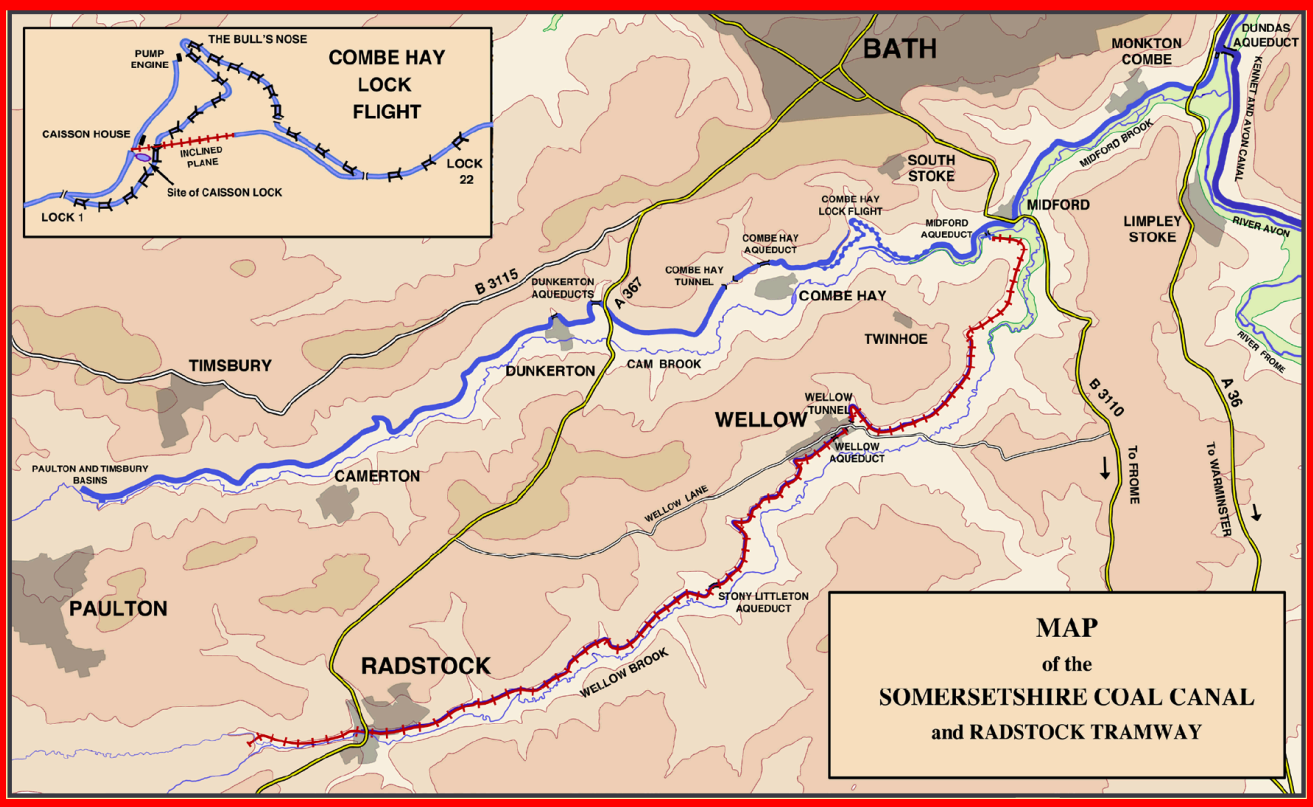
WEIGH-HOUSE

THE MAGAZINE OF THE
SOMERSETSHIRE COAL CANAL SOCIETY

FEBRUARY 2022

Nº 83



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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

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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.

Please send articles and correspondence to:
Liz Tuddenham 88,Mount Road, Southdown, Bath BA2 1LH
☎ 01225 335974 *E-mail (not HTML):* **liz@poppyrecords.co.uk**

Sunday 5th June —10:00
WORK PARTY — Location to be advised
For further details please contact: *Mark Sherrey* ☎ 07973 918467

Thursday 23rd June— 19:30
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING — 2022
Meet: The Radstock Working Men's Club.
For further details please see website or contact: *Patrick Moss* ☎ 07736 859882

BATS IN THE BATCH

On p.*12 of WH 87 we reported on changes that were being made to improve safety at Camerton New Pit following two small collapses. The site is the responsibility of the Coal Authority, which has a statutory duty under the Mines and Quarries Act to prevent access and ensure the site is safe. Andy Hoskins, the Project Manager has now sent an update on the work being carried out there.*

Various constraints have meant a slight change of scope and limited windows of opportunity throughout the year to undertake the works.

Due to the presence of bats within the two openings in the retaining wall these features must be retained. We have employed an independent Ecologist (A.V.A. Ecology) to oversee all aspects of the works and they have been working in conjunction with the county Ecologist and Natural England. The openings will be secured by way of grilles fabricated to incorporate bat access. To ensure the safety of our workforce whilst undertaking the fitting of these grilles some areas of loose stonework were removed from the right hand opening in April this year [*2021*].

Because the wall will be retained in its current form this will mean it is not viable to cap the shafts to modern standards (i.e it will not be possible to excavate to rock to form the cap). Instead we will be employing a more light touch option which will involve erecting palisade fencing around the area where the mine shafts are located. This will ensure that the mining heritage of the structure is preserved and that the wildlife habitat is maintained.

In order to install the fencing we will be regrading a section of slope at the eastern end of the retaining wall to form a ramp to access the shaft positions. A small section of wall will be removed to achieve this.

On completion of these works we will reinstate the site and regrade around our working area to leave the Batch in a tidy condition. The bund at the site entrance will be left in place and we will then implement the re-stock of the trees as defined in the conditions of the Forestry England felling licence.

If you have any questions regarding these works please don't hesitate to get in touch .

<http://www.coal.decc.gov.uk/>

ANDY HOSKINS

WEIGH - HOUSE Nº 83

EDITOR'S NOTES

Although the Society has been arranging walks for many years, it is a long time since we published an account of one. Derrick Hunt led the walk from Midford to Monkton Combe in November of last year and has written up the highlights for the benefit of members who missed it. As often happens, the leader is not the only person with expert knowledge; the contribution from Steve Page on railway fence posts shows just how diverse the knowledge of the other contributors can be.

