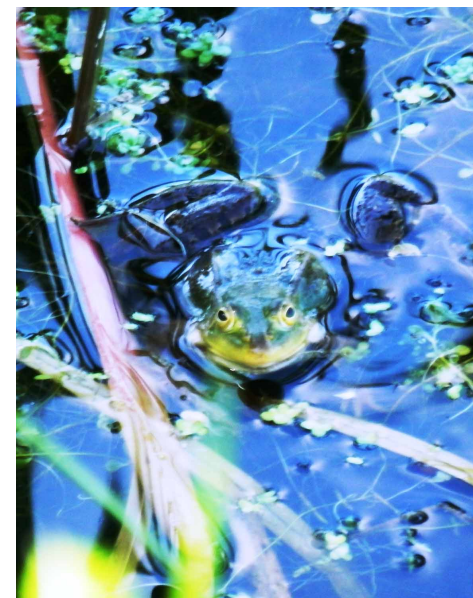
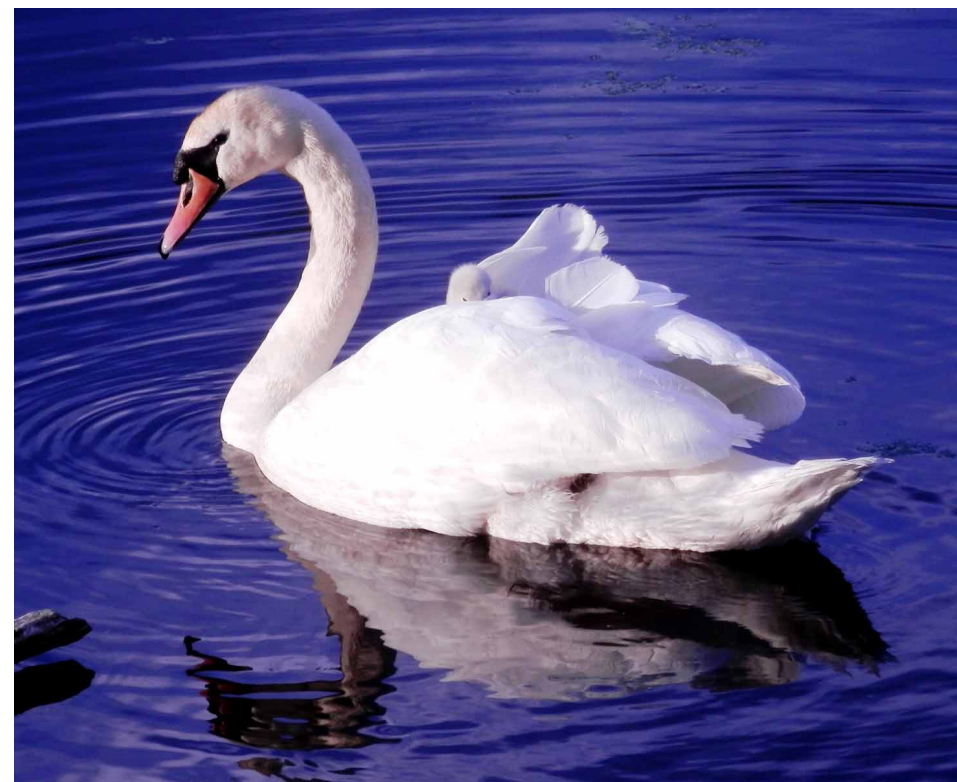


Fig 1. Detail taken from the deposited plan for line of the proposed New Warminster Road (A36) in the early 1830s, showing the inn, here named 'The Chequers'. The Dundas Aqueduct is indicated top right, under the word 'Canal'.



[Right]
FROG 'BUBBLEGUMMING'

[Below] MOTHER SWAN
(Spot the cygnet)



WILDLIFE IN PAULTON AND TIMSBURY BASINS

Since moving into the area a few years ago, Shelagh Hetreed has been an enthusiastic supporter of the S.C.C.S. and has built up a magnificent collection of wildlife photographs taken around the canal basins. As well as being for her own personal collection, these photographs have been shown in exhibitions and used to raise the awareness of the Canal.



