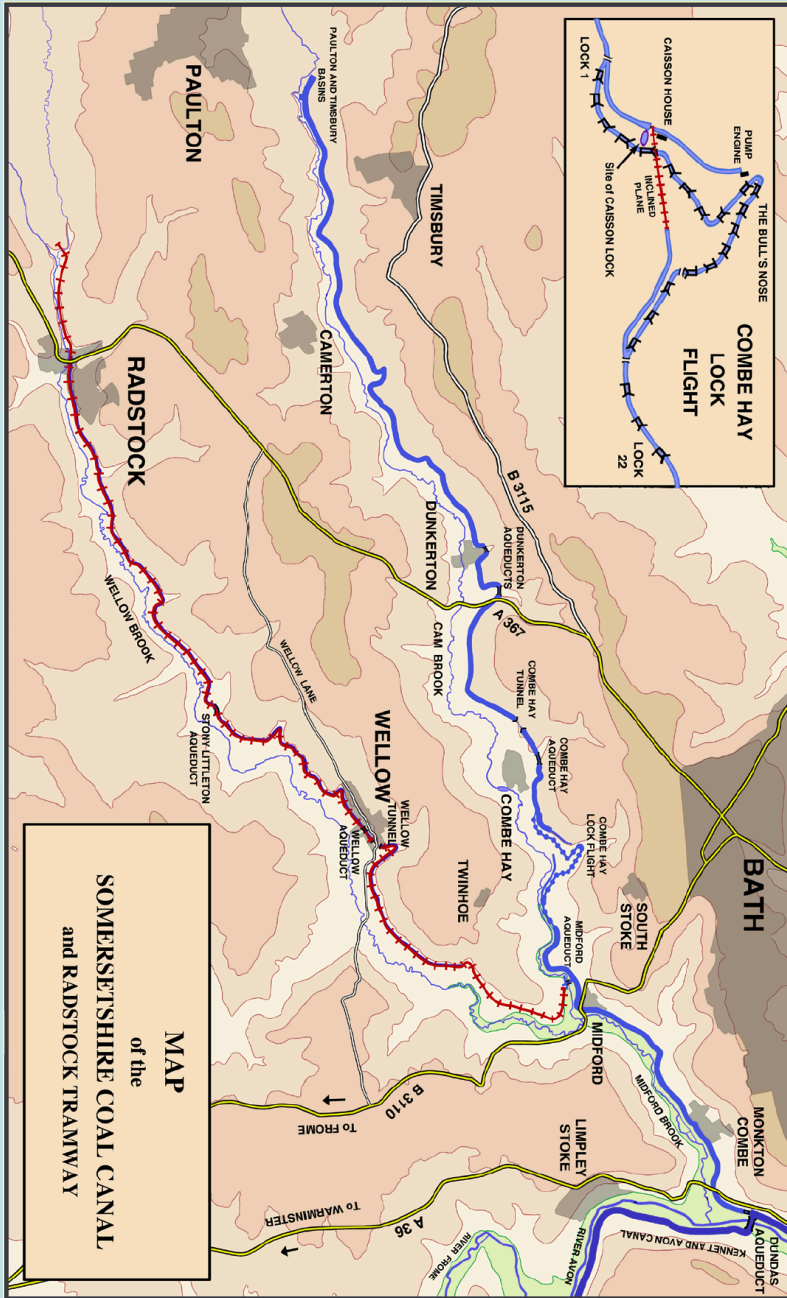


WEIGH-HOUSE

THE MAGAZINE OF THE
SOMERSETSHIRE COAL CANAL SOCIETY



MAP
of the
SOMERSETSHIRE COAL CANAL
and RADSTOCK TRAMWAY

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

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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>.

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

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY — 2020

Following Government advice on measures to combat Covid-19 (the Corona Virus) all our walks and talks have had to be cancelled for at least six months. We shall do our best to go ahead with work parties, but please check with the website or telephone the contact numbers given below for the latest information before travelling:

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

Saturday 17th October —10:00

WORK PARTY — Probably Combe Hay

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

Sunday 1st November —10:00

WORK PARTY — Probably Paulton

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

Saturday 14th November —10:00

WORK PARTY — Probably Combe Hay

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

Sunday 6th December —10:00

WORK PARTY — Probably Paulton

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

Saturday 12th December —10:00

WORK PARTY — Probably Combe Hay

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

— 2021 —

Sunday 3rd January —10:00

WORK PARTY — Probably Paulton

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

Saturday 16th January —10:00

WORK PARTY — Probably Combe Hay

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

Sunday 7th February —10:00

WORK PARTY — Probably Paulton

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

Saturday 13th February —10:00

WORK PARTY — Probably Combe Hay

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

WEIGH - HOUSE N^o 80

EDITOR'S NOTES	3
CHAIRMAN'S NOTES	4
DONATIONS	4
FROM THE MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY	4
NEW MEMBERS	5
OBITUARY: Angus Buchanan	5
OBITUARY: Maggie Shapland	5
NAVYING NOTES	6
VOYAGING TO SOMERSET'S COALFIELD — A Canal Trip in 1898	8
LOCK 13 COMBE HAY c.1920 by Roger Halse	11
PUBLIC & BEER HOUSES ALONG THE S.C.C. FROM DUNDAS TO PAULTON — Part 2 by Tim Lunt	14
UPPR MIDFORD ACCOMMODATION BRIDGE (Photograph)	16
WILLIAM SMITH'S COAL MINE VERSES by Andrew Matheison	17
THE CONTRACTOR'S RAILWAY — More Information	18
THE PEGLINCH INTERPRETATION BOARD by Derrick Hunt	20
HISTORIC CRANE RESTORATION GRANT by Mary Sabina Stacey	21
DATES FOR YOUR DIARY	22

EDITOR'S NOTES

Once again we have a good selection of articles covering a wide variety of subjects relating to the S.C.C.. As well as the second part of Tim Lunt's article on public and beer houses and a follow-up to the article on the contractor's railway, we have articles on other Industrial Archaeology in the form of an historic crane and a railway crash — and poetry by William Smith. For the first time, we have included obituaries of people who were not actually members of the S.C.C.S. but their contributions to the World of Industrial Archaeology are more than sufficient to justify paying tribute to them.

