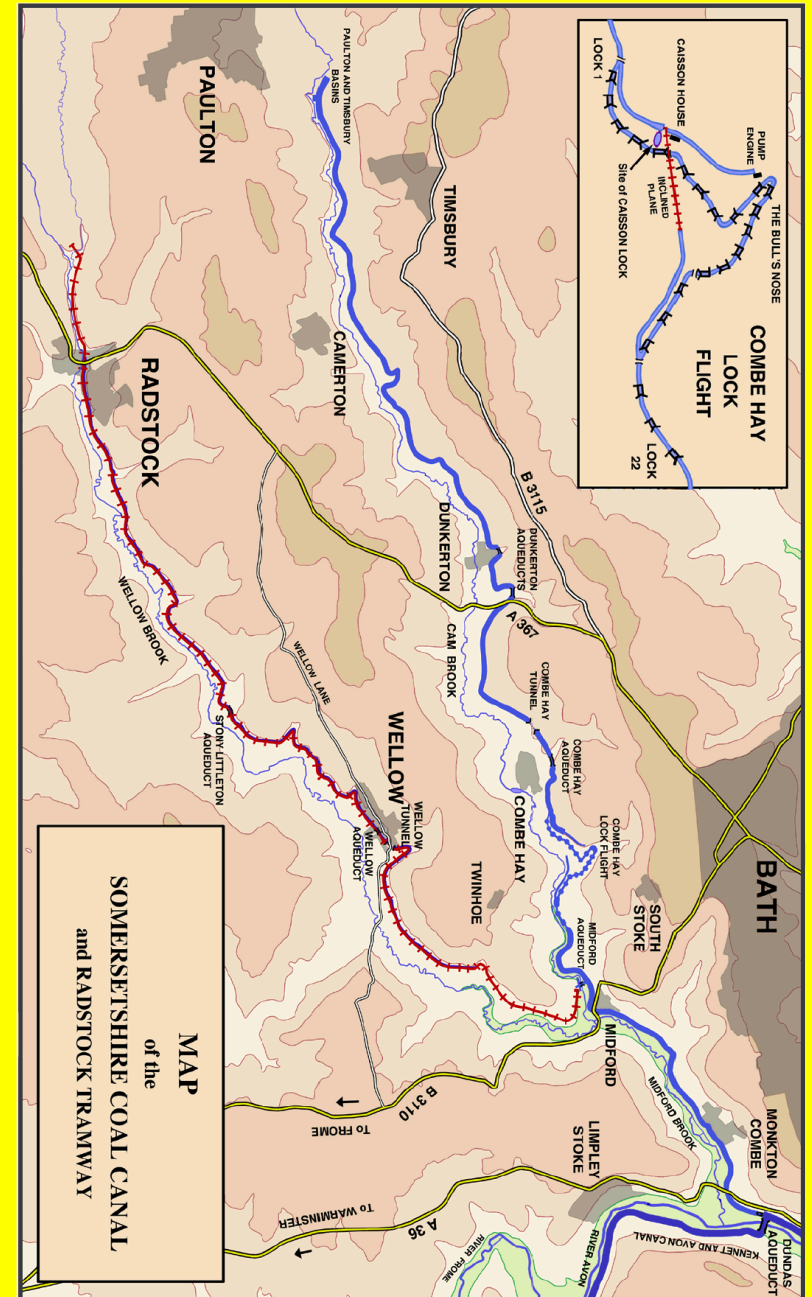


# WEIGH-HOUSE

THE MAGAZINE OF THE  
SOMERSETSHIRE COAL CANAL SOCIETY



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



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## EDITOR'S NOTES

Some years ago I promised myself that I would not keep apologising for the late arrival of Weigh-House and, instead, would devote my energy to bringing it out approximately on time. This time, however, unprecedented circumstances have meant that it could not be published until a report from the Chairman was available. Because of personal circumstances, the report was delayed indefinitely and it was not until very recently that the new Acting Chairman was able to complete the report.

This issue contains two very interesting reminiscences which add to our store of knowledge about the canal. Nigel Nicholds remembers the canal being infilled near Tucking Mill and his information could prove very useful when we come to re-open that stretch. Vernon Vowles' family lived in the wharfinger's cottage at Timsbury Basin during the 1930s and 40s and he has sent us family photographs which show the cottage as it was in those days.

Finally — and very sadly — just as Weigh-House went to press we received the news of the death of Mike Chapman. I'm sure many people will want to contribute to an appreciation of his life in the next issue.

LIZ TUDDENHAM

## CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

*At the A.G.M. of the S.C.C.S. in July 2022 the Chairman gave a brief summary of the reasons why we employed a consultant at a cost of £3,600. In response to enquiries from members, he promised: "A full description of Laura's progress will be included in the next edition of Weigh -House". The following is a description of the sequence of events, compiled by Martin Turner, which led to the appointment of Laura Wigg-Bailey as a consultant and her summary of her rôle.*

While the Society carries out much of its activity using committee members and volunteer labour, it relies to a large extent on donations and fund raising to finance its repair and restoration work. We have been fortunate in the past to have obtained grant funding from bodies such as the Medlock Charitable Trust and, more recently, from Paulton Parish Council. In 2021 the committee decided that it should investigate further sources of funding to support its ongoing restoration ambitions. A professional Heritage Development Consultant, Laura Wigg-Bailey, was engaged to work with us and make recommendations to support the Society's fundraising activities. Laura spent time with committee members and landowners before suggesting a framework for future fundraising.

