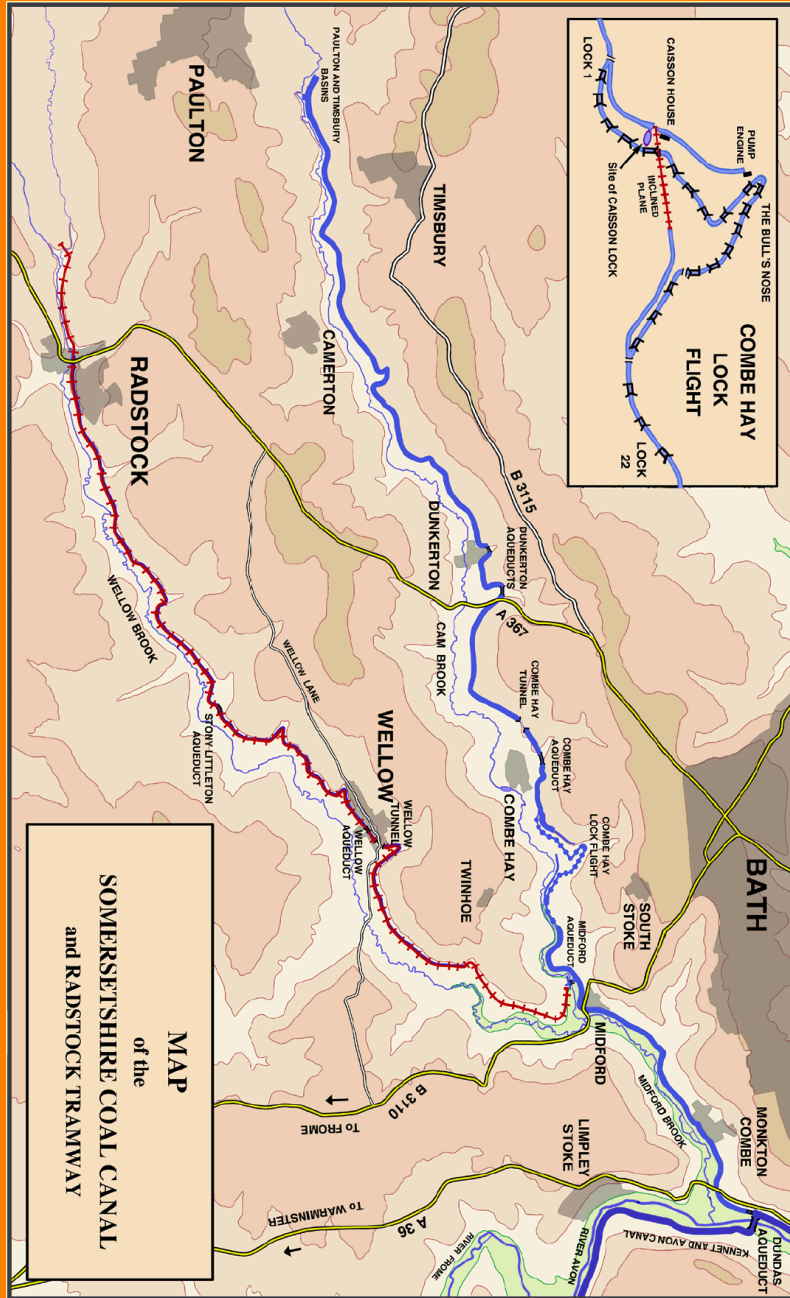


WEIGH-HOUSE

THE MAGAZINE OF THE
SOMERSETSHIRE COAL CANAL SOCIETY



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



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 BA3 3JW

☎ 01761 433418 *E-mail:* membership@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 – LIZ 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

HISTORICAL ADVISOR – MIKE CHAPMAN

Non-committee position.

51, Newton Road, Twerton, Bath BA2 1RW

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

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:

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

☎ 01225 335974 *E-mail (not HTML):* liz@poppyrecords.co.uk

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

Thursday 24th November— 19:30

SOCIAL EVENING — CANAL RESTORATION

by Patrick Moss

Meet: The Radstock Working Men's Club.

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

Sunday 4th December —10:00

WORK PARTY — Location to be advised

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

STROUDWATER HISTORY

It is always interesting to see what other Canal Societies are doing and how we may learn from them. For example, I read the Trow magazine of the Cotswolds Canals Trust carefully and have discovered this exciting new development. I quote a section from Hugh Conway-Jones' article below:

A new website tells the story of life along the Stroudwater Canal based on the most complete archive of any canal company in the country. To encourage community engagement with the main restoration project, the website presents historical information and images about places along the canal and about the activities that were needed to keep the canal operating. It also presents extracts, summaries and images of important documents from the archive of the Stroudwater Company, and there are pages providing resources for schools and suggestions about how to get involved.

There are eight sections on the front page of the website together with a search facility. Personally I am delighted to see that there is: "A list of promoters, builders, landowners and users 1774-9". A search reveals that John Billingsley of Oakhill was a shareholder, as he was in both the S.C.C. and the proposed Dorset & Somerset Canal. [See the article on John Billingsley in *Weigh-House No 56* (available on the Society's website)].

The site is managed by The Stroudwater Navigation Archive Charity which is separate from, but supported by, the Cotswolds Canals Trust. Other supporters include the Heritage Fund, Gloucestershire Heritage Hub and the Company of the Proprietors of the Stroudwater Navigation. The site may be found at:

<https://stroudwaterhistory.org.uk/>

It is a quality site packed with information. Unfortunately we in the S.C.C.S. do not have our company records available to emulate such a marvellous facility. However, our discoveries continue all the time and Roger's house must be groaning under the weight of material he has collected.