More directly related to the S.C.C. is a reprint of a newspaper article about a journey along the canal in the 1890s, which will give readers with an enquiring mind plenty of food for thought, as many of the features described are still in existence and it should be possible to reconstruct the journey in great detail from the author's description.

ADRIAN TUDDENHAM

CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

Autumn is upon us in one of the strangest years for a generation of more. COVID 19 still stalks the land and is making itself felt in so many things we do, one obvious casualty being our social programme. And yet, ingenuity and technology find a way through in many cases.

The Fax, now almost obsolete, was an available technology for over a century before it was widely used, so it is with video meetings; they have been possible for years but I now attend more video meetings every week than in my entire career prior to March this year. Our S.C.C.S. committees have been meeting on Zoom (other platforms are available) and the day before these notes were penned (another term overtaken by technology) Canal & River Trust held one of their popular restoration workshops online. It is an interesting thought that where historians once wrote of a meeting at the Old Down Inn in Emborough, for example, in future the historians may record that "the Committee decided at a virtual meeting..."

Thus, members of the S.C.C.S. committee have not been able to meet in person but we do still meet to discuss the society's next steps, and "safe working" has meant that those next steps can also be seen in development at Paulton, as the canal is gradually repaired and refurbished.

In many ways it was ever thus. The Canal du Midi in southern France opened a full 110 years before the Somersetshire Coal Canal gained an Act of Parliament, yet it used basically the same technology. As we press forward with our own schemes, it is well over forty years since the Peak Forest Canal and the Caldon Canal were reopened, and fifty-six since Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother, re-opened the canal to Stratford on Avon. The point is that a bright idea, a good proposal, or a worthwhile scheme will wait until the time is right for its potential to be realised. The Coal Canal restoration is such a scheme, and, like video technology, the time is now.

PATRICK MOSS

DONATIONS

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

Mr. C. Axon
Mr. S. Bryant
Mrs. J. Davies
Mr. & Mrs. J. Kestenbaum

Mr. D. Salvidge
Mr. D. Storey
Mr. & Mrs. A. Trinder
Mr. A. Witt

FROM THE MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY

There has been a steady influx of new members over the last few months, reflecting the ever-increasing interest in our canal. Thank you to those who have already renewed their membership for 2020. Those yet to renew and who usually pay by cash, cheque or on-line please do so as soon as possible. It is possible to renew *via* the website using your membership number and PayPal, or cheques can be posted to me (address inside front cover). Those who pay by Standing Order do not, of course have to take any action. Don't forget to let me know if you move house or change your e-mail address, or if you would prefer to receive Weigh-House electronically in future.

HISTORIC CRANE RESTORATION GRANT

What do the dockside in Thessaloniki, Greece, the Port of Antofagasta Chile and the dockside in Wellington, New Zealand, have in common? Answer: they all have restored Stothert and Pitt cranes, standing proud and tall there. The cranes were made in Bath on the Stothert and Pitt site along the Lower Bristol Road.

Stothert and Pitt were the 'crane makers to the world'. There is one preserved steam crane in Bath that has been installed on the site where it was built; it dates from 1904 and is in the Western Riverside development. Now there is the opportunity for Bath to acquire another Stothert and Pitt crane. This one is a quarry crane which was built c.1864 and is the oldest known Stothert and Pitt crane surviving intact. It worked in Box, in the Bath stone quarries, and was saved in the 1980s from scrappage by the then chairman of the Bath Stone Museum Trust: David Pollard, (d.2017).

The crane was built in the Newark works of Stothert and Pitt and a crane of this type is shown in their catalogue dated 1885, it is manually operated and would lift 6 tons at a fixed radius of 15 feet. Its condition is very poor and it is currently being restored by a group of volunteer experts, led by Peter Dunn and Arthur Feltham, former Stothert and Pitt service engineers.

The team is delighted to announce that we have received an offer of a grant from the Association for Industrial Archaeology. This grant has been matched by the Bristol Industrial Archaeological

Society and the Trust that owns the crane. So we now have the funds to treat the metal components so it lasts another 150 years.

The trustees of the Bath Stone Quarry Museum Trust have expressed a willingness for the restored crane to be erected in Bath. Major redevelopment is taking place on the Newark Works and Bath Quays South site with the interpretation led by The Museum of Bath at Work. We think that installing it on that site would provide a visual reminder in Bath of the importance of Stothert and Pitt Engineers & Iron Founders and also of the stone quarrying to the heritage of Bath and Box.

MARY SABINA STACEY



THE CRANE AT THE QUARRY SITE BEFORE RESTORATION

THE PEGLINCH INTERPRETATION BOARD

Along the cycle path from Radstock to Single Hill an Interpretation Board has been installed at Peglinch as a memorial to those who died in the Somerset & Dorset Joint Railway's worst accident, which occurred there on 7th August 1876. It lists the 13 who died and records that a further 51 passengers were injured.

Several factors conspired to cause the accident: overworked junior signalmen trying to cope with the huge backlog of unscheduled Bank Holiday traffic with totally inadequate communication between their signal boxes. The result of these shortcomings was that an excursion train from Wimborne to Bath met the Bath to Radstock train, which was going at full speed, head on. The rear carriages of the Bath train rode through the front carriages, where most of the deaths occurred. One of the barns of Peglinch Farm was used as a temporary mortuary and that building can still be seen from the cycle path.