The second part of Roger Halses article on Midford includes an explanation of the uses of Upper Midford Accommmodation Bridge and a wonderful photograph of it, which merits printing in full across the centre pages. Derrick's and Roger's articles would make a good accompaniment for anyone walking the Coal Canal Way.

At the start of the pandemic, when everyone was locked-down and looking for things to do, we made downloads of Weigh-House available free online. If you have ever mislaid one of your copies, the download will enable you to complete your collection. If you have only joined the Society in recent years and are wondering how it developed and built up the background knowledge that we take for granted nowadays, you will find plenty of interest in exploring the back issues at:

<http://www.coalcanal.org/wh.php>

LIZ TUDDENHAM

CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

Welcome to the first Weigh-House of 2022, I hope you all had an enjoyable break over Christmas and that the New Year has started well for you. This time last year we were in yet another lockdown and, essential as these have been, it is good to note that the pandemic is receding and we are able to resume activities such as walks and talks. A programme for both is in place and advertised within the pages of this edition and on the website.

We often talk of the benefits of a restored canal, but it is worth noting that even a canal that exists only as an archæological relic has value to the community around it; this was part of the reasoning behind the creation of the Coal Canal Way to explore the canal as it is today. This was initially promoted *via* a booklet that was available at various outlets and the content of which features on our website. We are now in the process of waymarking the route [*see opposite page*] and those who follow it will find the distinctive blue markers at regular intervals, guiding them and reassuring them that they are still on their way towards Paulton or Dundas. This in many ways represents the approach a society like ours must take, a layer cake or 'lasagne' approach, working to improve what we have at each location: where there is a footpath following the canal we waymark it, where the canal is present but overgrown we clear it, where there is a crumbling structure we repair it, and so on. This keeps the canal in the public eye, keeps momentum for volunteers and keeps the dream of restoration alive for when the resources are available to do it.

The canal is, of course, also an interest to historians nationally (and internationally, some time ago I was suprirsed to find an article on our canal in an American canal journal) and with that in mind I'm pleased to say that the Coal Canal is the focus of a two day social event organised by the Railway & Canal Historical Society. The party of 50 or so weekenders will be based at an hotel near Frome and will be taken to sites of interest along our canal and also to nearby sites of railway interest. With hotel rooms, coach bookings, meals and similar this visit is not only a feather in the cap of the Society, proving interest in our canal, but a very real demonstration of economic benefits of promoting the canal as well over £10,000 will be spent in the local economy by these ardent enthusiasts. If an abandoned canal, where restoration has barely begun can generate that kind of interest, we can only dream of what a restored canal might achieve.

PATRICK MOSS

DONATIONS

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

Mr. C. Davis
Ms. N. Harris
Mr. A. Screen
Mr. A. White
Mr. J. Whittaker

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY — 2022

We shall be following Government advice on measures to combat Covid-19, so any of the events listed here may have to be cancelled at short notice. We shall do our best to go ahead with them, but please check with the website or telephone one of the contact numbers given below for the latest information before travelling:

Website: **http://www.coalcanal.org**

Sunday 6th February —10:00
WORK PARTY — Location to be advised
For further details please contact: *Mark Sherrey* ☎ 07973 918467

Sunday 20th February —10:00
WALK — MIDFORD to LOCK 22
Meet: Twinhoe Lane, Midford.
For further details please see website or contact: *Liz Tuddenham* ☎ 01225 335974

Thursday 24th February— 19:30
SOCIAL EVENING CANCELLED due to uncertainty about Covid

Sunday 6th March —10:00
WORK PARTY — Location to be advised
For further details please contact: *Mark Sherrey* ☎ 07973 918467

Thursday 24th March— 19:30
SOCIAL EVENING — CANAL RESTORATIONS
by Patrick Moss
Meet: The Radstock Working Men's Club.
For further details please see website or contact: *Steve Page* ☎ 01761 433418

Sunday 27th March —10:00
WALK — THE LOWER LOCK FLIGHT
Meet: Bridge Farm, Combe Hay.
For further details please see website or contact: *Liz Tuddenham* ☎ 01225 335974

Sunday 3rd April —10:00
WORK PARTY — Location to be advised
For further details please contact: *Mark Sherrey* ☎ 07973 918467

Sunday 17th April —10:00
WALK — THE UPPER LOCK FLIGHT
Meet: Bridge Farm, Combe Hay.
For further details please see website or contact: *Liz Tuddenham* ☎ 01225 335974

Thursday 28th April— 19:30
SOCIAL EVENING — COLLIERIES OF TIMSBURY & PAULTON
by Roger Halse
Meet: The Radstock Working Men's Club.
For further details please see website or contact: *Steve Page* ☎ 01761 433418

Sunday 1st May —10:00
WORK PARTY — Location to be advised
For further details please contact: *Mark Sherrey* ☎ 07973 918467

BOOK REVIEWS

TECHNOLOGY, ECONOMICS AND CANAL DEVELOPMENT,
An early technical book and what it reveals

Including a translation by Mike Clarke of *Anleitung zu dem Entwurf und der Ausfürung schiffbarer Canäle* (Instructions for the Design and Implementation of Navigable Canals) by Sebastian Von Maillard

Sebastian von Maillard was an Austrian engineer who visited England in 1795 to learn about the English canal system. He used this information to build a narrow canal on the English style in Vienna. As an engineering officer in the Hapsburg army, he was one of the leading technically-educated engineers in Europe, using what was, at the time, advanced mathematics to help design canal structures.

Maillard's canal book has been translated by Mike Clarke, who has been researching international waterways history for thirty years. He has included a series of short papers which explain the history of inland waterways in the Hapsburg Empire; the origins of canal development in the 18th century and how this was influenced by local economics; the importance of narrow canal construction in England and internationally; and how the craftsman and technical education influenced the development of the industrial revolution.

