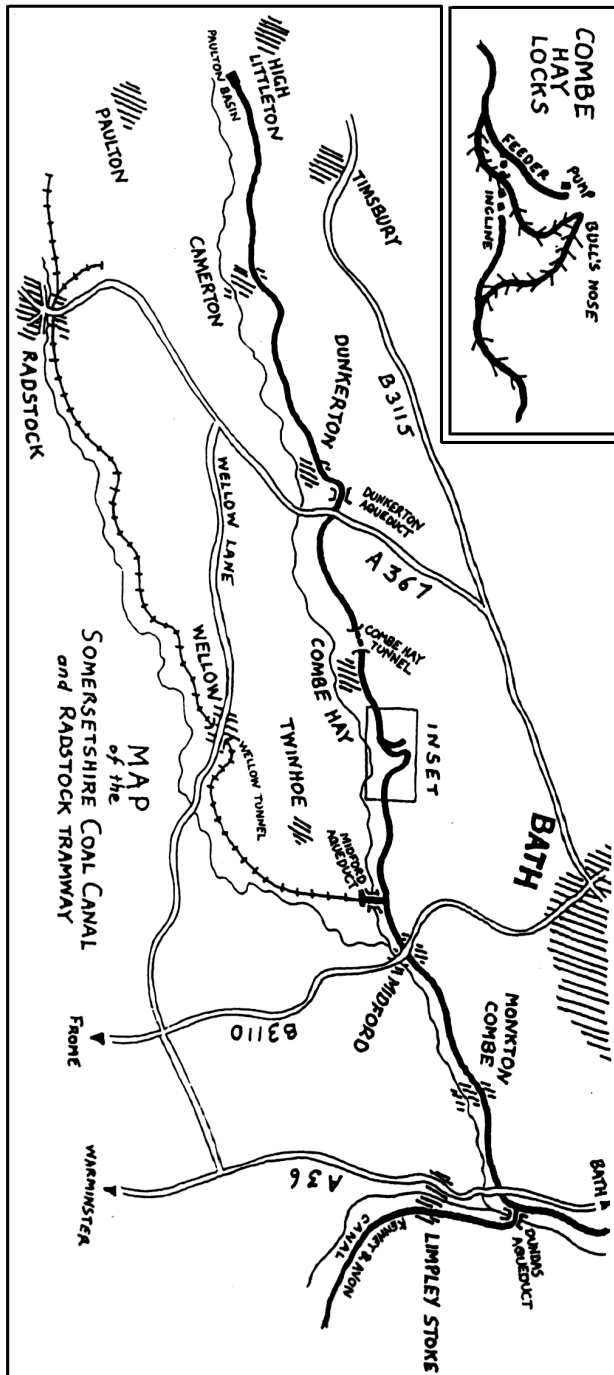


WEIGH-HOUSE

THE MAGAZINE OF THE
SOMERSETSHIRE COAL CANAL SOCIETY



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



Nº 76

MAY 2019

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

CHAIRMAN – PATRICK MOSS

13, Cheap Street, Frome, BA11 1BN

☎ 07736 859882 *E-mail:* chairman@coalcanal.org.uk

SECRETARY – VACANT

TREASURER – DAVID CHALMERS

'Shalom' 40, Greenleaze, Knowle Park, Bristol BS4 2TL

☎ 0117 972 0423 *E-mail:* treasurer@coalcanal.org.uk

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY – STEVE PAGE

36, Lower Whitelands, Radstock, Bath BA3 3JW

☎ 01761 433418 *E-mail:* membership@coalcanal.org.uk

SECRETARY TO THE COMMITTEE – JOHN DITCHAM

☎ 01225 8308711 *E-mail:* secretary@coalcanal.org.uk

HISTORICAL ADVISOR – MIKE CHAPMAN

51, Newton Road, Twerton, Bath BA2 1RW

☎ 07973 918467 *E-mail:* history@coalcanal.org.uk

WORK PARTY ORGANISER - MARK SHERREY

☎ 07973 918467 *E-mail:* workparty@coalcanal.org.uk

ENGINEERING ADVISOR – RICHARD HIGNETT

☎ 01793 855631 *E-mail:* engineering@coalcanal.org.uk

MAGAZINE EDITOR – ADRIAN TUDDENHAM

88, Mount Road, Southdown, Bath BA2 1LH

☎ 01225 335974 *E-mail:* editor@coalcanal.org.uk

ARCHIVIST – ROGER HALSE

4, Westminster Gardens, Chippenham, Wiltshire SN14 0DF

☎ 01249 652846 *E-mail:* archive@coalcanal.org.uk

COMMITTEE MEMBER — DERRICK HUNT

CO-OPTED:

SHELAGH & JONATHAN HETREED, RUTH EVERSLEY.

VACANCY: SECRETARY.

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

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,

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:

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 20th October —10:00

WALK — DUNKERTON, INCLUDING THE AQUEDUCTS

Meet: Dunkerton Parish Hall

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

Note: Social evenings will now be on the 4th Thursday of the month to avoid clashes with other societies' meetings

Thursday 24th October— 19:30

SOCIAL EVENING — 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

Sunday 3rd November —10:00

WORK PARTY — Location to be advised

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

Sunday 17th November —10:00

WALK — DUNKERTON TO COMBE HAY

Meet: Dunkerton Layby on the A367

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

Thursday 28th November— 19:30

SOCIAL EVENING — T.B.A.

by Patrick Moss

Meet: The Radstock Working Men's Club.

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

Sunday 1st December —10:00

WORK PARTY — Location to be advised

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

— 2020 —

Sunday 5th January —10:00

WORK PARTY — Location to be advised

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

Sunday 2nd February —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.