[Left] MOTHER DUCK AND YOUNG

[Below] RED LEGGED GULLS
STANDING ON AN ICED POND



All photographs on
p.18 and 19
copyright
Shelagh Hetreed

The New Warminster Road

A big change came in 1833 with the building of what is now known as the A36 Warminster Road by the Black Dog Turnpike Trust, 'over virgin land, a completely new route ... from Woolverton to Bathwick'. This was initially opposed by the Kennet & Avon Canal trustees who protested that, where the road ran on a parallel course above their canal in the Limpley Stoke Valley, there would be a threat of land slippage along the hillside above it. In the event, I.K. Brunel was brought in to arbitrate, and after visiting the site in March 1833, pronounced in favour of the scheme.

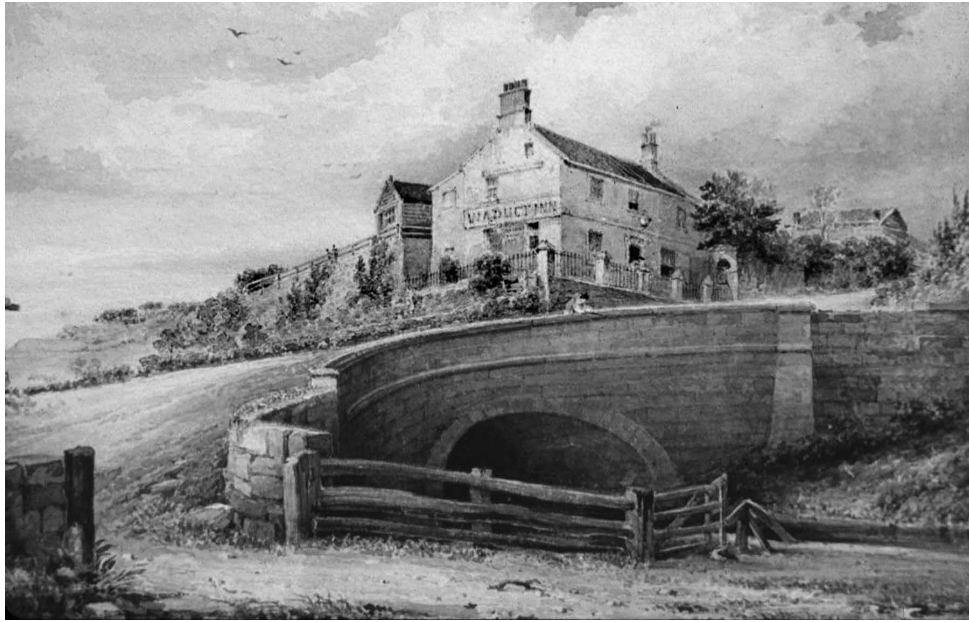
A striking feature below the inn is the Limpley Stoke Viaduct which carried the new road over the Midford Valley; regarded in its day as a notable engineering achievement. William McAdam senior was then General Surveyor of the Black Dog Trust between 1819 until his death in 1836, and it has been suggested that Telford was responsible for the design, although it is not known who actually built it.



Fig 2. 'View from the Warminster New Road near Bath'. An undated print taken soon after completion of the road, showing the Viaduct, Brassknocker Hill and Viaduct Inn on the left. Dundas Aqueduct can be seen on the extreme right.

At its northern end, the Viaduct crossed the Brassknocker road at the same point as the canal bridge, which had to be extended into a tunnel to carry the crossing of both roads. The narrow arch of the original bridge can still be seen today inside the main road tunnel which now serves as a covered boat-repair dock associated with the Brassknocker Canal Centre. One thing is certain; that the inn did not have the name of 'Viaduct' until the new turnpike road was put through. Clearly this provided the opportunity to profit from the additional traffic diverted from the old Bradford Road, in anticipation of which various additions to the inn began to appear from thereon.