THE SOMERSET & DORSET JOINT RAILWAY

On the 7th August 1876 at approximately 11.20 pm there was a major accident where you are now standing

The S & D Railway's Bath to Evercreech extension had been opened on 20th July 1874, but the Company was in financial difficulty and in November 1875 the line was leased jointly to the Midland and London and South Western Railways. The day of the accident was a Bank Holiday Monday and the railway had been busy with an additional seventeen excursion trains, as well as the seven scheduled on the timetable, all running on a route that was until the 1890s was single track with passing places. Exact details of the events which led up to this tragedy are confused and were not fully explained by the subsequent Board of Trade Inquiry, which was published in November of that year.

A summary of the factors are:

- It was the end of a twelve hour shift, with some staff working longer; those controlling the signals and passing places were young and inexperienced, the oldest being 18 and the youngest just 15
- A number of trains that day, including the two involved, were either very late or not scheduled
- Procedures were not followed and communications between signal boxes were not working properly
- Signals were not lit (because of a lack of paraffin), and were not correctly positioned because the young signalman lacked the strength to fully operate the levers
- Both trains had been released on to the single track at the same time. The Wimborne to Bath train had just left Braydown Colliery siding and was on the main line, unaware the Bath to Radstock train was on the same track and going at full speed. The accident resulted in 13 fatalities and at least five serious injuries. The bodies of those that died were taken to the granary at Paglinch Farm which was used as a temporary mortuary. This was the worst accident in the history of the S & D.

Those that died at the scene

Thomas Wills	Guard on Bath train (37) from Bath
James White	Collier (40) from Radstock
William Godfrey	'Boots' at the Bell Inn Radstock (30)
William Godding	Cellarman at the Bell Inn Radstock (23)
Louisa Golding	Wife of William (28)
George Saunders	Cellarman at the Bell Inn Radstock (27)
Sarah Ann Saunders	Wife of George (26)
Mrs Chivers	Wife of Radstock watchmaker (26)
Elizabeth Edgell	A widow from Clatdown, Radstock (64)
Eliza Matthews	Daughter of a Welton miner (5)
Jane Kidd	Wife of the bailiff from Radstock (45)
Mary Horler	Daughter of Elizabeth Edgell, wife of a Radstock miner (22)
Albert Horler	Son of Mary Horler, 2 months old

The injured
Reports at the time stated there were a further 51 passengers injured. Of these, at least five were in a serious condition and transported to the Bath hospital.

A photograph of the scene a few days after the accident
Some of the broken carriages and debris have yet to be removed. Note the three Police officers in the foreground on guard, the single track, which received little damage, and the telegraph pole used for communications between signal boxes.

Newspaper reports state: 'the hinder carriages of the Bath train were driven through and upon the foremost carriages in which the unfortunate killed and injured were riding. It was a most remarkable fact that neither of the engines left the rails. All the killed and seriously injured were from the Bath train.'

This pulled the train from Bath. It was another D-6-0 saddle tank locomotive, newly built by Fox Walker of Bristol in 1876. This class, built for freight and banking, continued in service until 1934.

Acknowledgements: Bath in Time for the 'scene of the accident' photograph. The National Railway Museum/Science & Society Picture Library for the images of the locomotives. The S and D Museum Trust for support and providing background information. This board is produced as a memorial to those who died, by Shoscombe History Group with funding through Bath and North East Somerset Council's Ward Councillors' Initiative Fund (Cllr Neil Butters).

THE INTERPRETATION BOARD AT PEGLINCH

The S&D railway was built on the line of the Southern Branch of the S.C.C.; the Radstock - Midford cycle path follows the railway and the canal alignments for much of its course and is a convenient way of exploring this branch of the canal.

Unfortunately the Interpretation Board does not mention the S.C.C., nevertheless it is an excellent example of the presentation of historical, information and collaboration between the various interested societies. The board was produced by the Shoscombe History Group with funding from Bath & N.E. Somerset through Councillor Neil Butters. Background information was provided by the Somerset and Dorset Museum Trust and the pictures were supplied by Bath in Time and the National Railway Museum/Science and Society Picture Library.

DERRICK HUNT

NEW MEMBERS

The Society welcomes the following new members:

Mr. R. Bradshaw	Bakewell	Mr. P. Green	Hallatrow
Mr. R. Bullard	Bath	Mr. D. Jury	Dulverton
Mrs. T. Clifford	Freshford	Mr. P. Oates	Daventry
Ms. T. Craven	Paulton	Dr. A. Padfield	Cheltenham
Mr. R. Croton	Newbury	Mrs. S. Pitt	Bath
Mr. I. Diddams	Rowde	Mr. M. Slade,	Bridgwater
Mr. C. Gratton	Camerton	Mr. A. Witt	Odd Down

OBITUARIES

ANGUS BUCHANAN

Professor Robert Angus Buchanan O.B.E. died in June 2020, two months after the death of his wife, Brenda. He was a pioneering figure in Industrial Archaeology and a much respected scholar in both that field and the History of Technology. His major influence was the *Industrial History of the Bristol Region* which he wrote with Neil Cossons in 1969. His research on the Somersetshire Coal Canal pre-dates the formation of the S.C.C.S., and included the links between the S.C.C. and the surrounding coalfields. As well as theoretical investigation, he did practical field work on the canal and spread his knowledge widely through his university teaching and by means of extra-mural education groups.

MAGGIE SHAPLAND

Margaret Jacqueline Shapland, B.E.M., BSc. "Maggie" as she was known to everyone, died after a long battle with cancer on 1 October 2020. A computer programmer by profession, her interests included vintage vehicles and many aspects of industrial archaeology, as well as being an acknowledged authority on cast-iron lamp posts. She was a leading figure in the Bristol Industrial Archaeological Society, the Clifton Rocks Railway project, "Brunel's Other Bridge" and the Clifton & Hotwells Improvement Society and a tireless campaigner for the preservation of industrial archaeology in all its forms, even during the final stages of her illness. There are many industrial artefacts, particularly in the Bristol area, that we would have lost if it had not been for her dedication and perseverance, she set an example that would be hard to follow and we have a lot to thank her for.