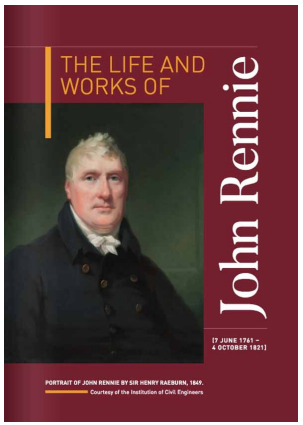
The book is available form the Railway & Canal Historical Society
<shop@rchs.org.uk>

R.T.

THE LIFE AND WORKS OF JOHN RENNIE
(7 June 1761 - 4 October 1821)

A book made available online by the Rochester Bridge Trust

Although John Rennie is primarily known in this area as the Engineer of the Kennet & Avon Canal, his work was much more widespread and examples of his engineering skills are to be found all over the country. In addition to his masterpieces, this well-illustrated online book describes many of his lesser-known achievements such as the Stowmarket Navigation, the Chelmer & Blackwater navigation and the Albion Mills. In addition to at least 65 non-canal bridges, he also designed docks and harbours in Scotland and Ireland, numerous sea defences and the Bell Rock Lighthouse.



The book begins with his eary life, including his relationship with James Watt, and ends with details of his death, funeral and the family that survived him. The editor, Sue Threader, gives links to other, more comprehensive, works on which she drew and includes a page on the John Rennie archives at the Institution of Civil Engineers.

Of particular interest is John Rennie's original drawing for the ball-bearing swivel bridges on the K&A Canal, which were removed during 'improvement' works and never replaced.

The book is available online at:
<https://rbt.org.uk/john-rennie/>

E.M.T.

NEW MEMBERS

The Society welcomes the following new members:

Ms. D. Gover	Frome
Ms. N. Harris	Peasedown St John
Mr. J. Whittaker	Chewton Mendip

COAL CANAL WAYMARKING

Following the success of the Coal Canal Way *booklet, the Society has decided to waymark the route in a similar way to other footpaths in the area.*

WAYMARKS AT A KISSING GATE
From top to bottom: **Public Footpath; Limestone Link; Circuit of Bath; The Coal Canal Way.**

We are currently working our way westwards along the route from Dundas Basin in the direction of Paulton. Many of the paths are shared with other routes which already have their own waymarks in place, but in some areas we will have the field to ourselves – quite literally.

Not only will our waymarks help readers of the booklet to find their way about, but they will also act as publicity when walkers who know nothing about the S.C.C. see the waymarks and begin to enquire about them.

THE LEAK AT WITHY MILLS

In November of 2014 we were given permission by the landowner to begin repair work on the section of canal between Paulton Basin and Withy Mills Stop Point. There were several unexpected discoveries during that work, which puzzled us at the time and have proved to have a much greater significance than we initially realised. The repairs were completed in April 2015 and the canal refilled, but it gradually became apparent that there were leaks in that section. When the canal was full, areas of wet ground began to appear in the meadow below it and water was found to be flowing into the Cam Brook at the point where the brook meandered nearest to the canal embankment. This latter area suddenly became a mass of leaks, which defied all efforts to block them, and the canal emptied out completely.

The first clue as to what might have happened was to be found in photographs taken at the time of the repair works. The work began at Withy Mills Stop Point and worked westwards. The photograph below [*Fig 1*] shows the situation after the first 75 metres had been completed.

***Fig 1* —EMBANKMENT PUDDLING UNDER CONSTRUCTION AT WITHY MILLS — December 2014**

The repairs began at Withy Mills Stop Point (A) and had progressed as far as (B) when this photograph was taken on 10th December 2014. The layer of puddling on the embankment was about 18" thick, as recommended by most authorities on canal construction. There was no difficulty maintaining this thickness because a plentiful supply of natural clay could be dug out of the uphill bank, where it was easily within reach of the digger.

At (B) things began to go wrong. The uphill bank suddenly ceased to supply good quality clay and became porous soil. The only supply of clay nearby was the bed of the canal itself. Before mining this, Richard Hignett advised us to dig trial pits to ensure that we would not be exposing any porous strata below the canal bed. Luckily the clay seemed to go down a long way, so we felt that some judicious mining would be permissible. A prodigious volume of clay would have been needed to carry on building the embankment to the previous thickness, so we were forced to economise. From (B) to (C), we had to make the puddling much thinner and this was one of the contributory factors that led to the occurrence of major leaks in that section later on..

IDENTIFYING RAILWAY FENCE POSTS

During the walk from Midford to Monkton Combe referred to in the previous article, a discussion arose concerning the origins of concrete fence posts used by various railway companies. Steve Page explains how to distinguish between the different types of concrete and thus identify where and when the posts were made.

The fence along the side of Twinhoe Lane at Midford adjacent to the viaduct marks the boundary of the railway property associated with the former Somerset & Dorset line.

The concrete fence posts here are products of the London & South Western Railway's own Exmouth Junction Concrete Works (actually located on the outskirts of Exeter). The large proportion of pebbles visible differentiates them from the later, Southern Railway version, which had fewer pebbles in the mix, and thus a much smoother surface.

***Photograph:* Steve Page**

Fig. 1 — L.&S.W.R. FENCE POSTS AT TWINHOE LANE, MIDFORD

***Photograph:* Steve Page**

Fig. 2 — CLOSE-UP VIEW OF POST AND WIRE

If you look closely you will see that the fence wires are threaded through holes in the posts. This was found to be a nuisance if a wire had to be replaced, as the remains had to be withdrawn and the replacement wire laboriously threaded through all the holes. Because of this, any new fence posts which were being installed were positioned with the holes at right angles to the line of the fence, with the wires fixed along the outer face and secured with split pins through the holes. This made replacing a wire much easier.

Thanks to John Smith for originally drawing our attention to these interesting details.

STEVE PAGE

The Infill [7]

The canal just South of Tucking Mill has been filled in. No walk would ever be complete without discussing the contents of the infill and the potential problems in restoration. There is a large quantity of decomposing sheet rubber in the infill [*See Fig. 5*], which would be difficult and expensive to remove from the site. The footpath runs along the foot of the embankment at this point, but if it were reinstated along the towpath, the canal infill could easily be dug out and tipped at the embankment base, where the extra weight would help stabilise it.