→



Victoria Art Gallery, Bath

Fig 3. [Above] ‘The Viaduct Inn, Brassknocker Hill, near Bath’. A watercolour by an unknown artist showing the canal bridge and inn before the addition of the upper storeys and the building of the brewery.

Fig 4. [Below] A view of the Viaduct Hotel taken in about 1885, after the addition of the upper storeys and the building of the brewery.



THE SCARBOROUGH ROTUNDA

William Smith was the surveyor for the Somersetshire Coal Canal and was known as the “Father of English Geology” and that is where most people’s knowledge of him stops. In fact he went on to do many more things including mapping, stone mining, other canal surveys, drainage and, most unlikely of all, founded a museum. The World’s first purpose-built museum, the “Rotunda” in Scarborough, was the brainchild of William Smith and was built to display geology in chronological order.



Picture: Derrick Hunt

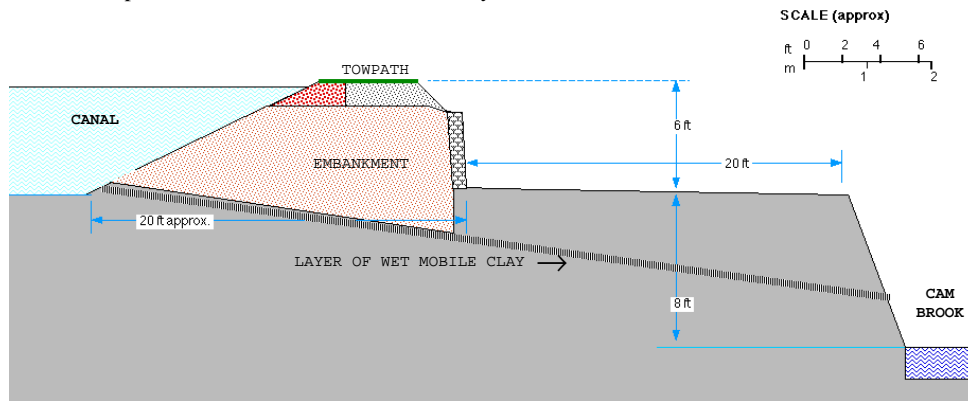
THE ROTUNDA, SCARBOROUGH

The fossils and rocks were arranged in the order in which they occurred, with the youngest in the cases at the top and the oldest at the bottom. Scarborough has a striking Jurassic coastline and provided Smith with an area of geological richness from which to collect his specimens when he worked nearby at Hackness. His employer was Sir John Johnstone, president of the Scarborough Philosophical Society which raised the money to build the museum in 1829. They employed Richard Sharp of York as the architect, who built the Rotunda to William Smith’s design. The present day building had two wings added in 1860 and has been modified recently to meet modern standards.

Although the displays are mainly focussed on geology in general and Scarborough in particular, Smith’s connection with the Somersetshire Coal Canal has not been neglected and forms the subject of several of the display boards. If you happen to be visiting the area, this museum is well worth a visit.

DERRICK HUNT

We are still debating the historical cause of this layer, and the layer of coal dust in some of the samples, but one thing is certain: there is no point in trying to patch up the leaks piecemeal; far more extensive repairs are needed to ensure the stability of the embankment.