The walks include detailed explanations, so 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

WEIGH - HOUSE N^o 76

EDITOR'S NOTES	3
CHAIRMAN'S NOTES	4
LEGACY	4
DONATIONS	4
NEW MEMBERS	5
MEMBERSHIP MATTERS	5
'ELECTRONIC' WEIGH-HOUSE	5
LETTER TO THE EDITOR	5
BEYOND THE BASINS	6
THE CONTRACTOR'S RAILWAY — Part 1	8
SITES OF PLEASURE OUTINGS ON THE KENNET & AVON AND SOMERSETSHIRE COAL CANALS — Part 2	
by Mike Chapman	16
NAVYING NOTES	19
DATES FOR YOUR DIARY	21

EDITOR'S NOTES

We cover a variety of different subjects in this issue, all of which are relevant to the S.C.C., but slightly removed from the 'mainstream' canal articles which make up the bulk of canal-related reading matter. Far too little attention is paid to the supply and management of water, which is often taken for granted until it runs out. Our article *Beyond the Basins* deals with one of the sources by which the canal was supplied with water in its early days and *Navvying Notes* includes an update on what happens when it literally *runs out*.

Our main article, *The Contractor's Railway* is the first part of a three-part series on the temporary railway that was used to build another railway: the G.W.R. Camerton to Limpley Stoke line. Railways may not seem directly relevant to the S.C.C. at first, but several sites along the Canal contain interesting remains which would not make archaeological sense if we had not known of the Contractor's Railway's existence. With that in mind, there are some aspects of the remains of the lock flight which have not made sense so far; interpreting these in terms of the Contractor's Railway offers a plausible explanation of how they may have come about and what purpose they may have served.

The concluding part of Mike Chapman's article on *Sites of Pleasure Outings...* sheds a fascinating insight on the businesses which flourished alongside the S.C.C. and gives a tantalizing glimpse of the goings-on which were not part of the original brief of the canal proprietors. It is interesting to speculate on whether something similar might result in future from our present restoration efforts.

ADRIAN TUDDENHAM

CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

Unusually, these notes were composed in the studios of *Frome F.M.*, as I spent the evening as studio manager following my own show. However they follow a weekend on the canal, the Somersetshire Coal Canal no less, spent on board my boat moored at Brassknocker Basin. On a glorious weekend literally hundreds took to the water, there was a constant stream of boats, mainly canoes and the electric day boats, but also cruisers and the occasional narrowboat, with pedestrians and cyclists on the towpath outnumbering them all — and this was just the S.C.C., not the Kennet and Avon Canal. One thing struck me: nearly all these boats would be going no further than Bath or Bradford — if they'd been starting from Paulton Basin on a restored canal, their cruise would have taken them no further than Combe Hay. The walkers and cyclists travel further, but locks, bridges and even an absence of water don't impede those users.

That is in part why, at the last A.G.M. we announced the Coal Canal Way project; that, and a footpath being considerably easier to deliver than a full-sized canal. We have made great strides with the Coal Canal Way, but now we must be bolder. This weekend's experience shows that whilst our ultimate aim should be the restoration of the whole canal, a vibrant and worthwhile scheme could be much shorter - if our canal were navigable from Brassknocker to Midford it would be just as well used as the 600 yards already in water. A bolder move would see a couple of miles of our summit level open and available for navigation - the canoeists, walkers and day boaters would still find this attractive, as would those who, like me, were afloat but didn't actually go anywhere in their vessel. Such schemes would be stepping stones to the bigger picture, whilst also being viable on their own.

As we approach the A.G.M. it is time to focus a little more on our vision for the Coal Canal, to add some specifics, to clarify some of the detail not just on what we want to do but how we want to do it and why - see you all on June 11th.

PATRICK MOSS

LEGACY

A generous legacy has been received from the estate of the late Terence Reed. This will be put towards the restoration programme and we have planted an oak tree at Paulton Dry Dock in his memory.

DONATIONS

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

Mr. R. Crowley
Ms. S. Flint
Mr. F. Mitchell

Ms. H. Kelly
Mr. & Mrs. R. Wilsdon

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY — 2019

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 SALTFORD BRASS MILLS

by Tony Coverdale

Meet: Saltford Brass Mill

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

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

Tuesday 28th June — 19:30

SOCIAL EVENING for Members & guests

Hosted by: Shelagh Hetreed

Meet: Paulton Engine

For further details please contact: *Shelagh Hetreed* ☎ 01761 569908

Sunday 7th July —10:00

WORK PARTY — Location to be advised

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

Sunday 4th August —10:00

WORK PARTY — Location to be advised

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

Sunday 1st September —10:00

WORK PARTY — Location to be advised

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

Sunday 15th September —10:00

WALK — HOPYARD CAMERTON TO DUNKERTON

Meet: Dunkerton Water Treatment Works (Sewage Works)

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

Sunday 6th October —10:00

WORK PARTY — Location to be advised

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

Many years ago we realised that it would be desirable to have a storage facility near the worksites where we could leave tools and equipment, to save carrying them to and fro for each work party. Two local landowners, one at Combe Hay and one at Paulton, came to our rescue and agreed to allow us to park Allen Scythes in their sheds. They were by far the heaviest and most cumbersome items in our inventory, so that solved the most difficult problem, but we still had to move a vanload of smaller tools and wheelbarrows every time we had a work party. The brick blockhouse, previously a water pumping station, in the meadows below Bridge Farm in Combe Hay, was briefly considered as a potential store and clubhouse, but it was decided that this was too much for the Society to take on; a portable shed was more in keeping with our needs.

Ever on the lookout for a bargain, Adrian noticed a temporary metal storage shed being demolished on a building site near his house and found that the builder, Joe Haysler, was happy to donate it to a good cause (the S.C.C.S.). It was dismantled and stored, flat-pack style, at the bottom of Adrian's garden — and there it stayed for many years as there was nowhere else to put it. We have now been given permission by a landowner at Paulton to put the shed on his land, so the kit of parts has been dug back out of the undergrowth and checked for completeness [See picture below].

The next step is to lay down a concrete base, then the shed can be transported to Paulton and reassembled on site. With the help of a large quantity of new screws and plastic washers, to replace the missing ones, and the addition of a few shelves and storage racks, this should allow us to keep our tools safely where they are most needed



MARK SHERREY SHOWING HIS SUPPORT FOR OUR NEW AIR-CONDITIONED SHED

NEW MEMBERS

The Society welcomes the following new members:

Mr. A. Eccles	Frome	Mr. P. Perry	Braintree
Mr. D. Ford	Midsomer Norton	Mr. G. Puddephat	Reading
Mr. I. Moss	Stockport	Ms. M. Watkins	Stirling
Mr. J. Myerson	Sutton		

MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

Thank you to all who have already renewed their membership for 2019 — your continued support is appreciated. Those who pay every year by cash, cheque, or on-line and have not yet renewed this year, please do so as soon as possible. For me this will mean fewer people to contact individually to remind! Your subscription remains at the rate at which you joined, as a reward for your loyalty, but you may, of course, add a little more as a donation if you wish.