DERRICK HUNT

WEIGH - HOUSE N^o 84

EDITOR'S NOTES	3
CHAIRMAN'S NOTES	4
DONATIONS	4
NEW MEMBERS	4
NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING	5
FUNDRAISING NOTES	5
THE COAL CANAL WAY — THREE YEARS ON	5
PUBS AND BEER HOUSES ON THE S.C.C. SOUTHERN BRANCH by Tim Lunt and Chris Paul	7
PHOTOGRAPH OF 'MINERAL RAILWAY'	12
THE CONTRACTOR'S RAILWAY — ANOTHER PHOTOGRAPH?	15
SHAREHOLDERS OF THE SOMERSETSHIRE COAL CANAL— Worthington Brice Esquire by Derrick Hunt	16
CONNECTIONS BETWEEN PROMOTERS by Derrick Hunt	17
DIVERSIONS AT COMBE HAY INCLINED PLANE	18
THE RAILWAY & CANAL HISTORICAL SOCIETY	20
DATES FOR YOUR DIARY	21
STROUDWATER HISTORY by Derrick Hunt	22

EDITOR'S NOTES

Members who are reading this magazine because they are interested in canals may be puzzled to find the centre pages of this edition are occupied by a photograph of a railway. The connection with the S.C.C. is not immediately obvious, but there is good evidence to suggest that this photograph shows a much-neglected aspect of the canal's history. The main problem is that we don't actually know where it was taken — but we are working to resolve that.

Following on from the interest generated by Tim Lunt's recent articles about the pubs and ale houses of the Northern Branch of the S.C.C., he has teamed up with Chris Paul to produce another fascinating article on the subject, this time covering the Southern Branch.

After a long pause for research, Derrick Hunt has contributed another article in our occasional series about the shareholders of the S.C.C.. Unpicking the tangled web of family and business connections of those who financed this, and other canals, is a slow and painstaking business; but Derrick's research is turning up a lot of interesting facts and buried family history.

LIZ TUDDENHAM

CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

When looking at the history of canal restoration it is very difficult to define when a restoration "start" and thus how long the completed scheme actually took to deliver. Was it when volunteers first cut back vegetation? Or when the first contractor appeared on site? Or when the first navigable structure took shape? From this perspective the timeline for the Droitwich Canals, completed some ten years ago, makes interesting reading: A summary of the history of the project is as follows:-

1939 The Droitwich Barge and Junction Canals closed.

1959 I.W.A. member Max Sinclair started correspondence in the local press about the Canal's poor state.

1971 Volunteers from the Worcester & Birmingham Canal Society started working parties.

1973 The Droitwich Canals Trust was formed. Over 1,000 volunteers attended the "Droitwich Dig" on the Barge Canal.

2005 Work to complete the restoration was funded by grants from many organisations, including Heritage Lottery Fund, Councils and I.W.A..

2011 The Canals fully reopened.

Thus the timescale was 52 years.

We are about to start our own formal process to get consent for a replacement structure at Terminus Bridge — a process that will take 12 months from start to finish. We in the S.C.C.S. have a long way to go yet to achieve our restoration objectives, however, we can see that others have done it in other parts of the UK, and that they too had to take such small steps to begin with.

We need a clear idea of the direction in which those steps should be taking us, so a formal restoration plan has to be our next move. In order to achieve this we shall need many more volunteers with engineering and planning experience, so if you have suitable abilities, please come forward at the A.G.M.

PATRICK MOSS

DONATIONS

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

J. Van den Broeck	Mr. J. Henn
Mrs. A. Cannon	Mr. G. Lang
Mr. M. Clarke	Mr. P. Oates
Mr. P. Collins	Mr. J. Smith
Mr. M. Cox	Mr. R. Wilsdon

NEW MEMBERS

The Society welcomes the following new members:

J. Van den Broeck	Belgium
Mr J. Smith	Tisbury.

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 5th June —10:00

WORK PARTY — Location to be advised

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

Thursday 30th 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

Note change of date from previous announcements.

Sunday 3rd July —10:00

WORK PARTY — Location to be advised

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

Sunday 7th August —10:00

WORK PARTY — Location to be advised

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

Sunday 4th September —10:00

WORK PARTY — Location to be advised

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

Sunday 2nd October —10:00

WORK PARTY — Location to be advised

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

Sunday 16th October —10:00

WALK — COMBE HAY AQUEDUCT & TUNNEL

Meet: The Avenue, Combe Hay.

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

Thursday 27th October— 19:30

SOCIAL EVENING — OVER THE MENDIPS

The Somerset & Dorset Railway's Bath Extension

by Mike Beale

Meet: The Radstock Working Men's Club.

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

Sunday 6th November —10:00

WORK PARTY — Location to be advised

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

Sunday 20th November —10:00

WALK — EAST OF DUNKERTON

Meet: Dunkerton Parish Hall

For further details please see website or contact: *Derrick Hunts* ☎ 07986 972984



THE CRUSE MAP (1805)

Showing the diversion of the lock flight at the point where the inclined plane crosses it.

This problem was solved in a similar way to the road problem: by diverting the canal further up the hillside; the canal was kept on the same level so it reached a point where the inclined plane had risen high enough to be bridged over it. In this case, the canal could go underneath the inclined plane because there was no need for an allowance for unexpected large loads on the canal boats, in the way there would have been for road waggons. This would explain the strange-looking diversion of Locks 5 and 6 from the general smooth line along the contour of the hillside below Caisson House (unless anyone can come up with a better explanation).

Thanks to Roger Halse and all those who contributed to this discussion on our recent walk.