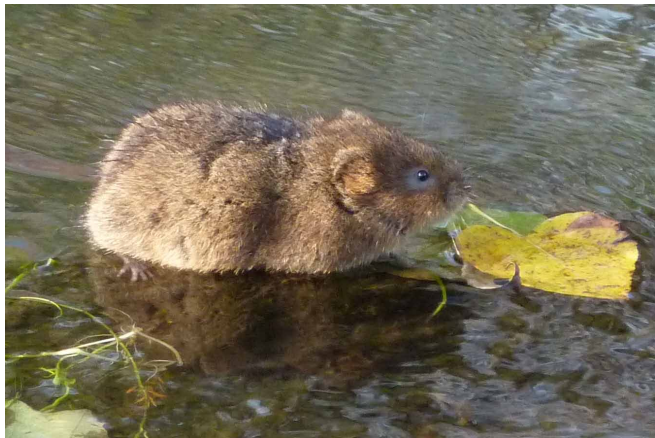


PROBABLE CROSS-SECTION OF THE CANAL EMBANKMENT AND CAM BROOK IN THE VICINITY OF THE LEAKS

If the water can be stopped at the canal side of the layer, the layer may eventually dry out and become solid again. There isn't enough good clay in the area to make new puddle for this, so a large quantity would have to be imported — weighing roughly 5 tonnes per metre of canal repaired. An alternative modern solution would be Bentonite matting or a plastic membrane held down with high density concrete blocks, but these are also heavy and require mechanical handling and road access for delivery, both of which are problematic in this area. Another alternative is vertical sheet piling along the water side of the embankment; this would be easier to get on site but may not be waterproof enough to stabilise the soil under the embankment. It could, however, be driven into the ground between the

embankment and the Cam, leaving the 'custard' layer still wet and mobile but with the piles preventing any flow into the Cam and physically supporting the embankment from the outside.

It is a rare work party when we don't receive compliments from passers-by about the improvement in the state of the canal since we began work on it, this is most gratifying and shows the importance of our continuing efforts, even if it sometimes seems as though we are just covering the same ground again and again.



Picture: Lymantria

A WATER VOLE — *Arvicola amphibius*
Which in our case we have not got

The Viaduct Inn and Brewery

Some time between 1870-76 extra floors were added to the basic structure, together with a brewery built onto the upper side of the inn, '.. with the latest modern improvements and steam power'. The site chosen for the brewery was not ideal but left the ground at the rear of the hotel free to develop a garden and recreational facilities to be enjoyed by excursionists. The elevated garden enjoys a wide view along the Avon and Midford valleys and was always treated as a viewing point, enhanced by the addition of a small summer house, later replaced by a round 'gazebo'. On the upper side of the garden a long Concert Hall was also built on an east-west alignment with an apsidal western end, apparently at the same time as the brewery (the architecture is of this period). Later sales details also refer to a bowling alley, a bar parlour, tap room, kitchen, larder, dairy, scullery and piggeries. Practically all of these improvements were complete by the 1880s, mostly introduced by J.Frederick West who owned the property from 1871 until 1892 when his ill health led to its sale to the Bath Brewery Ltd for £2,000. When advertised to let shortly after this, the press notice referred to a large and profitable trade, stabling for 28 horses, coach houses, a garden, concert hall, 10 bedrooms and 4 sitting rooms.

The Viaduct 'Hotel'

The later history of the inn - it became renamed a 'hotel' in the early 1890s - has not been fully researched, but local newspaper files have reports which refer to works' outings which stopped at the pub during late 19th century summers. Examples include; The Bristol YMCA Ramblers who took tea here in April 1886; The Stonebridge Printers' day out, taking dinner and tea 'in the large hall' in September 1888; and a visit by J.S.Fry's chocolate factory fire brigade in July 1899. These reports often mention 'the beautiful scenery' and the views from the pub grounds, clearly an important attraction for the business. It very likely that some of these excursions were part of a cruise along the K.&A. Canal, culminating at the inn, along the Coal Canal, a few hundred yards away from the Dundas Aqueduct. It was also a regular venue for auction sales advertised in the Bath Chronicle around this time.