STEVE PAGE
MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY.

'ELECTRONIC' WEIGH-HOUSE

A small but increasing number of our members receive their copy of Weigh-House 'electronically', by downloading it from the Internet. There are several advantages to doing it this way: you receive your copy earlier than a posted version, you can see recent photographs in colour (although the historic ones will still be black & white!) and it saves the Society printing and postal costs.

If you would like to receive the magazine electronically, please contact our Membership Secretary, Steve Page, membership@coalcanal.org.uk, and he will arrange this.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

I was very sad to read in WH75 of Bob Parnell's death. I'd echo every word of the obituary. I enjoyed every minute of the many work parties we went to together in the late '90s, with Bob quietly steering what we did, and always seeming to have the right crew and the right tools for the job — including, occasionally, quite hard-to-get items on loan from a source known only to him. He also had the right judgement of who would be capable of what jobs (up ladders, power strimming, brush cutting and so on), so no frustrations arose there.

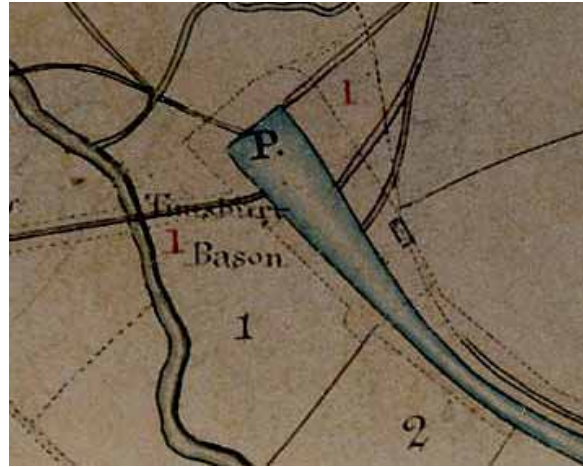
I'd just add that Bob was kind and thoughtful enough to send to me, quite unsolicited, an S.C.C.S. T-shirt - just like the one he's wearing in the photo - some years after I'd had to cease work party participation and had moved away from the area. I still wear it with enjoyment — and now also in his memory.

Keith Drury, Leicester

BEYOND THE BASINS

It is generally assumed that the western end of the Somersetshire Coal Canal is marked by the water's edge of Timsbury Basin, but the structures of the canal have been found to continue for some distance further westwards, on land that was owned by the Coal Canal Company. During excavations to lay a culvert in that area, in May 2015, a very solid wall was discovered about 11 metres further West than the end of the basin.

The Cruse Map of c.1805 shows a dotted line running around the basin area, but it is not clear what this represents. On the southern side of the basin it could mark the top of the retaining embankment;



A SECTION OF THE CRUSE MAP SHOWING TIMSBURY BASIN

this could be consistent with the lines underneath the word "Timsbury", as the tramway to Upper Engine Pit, which is shown crossing the brook, was probably on a built-up causeway.

To the West of the point marked "P", is a leat which brought water into the canal from the junction of three feeders and an overflow drain to the Cam Brook. At the point where this crosses the dotted line, a wall was discovered during the laying of a pipeline. It was immediately apparent that this was not an insubstantial field boundary wall or part of a minor structure related to the Wharfinger's Cottage, even though a boundary wall is visible in approximately the same position in an old photograph of Timsbury Basin and the cottage.



ENLARGEMENT OF A PORTION OF A PHOTOGRAPH OF TIMSBURY BASIN showing [left to right] the cottage garden bounded by a fence, the leat, more cottage garden bounded by a wall, the wharfinger's cottage, kitchen, outbuildings and pigsty.

NAVYING NOTES

The first two work parties we ever did were experimental affairs at the Combe Hay lock flight under the guidance of the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers. Not only was this a 'first' for the Society, but it was also a 'first' for the landowner; none of us knew what to expect. We must have created a good impression because we were allowed to continue, this time under our own management, and gradually cleared the area around Locks 11 to 15 over the course of the next few years.

Those work parties were led by Bob Parnell, who put in an immense amount of work to ensure that they were a success. Eventually, through age and illness, Bob decided to call it a day - but there was no-one for him to hand the work to. For several years, the work parties became self-organising, with Adrian Tuddenham as the reluctant figurehead, waiting for the day when someone else could take the job on and do it properly.

Recently Mark Sherrey has joined the Society and has enthusiastically taken on the rôle of Work Party Manager, he is currently assessing the situation at Paulton and hopes to come up with some practical solutions to the problems we face. In the meantime he is continuing keep the present format of work parties going, with scrub-bashing and maintenance taking priority over any long-term plans — which in any case would need to be discussed with all the parties involved.

The biggest challenge at present is the leaking embankment near Withy Mills stop point. Mark has temporarily shut off the water supply to this section, but with warmer weather there is a risk of the puddle clay drying out and becoming damaged, so a temporary solution may have to be found in order to retain enough water to keep the clay damp. Speculation still continues as to the exact cause and extent of the leak; various solutions have been considered, but it is apparent that further investigation is needed before the correct one can be decided upon.