RAILWAY & CANAL HISTORICAL SOCIETY

As many members will already be aware, the Railway and Canal Historical Society was founded in the United Kingdom in 1954 to bring together all those interested in the history of transport, with particular reference to railways and waterways in Britain, its main objects being to promote historical research and to raise the standard of published history. Its website contains a wealth of material which may be accessed by non-members. This includes a talk recently given to the R.&C.H.S. by Patrick Moss on the S.C.C..

<https://rchs.org.uk/meetings-report/>

D.J.H.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The next Annual General Meeting of the Somersetshire Coal Canal Society will be held on
Thursday 30th June 2017
at the Radstock Working Men's Club, Radstock, BA3 3PR commencing 7.30 pm.
Please note this is a change of date from previous announcements.

FUNDRAISING NOTES

The current focus for fundraising is centred around the Paulton and Timsbury Basins and, in particular, Terminus Bridge for which local Community Infrastructure Levy funding is being sought. The S.C.C.S. has been liaising with B&NES Council to connect our project with their Somer Valley Rediscovered Project amongst other partnership opportunities. They have shown their support for the Coal Canal Way and we are looking forward to them supporting further projects involving the S.C.C..

I have been working on strengthening our readiness to seek major funds from the bigger grant schemes such as the National Lottery Fund through developing a stronger working relationship with the landowners along the S.C.C. and also broadening the engagement with other local community groups, volunteers and stakeholders such as the relevant Parish Councils. I will be working with the committee and the trustees in the coming months to see how our governance and management structure can work with new members and volunteers to improve our efficiency in readiness for the rigours of major grant funding applications.

LAURA WIGG-BAILEY

THE COAL CANAL WAY — THREE YEARS ON

The Coal Canal Way seems such an obvious asset to the canal and yet there were no plans for it until just over three years ago. One of the most frequently asked questions at that time was "Is there a book of walks along the canal", to which our answer had to be that the few books which had included the canal were now long out of print. The idea of joining up existing public footpaths to form a walk along the entire length of the canal came from a brainstorming session between Patrick Moss, our Chairman, and Sheila Petherbridge, the Public Rights of Way Officer for Bath and N.E. Somerset Council.

The job of working out the details of the scheme fell to Derrick Hunt and Liz Tuddenham, assisted by various members of the Society and local rambling groups. The original print run was only a few hundred copies and it initially sold rather slowly; but sales were steady and it soon became apparent that a second print run would be needed.

Its fame is spreading and it is now included in websites of local interest groups, such as the Timsbury Community Website (which incidentally includes five more walking books covering that area).

The project to waymark the Coal Canal Way was begun last year and is now complete from Dundas to Paulton. Once again we were greatly helped in this work by advice from Sheila Petherbridge. The blue & white roundels are now in place; in combination with the booklet they should unerringly (we hope) guide the exploring visitor from one end of the Northern Branch of the S.C.C. to the other.

→

By pure chance, Sheila Petherbridge happened to be visiting Timsbury Basin at the same time as our team working on the final section, so we invited her to ceremonially fix one of the last roundels in place.



SHEILA PETHERBRIDGE, B&NES PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY OFFICER, CEREMONIALLY NAILING A WAYMARK TO THE SIDE OF THE INTERPRETATION BOARD NEAR THE PAULTON END OF THE COAL CANAL WAY

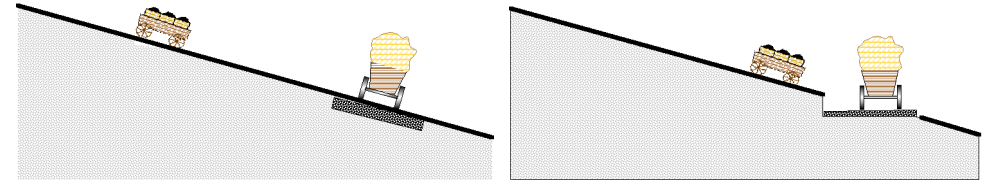
Selecting sites for the markers hasn't been easy, they must be clearly visible to the approaching walker and must point the correct way without any ambiguity — for instance, does a sign pointing right on a left-hand gatepost mean “go along the lane to the right of this gate” or “go through the gateway on the right of this sign”? We hope we have avoided such obvious errors but please let us know if you find any.

Early on in the process we discovered that many of the locations where signs needed to be fixed had only tubular metal posts, which our rigid flat roundels couldn't be nailed to. Initial attempts to curve the polycarbonate roundels by bending them around jam jars in a hot oven met with only moderate success.

We had to quickly devise a more flexible form of sign which we could print ourselves and attach to curved surfaces with double-sided sticky tape. This led us to make a few ‘custom designed’ roundels for places where the route doubled-back on itself and the normal roundel would have been confusing. Even more fixing difficulties were encountered in a few places where the roundels had to be attached to stone surfaces; luckily we had researched this problem in the past for our QR Code project, so we were able to find an appropriate bonding product straight away.

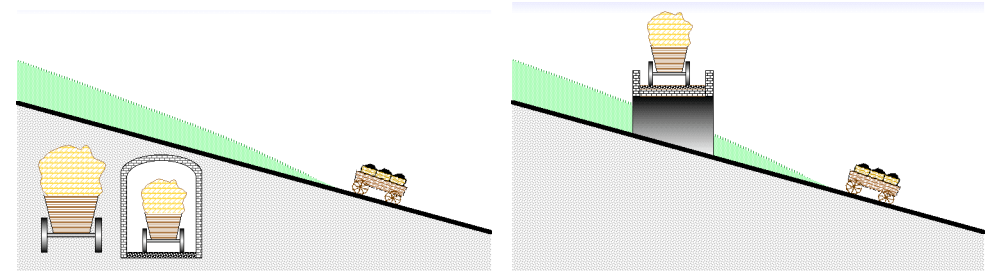
Most of the locations shared posts with official markers for footpaths and other routes, so there was no need for us to seek permission. In some places we were able to approach the landowner, who invariably approved of any form of marking which would keep walkers on the straight and narrow and prevent trespass (accidental or otherwise). Sadly, one or two anonymous people appear to have been opposed to waymarking and have removed not only our waymarks, but those of B&NES as well. Sometimes we, and B&NES, replaced the vandalised waymarks only to find they were removed for a second time. In due course, we anticipate some of the signs will succumb to the weather, plant growth and vandalism, so we expect to be doing ‘running repairs’ for some time to come.