For further information on both of the above see the B.I.A.S. website:

<https://www.b-i-a-s.org.uk>

NAVYING NOTES

The restart of the work parties has been very successful and welcomed by many, they have also attracted some new members to our crew. Once confidence returns amongst our other members we will be back to full strength.

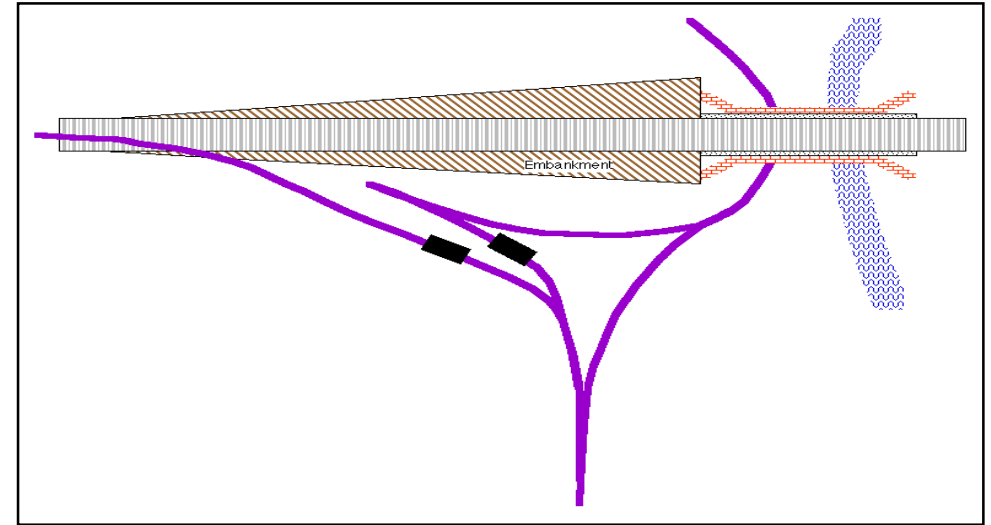
At the start of the year it was always my intention that we do two or more work parties per month, and I am glad to say that we have now achieved my goal. We have been joined by a group from the Canal and River Trust who are working at Combe Hay. For the moment we are clearing the vegetation from the locks and the interconnecting pounds. Once we have it under control we can start to make some repairs to the locks, sadly some of the stonework is in poor condition. The work parties are held on a Saturday, typically around the second week of the month, (see the list of work party dates on p.22). Having introduced the work on a Saturday we have seen a lot of the public taking an interest in what we are doing and I have had the pleasure of showing a few people the lock chambers. As a result of this they have joined the Society. So as restrictions relax next year (hopefully) we will get our promotions team there on a work party day.



Photograph: Mark Sherry

A WORK PARTY AT COMBE HAY

Meanwhile at Paulton: After a long break the brilliant members of our work party have worked wonders at Paulton as well. One of the regular jobs, which really ought to be done twice a year at least, is clearing out the sludge trap at the Intake end of Timsbury Basin. This is a region of deeper, stiller, water where sludge from the feeder streams is allowed to settle, rather than being carried into the canal. It is held back by a plank dam, which we dismantle from time to time, to allow the collected sludge to carry on down the stream.



A POSSIBLE LAYOUT OF A REVERSING TRIANGLE TO CORRESPOND WITH THE PHOTOGRAPH BELOW



Fig 18 from WH77 — UPPER MIDFORD EMBANKMENT LOOKING NORTHWARDS
The main line goes through the arch of Holley's Bridge and on to Midford.

Colin Maggs also notes that the contractors brought in horizontal and vertical stream engines, presumably to drive pumps and other machinery. The locomotives needed a reliable supply of water, so one of those steam engines could have been used to raise water from the Cam Brook or a derelict, but still in water, section of the S.C.C.. The photographs suggest that Upper Midford was the 'stabling' point for at least two of the locomotives and this would have been a convenient point half way along their working area for them to replenish their supplies of coal and water; the hut could have housed one of those pumping engines, hence the tall chimney. Alternatively, the locomotives may have been able to lift their own water from the canal and the hut may have merely housed a night watchman and his tall-chimneyed stove.

THE CONTRACTOR'S RAILWAY

More information

Following the publication of the article on the Contractor's Railway in WH78, Roger Halse has added the following comments:

In Part 3 of your article (Weigh-House 78) on page 19 you questioned 'how the massive viaduct across The Hollow at Dunkerton was constructed and how the materials to build it were brought in'. I suggest that these would have come from the Camerton direction. The first railway contract was to build the length from Camerton to Dunkerton Colliery; the length from Dunkerton Colliery to Limpley Stoke being the second contract.

On pages 28-29 of his book *The Camerton Branch*, Colin Maggs states:

On 6th January 1910, the Bath Chronicle reported that the station buildings at Dunkerton were nearly complete. Pauling's had a depot near Dunkerton station for the temporary storage of their plant. Five locomotives lay covered by tarpaulins and there were many wagons nearby. Also at the depot were several portable steam engines and 'quantities of the rough-hewn sleepers of semi circular section and the light, chairless rails which formed the temporary road'.

Pages 26 and 27 have a brief Bath Chronicle report from 13th August 1908 on works at Monkton Combe, Midford, Combe Hay and Dunkerton:

Elsewhere along the course of the railway from Limpley Stoke to Dunkerton there are signs of activity. The contractor's line is being pushed westwards and now reaches as far as Mr. Freeman's mills at Monkton Combe. The bridgework at Midford is proceeding steadily, as is the construction of the various embankments. The steam navvies are still busy in the neighbourhood of both Combe Hay and Dunkerton. At the latter place the excavations for the foundations of the station buildings are also in a very forward state.

[...] At least a twelvemonth more is expected to elapse before the line will be ready for traffic.

Steve Page has identified one of the locomotives in the photographs in Figs 17 & 18 on Page 9 of WH77 [repeated opposite →] and the possible track layout which may be deduced from their disposition.