Tucking Mill [8]

This area has seen many changes with the construction of the canal, during its working life, and after closure. However the wharf edge is still visible, although now in a private garden, and the 1½ mile stone is still there without its plate, although not in its original position.

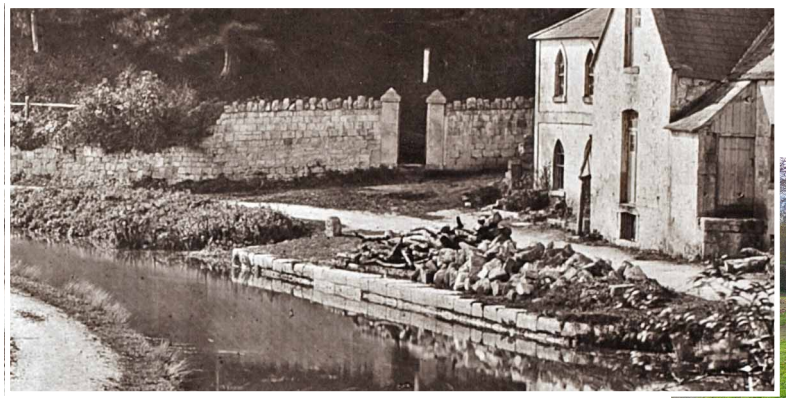


Fig 6 **— TUCKING MILL WHARF — 1890**

Fig 7 **— THE WHARF EDGE STILL VISIBLE IN A PRIVATE GARDEN**

Fig 8 (Left) **— TUCKING MILL BRIDGE — 1997**

Naturally, on a walk like this, a lot of other fascinating discussions were held and valuable contributions made by all the participants. One of these was a revealing description of railway fence posts by Steve Page, which is covered in a separate article.

DERRICK HUNT

At (D) we discovered a curious 'thing' whose purpose we could not imagine [*See Fig 2*]. It appeared to be a wooden trough with a slatted lid, set into the base of the embankment and forming a rectangular duct underneath it. It was packed solidly with waterproof clay of a distinctly different appearance from the clay in the embankment surrounding it. We got the digger to remove some of the embankment so that we could follow along it, but its purpose did not become apparent at the time and has only been guessed at quite recently.

Fig 2 **—MIKE CHAPMAN EXAMINING THE 'THING' The stone wall at the base of the embankment has been partly dug away and a small pit has been excavated along the side of the wooden object to try to assess its overall size.**

This excavation also confirmed that the base of the embankment incorporated a stone wall, which was a most unusual feature for canals before the 1880s, although it was used at that time in the construction of reservoir dams. It was more expensive than standard canal constructions and tended to be reserved for sections that were particularly at risk and needed more strength than usual.

The reason for the inconvenient disappearance of the clay on the uphill embankment became apparent when we researched old maps of the area. When Withy Mills Colliery was built, boats loading at the colliery wharf would have had to go all the way to Paulton Basin to turn and begin their journey back to Dundas. To save this extra travel, a 'winding hole' was cut in the uphill embankment of the canal as near as possible to the colliery, so as to allow the boats to turn. When the railway from Hallatrow to Camerton was built alongside the canal, this winding hole was partially filled in, but an archway was built under the railway embankment, perhaps to give the local farmer access to the canal as a drinking pond for his cattle. Eventually the railway embankment was removed and the winding hole completely filled in – which explains why this section of the bank was no longer natural clay.

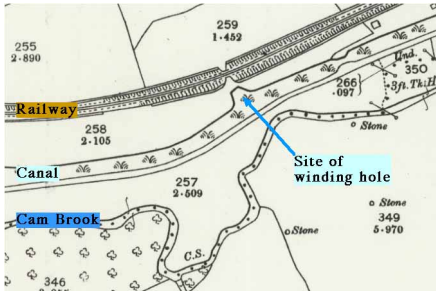


Fig 3 — THE REMAINS OF WITHY MILLS WINDING HOLE *c*1914

Now we know that the embankment here was directly opposite a winding hole; this raises another possible explanation for the presence of the wall. The embankment might have needed reinforcement to cope with the buffeting it would receive from carelessly handled boats. That led to speculation that the 'thing' might have been associated with some sort of windlass to help turn the boats, but there is no evidence of such aids on any other canal and nothing to suggest why it might have been necessary on this one.

It wasn't until major repairs were begun in earnest that the evidence for what had probably affected the canal years ago began to fall into place.

→

The mystery deepened when test borings in the meadow below the area of the leak showed a layer of coal dust or coal waste. This obviously wasn't a natural phenomenon and suggested that the ground between the canal and the Cam Brook had been infilled at some time in the past. It wasn't until the embankment was cut away in preparation for plugging the leaks that the most striking evidence of all came to light.

***Fig 4* — CANAL EMBANKMENT SHOWING PATTERN OF COAL WASTE INFILL**

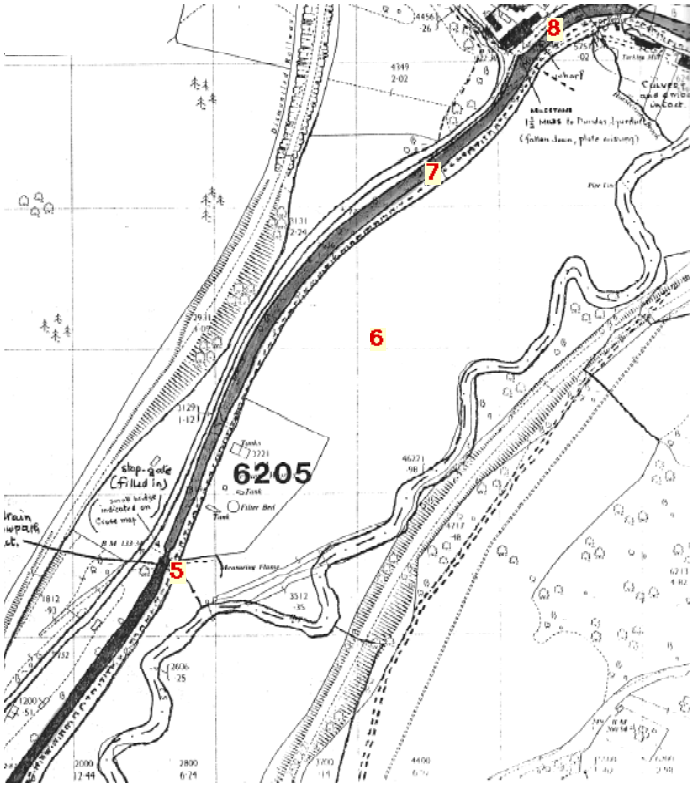
The shape of the infill showed that there had been a major washout through the canal embankment at the point where it was closest to the brook. It had been patched up with materials which were easily to hand, such as local soil and coal waste. As those materials were porous, they had been waterproofed on the canal side by a layer of puddling clay and it was this layer of clay which we had thinned down when repairing the canal in 2014. The boundary between the puddle clay and the porous infill was not a perfectly flat plain, so at the places where the infill poked through the puddling, a leak would develop. Repairs to this leak would raise the water table and then other leaks, with just a thin layer of protection, would start to seep and eventually wash through into big holes. This accounted for the whole line of leaks which kept appearing all the way along the washed-out section and combined underground into two major outlets that jetted plumes of turbidity into the Cam Brook.