It would be helpful if members could keep an eye on sections of the Coal Canal Way, by walking them from time to time, clearing obstructing vegetation and reporting any locations where signs appear to be missing; if you would like to volunteer for this, please contact Derrick Hunt.



TWO IMPRACTICAL WAYS OF FORMING A ‘LEVEL CROSSING’ BETWEEN AN INCLINED PLANE AND A ROAD

Given the choice between an inclined plane bridge over the road and a road bridge over the inclined plane, what factors would have been considered? The size of the road traffic was unpredictable and could range from pedestrians to tall fully-laden hay waggons, a bridge over the road would have to be large enough to allow the biggest anticipated road traffic to pass through and massive approach cuttings would have been needed.



INCLINED PLANE BRIDGE OVER A ROAD

ROAD BRIDGE OVER AN INCLINED PLANE

The waggons on the inclined plane were flat-bed trucks with boxes of coal loaded onto them by crane. The size of the maximum load was a known and fixed quantity, so there was no need to build a bridge over the plane that was any larger than the size of a fully-laden truck. To avoid the expense of large earthworks, the road could be diverted up the hillside until it was above the line of the inclined plane, then a bridge would only need to span the cutting in which the plane ran. Clearly a road bridge over the inclined plane was the cheaper and more convenient option — and that was how it was built.

When the lock flight was being built, a similar problem was encountered at Lock 5. Having been once bitten by putting all their eggs in one caisson, the committee would have been twice shy of trusting to the vagaries of a lock flight at a time when the future of the entire canal project depended on creating an impression of reliability and prosperity. Although the locks were supposed to eventually supplant the inclined plane, there was no guarantee that this would happen as soon as the lock flight was opened for traffic and, indeed, there may have been good economic reasons for retaining the services of the inclined plane for a long time afterwards. This meant that a way had to be found of keeping the inclined plane in operation while the locks were being built and used.

The big snag with this plan was that the planned line of locks would have gone straight across the inclined plane, at about the same level as the plane, somewhere by Locks 5 or 6. If a ‘level crossing’ between a road and an inclined plane is impractical, the idea of a level crossing between a water-filled canal and an inclined plane is too bizarre to even imagine. →

DIVERSIONS AT COMBE HAY INCLINED PLANE

On a recent walk at Combe Hay we noticed that there was a distinct track up the slope on the North side of the road between Inner Meadow Cottage and Bridge Farm. We knew that this was where the road had been diverted to cross the Inclined Plane, but were surprised to find it was so distinct after nearly two centuries of disuse. Roger Halse explained that this was because that section of the diversion was later used as an access drive to Caisson House and continued to be used as a footpath after the building of the Camerton to Limpley Stoke Railway — in fact, its use was only discontinued relatively recently. The reason why it was built in the first place was a subject worthy of further investigation.

When the caisson failed and a temporary inclined plane was installed to get the coal moving and reassure shareholders that the canal would eventually become viable, there was an engineering problem to be tackled: the road from Combe Hay to Midford ran along a contour that the inclined plane would have to cross.

A map of the period [right] clearly shows the road running approximately from South-West to East and the diversion as a triangle to the North of the road. A bridge which crosses the line of the inclined plane is also shown but it is not clear from the map why the diversion was necessary or why a bridge was the solution decided upon. Another thing that is not clear from the map is any indication of the slope involved. The photograph below shows that the slope is considerable. A length of road with a transverse slope which matched the slope of the inclined plane would have caused all kinds of difficulties for road traffic; with the prospect of wooden-wheeled



MAP SHOWING DIVERSION OF THE PARISH ROAD

carts sliding sideways down the slope or heavily-laden waggons overturning. The alternative of changing the slope of the inclined plane at the point where it crossed the road would have been equally impractical, with the risk of the trucks stalling on a flat part of the track or the haulage rope fouling the vertical undulations of the track bed.

It is clear that some sort of tunnel or bridge would be needed to allow the road and the inclined plane to occupy different levels.



LOOKING UP THE SLOPE OF THE INCLINED PLANE TOWARDS CAISSON HOUSE

PUBLIC AND BEER HOUSES ON THE S.C.C. SOUTHERN BRANCH

Following on from the articles in WH79 and 80 that described the pubs and beerhouses along the S.C.C. northern branch, we now take a look at the southern arm to Radstock and discover its selection of watering holes.

Some were ancient village Alehouses that pre-dated the canal and then were supplemented by other licensed establishments, all by the 19th century known as 'Public Houses', which sprang up as a result of the new business or the expansion of the coal industry in the area. Smaller enterprises, 'Beer Houses', appeared after legislation in 1830; run by householders selling beer from their premises and encouraged by the Government of the day in an effort to reduce the consumption of gin. The pubs and beerhouses might offer food, games and lodging as well as drink, with stabling alongside for boat horses. Beer houses in particular also gained a reputation for prostitution and crime which was probably not uncommon in the Somerset coalfield.