The locomotive on the left can be identified as "PELLON", a Manning Wardle 'K' Class 0-6-0 saddle tank, Works Number: 1112, built in 1899. This means we have now identified three of the five locomotives said to have worked on the project. The *railwayarchive* website shows several locomotives belonging to Pauling & Co including some M-W 'K' Class, both with and without the distinctive tapered brass safety valve between the front of the cab and the back of the saddle tank; those without having no gap between the tank and the cab.

Although the locomotives were capable of running either backwards or forwards, there may have been provision for turning them which would have either required a large and expensive turntable or a much simpler 'reversing triangle' arrangement of rails. The triangle would have needed an area of land considerably wider than the main trackbed and could advantageously have been sited where a side branch was already required. There was just such an area of land at Upper Midford and a side branch would have been necessary to take materials, locomotives, and the parts to assemble the steam navy, up to a point on the hillside where they could begin construction of the new embankment and cutting.

We need to give it a helping hand, which means climbing in with it and raking and shovelling it out. Part of the trap lies in a tunnel, clearing this is an awkward and unwelcome task which is only undertaken by the keenest of volunteers.



Right: JOHN DITCHAM AND LIZ CLEARING OUT THE SLUDGE TRAP

Below: JOSH GOULD CLEARING OUT THE TUNNEL

Photograph: Elijah Gould



Around the area of the Dry Dock and Terminus Bridge, vegetation grows so rapidly that each year we seem to spend most of each work party just getting back to where we started. At last most of the area is cleared and we are out of the growing season, this means we should be able to catch-up on the maintenance work and plan for next year's improvements.

After the work at Paulton over lockdown we have been planning to continue restoration of this section.

We have three projects

- 1) Replace an old ground paddle near Paulton Basin
- 2) Repair the stonework of Terminus Bridge
- 3) Dig out and repair the large holes in the embankment.

Once this is completed we can re-water the section. We are also planning to build a new bridge on the site to carry the public footpath. The new bridge will be an elevated flat footbridge on stone abutments with the towpath passing under the bridge. A lot of this work will be carried out by our volunteers giving them a chance to learn new skills and take part in real canal restoration work.

Finally I would like to thank our volunteers for their hard work and support this year, it's because of you that we are able to plan for the future, a future that will see a return of boats to the canal.

MARK SHERREY

VOYAGING TO SOMERSET'S COALFIELD A CANAL TRIP IN 1898

TELLING OF MANY UPS AND DOWNS

This reprint, which appeared in the Bath Weekly Chronicle and Herald: Thursday, December 23, 1937, was brought to our attention by a post on Facebook. Although it contains a few factual errors, it gives a good impression of the S.C.C. and its surroundings during the final years of its life.

A beautiful August morning in 1898. We have all had our breakfast and the milk has been sent safely off to Seend station to catch the 7.5 a.m. London train. All being in order, we set off four of us across the fields, over the railway line, and up Rusty Lane to the Canal Bridge to await the coming of the Phœbe.

Our boat is to time, the bridge is just being swung as we arrive at our trysting place at the water's edge, and we greet our host and friends (including, of course, "Lola" on her mistress's lap). "Gee, Dick!" from the Captain, Mr. Dan Harris; the tow rope slacks, dips into the water and tightens, wet and covered with water weeds, slides over the rails by the bridge. The boat stops a minute or so to take us aboard and starts again. The bridge is swung into place and we are off to the coal pit for the last voyage of the Phœbe. Our host has a newspaper and we read of the death of Prince von Bismark.

"Gee, Dick" under the willows on Pile Farm Canal Bank by the Lock House, the trees mentioned in the "Adventures of a Houseboat," by William Black. Clank, clank, go the handles as the paddles of the first lock are lifted and we are lowered into the reaches below, below the old iron works just lately being planted with fir trees. We pass through several locks by the Barge Inn and the Lock House, where Mr. Perry lock-keeper, greets us with a cheery "Good morning; going to pit? Only one engine pumping now you know." Another lock and we are sailing by the "Ironing Box," a small triangular bit of woodland on Seend Park Farm; opposite on the right-hand side is Mr ?? Selfe getting in a crop of August hay.

"Gee, Dick" and on again. Here a jack lying in the weeds swirls his tail and vanishes away in a swirl of water. On the left we come to a field of thistles and a man busily catching goldfinches! It is at Semington that the Wilts and Berks Canal joins the Kennet and Avon Canal, connecting

Bristol with Melksham, Calne, Chippenham, Swindon and the Thames. Here we pass over our first aqueduct, on Mr Jeffery's farm.

* * * *

Our kind host and hostess have an awning in the boat over the dining table, making a little dining room. Tales of the canal are told. Captain Dan Harris and his son share the cabin and keep the little iron chimney smoking away quite happily. Formerly there were two boats "sailing" to and from the Dunkerton Colliery and Sells Green, Seend, each carrying 30 tons of Somerset coal, and a substantial cheque for carriage was paid weekly to the canal company, for the business was established in 1802 and is nearly 100 years old.

At each lock we drop lower into the valley of the Bristol Avon, and it is not long before we are looking down on Bradford-on-Avon and its Tithe Barn. On our left rises a hill covered with trees and on our right is the bank which caused the engineer so much concern about 100 years before, as it slipped out with the letting in of the water, and had to be renewed. Below again on our right is the river, and soon we pass over it by way of the big freestone aqueduct, and we are now in the Limpley Stoke Valley with the Winsley Woods rising up the hills on our right, and road, rail and river on our left in the valley.

It was intended to connect the Kennet and Avon Canal with the South Coast, via Frome, Blandford and the river Stour. A beginning was made in 1796, and a branch running from Coleford to Frome is said to have been completed.

Occasionally we come to specially-built little promontories on either side of the canal with just room for a full-sized barge to pass between them.