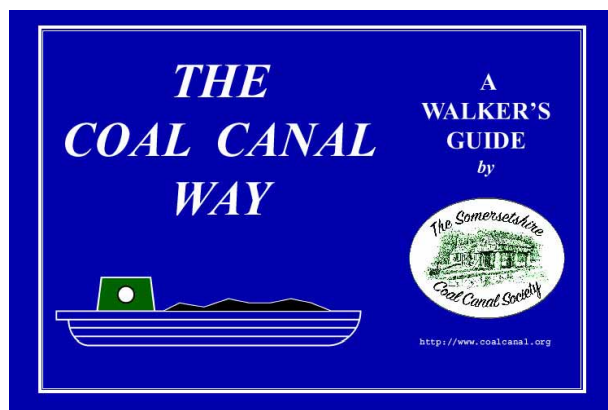
Fig 5. The Hotel in the 1950s, during the lifting of the track of the Camerton Branch railway. The concert hall is plainly visible behind the Hotel, together with the 'gazebo' on the corner of the garden.

To be continued in WH 76

THE COAL CANAL WAY

One of the questions that often crops up when discussing the Somersetshire Coal Canal with members of the public is the matter of access. In particular, people keep asking if there is a book of walks along the canal which they could buy. Whilst there have been a few books, booklets and pamphlets with walks that partly included the canal, there has only ever been one book that was written specifically about walking the canal and that is now long out of print. The S.C.C.S. has now taken steps to remedy this omission by publishing its own book of walks: The Coal Canal Way.

There are public footpaths running along or close to much of the route of the Somersetshire Coal Canal and many of these are well used, with the remains of the canal nearby being an added attraction. Others of these footpaths are not so well-walked or their proximity to the canal is less obvious and rarely recognised by the people who use them, so their amenity value is not fully exploited. It was during a conversation between Cleo Newcombe-Jones of Bath & North East Somerset Council and our Chairman, Patrick Moss, that the idea of linking all these footpaths together to form a single long-distance walk was raised. Thus, the basic concept of a *Coal Canal Way* was born.



Patrick put the idea forward at a Committee meeting in July 2018, where it was greeted with a mixture of approval and mild apathy. The approval was because it fulfilled the long felt need for a dedicated Coal Canal walks booklet and because it would tie together the whole length of the northern branch of the Canal as a complete entity in a way that hadn't been done before and would be particularly beneficial in any future negotiations for protection and restoration. The apathy was because someone would have to do

something about it — and that looked like a lot of extra work. A further meeting with B&NES was planned, so there was also a deadline by which at least some of that work had to be completed.

It wasn't practical for the Society to just pop out on the occasional weekend and nail a few waymarks to trees along the route, much more detailed planning than that was required and, in any case, waymarking was the province of B&NES, not of enthusiastic individuals. The first step was to decide upon the route; the southern branch to Radstock was already designated part of a National Cycle Route, so we would concentrate only on the northern branch between Dundas and Paulton. We had to stick strictly to public footpaths and roads and avoid any temptation to stray onto private property, however interesting such an alternative route might have seemed. Luckily, after re-working the route several times, we found it was possible to keep quite close to the Canal for most of the distance on existing public routes.

For walks that return to their starting point, there are three options: they can be circular or there-and-back-again or one-way with return transport from the far end. Most of the existing publications described the circular type which had a big disadvantage as far as canal walks are concerned: the canal is a single track, so at least half the distance of each walk could only be along routes that had nothing to do with the canal. This ruled out circular walks if we wanted to make the canal our main feature. The two other types could be, in effect, the same walk with just different transport arrangements — so

Mark soldiered on, blocking the holes with sandbags, clay and other materials until finally the canal held water once again. The feed pipe through the bund at Terminus Bridge was cleared out to increase the flow of water and the canal began to slowly fill. Heavy rains at the end of the Autumn completed the job and, as Christmas approached, the section was once again full of water with a healthy surplus cascading over the stop planks at Withy Mills.

Disaster struck two days before our January work party: we had planned to begin draining the canal on the previous day, ready to make some borings to find out what lay beneath the bed and the embankment in the area of the leaks; but when we arrived, we discovered that it had emptied itself. The original discharge into the Cam had returned with a vengeance and had been joined by another, even more vigorous, about 10 ft upstream of it. A series of small perforations ran along the base of the embankment where it met the bed of the canal and water was disappearing down them as quickly as it was being replenished.