***Fig 5* — THE LEAKS COMBINING IN PASSAGEWAYS ON THE DOWNHILL SIDE OF THE CANAL EMBANKMENT**

After digging out a lot of the porous material, we rebuilt the embankment with 90 tons of dense blue clay, worked into waterproof puddle by kneading it with the bucket of a tracked excavator. This required a supply of water, so a pump was set to work to lift some from the brook and pour it where the excavator was working. At this point we received another surprise: Josh Gould reported that a third plume had appeared, upstream of the other two, in a place which appeared to have no connection with the main leaks.

Milestone [4]

About 100 yards North of the Weigh-House, on the non-towpath side of the canal, was the "2 miles to Dundas" milestone. It is not visible now and there is no record of what has happened to it or whether it still has its cast iron plate. It might be still in place but buried under debris which has fallen down the railway embankment which towers above it. Mike Chapman's survey tantalisingly indicates the location.



***Survey data:* Mike Chapman**

Fig. 2 — MIKE CHAPMAN'S SURVEY OF THE CANAL SOUTH OF TUCKING MILL — 1987

Sluice drain [5]

This structure is located underneath the towpath and eaily missed unless you spot the stream which still runs through it [*see Fig. 3*]. This stream runs into the field below and disappears into the ground, which might suggest there is an underground stone culvert between here and the brook.

Mystery Stone [6]

What is this stone [*Fig. 4*] located away from the canal in the field towards the Cam Brook ? The stone stands on the edge of a plateau which occupies the land between the stone and the canal embankment.

→

Fig 3 — THE SLUICE

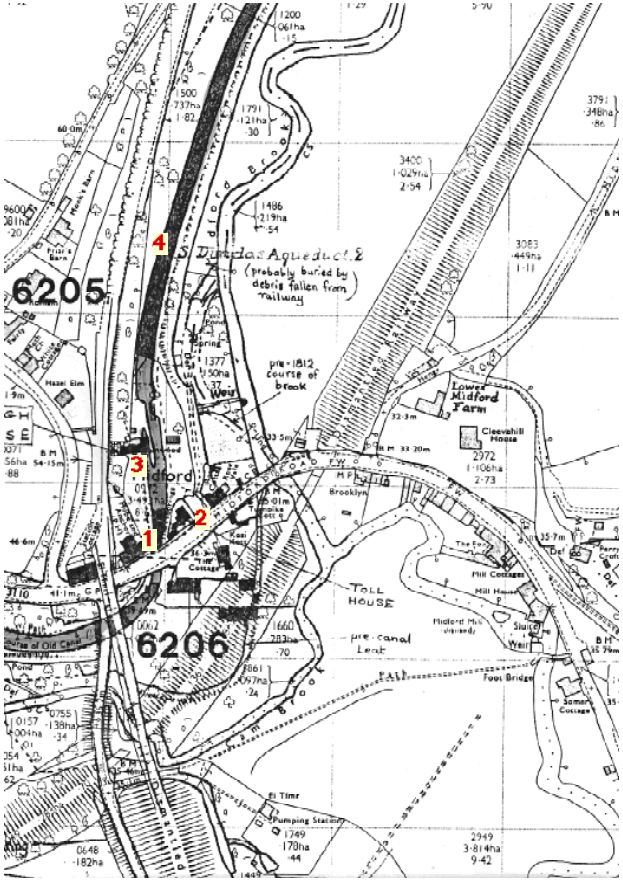
Fig 4 — THE STONE

Fig 5 — THE INFILL

A WALK FROM MIDFORD TO MONKTON COMBE
Delights in discovering the details and discussing the discrepancies

The Society's walks programme started back in the 1990s with Mike Chapman showing us the route of the Canal, which he surveyed and recorded in 1987. Most of us knew very little then. Since that time with additional research and surveying we now have a much better picture of the layout and features of our Canal. Our interpretation today now includes discussing the feasibility of restoration.

Our walk in November 2021 provided a detailed description of the Canal from MIdford to Monkton Combe. There have been many changes at Midford with the construction of the Canal and then two railways as Roger Halse has covered in his articles. Here are some of the details which we delighted in discovering and discussing on our walk.



Survey data: **Mike Chapman**

Fig. 1 — MIKE CHAPMAN'S SURVEY OF MIDFORD — 1987

Hope and Anchor side path handrail [1]

A photograph of 1880 [*See Fig. 3 on p.17 of WH 82*] shows a handrail alongside the path on the downhill side of the Hope and Anchor public house. We were surprised to find that it was still there in 2021 but the pathway to the Weigh-House is now blocked and the house itself is no longer visible from this viewpoint.

The Toll-Collector's House [2] and Weigh-House [3]

This building on the main road below the canal bridge is now a private residence called "The Moorings". It could easily be passed by without realising its significance: this house was at one time the main office of the S.C.C.. The new technology of the Weigh-House considerably reduced the scams which the boatmen were using to avoid paying the correct tolls and thus significantly increased the profitability of the canal. The Weigh-House itself has now been converted into a two-story private residence called "Lynwood", the public footpath goes around the property and becomes the towpath of the canal.