Completed in 1798, the branch to Radstock was a canal only from Twinhoe, linked initially by a short tramway from Midford until sufficient funds could be raised to build the connecting locks. This never happened and with trans-shipment of coal required at Radstock, Twinhoe and Midford, the business was clearly uneconomic and led to the tramway being extended along the entire route of the southern branch from Radstock to Midford in 1815. Railway competition from the G.W.R. line at Radstock ultimately forced the sale of the tramway in 1871 to the Somerset and Dorset Joint Railway Company (S&D) who used much of its course to construct their railway to Bath.

Although having a shorter working life than the main canal branch to Paulton, transport on the tramway was, as with the canal, horse drawn and manned by thirsty people. The seven mile journey from the collieries around Radstock down to the wharves by the aqueduct at Midford would have taken around 2 hours but coal was loaded from other mines along the way. →



THE BOATMAN'S ARMS
Centre, near the canal bridge at Upper Midford

Midford

Beginning the journey at Midford there were three public houses that catered for the workers who would have been busy transferring coal from the tramway to canal boats at the wharves over the Cam Brook aqueduct by the Upper Midford junction.

The closest pub to Midford wharf and the tramway was the *Boatman's Arms*, now the Hyver Boarding Kennels, which was only a few minutes walk across the aqueduct to the canal bridge by the pub. *The Boatman's Arms* seems to have started up when the canal was built and ceased operation when the canal was abandoned to be sold at auction in 1899 as "Two Dwelling Houses".

In Midford itself was the *Fox Inn*, with adjacent brewery, which possibly catered more for road traffic and classier business, finally closing in the 1950s. The third pub, and the only one left today, is the *Hope and Anchor* which may have become a public house when the turnpike road to Bath was built in the 1770s and was then enlarged and renamed when the S.C.C. was dug just beside it in around 1800. The Somerset and Dorset railway arrived in Midford in the 1870s after the Radstock tramway had been sold and its course used for the new line. With Midford station built above the pub it benefited for a period of time from custom arriving by road, rail and water.

Twinhoe

From the wharves, just over the Cam Brook aqueduct at Upper Midford, the tramway climbed up the hillside where the locks were intended to be built to reach the canal level and basin below Twinhoe. For about 15 years (1800-1815) at the beginning of the life of the canal this was the transfer point for coal brought from Radstock onto this short tramway down to Midford. No refreshments seem to be available here with no licensed premises recorded and the canal was gone by the beerhouse era when the coal wagons on the tramway would not have stopped at Twinhoe.

Wellow

Passing on through open countryside for three miles to Wellow, the tramway looped around the site of St Julian's Well before entering the 135 yard tunnel under the village to emerge south of the church.



FESTIVITIES OUTSIDE THE NEW INN, WELLOW — Late 1800s

The darker side of Worthington's character is contained in his will³, proved 02/03/1826. In it Brice claimed to be owed £12,000 - £13,000 in total by Samuel Span the Elder and Samuel Span the Younger, and to be owed further amounts secured on the latter's estates in Trinidad. However, more significantly, he left half of the money to his "natural son John Oland" and half to his nephew James Smith and family. It appears as though John was the illegitimate product of Worthington's relationship with Grace Oland.

There are descendants of John alive today, so I will go no further in this direction. It appears that the money promised to John Oland did not materialise – perhaps his supposed financial prosperity had not returned after all.

DERRICK HUNT

¹ London Gazette 16597 25/04/1812 p. 793

² This book is available in the Somerset Record Office or South West Heritage Trust (Ref: SHCDD/UK/58) and at <bridginghistories.com>

<https://bridginghistories.com/what-you-have-shared/emra-family-2>

³ PROB 11/1709/271.

CONNECTIONS BETWEEN PROMOTERS

When Mike Chapman used to lead the walks on the S.C.C. we often discussed the interesting connections between people involved in planning and building the canal. Also, Ken Clew's book provides a good account of the involvement of some of these promoters. Naturally the most significant group of original shareholders was the coal mine owners.

Many of these promoters were not just shareholders in the the Somersetshire Coal Canal Company but some also subscribed to the Kennet & Avon Canal Company and later to the S.C.C. Lock Fund. All these companies were intertwined and obviously interdependent to a great extent, but it is becoming more and more apparent that the promoters' families and family businesses were also intertwined to a far greater extent than was previously realised. Untangling these connections and identifying the personalities involved has led down a far more interesting path than just listing names on a piece of paper.

When researching the shareholders in the Canal and the subscribers to the separate Lock Fund, an intriguing connection appears with the Bristol Merchants. Some of the biographies of these Bristol Merchants have been published in Weigh-House, for example Levi Ames (*WH64*) as well as Worthington Brice in this issue. Another important Bristol Merchant was Benjamin Bickley and I hope to write an article about him soon. Sometimes queries arise around different people with the same name: can anyone tell me whether Philip George of Bristol, who founded George's Brewery, is the same Philip George who was Town Clerk for Bath from 1800 to 1817 — or might he even have been related to him?

We have lists of the shareholders in the S.C.C., the Lock Fund, the Kennet and Avon Canal plus the Wilts and Berks Canal. If you would like to assist in researching these connections, or would just like to see the lists, please contact me and I will email these documents to you.

DERRICK HUNT

SHAREHOLDERS OF THE SOMERSETSHIRE COAL CANAL

Worthington Brice Esquire (1748 - 1826)

Worthington Brice, born in 1748, was a Bristol merchant who became Sherriff of Bristol in 1799. He bought 5 shares of £100 each in the S.C.C. and shares in the Kennet & Avon Canal.