Picture: Mark Sherry

A LINE OF SANDBAGS AND CLAY BLOCKING THE HOLES



JOHN CLUTTERBUCK
AUGERING WELL

mobile and eventually quite sloppy; this was the state of the 'custard' layer through which the leaks had been finding their way. →

NAVYING NOTES

When the length of canal between Terminus Bridge and Withy Mills Stop Point was being restored to water in the Autumn of 2014, several unexplained features were discovered in the canal embankment and the embankment itself was found to be different from normal canal construction. At the time we were cautiously optimistic that all would be well, but recent events are casting doubt on the integrity of this section.

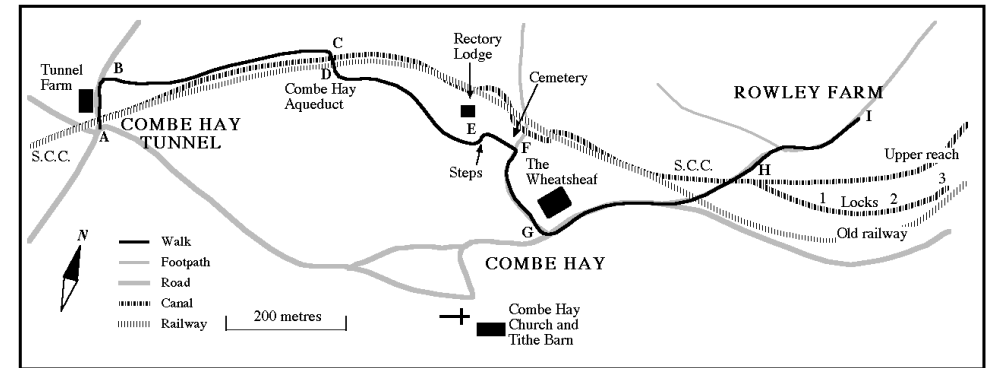
When the section was filled above a certain depth of water, it almost immediately began to leak very slightly in a region about 150 metres East of Terminus Bridge (we used the stop plank grooves at Terminus Bridge as the datum point for all our measurements). At first we were concerned by this, but the volume of water lost was small and, more importantly, the leaking water wasn't turbid, which indicated that it wasn't carrying away material and enlarging a hole. Since then the leak has continued when the canal fills up, but it hasn't got any worse.

The same could not be said for another leak which was first spotted as a small discharge into the Cam Brook. Then, during the Autumn of 2018, we began to worry that the canal wasn't filling as much as it ought after heavy rain. Mark Sherrey, who has since become our new Work Party Manager, spent many hours patching minor leaks in the region of 220 metres from datum — which also happened to be the point of nearest approach of the brook to the canal embankment. As soon as he blocked up one leak, another appeared in a slightly different place. The small discharge had become a much larger one, which ran muddy when the mud of the canal was stirred up in the vicinity of each new sink hole. There was obviously a whole network of channels draining into quite a large hole in the bank of the brook.



A HOLE IN THE CANAL BED WITH NO SIGN OF A 'LAWN' *Picture: Mark Sherrey*

At first we suspected that the holes could have been dug by animals: rats or water voles being the prime suspects. Water voles are a protected species and we would have had great difficulty dealing with them if they had been the cause of the problem. Luckily their burrows have a characteristic feature in the form of a close-cropped 'lawn' of grass near the entrances and this was completely absent from the holes we had discovered. Mark engaged the services of a Canal & River Trust ecologist who confirmed that water voles were definitely not the culprits but a few rats in the area may well have taken advantage of some existing holes and were giving the impression that they had been responsible for their creation. If any animals had dug these holes, it was a mystery why they would repeatedly have tunnelled all the way from the Cam to come up underneath the Canal, only to be drowned by the inrush of water — perhaps it was some kind of upside-down lemming?