→



Photograph: Mark Sherrey

WATER POURING OVER WITHY MILLS STOP POINT FOLLOWING HEAVY RAIN A FEW DAYS BEFORE THE LEAK DRAINED THE CANAL



Fig 8. A BOAT OUTING (WITH MUSIC) FROM TROWBRIDGE IN c.1905 MOORED AT DUNDAS WHARF

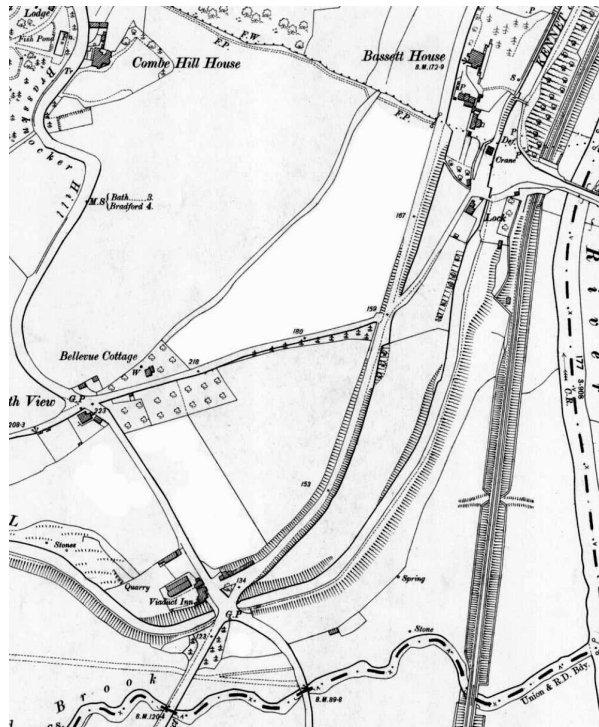
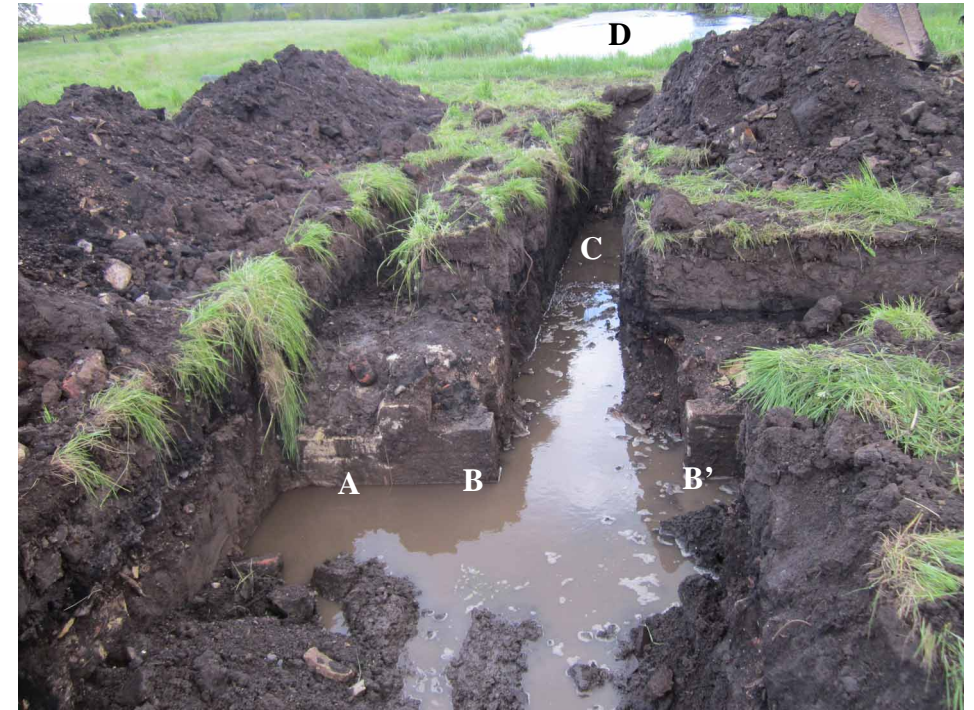


Fig 9. [Left] OS MAP OF 1899 SHOWING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE VIADUCT INN lower left, COMBE HILL HOUSE (FORMER BRASSKNOCKER INN) upper left, AND BASSETT HOUSE upper right

Nevertheless, entertainment and refreshment could still be obtained at the Viaduct Inn a little further along, thanks to which pleasure excursions to Dundas Aqueduct by boat from towns along the line of the K&A continued to be popular through to its decline in the 20th century.

MIKE CHAPMAN

This was a nicely-faced heavily-built mortared wall which the digger was unable to penetrate. What is more, it was faced on the West side and rough on the side facing Timsbury Basin, so it is reasonable to assume that the West side was the one exposed to view. This rules out the possibility that it was a wharf wall, as that would have been vertical and smooth on the side facing the water. The photograph below shows the smooth facing (A), some quoins with stop-plank grooves (B) (B'), and a channel (C) leading eastwards towards Timsbury Basin (D)



A VIEW OF THE WALL LOOKING EASTWARDS WITH TIMSBURY BASIN IN THE BACKGROUND



It looks as though it was a retaining wall for the end of the canal, but placed some distance away so as to contain a broad embankment, which later became the cottage garden. The two quoins appeared to be some sort of sluice or stop point which controlled the water flowing into the canal or could be shut to prevent flooding from the Cam Brook, which is near canal level at this point.

[Left] VIEW OF THE QUOINS SHOWING THE STOP PLANK GROOVES (arrowed).

THE CONTRACTOR'S RAILWAY — Part 1

All the well-known books about the S.C.C. mention that the Limpley Stoke to Camerton branch railway line was built along the line of the canal shortly after that was abandoned, but very few of them contain much information about the physical evidence, other than the branch line itself, which might remain from the construction process. In attempting to plot the course of the contractor's temporary railway, which was used to bring in the materials needed to build the branch line, explanations may be deduced for some of the puzzling anomalies that have come to light during our explorations along the Northern Branch of the S.C.C..