By directing the water to different places in the canal, it became apparent that the leak for this plume was in the neighbourhood of the 'thing'. The top slats had been removed from the 'thing' and further excavation revealed that it had once been a wooden sluice.

Fig 6 **— THE PLUME OF TURBIDITY AND THE 'THING' WHICH WAS THE SOURCE OF IT**

It was probably built as a temporary drain to keep the work site dry while repairs were being effected on the embankment; its level, just slightly below the canal bed, would have been appropriate for this. When the work was completed, it had been blocked off with a thick plug of any type of clay which was to hand, there being no need to match it to the existing puddle clay.

So now we had a much better idea of the previous repair and the washout which had made it necessary, but we still had no idea why it had occurred here, rather than anywhere else along this stretch of the canal. The only thing that was different about this short stretch of canal was its proximity to the Cam Brook, which might have undermined it at some time in the past. The brook at this point is in the early stages of forming an Ox-bow, which is a well understood geographical phenomenon [*see Fig 7*]. On the outside of a bend, even a very slight one [Stage 1], the water flows faster and is more turbulent, so it erodes the bank and the bed slightly faster on that side. On the inside of the bend, the water is calmer and slower, so it deposits silt particles which it may be carrying. This has the effect of increasing the deviation of the bend from the original line [Stages 2 & 3] and increases the rate of erosion as the water is now thrown against the bank. Eventually the bend becomes so sharp that it is thrown back on itself [Stage 4], giving the classic 'ox-bow' formation. Further stages follow in which the stream cuts through the remaining land, and finally isolates the loop, which is left as a small side pond.

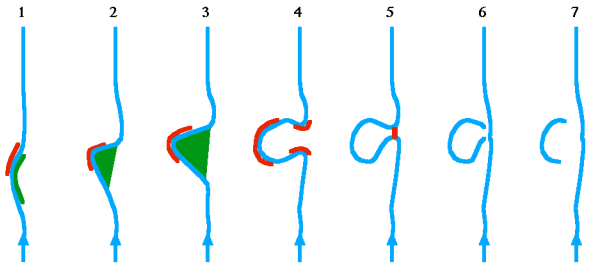


Fig 7 — STAGES IN THE FORMATION OF AN OX-BOW
Erosion shown in red, deposition shown in green

The Cam Brook in the vicinity of the leak is somewhere between Stages 2 and 3 and appears to have been at this stage for many years; old maps show the stream has followed virtually the same course in this immediate location for the past 230 years.

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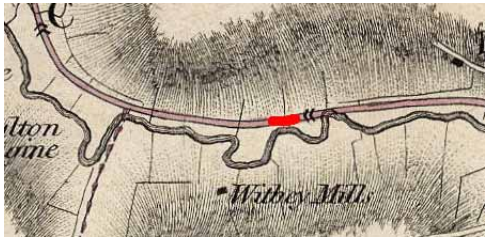


Fig 8 — CAREY'S MAP 1793
The area of the leak is shown in red. A loop of the Cam Brook cuts into the proposed route of the S.C.C. The map is only a proposal for the general line of the canal and shows a lock (as chevrons) which was not needed in the final construction.

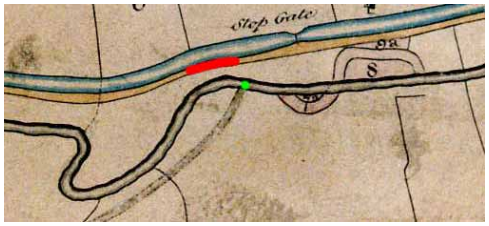


Fig 9 — THE CRUSE MAP 1805
The area of the leak is shown in red. The loops of the Cam Brook shown in Carey's map have been cut through and the stream straightened.
The green dot marks the point where the tailrace leat from Lower Engine Pit discharges into the Cam Brook. Water still issues into the brook at this point, making it a convenient reference marker.

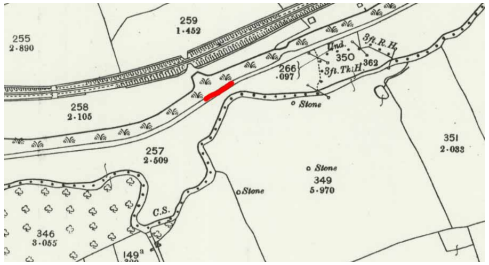


Fig 10 — O.S. 25-inch MAP, 1914
The area of the leak is shown in red. The loop of the Cam Brook is still shown in its original position over 100 years later, even though other parts appear to have changed their shape.
A new ox-bow is developing up stream (to the left) of the leak.

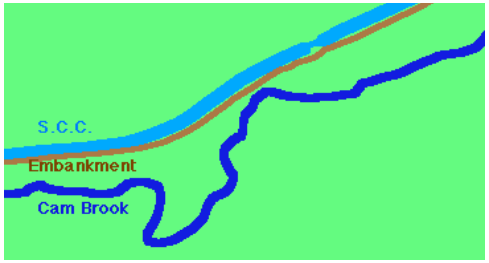
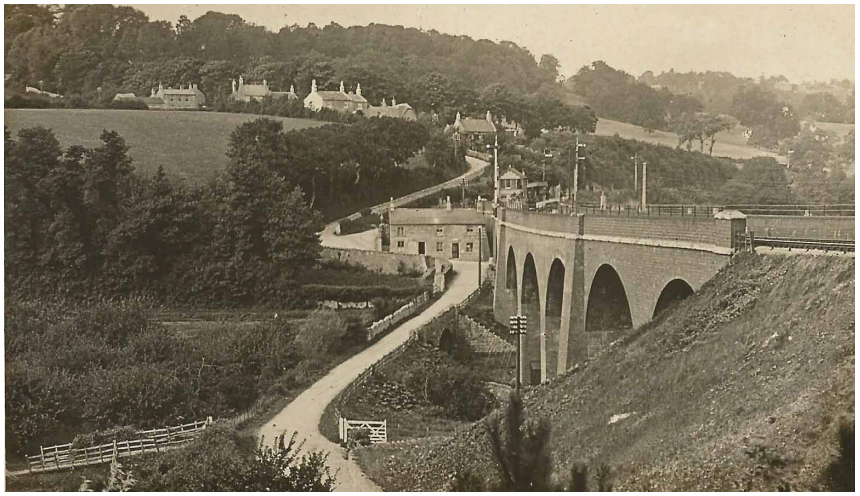


Fig 11 — PRESENT DAY (based on LIDAR data)

In the relatively short time we have been holding work parties in the Paulton area, it is noticeable how much the brook has eroded towards the canal below the leak. With erosion taking place at such a rate, why don't the maps show any change over the centuries?