WILLIAM SMITH'S COAL MINE VERSES

With time to spare during the lockdown, Andrew Mathieson has been sorting through material by William Smith that he copied from the Oxford University Museum of Natural History archives. He has found two verses of particular interest to S.C.C.S. members which he believes have not appeared in print before. They show something of Smith's thinking, rather than the factual writings which make up most of his archive.

Smith worked as a surveyor and engineer on the construction of the S.C.C. from 1793 to 1799. He then went on to concentrate on geology and famously published the first geological map of England, Wales and part of Scotland in 1815. His interest in geology was heightened when he was required to undertake an underground survey of the Mearns Coal Pit in High Littleton in 1791.

Both of the verses below appear to be based on that visit to the Mearns Pit. They were written in Doncaster on 1st September 1825 at a time when Smith wrote a number of verses about his early career. They are now in the William Smith Archive in Oxford University Museum of Natural History. Their copyright belongs to the Museum but permission has been granted to publish these transcriptions in Weigh-House. They were both amended by Smith and the transcriptions are based on his final versions.

Smith paints a picture of being underground in the mine, which later transported coal on the S.C.C.. –He also reveals interesting views on employment, wild cooking and the use of the pressgang to recruit quarrymen.

Coalpits

First in a rope yourself suspend
And then the pitch dark pit descend
Whence thundering sounds that hollow tub
Which like yourself the sides may rub
If you extend your feet too wide
Or hasty touch on either side
Around, or side to side you swing
Like roasting sparrow in a string
But caution needs not take afright
Safe in the coalhole you alight
There ere your feet receive the shock
What strange infernals round you flock
Each firey forehead's shiny light
Just brings their bare black limbs in sight
Their staring eyes and teeth so white
For so they welcome strangers in
All with a stare all with a grin
We're now 200 yards below
And deeper deeper far to go.

Subterranean Excursion

As quadruped we next proceed
And gain the glimmering stall,
Or lonely cell, within the coally wall.
Thus while we stay and there recruit
A depth of 500 yards compute
The collier have like blinking mole
At that great depth to delve for coal
For many a bright and cheering fire
What more of slaves could we require
Men once were banished to the mines
But now no slavery there repines
No pressgang comes with regal power
For men to quarr fro Windsor Tower
But "happy happy" is the nation
And labour happy in vocation
Where each his own employment chooses
And takes the task the slave refuses

ANDREW MATHIESON

The Paulton Foundry was also nearby but with all the collieries in the vicinity there were many hostelrys already catering for coal miners as well as the boatmen. The nearest, the 'Somerset Inn' and originally a Beer house, was a hundred yards up the tramway from Paulton Basin at New Pit colliery and has only very recently closed to become a private house. Another Beer house, functioning in the later years of the canal, was a similar distance from Timsbury basin at the top of Plummer's Hill on the edge of Paulton. A little further away were the various pubs and beerhouses in Paulton of which only the 'Lamb Inn' and 'Red Lion' survive today, both earlier establishments than their mid 19th century buildings, and within a mile or so in other directions were the inns at Timsbury, High Littleton and Hallatrow.



JOURNEY'S END AT TIMSBURY BASIN

Along the canal today only the 'Wheelwrights Arms' in Monkton Combe, the 'Hope and Anchor' in Midford and the 'Wheatsheaf' at Combe Hay survive from those early times. As gastropubs, with the emphasis on fine dining, they are different to what they were and will face a difficult period post pandemic. Drink however is still available for thirsty Coal Canal travellers.

TIM LUNT

UPPER MIDFORD ACCOMMODATION BRIDGE

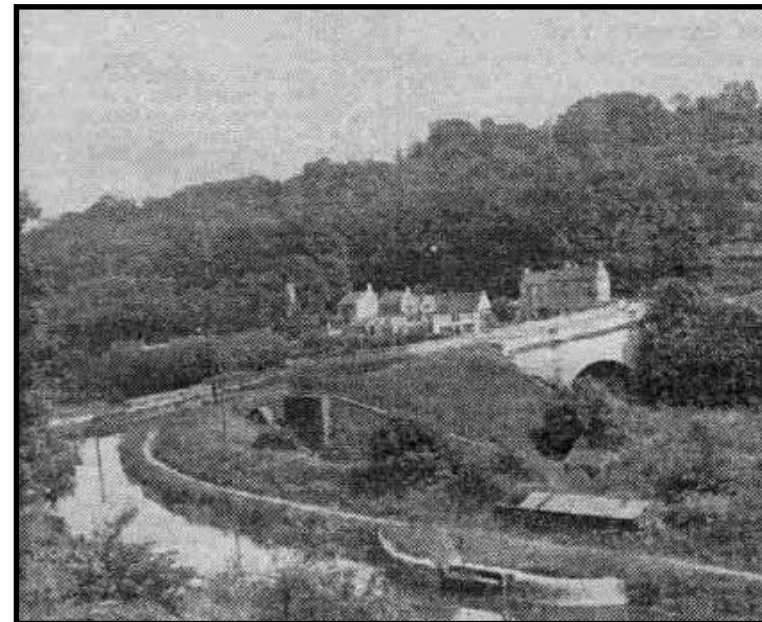
Tim Venton has contributed this photograph of Upper Midford Accommodation Bridge which he took about 1975, it shows the view looking southwards from the laneway outside Hyver Kennels. In the background is the embankment of the Limpley Stoke to Camerton Railway cutting across the canal bed.



Photograph: Tim Venton

These are fitted with grooves to hold pieces of timber in case the bank of the canal should break away, and timbers ready to hand could then be dropped into the grooves and a large amount of precious water saved from running down into the Avon.

A turn to the left and we are passing over the Dundas Aqueduct, over the railway and river. Again to the left, and we are under the iron bridge spanning the entrance to the Somerset Coal



AVONCLIFFE AQUEDUCT

Canal, cast at Paulton 1810, and we enter the first lock of the Somerset Coal Canal. There is plenty of water in the reach, and roach and dace sweep by in little shoals.