A Brief History of Canal and Rail Transport Around the Cam Valley

- 1805 Somersetshire Coal Canal opened to carry coal from coalfields to the K&A Canal for distribution across the South of England.
- 1854 Great Western Railway broad gauge branch opened from Frome to Radstock.
- 1857 Proposed Bath & Weymouth Railway project, as the Wilts Somerset & Weymouth Railway, built along the Limpley Stoke valley with help from the G.W.R..
- 1871 Southern branch of S.C.C. sold to Somerset & Dorset Joint Railway Co..
- 1873 Bristol and North Somerset Railway was built from Bristol to Radstock, but it did not directly connect with the G.W.R. at Radstock.
- 1874 Frome to Radstock line converted to standard gauge.
- 1875 B.N.S.R. joined to G.W.R. at Radstock with passenger services extended to Frome.
- 1875 S&D.J.R. to Bath opened, coal from the Radstock area ceased to travel by canal.
- 1882 B.N.S.R. opened a branch line from Hallatrow to Camerton, taking coal trade away from the western end of the S.C.C.. A steep gradient at Hallatrow limited the weight of coal that could be carried per train in that direction, and much of the trade was bunkering coal for ships at Southampton, so the economics would have been better if the line could have continued eastwards from Camerton to Limpley Stoke.
- 1893 Liquidator appointed for S.C.C..
- 1904 Camerton to Limpley Stoke railway extension approved.
- 1907 Railway extension opened from Camerton as far as Dunkerton. The G.W.R. employed Pauling & C^o of Westminster as contractors for this work.
- 1910 Branch line completed from G.W.R. (ex-B&NSR) at Hallatrow via Camerton and Dunkerton to G.W.R. (ex-WS&WR) at Limpley Stoke.

Dundas Aqueduct

Initially there was no road access to the aqueduct, and it was not until about 1823 that the present trackway from Brassknocker Hill and Monkton Combe was put through so that Dundas wharf and its toll-house and crane could be set up for the export of Bath stone. Here again the opening of the new Warminster Turnpike road just a few yards above the wharf had a dramatic effect, providing new opportunities. In this case the ground on the north side of the wharf was adopted in 1836 for the building of a fine detached Italianate villa overlooking the aqueduct, commissioned by George Vivian, then owner of Claverton Manor, whose father John Vivian built the present Manor House (now the American Museum).

This villa (now Grade II listed), with fine views along the Lympley Stoke Valley, appears to have been built from the outset as a commercial investment. Now generally known as Bassett House (recently advertised as 'Pendragon House self catering'), it was initially called the 'Aqueduct Hotel', but in 1837 was occupied privately and renamed Combe Villa by Richard Parker, a canal carrier whose company ran a fleet of high-speed 'Scotch' boats from the wharf at the northern end of Sydney Gardens which ran twice daily between Bath and Bradford-on-Avon.

In about 1840 Parker's business was taken over by the canal carriers Messrs. Packer & Kiver, including the villa (now occupied by Richard Packer) which was advertised as the 'Claverton Hotel', the destination for afternoon pleasure boats 'The Scenery of which is most beautiful & not surpassed in the West of England'. Pleasure Boats to 'Claverton Hotel and Neighbourhood' left Bath at 3 o'clock in the afternoon (Abbey clock time), and returned at 7 o'clock in the evening. Legend has it that, owing to its discreet location, the hotel was associated with bawdy goings on, patronised by a wealthy clientele from Bath staying there overnight.

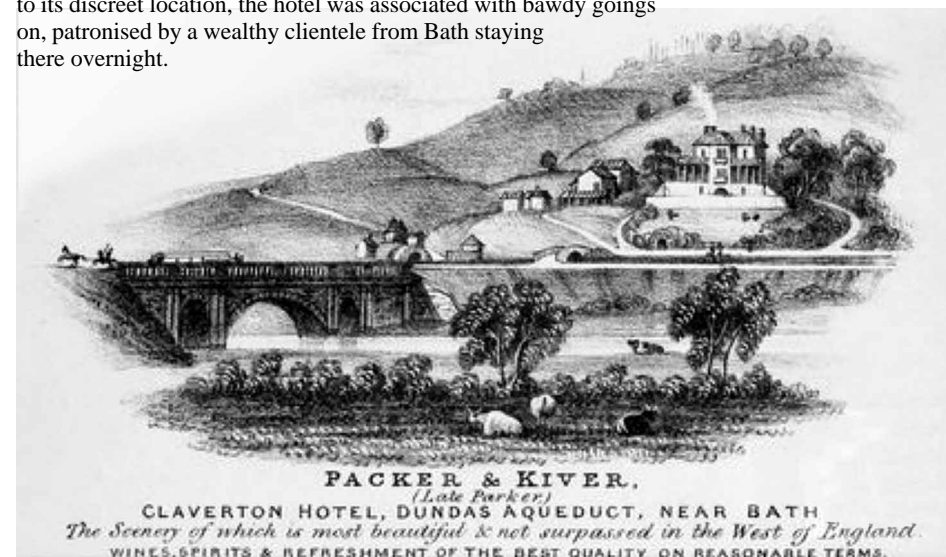


Fig 7. AN ADVERT FOR THE CLAVERTON HOTEL BY PACKER & KIVER showing the SCC entrance bridge, and the tollhouse, warehouse and turnover bridge on the K&A.C.

However, as a result of competition from the railways and a speed restriction imposed by the GWR (who had in the meantime acquired the canal), the Bradford/Bath Scotch boat service ceased running in the mid 1850s, after which time the villa appears to have reverted to use as a private residence with the change of name to Bassett House (presumably named after the former lords of Claverton Manor in the 18th century).

SITES OF PLEASURE OUTINGS ON THE KENNET & AVON AND SOMERSETSHIRE COAL CANALS – Part 2

by Mike Chapman

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

The Viaduct “Hotel” continued:

The closure of the Coal Canal in 1898 does not seem to have affected the fortunes of the inn, or its purchase by the G.W.R. for the construction of the Limpley Stoke to Camerton branch railway in 1910, although the latter did have a disruptive effect on passing traffic later on. Until the building of the railway the intersection between the Bradford Road and the viaduct remained a simple crossing, but since the line was built a little way below the abandoned canal, the present dog-leg taking the Bradford Road over the viaduct was adopted to avoid building a second bridge, producing the present traffic bottle-neck. The pub continued as a tied house, passing to the Bristol Brewery Georges & Co Ltd in 1923 when they took over the Bath Brewery, and then to Courages (later part of the Heineken group) as takeovers gathered pace in the licensed trade. Eventually it was closed in 2005 and converted to a business centre. The Concert Hall, rebuilt for reception and conference accommodation called The Chalet, has a strong association for Society members who may remember meeting there for the inauguration of the Society in 1993.