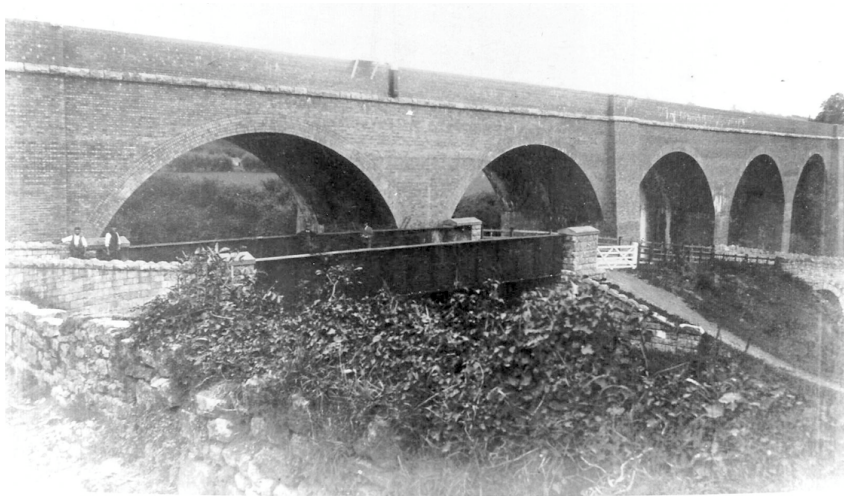
The maps shown above are separated by many years; during the intervals between them the banks of the brook may have been washed away several times because floods are a frequent occurrence in this valley. After each washout, the landowner would have quickly rebuilt the banks and put the brook back to its original course. No records would have been kept of these changes and there would be no evidence on the maps.

Along the base of the embankment in this section is a strong wall which would seem unnecessary merely as a support for the embankment. In times of flood, however, the waters of the Cam Brook spread out across the meadows and in the absence of the wall would rapidly erode the soil of the embankment, causing it to collapse. In view of this, it is essential to maintain this wall – and it would also be expedient to undertake some protection works on the bank of the brook nearest to the canal, to prevent the Cam Brook from undermining and destabilising the embankment again in the future.



Photograph: **Roger Halse collection**

Fig. **13 TWINHOE LANE AND SOMERSET & DORSET RAILWAY VIADUCT, MIDFORD c.1900 (before the GWR Camerton to Limley Stoke branch was built).**



Photograph: S&DRT

Fig. 14 — S&D RAILWAY VIADUCT & TWINHOE LANE BRIDGE c.1895
The 'New' Road Bridge over the canal.

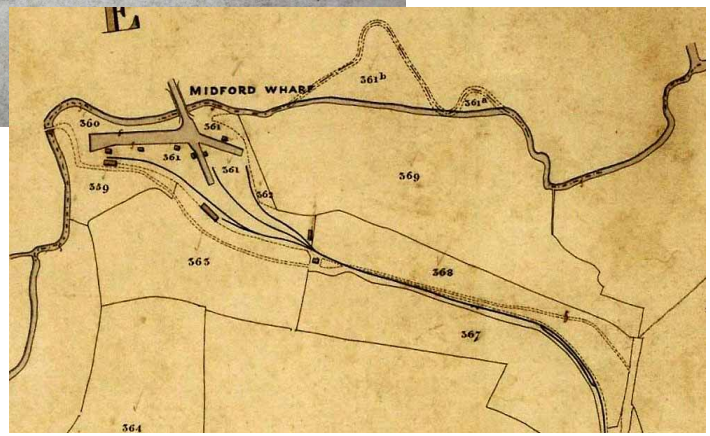
Returning to our walk. After passing by the Midford Accommodation Bridge the footpath takes a slight detour away from the canal, passing under Holley's Viaduct (part of the GWR line), before returning to the canal on the other side of the railway embankment. From here you continue along the former southern towpath, and the ever-popular public footpath, towards Combe Hay. Here we end our brief sojourn in Midford.

ROGER HALSE

Midford Accommodation Bridge is far more important than some would think. It once carried the main packhorse road between Midford and Twinhoe over the canal. The former packhorse road (marked as № 1986 on the map) comes down the hill from the main Bath Road, skirts around the orchard (Field № 191), over the canal bridge, and heads towards the Cam Brook. It would have crossed the Cam Brook *via* a ford and run along the back of the canal/tramway interchange basin (wharf), crossing the route of tramway, before turning south towards Twinhoe. Part of the road between the bridge and the ford can still be traced today as there are still some remains of the stone walls that were each side of the road.

PLEASE DO NOT ATTEMPT TO CROSS THE FORD. THE LAND ON BOTH SIDES OF THE BROOK IS PRIVATE.

(Left)
***Fig.* 11 SOUTH STOKE TITHE MAP c.1840**
***Source:* National Archives, London**



(Right)
***Fig.* 12 WELLOW TITHE MAP, MIDFORD WHARF & TRAMWAY c.1840**
Source: Somerset Heritage Centre

The packhorse road fell out of use some time after the 1870s following the building of a new, more direct route, between Midford and Twinhoe. During the construction of the Somerset & Dorset Joint Railway's new line, the railway cut through the route of the old road. The S.&D.J.R. agreed to provide a new road, built adjacent to the splendid railway viaduct in Midford, including new bridges over both the canal, and the Cam Brook. This road is still in use today and is the one that the present-day footpath goes under at the start of this walk.