The historic Brice family came from Dinnington, Somerset, which is situated between Ilminster and Crewkerne. They were Lords of the Manor and leased the Manor House from the Poulett family. The former Manor House has been downgraded is now named *Frog Farm*. Brice family monuments may still be seen in the parish church of St Nicholas. Worthington leased a Town House from the Corporation of Bristol in Prince Street and owned a farm which was just outside the Southern city boundary, but still within sight of the glass cones and the smoke of other industries. He was the former partner of Samuel Span the Younger and probably of Samuel Span the Elder.

Although Worthington was declared bankrupt¹ in 1812 he appears to have prospered again, no doubt assisted by his wealthy family and acquaintances, some of whom were West India Merchants. Research has revealed facets to his character which appear contradictory from a modern viewpoint, but perhaps were not unusual for that era.

Worthington married Martha (nee Pearce or Pearce) in Bristol on 23 August 1767. They did not have children of their own, but became the guardians or surrogate parents in England to John Emra, the son of family friends from the Caribbean. The family wished to have John, who was born in 1769, brought up by and educated by a "respectable" Bristol family, rather than in the Caribbean. At a young age John had inherited property, including slaves, in the West Indies from relatives.

It appears that John sold the plantations and went on to become the Reverend John Emra, married and had three daughters. These daughters all wrote books, but one of them, Martha, wrote about and sketched Worthington, her grandfather. It is through her "extra-illustrated" book² that we learn part of the story. In the book she refers very kindly to her grandparents and she made the sketch of Worthington which we reproduce here.



[Right] SKETCH OF
WORTHINGTON BRICE
by Martha Emra

Reproduced by kind permission of the South West
Heritage Trust for which they charge £10.
Reference number: SHC DD/UK/58

Several pubs are recorded for Wellow with the most famous, and probably notorious, being the *New Inn*, now renamed the *Fox and Badger* and the only pub remaining today. The *New Inn* operated throughout the 19th century and was a short walk up from the tramway to the top of Railway Lane. Of all the pubs in Wellow over this time the Bath Chronicle records many incidents of assault and battery here and certainly more than the *George Inn*. The *George*, again of long-standing in the village, was over the road from the *New Inn* at the foot of Bath Hill and appears to have been more refined, holding local auctions and events.



WELLOW —THE GEORGE INN (left) AND NEW INN (right)

Another pub in Wellow was the *Globe*, of which little is known. The *Royal Oak*, standing on Popes Lane, was a beerhouse from at least 1830. A beerhouse also existed at Ford Farm; another at the west end of the village was called the *Canteen*. The latter had bunks for lodging in the attic and was supposedly used by the navvies while digging the canal as they were banned from the other pubs in Wellow who saw them as too unruly. It seems to have closed in 1906 when the owners, a Mr Thatcher and John Munden were unable to renew the license. Still standing as a private house on Canteen Lane, the current owners remember this heritage with its name on the door.

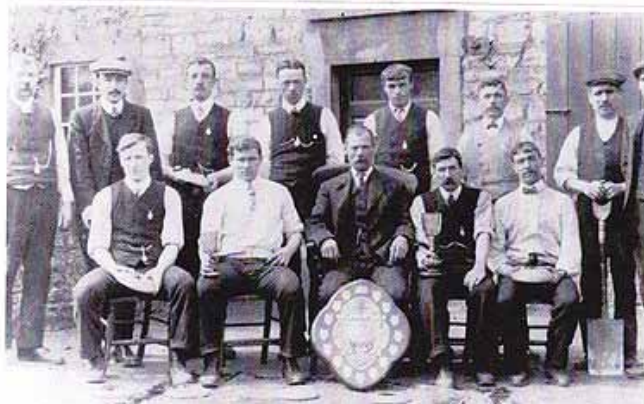
Stoney Littleton

Two miles further on, following the Wellow Brook, the canal passed over the aqueduct at Stoney Littleton where a beerhouse is known to have existed by the Mill in 1795. Both buildings are now gone. Nearby at Double Hill was the *Horseshoes Ale House*, in operation from 1729.

Single Hill

Shortly after, comes Single Hill, where the *Magpie Inn* (now Magpie Cottage) was built around 1865, shortly before the arrival of the S&D; along with other buildings in the terrace it was reputedly located over the bed of the canal. Famous for its quoits teams, the *Magpie's* demise came about after the closure of the S&D in the 1960s which took away many of its customers.

→



Publicans, sometimes known as victuallers, changed often at the *Magpie*: every census in the 1800s showed new names. They were family businesses, often with the daughter as barmaid; at the *Magpie* in 1891, the landlord James Colborne had his sister in law pouring the pints.

Left:
THE MAGPIE INN
QUOITS TEAM,
SINGLE HILL

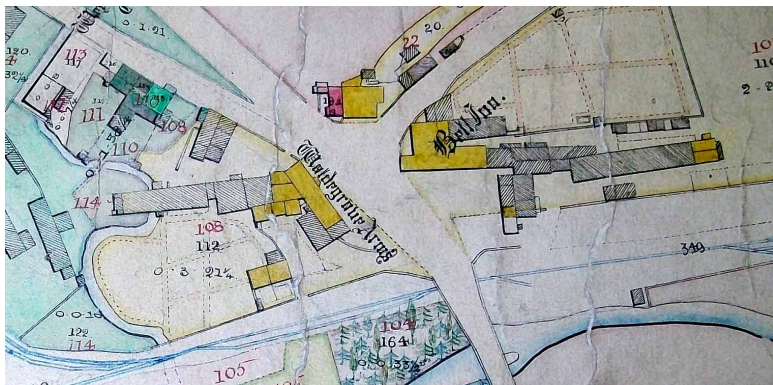
Shoscombe

Close to Single Hill was the village of Shoscombe and the edge of the North Somerset coalfield. Three collieries were nearby: Shoscombe colliery, only a small enterprise lasting from 1828-55; Braysdown, much larger, ran from the 1840s until 1959 and Lower Writhlington, sunk on the opposite side of the valley in 1829 and the longest lasting until 1973. All collieries had spur lines joining them to the tramway.