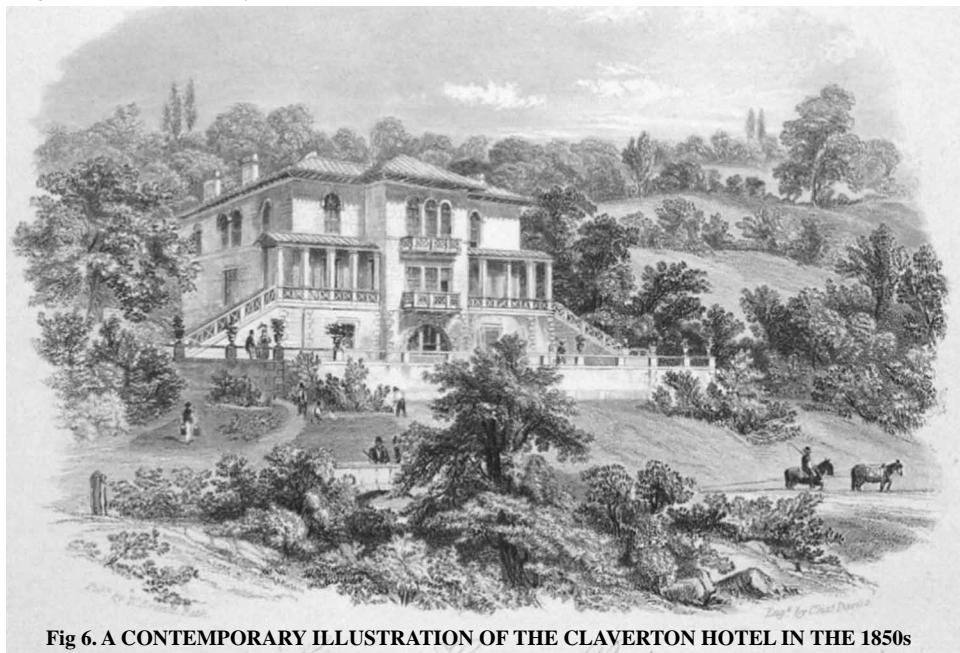


Fig 6. A CONTEMPORARY ILLUSTRATION OF THE CLAVERTON HOTEL IN THE 1850s

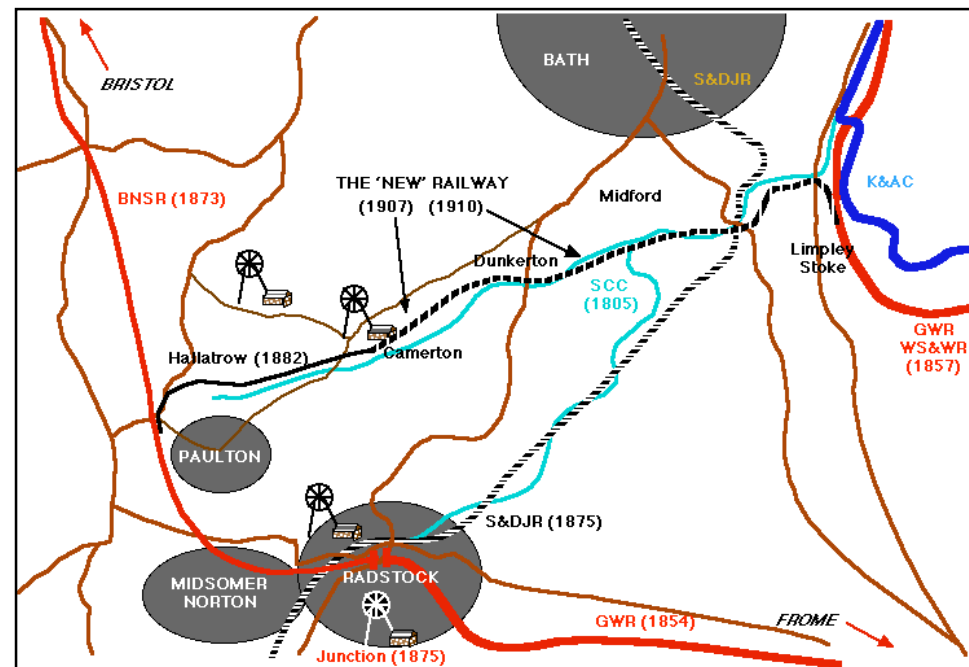


Fig. 1 — TRANSPORT LINKS FROM THE SOMERSET COALFIELDS

The section from Limpley Stoke to Dunkerton was the part of the railway whose construction generated the greatest interest and even resulted in articles in *The Engineer* of May 1907 and February 1909, which contain a great deal of useful information. Roger Halse has tracked down many documents and maps relating to the purchase of land and specifications for various structures, but these do not tell us how the actual construction was carried out.

The line was very picturesque and many photographs of it appear in books and on postcards, but these were taken long after the line had been completed and all signs of its construction cleared away. In the early 1950s, when the service had been withdrawn and the line was becoming derelict, an extremely popular film, *The Titfield Thunderbolt*, used it for many of its main location shots. Some DVD presentations of the film include out-takes as ‘extra content’; some of these shots were discarded for artistic reasons, some were taken as a record of the filming process, and they form a valuable source of historical information about the Cam Valley at that date.

On the ground there are still many traces of the route; the abutments of most of the bridges can still be identified and some of them have their arches intact. The station and halts haven’t fared so well; they have disappeared without trace or are only recognisable with a practiced eye and a good map. The largest structure to have been demolished was the viaduct across the bottom of The Hollow at Dunkerton; this had five brick arches of 40ft span each, with a total length of 235ft. With the village school (now the Parish Hall) and several houses just below it, demolishing the arches with explosives was a risky and spectacular business. Also at Dunkerton, the bridge over the A367 has been demolished and the abutments completely removed to allow the road to be widened and straightened.

Combe Hay Tunnel still exists, but the cuttings each side of it have been infilled, as have the deep cuttings above the Wheatsheaf pub at Combe Hay and at Upper Midford.