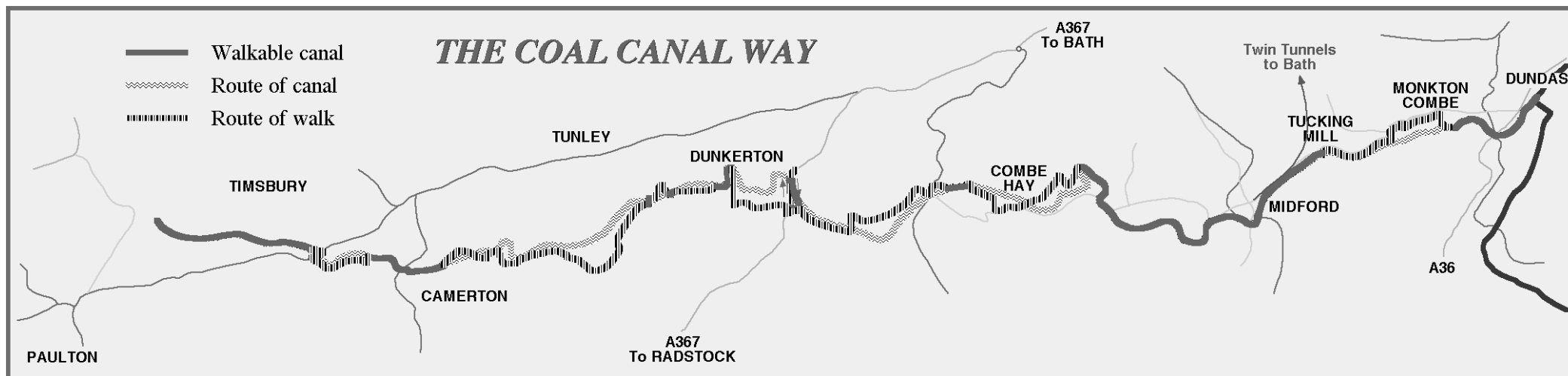
A SAMPLE MAP FROM THE BOOKLET

we inclined towards writing the walks as there-and-back-again; leaving it to the walkers themselves to decide how they reached the beginning and/or end of each walk.

We immediately recognised that different people would require different lengths of walk, so the most obvious way to deal with this was to make each walk relatively short, but indicate how they could be joined together to form longer walks if necessary. This created a conflict with the there-and-back-again principle which was neatly solved, quite early in the writing process, by treating each walk as two separate walks in opposite directions. Anyone wanting to walk just a short distance could follow one of the walks and then come back again by following the other. For a longer distance, at the end of the first walk, the page could be turned so as to continue seamlessly onto the next walk. Thus walks, and their return journeys, could be concatenated to form anything from a simple stroll to a long-distance route march and they could be started from whichever end was most convenient.

A master map was drawn up showing the route of the canal with the walkable sections marked. Alternative footpath and road routes were then worked out for the unwalkable sections, keeping as closely as possible to the canal; then we set about deciding where each walk should start and finish. At first we thought all the starting and finishing points ought to be located with easy road access, but this placed impossible constraints on some sections of the route. Instead it was decided that every walk should have at least one end easily accessible, but it wouldn't matter as much about the opposite end. It would have been nice to have been able to give information about bus connections and other public transport links, but these were so infrequent and variable that we reluctantly had to omit them as they could have become very misleading if there had been changes during the anticipated lifetime of the publication.

Sometimes the route had to be varied from the strictly correct one because of unexpected local factors: The closest route to the canal between Dunkerton and Stoneage Lane would have been the footpaths on the northern side of Dunkerton Colliery, but when we walked these we discovered that they were difficult to follow, showed no obvious sign of association with the canal and would rapidly become treacherous in wet weather. The footpath following the Cam Brook around the southern edge of the colliery batch was almost as close to the canal route and gave a much easier and more pleasant walk. The various interesting features near the A367 at Dunkerton could have been visited by a simpler route than the circuitous one finally chosen, but this would have meant crossing a fast major road from the inside of a blind bend. To avoid this frightening and extremely dangerous manoeuvre, a more convoluted but much safer route was chosen, so that the road crossing occurs at a point of good visibility.