Captain Harris takes his kettle down to the bank to fill it at the stream which runs below us as we pass under one of the arches which stride across the valley among the trees. Here, plates and dishes need clearing and washing, and we make things more or less tidy. So we come to Midford.

On our left rises from the reed-grown waters of the canal lay-bye, a temple-like structure having two rows of doric columns of freestone surmounted by a plain entablature, and we think we must be dreaming over an old volume of "Sunday at Home," our eyes feasting on some Grecian temple, but our kind host explains that this was where the boats were weighed. We see the frame on which they swung as their loads were checked, and so we realise it is not Athens at all.

Under the Frome-Bath road we go, and the feet of our horse send ringing echoes as we walks under the arches of the railway bridge near Midford station. Just beyond, there is a wall by the canal side, and an iron railway runs

close to the water's edge.

This was the junction of the Radstock branch, completed, but the owners of the mill rights in the River Somer refused to allow the water to be turned into the canal, and threw the whole thing into Chancery. The company then ran a light hamline down the towpath, trucks loaded with coal and drawn by horses were from Radstock to Midford, where the coal was tipped into waiting barges. The rails which we saw on that sunny August day in the eighteen-nineties have long since vanished like the water in the canal itself.

* * * *

On the Kennet and Avon Canal we follow the basin of the Avon, dropping down towards Bath and Bristol with each lock, but now we rise one step at a time up the side of one of the hills near Bath. We have now reached a little stone bridge over the Canal, Dick is unhitched and goes through a little wicket on the right-hand side, while the rope is thrown under the bridge and fastened on again as Dick meets us on the tow-path the other side of the bridge. →



**REMAINS OF THE WEIGH-ENGINE
AT MIDFORD**

In front is another lock, on our left the waterway broadens out and leads to an opening (blocked up, however) which once led into the big basin in front of “Wellow Inn”, where many a counterpart of the Phoebe put in for the night, to continue its journey up into Wiltshire, or perhaps Berkshire, in the morning.

Now we are close to Combe Hay and rise quickly through a succession of pools and twenty-two locks to find ourselves looking down on the Wellow Inn from another point of view. There is plenty of water in the little pools or pounds, and we catch sight of a jack in one, about halfway up. One or two boats have probably gone up before us and, “locking up”, have left their spare water behind them.

The lock at the top of this series is made, not of wood but iron plates, and as we leave it behind we see on our right what was once a large lake on the hillside surrounded by wharves and the houses of the engineers and other employees of the company.

On our left we look down upon Combe Hay and soon pass through a tunnel in the hillside. Captain Harris lowers the chimney of the cabin, by its hinge, as the roof of the tunnel is close upon the boat. Clump, clump, go the horse’s feet on the towpath in the tunnel, and in less

than a minute we are out again into the sunshine—the hillsides around us with their square meadows, sometimes walled with hay ricks in the middle, each with its barbed wire fence, strange enough to our Wiltshire eyes used to seeing the hay “hulled whoam.”

* * * *

The water is low now, just enough to float our boat, and the tow rope drops into reeds and rushes. It slackens and tightens again as we go past a wharf, deserted, except for a small boy from London, who asks for and gets a ride under a road, a tiny aqueduct, and we leave Dunkerton church upon our left in the hollow.

Now we are nearing our journey’s end, and we come upon little cottages, with low roofs and little windows, huge heaps of dark grey slack from the coal mines are piled in the valley beneath and covered with wild rhubarb leaves.

Even as we watch a man drives a grey horse across, harnessed to a whole string of little tubs running on a miniature railway. Two large, walking beam engines also appear; each has a huge, adjustable timber beam attached. One of these is still and silent, the other rises and falls with a regular beat, and at each rise pulls up a quantity of water from the Cam below and pours it into the canal. The water is no longer clear but dark, water lilies are floating on the surface, strangely enough.

Soon on our right a long screen slopes over the water. Captain Harris twists the tiller, and the Phoebe berths at pit for the last time.

Now watches are consulted and everyone gathers up wraps and asks one another, “What time is it? Can we catch such and such a train at Radstock Station?” How we all found our way to the station I never knew, but have a confused idea of fields, stiles, and various types of individuals all directing us different ways, then a long hill and some level crossings at the bottom, with signal boxes and railway stations, then a safe journey home, after a happy day.

S.H.B.



**THE JOLLY COLLIER, CAMERTON
with the S.C.C. behind**

Camerton

Joseph Coombs was Inn Keeper of the ‘Camerton Inn’ for many years with the pub itself probably built at the same time as the S.C.C. to serve canal traffic. The name seems to have been changed to ‘Jolly Collier’ around 1860, shortly before Coombs retired. By 1901 it was owned by Charles Stone as the Licensed Victualler and had become a family affair with son Charles running a brewery built next door, and another son George as barman. Contemporary newspaper reports of crime and assaults associated with public houses along the S.C.C. show the ‘Jolly Collier’ certainly lived up to the wayward reputation for the village deplored in the well-known journals of the Reverend John Skinner, Rector of Camerton from 1800 -1839.

Radford

In 1805 Radford Brewery was built beside the canal to supply ale to the local area. Expansion of the pits meant that there was an increasing demand for beer to supply the mining community but it is not known whether retail sales were available directly from this large brewery to canal customers. Nowadays drinks are available very close to the canal at the bar in the ‘Old Malt House Hotel’ at the start of Radford Hill, built in 1835 as the Malthouse for this brewery.