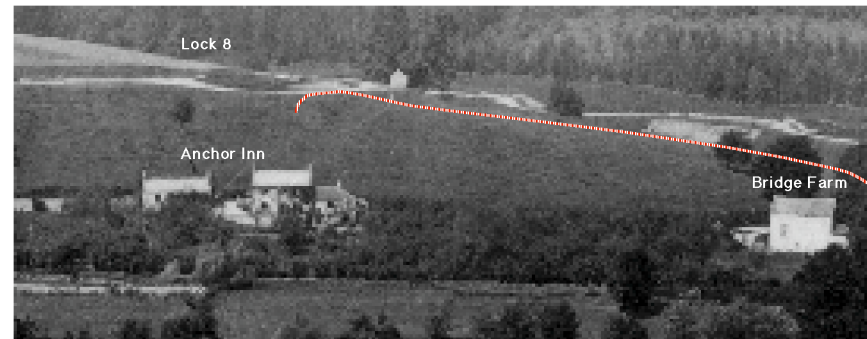
With the many miners in the vicinity, as well as the local agricultural workforce, the census returns show at least 4 beerhouses in Shoscombe run by enterprising individuals usually as a sideline to an existing shop or farm. The most enterprising of all was the beerhouse recorded in 1861 as being run by Sarah Pobjoy, aged 15, as 'Beerhouse Keeper' with Emma Lewis, her servant also aged 15! Sarah had grown up with her parents nearby at Foxcote Mill and it seems a domestic episode took her into the beerhouse trade. By the time of the census in 1871 she had returned home and was recorded as step-daughter.

The *Apple Tree Inn*, the only hostelry left today in Shoscombe, was started in around 1750 with the building extended in the mid to late 19th century.

Radstock



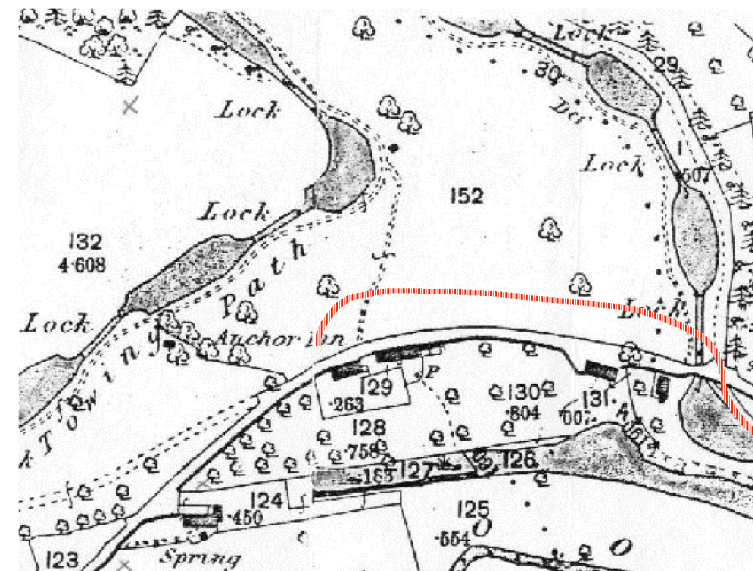
RADSTOCK c1850 — SHOWING THE WALDEGRAVE ARMS AND THE BELL INN
The S.C.C. tramway runs by the old canal basin with spur lines to the neighbouring collieries



PHOTOGRAPH OF THE HILLSIDE BELOW LOCK 8 — c.1872

Looking northwards with Locks 12 to 15 in the background.

The red dotted line shows the later course of the back drive of Caisson House which was probably left over from the contractor's railway.



MAP OF THE SAME AREA IN 1886

The red dotted line shows the probable course of the contractor's railway

Both the photograph and map above clearly show that there were no trees along the probable line of the contractor's railway at that location in 1872 and 1885 and it is most unlikely that the woodland in the photograph could have grown to such a density in the intervening 20 years. There are very few other sites along the line of the contractor's railway which might have had woodland of that type but another promising one has been identified and the results of further research will be reported in *WH85*.

As with so many discoveries on this canal, every fresh piece of information raises another cluster of queries.

THE CONTRACTORS RAILWAY — ANOTHER PHOTOGRAPH?

The photograph on the previous pages [p.12-13] was sent to us by Dr. Peter Holmes. Although it is marked on the back as a mineral railway, there are a number of good reasons to suppose it might show the contractor's railway which was used during the building of the Camerton to Limpley Stoke branch of the G.W.R. along the line of the Somersetshire Coal Canal. Dr. Holmes' letter and the discussion which followed it are reproduced below:

I recently acquired the attached photograph on ebay. It's a small bromide print with 'Mineral train, Somerset 1910' written in pencil on the back. I put this on the chat-line of the Industrial Railway Society, and it's been suggested that it was taken during the conversion of the Coal Canal into a railway [...].

The locomotive is a Manning Wardle, a make that was frequently used by civil engineering contractors. The wagons appear to be of the typical contractors' type used for moving earth and stone. The 'switchback' nature of the rail layout is very suggestive of a temporary contractor's system! I understand that in places, the conversion of the canal into a railway involved laying a temporary railway on the canal bed, and the up-and-down nature of the line in the photo could be consistent with a temporary railway jumping from canal bank to the bed and possibly back again.