→

The cutting at Combe Hay was in two sections totalling 1.4 miles in length and nearly 40ft deep, entailing the removal of 139,538 cubic yards of material, mostly limestone. The other major cutting through limestone was at Upper Midford, that was much shorter, being only one-eighth of a mile long but it was 47ft deep. The embankment from Upper Midford to Midford is still intact, along with an imposing double-arched bridge (Holley's Bridge) over the Cam, but the steel bridge over Twinhoe Lane, almost underneath the S&D.J.R. viaduct at Midford, has been removed, leaving only the abutments and an adjacent brick arch over the Cam Brook.



The Engineer

Fig. 2 — THE STEEL BRIDGE OVER TWINHOE LANE UNDER CONSTRUCTION

Similarly, only the abutments remain of the steel bridge over the main road a hundred yards East of the viaduct. From Monkton Combe to Brassknocker Basin, the trackbed is used as a road; the line of the track can then be seen crossing the Cam by a double-arched bridge (one for the river and one for the cows) and sweeping around to continue alongside the main line as far as Limpley Stoke.



Fig. 4 — A VIEW OF THE BRIDGE OVER TWINHOE LANE, THE ARCH OVER THE CAM BROOK AND THE TRACKBED OF THE CAMERTON TO LIMPLEY STOKE LINE UNDER THE S&D RAILWAY VIADUCT AT MIDFORD.

The structure on the left appears to be a temporary water tower.

SUMMARY OF BILL No. 7.	
Bridges, etc.	
Over bridge at 1 mile 46 chains	688 18 4
Viaduct .. 2 .. 9	1892 3 7
Under bridge .. 2 .. 38	832 3 2
.. .. 2 .. 44	1995 11 11
Over .. (tunnel) 3 mile 40 chains	2,329 11 0
.. .. 3 .. 76	759 19 8
.. .. 4 .. 10	581 2 2
Under 4 .. 36	709
.. .. 4 .. 54	778 12 2
Over 4 .. 62	757 13 2
River bridge at 5 mile 35 chains	890 13 6
Viaduct .. 5 .. 54	1306 13 6
.. .. 5 .. 64	2,455 10 8
River bridge .. 6 .. 35	1963 18 4
Footbridge .. 7 .. 6	1737 17 4
Over bridge .. 7 .. 30	99 18 0
River .. 7 .. 36	1729 13 11
Avon River wall... .. .	1128 2 2
Station Yards and Platforms	1740 1 6
Accommodation Works outside Company's fences... ..	539 9 4
<i>Level crossings</i>	424 17 6
	66 11 9
Carried to General Summary	24631 7 8
	24,538 5 11

Fig. 3 — G.W.R. SUMMARY BILL No 7 Distances measured eastwards from Camerton

The photographs at at Midford were taken around 1907, so this particular machine was probably built some time in the early 1890s. A photograph, taken during the construction of the Manchester Ship Canal shows an almost identical machine and identifies it as a Dunbar & Ruston Steam Navy. During that construction work, 97 steam navvies, including 58 of the Dunbar & Ruston type, were used. The canal was finally completed and opened by Queen Victoria in 1894, so it would hardly be surprising to find a sudden upsurge in the use of steam navvies elsewhere after that date, because every major contractor in the country must have had a few spare ones looking for employment.



Fig. 12 — A DUNBAR & RUSTON STEAM NAVVY AT WORK ON THE MANCHESTER SHIP CANAL

Another interesting piece of information can be gleaned from looking carefully at what is behind the steam navy in the photograph taken at Upper Midford. Almost hidden below the new embankment, on the right is Upper Midford Bridge and to the left of it, in the background, it is just possible to see some sort of white construction along the line of the canal towpath in the vicinity of Midford Aqueduct.



Fig. 13 — ENLARGED PORTION OF Fig. 12, SHOWING THE SCENE BEHIND THE STEAM NAVVY

When that portion of the photograph is enlarged, it becomes clear that the white construction is a line of new ballast with a railway track laid upon it. At a position corresponding to the entrance to Midford Aqueduct, the track swerves to the right and then returns to its original alignment along the towpath. This would explain why the entrance to the Aqueduct appears to have been so substantially blocked off, it was infilled, after the canal closed, to sufficient width to support the contractor's railway.

To be continued in WH77

The two previous pictures (Figs 8 & 9) came from a series of photographs taken by the Bath photographer, George Love Dafnis, who would travel around the area on a bicycle at weekends, photographing scenes which he thought were sufficiently interesting to be published and sold as postcards. These postcards are now collectors' items and the original glass plate negatives, including many that were never published, form part of the *Bath In Time* collection which can be purchased online. Fortunately he seems to have been particularly interested in the construction of the "New Railway", so there is a good photographic record of the parts of it which he visited on his Sunday excursions — and the detail of these gives us a lot more more information about the contractor's railway than is available from written records.



Fig. 11 — STEAM NAVVY ON THE UPPER MIDFORD EMBANKMENT

The above photograph (Fig. 11) contains a lot of useful information. The steam navvy is shown perched on a section of temporary track, with the beginnings of another track alongside it. The location is the point where the eastern end of the cutting in the previous photograph meets the beginnings of an embankment leading to a two-arched bridge over the Cam; spoil from the sides of the cutting would be transported a short distance by wagon and tipped to form the embankment.

The steam navvy has the jib, which carried the 'stick' and bucket, mounted on a turret at the front of the machine, which allows it to be swivelled in an arc of about 90° each side of the centre line. This means that the bucket can, for instance, be used to dig away at material on one side and then swung to dump it into trucks on the opposite side, which is how it appears in the photograph to be set up for working. The turret system restricted the operating arc to a total swing of 180° and was quickly improved to give 360° of rotation by mounting the jib rigidly to the cab and boiler, then swivelling the entire unit. The design shown here, with the jib on a turret, was at least 10 years out of date at the time this photograph was taken, so this leads to some speculation about why the contractors were using such an old machine — indeed, historians have already raised the question of why they were using a steam navvy at all, when human navvies would have still been cheap to employ and much easier to transport to the site.