Paulton

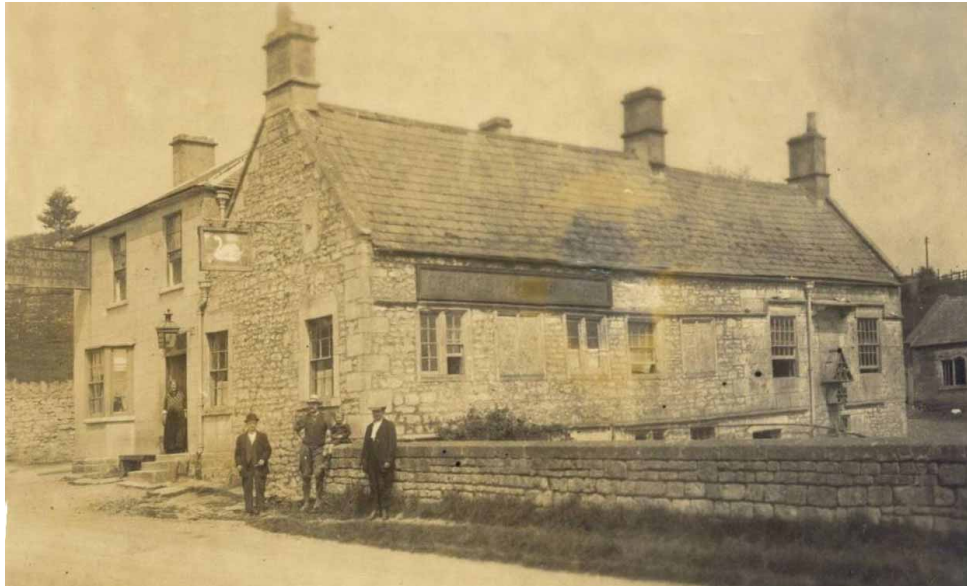
Surprisingly none of the cottages around the basins at the end of the canal seem to have operated as a Beer house although many barges must have moored here for loading coal from the various tramways as well as for repairs in the dry dock.

PUBLIC AND BEER HOUSES ALONG THE S.C.C. FROM DUNDAS TO PAULTON – Part 2

Canal-side inns remain a feature of the waterway network today and the Somersetshire Coal Canal had its own selection of watering holes to satisfy the passing boat crews. Tim Lunt continues his 19th century canal pub crawl, identifying the hostelrys that existed during the 100 year life of the SCC.

Dunkerton

In operation throughout the life of the SCC the 'Swan Inn' had originally been an ancient inn for travellers on the Fosse Way but was close to the canal wharf on the Wells Road. It is the place where William Smith stayed while supervising the cutting of the S.C.C. and on January 5, 1796 wrote his momentous observation on the occurrence of fossils: "That wonderful order & regularity with which Nature has disposed of these singular productions and assigned to each Class its peculiar Stratum". Closed during the 1950s it is now a private house.



THE SWAN INN, DUNKERTON

The 'Swan Inn' was reputed to serve only whisky and spirits so the Beer house (now Home Farm) along the road at the foot of the hill to Peasedown must have enjoyed some custom from boatmen. It is recorded as being run by William Skuse in the censuses for 1851-1881 and is shown on later maps.

Carlingcott

Cottages beside the canal below Carlingcott by the colliery spoil-heap (now Dunkerton Dismantlers) are shown on the 1841 Dunkerton tithe map and include a Beer house on later railway maps thought to have been called the 'Barge Inn'. It stood near the end of a tramway where limestone was loaded from a nearby quarry.

LOCK 13 COMBE HAY c.1920

You wait years for photographs of the canal at Combe Hay to come along, and you publish what you thought was one of only a few views of the lock flight.

— Then out of the blue another five (yes, Five!) appear.

Weigh-House 79 had just been published, along with a superb view of Lock 19 of the lock flight, when I received a phone call informing me that perhaps another five views of the locks had come to light. Chris Gibson is well known for his collection of Kennet & Avon Canal postcards and photographs, and one of Chris's recent internet purchases had not only resulted in previously unknown views of the K&A Canal at Bath, but five other views of what, Chris confidently assured me, were views of the S.C.C. locks near to the Bull's Nose. Obviously I was interested! When the scans arrived at my home I immediately knew that Chris was correct. For someone, who I quote "had only walked the lock flight twice", he had identified almost all of the views, but needed a little help with the others.

Now these photographs were not of the best quality. They were probably taken by an amateur photographer, as some were not fully focused and one had what I call 'the shakes', where the photographer had moved the camera slightly when taking the image. However, they are still interesting views of the locks.

Following a visit to Chris to view the original photographs, and through a process of elimination, comparing more recent views of the locks, and basic on-the-ground comparisons, we managed to work out what locks they were. I still had to ask a recent Coal Canal Society - Work Party to clear some of the vegetation to be sure of one view. Thanks to Mark Sherrey and his team! The views have been identified as being lock numbers 11, 12, 13 and 14. Although you would have already had a clue of the locations by the title of this article! Due to limited space in this newsletter there are only two photographs reproduced here [Pages 12 & 13].

The first is a view looking down the lock flight to Lock 13. The upper (top) gate is detached and leaning against the lock side. The lower (bottom) locks gates appear to be in place. The short stump of the 3 1/2 mile-stone can be seen to the left of the lock. In the distance to the right can just be seen the embankment for the G.W.R.'s Camerton to Limpley Stoke Branch line. This railway helps date the photograph as post 1910, when the railway was opened. My guess is probably c.1920, but it could be ten years earlier (c.1910) or ten/twenty years later (c.1930/1940)?

The second view is a close up of the bottom gates of Lock 13. Just visible, but which may not be seen in this reproduction, beneath the balance beam on the left, is Lock 14. The railway embankment is in the distance, but is not very clear. These two views are (in my opinion) the best views of the series. Both are Winter views as can be seen by the light covering of snow.

I hope to be able to publish the other views of the locks in the next *Weigh-House*.

ROGER HALSE

Pictures overleaf →

[Editor's note: These photographs were taken looking southwards, which would only be possible during overcast or Wintery days. It is unusual to find photographs of any of the canal features viewed from this direction, which makes these views even more valuable.]



BOTTOM GATES LOCK 13 c.1920



VIEW TOWARDS LOCK 13 c.1920