A TALE OF TWO TOWPATHS — Part 2
An historical walk along the canal at Midford

Continuing from p.19 of WH 82, Roger's walk has taken us as far as Midford Aqueduct, opposite which is a stone wall protecting the northern towpath from boats leaving the aqueduct.

In 1898 the pumping engine at Dunkerton, which supplied the canal with much of its water, broke down, and there being no money to repair it, the canal was closed. A few boats still managed to carry on trading as Winter rains kept the water at a reasonable level. The last recorded boat was in May 1899. However, this was not to be the last goods traffic that came along this route.

Photograph: Roger Halse

Fig. 8 — MIDFORD 1998 — Showing the stone wall at the base of the northern towpath

In 1904 the canal was acquired by the GWR, who between 1907-1910 built the new branch line from Camerton to Limpley Stoke. The railway closely followed the line of the former canal. During the railway's construction the southern towpath came back into use, this time transporting materials for the railway. Here the railway contractor used the former towpath as the base for a temporary railway between Midford and Combe Hay. [*See WH 76, 77, 78 and 80 for further details on the Contractor's Railway*] Approaching the Midford Accommodation Bridge, the horse would now cross over the bridge to re-join the southern towpath.

Note: The northern towpath is not accessible to the public, neither is the bridge. BOTH ARE ON PRIVATE LAND, PLEASE DO NOT TRESPASS! →

***Photograph:* Bathintime**

***Fig.* 9 — ' MAKING NEW RLY. ' *c*1909**
The temporary contractor's railway running along the former canal towpath towards the camera; past the entrance for the Midford Aqueduct (shown as a slight kink in the line) and towards the Midford Accommodation Bridge.

Unfortunately two historical errors crept into the first paragraph of Part One of this article:
1). Midford is in fact in five parishes, not four. I omitted the small part of Freshford Parish that lies within the village.
2). Although other stations and halts along the GWR's Camerton Branch re-opened in 1923, Midford Halt did not. Thank you to those who noted my mistakes, my apologies.

R.H.

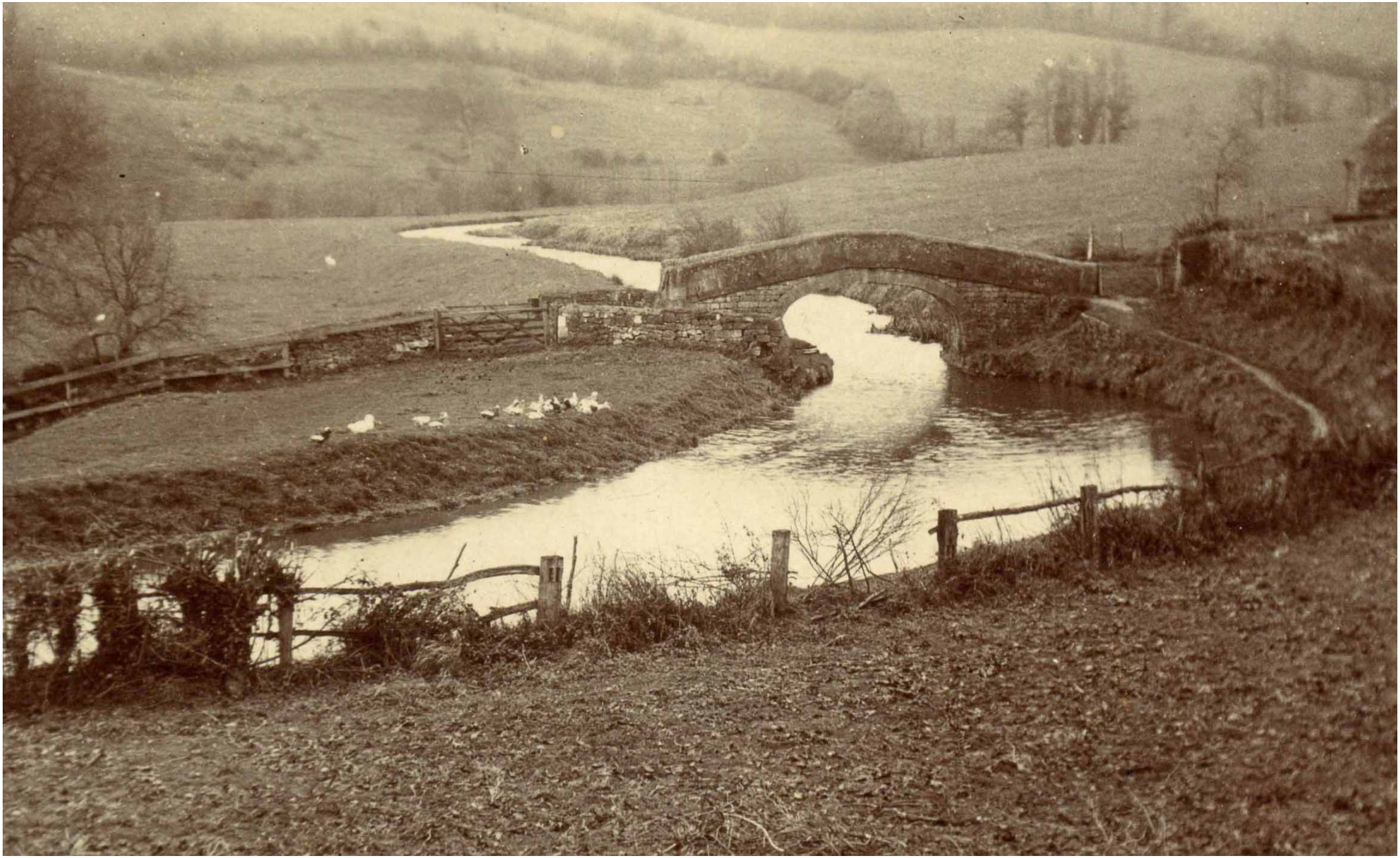


Fig. 10 **MIDFORD ACCOMMODATION BRIDGE *c*1890**
The northern towpath can be seen as it approaches the bridge.
The track to the left of the bridge heads towards the Cam Brook.

Photograph: **Paul De'Ath**

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