I would welcome any ideas you might have. You would be welcome to publish this photo in your group's magazine if you think it would be of interest.

Best regards Peter Holmes

Steve Page has added the following information:

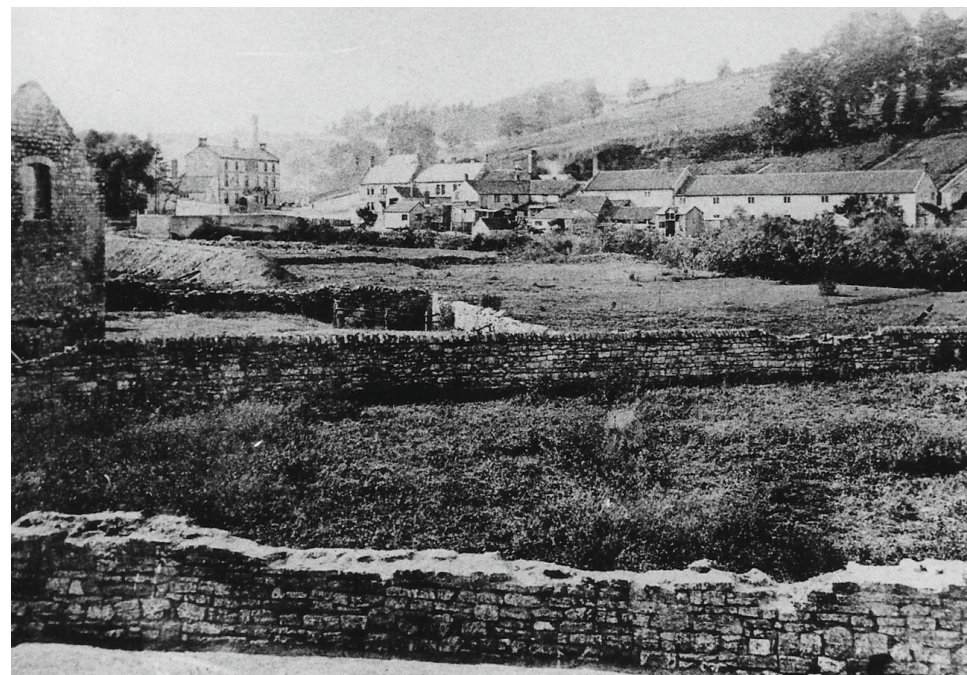
It has been put forward that the stone in the embankment suggests a quarry railway further South in Somerset, but I wonder why a quarry would allow such obviously good blocks of stone to be wasted on building an embankment. I don't think it resembles a quarry railway; it is definitely a contractors railway. Further south in Somerset, the building of the railway linking Castle Cary and Langport utilised a contractors railway with Manning Wardle locos and similar wagons, but the opening date of that line, in 1906, is a little adrift. I have a book with numerous pictures of that line's contractor's railway, but none showing a wooded area like the one in the photo. I cannot think of any other lines under construction in 1910.

Bear in mind that most of the Combe Hay area wasn't wooded until a long time after the contractor's railway had been built. (It is a pity the locomotive name or number isn't visible.)

The wooded nature of the surroundings immediately rules out any of the known locations of the Camerton to Limpley Stoke contractor's railway East of Lock 20 or West of Combe Hay. There is a possible location at the top of the footpath from Southstoke Bridge (near the bottom of Lock 19) which climbs to meet Bisham's Bridge at the road above, but the track in the photograph swings to the right at the top of the climb, whereas it would have swung to the left when it reached the site of that bridge.

At first, the most promising site for the photograph appeared to be beside Lock 8 at the top of what is now the back drive of Caisson House, with the track climbing in a westwards direction towards the camera and then swinging around southwards to meet the level of the main line. Luckily a photograph exists which shows the hillside where the main line and the contractor's railway were built.

Coming from open countryside, the final two miles of the journey are increasingly dominated by the batches (spoil heaps) of the many collieries that surrounded Radstock. They were controlled by the three coal empires of the Duchy of Cornwall, Waldegrave and Writhlington companies and nearly all had connecting lines to the tramway. The arrival of the G.W.R. broad gauge railway to Frome in 1855 made the tramway increasingly uneconomic and the end was to come in 1871 with the purchase by the S&D.



**THE WALDEGRAVE ARMS AND BELL INN IN THE DISTANCE
c1870, when the S&D took over.**

Around the old canal basin and the end of the tramway, the *Waldegrave Arms* (now *Radstock Hotel*) and the *Bell Inn* (closed) stood opposite each other at the foot of the hill to Bath. Both were ancient inns by the market place and are shown on the c1850 survey map [p.10].

Around 1850 the Coombs brothers, George and Joseph, owned both pubs and had added a brewery behind the *Bell* to make their famous Clandown Bitter. The *Waldegrave* was where many miners were paid and their wives would gather outside to shout for their husbands to come home before all the money was spent.

The railways have removed much evidence of the canal/tramway of the SCC southern branch but its seven mile route can be followed relatively easily along the old S&D track from the site of Midford station above the *Hope and Anchor* pub (now on a Sustrans cycle route and with a view across to the Cam Brook aqueduct and the canal junction with the S.C.C. northern branch to Paulton). This will take you as far as Wellow where the *Fox and Badger* still plies its trade and then it is on through Shoscombe Vale by footpath and lane. Here the S&D track can be rejoined for the last couple of miles into Radstock and refreshment at the old *Waldegrave Arms*.

TIM LUNT and CHRIS PAUL



PHOTOGRAPH MARKED: "Mineral Train, Somerset 1910"

See p.14 for details

Photograph: Dr. Peter Holmes