The walks could be made available on the Web for those with mobile devices (although reception along the Cam Valley is extremely patchy at present) but it was anticipated that many traditional walkers would prefer to carry this information with them in the form of a printed guide book. To fit into a coat or rucksack pocket, the book really ought not to be larger than A5 size: the same size as a copy of *Weigh-House*. It was decided to keep it to 24 pages, as this would be a convenient number for our printers to make up into a booklet — again this was similar to *Weigh-House* and would allow the software already set up for the magazine to be used for the booklet. Finally, an initial print run of 350, the same as *Weigh-House*, was decided upon, as the cost was already known and could be used as the basis for our pricing scale.

The major departure from the *Weigh-House* format was the decision to print the pages in 'landscape' rather than 'portrait', in a similar way to a wall calendar. This was to allow the maps, which were wide and squat, to spread across the maximum width of a single page without having to cross a 'gutter' between two pages. Conveniently that then allowed the two versions of each walk to be printed as a pair of side-by-side columns beneath the map. The usual page numbering scheme was abandoned in favour of giving a number to each map and printing it at the top and bottom of the relevant pages; this later caused some consternation at the printers when they diligently checked the layout before printing it and found the 'page numbering' appeared to be duplicated!

At a late hour, it was pointed out to us that the inclusion of an extra walk, to Dundas from Bath, would encourage a greater number of walkers, especially those who depended on public transport. It would also tie the route into several other important corridors, rather than being a 'float alone' scheme in the middle of the countryside

with no major connections. This called for a significant reorganisation of the whole booklet — and the noble pontifications that had formed an Introduction Page were scrapped to create more space (probably the best thing that could have happened to them).

The arrangement of walks finally decided upon was:

1. Paulton to Radford
2. Radford to Camerton
3. Camerton to Carlingcott
4. Carlingcott to Dunkerton
5. Dunkerton to Combe Hay Tunnel
6. Combe Hay Tunnel to Rowley Farm
7. Rowley Farm to Bridge Farm
8. Bridge Farm to Midford
9. Midford to Monkton Combe
10. Monkton Combe to Dundas
11. Dundas to Bath

The next decision was what sort of logo we needed to tie it all together. It had to be a very basic outline drawing which conveyed the impression of a coal canal to an untutored member of the public, rather in the manner of a road sign. A rough sketch of a boatload of coal proved to be perfectly adequate, so this was adopted for the booklet and will be simple enough to use on the waymarks when they are produced.



The colour scheme was the cause of much thought and debate: yellow and green were already used for other routes, brown would merge into the landscape and red would rapidly fade (or be confused with emergency signs). Eventually a royal blue was chosen, the cover of the booklet having the logo in white on a blue background — but the waymarks might have to be printed blue on white to show up better.

At one of our Autumn meetings in Radstock, we distributed draft copies of the booklet free to anyone who was prepared to walk a section or read the text and let us know of any corrections that might have been needed. We would like to pride ourselves that the sparsity of replies was because we made such a good job of the initial draft and not because readers had fallen asleep or walkers had never found their way back.

An appeal online to our Facebook group also brought forth several willing volunteers, many of whom were not seasoned ramblers, but who were prepared to get out and test the various routes for us. Draft copies were given to members of the West Wiltshire Branch of the Ramblers Association to gather the impressions of the more dedicated rambling fraternity. Once again the number of corrections received was gratifyingly small, so, by the end of October 2018 we finally felt confident to send it off to the printers — less than four months after it was first suggested.

At the time of publication, we have covered more than half our printing costs and sales are still steady. Copies of *The Coal Canal Way* can be obtained directly from the Society, either on-line or at any of our events, or from specialist bookshops in the Bath area.