At Monkton Combe, the canal had been spanned by a cast iron footbridge. The railway engineers saw no reason to waste money with a brand new replacement, so they had it refurbished and raised on pillars to give the additional clearance needed for trains to pass under it. The central part of one of the spans is currently preserved at the Brassknocker Canal Centre and bears the legend "Cast at Paulton 1811".

To save a lot of earthworks, the canal had followed the contours whenever possible, but a century later the railway was able to take advantage of newer and cheaper digging technology and follow a straighter course. The canal was built as two long level pounds, with a steep lock flight between them to accommodate the difference in their levels, but the gradients of the railway were restricted to those a locomotive could easily climb. A combination of those two factors meant that for much of its route, although the railway was built on or near land owned by the canal company, it was not actually on the canal bed and did relatively little damage to the canal structure.

A good example of this is the track between Monkton Combe and Brassknocker, where the canal meanders first to the South of the railway alignment (where there is a section of canal bed in very good condition) and then to the North in a loop close against the hillside. Finally, just before it went under the A36 road below the Viaduct Hotel, the canal looped out sharply to the South — at this point the railway cut right through it twice and produced two cross-sections of the canal bed and towpath hanging part way up the railway embankment. In Winter, when the vegetation dies back, these are still discernable



Fig. 7 — THE TRACKBED AT BRASSKNOCKER LOOKING WESTWARD THROUGH THE BRIDGE UNDER THE A36 ROAD

The two arrows indicate the positions of the intercepted canal bed.

[This bridge is also visible in the photograph on P.9 of W.H.75]



Bob Hallam

Fig. 5 — THE FOOTBRIDGE AT MONKTON COMBE SPANNING THE CANAL



Monkton Combe School

Fig. 6 — THE SAME FOOTBRIDGE RAISED TO CLEAR THE RAILWAY
Photographed from the opposite side during demolition

→

The major engineering works between Combe Hay and Limpley Stoke included Combe Hay Tunnel, three brick over-bridges, four brick under-bridges and two steel box-girder type under-bridges. All these required significant quantities of heavy materials to be brought into the Cam Valley, which was only served by narrow winding country lanes and tracks across fields. Road vehicles drawn by heavy horses and traction engines would soon have rapidly churned the roads and fields into quagmires, so a temporary railway was the obvious answer.

Temporary railways were by no means unusual, they had been employed on most large building projects for many years and were also used by the military, whenever heavy materials needed to be transported across unsuitable ground. Special locomotives were made for the purpose by several manufacturers; they were specifically designed to cope with conditions of uneven track, sharp curves and steep gradients which would have defeated ordinary main line locomotives, but were limited to speeds which would make even the most languid rural stopping train look hasty by comparison. These locomotives were often purchased when required and then re-sold

to another contractor (or even back to the manufacturers) at the end of the job. The track was light in weight and very poorly laid; it was often taken up and re-laid several times during the work to keep up a constant supply of materials to the teams of bricklayers as they moved from site to site.



Fig. 8 — UNEVEN TEMPORARY TRACK NEAR LOCK 22

Some of the heaviest materials, such as the steel plates for the bridges at Midford, would have been almost impossible to transport without the temporary railway. Another unusual feature of this particular construction, which would not have been possible without a temporary railway for transport, was the use of 'steam navvies', instead of human ones, to construct the major cuttings and embankments.



Fig. 9 — A STEAM NAVVY DIGGING INTO THE HILLSIDE ABOVE UPPER MIDFORD, EAST OF LOCK 22 THE TEMPORARY RAILWAY IS IN THE FOREGROUND

The steam navy of the late Victorian and Edwardian era, known as a 'steam shovel' in American parlance, has its modern counterpart in the J.C.B. excavator. Whereas the J.C.B. scoops materials towards the operator and drops them by rotating the bucket from a kind of 'wrist' joint, the steam navy scoops away from the operator and drops materials by opening the entire floor of the bucket as a hinged flap.

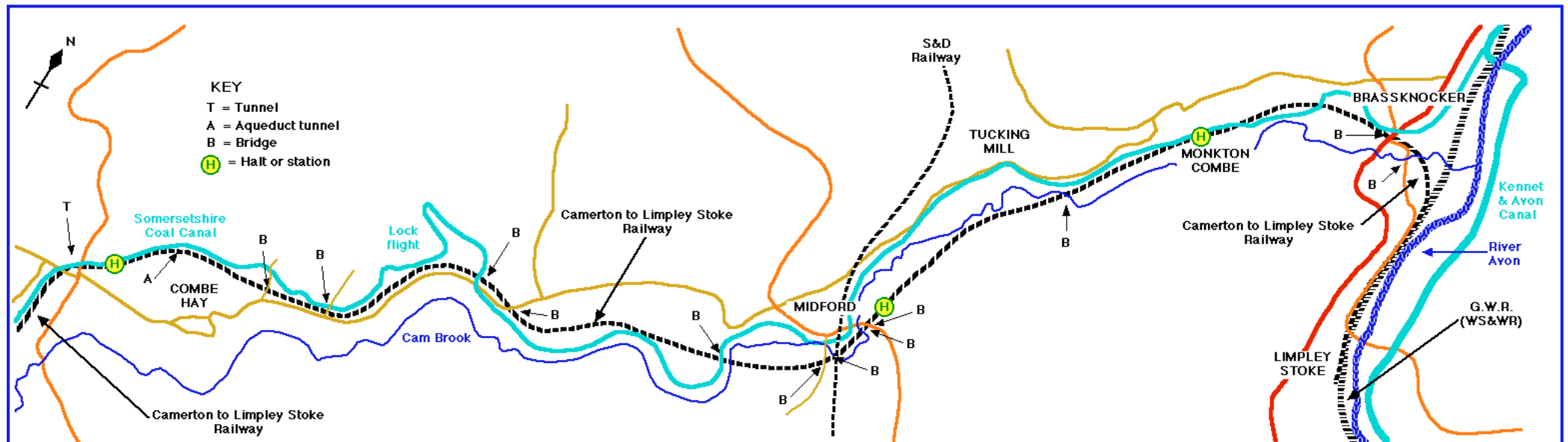


Fig. 10 — MAP OF THE BRANCH RAILWAY BETWEEN COMBE HAY AND LIMPLEY STOKE