Her recommendations included: Developing relationships with major landowners along the canal to support canal restoration and demonstrate the benefits that could accrue to landowners of sensitive improvements. The formulation of a long-term restoration plan including greater detail on current areas of activity such as Paulton / Timsbury basin and Combe Hay locks. Pitching partnerships with B&NES heritage and environmental projects as a source of advice and funding.

It was clear that these recommendations are intimately linked as it would be impossible to make progress without landowner agreement, a detailed plan, local authority support and funding. To help advance these aims Laura made initial contact with several local public groups, including the Somer Valley Rediscovered and Bathscape projects. Laura and several committee members presented the Society's aims and ambitions to these groups with the aim of developing future partnership projects. The Society has continued to develop these relationships, with Martin Turner and Derrick Hunt recently having met with the *Somer Valley Rediscovered* Project Manager. A meeting with the Bathscape Project is also scheduled for January.

What has become clear through Laura's early work and the continuing development of relationships between the Society and funding bodies is that in recent years the landscape for fundraising has changed appreciably. Funds are available but the grant criteria for medium scale projects have increased significantly. Bodies require a fully developed and costed proposal with visible benefits in terms of increased biodiversity, heritage improvement and public realm involvements. Funding timelines are consequently elongated, with the most successful bids being supported by high quality preparatory work and relying upon engagement with bodies in advance of any application for funding.

The following report was provided by Laura Wigg-Bailey as a summary of her work for the S.C.C.S.

### **S.C.C.S. - Fundraising Consultant Summary Getting Fit to Fundraise**

I always liken major-scale fundraising well to a marathon where I'm not necessarily the one doing the running. The organisation which commissions me has to do the running and I am just there to get them fit. I will also plan their routes and potentially run alongside them all the way, providing isotonic drinks and helping them keep going when they hit the wall. With the S.C.C.S. we have so far done a couple of training sessions but, if I may

continue with the same metaphor, we have yet to identify which marathon they want to run.

I developed an initial strategy following my first site visit - a wonderful two days, walking about half the line, discussing some of the engineering issues, land ownership boundaries and meeting some of the characters involved. Mark Sherrey shared his knowledge and experience with me so generously and I left with the following impressions:-

1. Landowner relationships are central to the success of the project.
2. Many sections along the line are easily restored.
3. There are some fantastic key features/visitor attractions along the line which present discrete projects, to open up the canal to a much wider audience.
4. The Coal Canal Way/Limestone Way would make a great partnership project with other local groups landowners and Bath & NorthEast Somerset Council.

My initial strategy was therefore as follows:-

- Make the details of all the landowners (sourced from Land Registry) into a usable database that could be used to keep track of negotiations and agreements with landowners. This became the Landowner Gazetteer, an asset created and shared with S.C.C.S. committee.

- Develop a consultation exercise with the landowners to include questionnaires and a face-to-face event to build relationships. This became the Opportunity Presentation, an asset which I road-tested on landowners, Josh Gould and family and Richard Fox.

- Encourage S.C.C.S. committee to develop an online plan for Paulton and Timsbury Basin and Combe Hay Locks, to aid future funding application.

- Work with Mark Sherrey to secure support for the terminus bridge project offer. This led to an offer of free scaffolding from a Bristol based company, for the bridge during restoration.

- Pitch a partnership to B&NES Council via their Somer Valley Rediscovered project officer Miriam Woolnough. This led to the creation of an S.C.C.S. Governance discussion paper and a Partnership Presentation.

At the start of my commission, I knew that the SCCS Committee wanted me to secure some small scale grant funding for general day to day resources such as tools and equipment. However there have been a couple of blockages on the road to achieving that goal; The first being that the fundraising landscape has changed dramatically post-Covid, so competition is high and funders are looking for a bigger bang for their buck. Secondly the S.C.C.S. did not, at the time, have the capacity to deliver big audience-engagement activities i.e. events and school visits, training placements etc. These are the types of activities that are the gateway to grant-funded resources such as lawnmowers. They may have wanted to do all these things, but capacity was low and I felt it wasn't the right time to undertake even small applications.

I then secured a meeting with several B&NES Councillors and some senior leadership officers to introduce the project and pitch the partnership organisation to deliver it. The key outcome from that meeting and subsequent networking with other community stakeholders, e.g. the Local Forums, is that there is plenty of appetite for the project but that S.C.C.S. must lead from the front. Partnerships and local support will flow from S.C.C.S. being active canalside as well as in the meeting rooms. To succeed at that, the message about 'What, Why and How (much)?' must be clear.

Laura Wigg-Bailey

→

In reviewing the outcome of Laura's work, it has become clear that the S.C.C.S. must 'lead from the front' rather than continue to rely on external consultancy. An outline restoration plan should be drawn up for the northern canal route with particular focus on those areas where funding will be most beneficial in the short to medium term. Detailed funding applications should be developed for these projects, working in partnership with those funding bodies where our interests coincide. Clearly this represents a considerable amount of work for the Society but Laura's recommendations have shown that it will be the only effective way to make the progress that we wish to achieve.

So, the plan for 2023 will be for the S.C.C.S. committee to continue to develop relationships with potential partners while working on developing a long-term outline restoration plan. Detailed project plans will be drawn up for those areas where we consider that funding applications could be the most successful. At the same time, we will continue with our existing volunteer work parties to progress the improvements at Combe Hay and at Terminus Bridge that are already underway and showing real benefits.

The focus on 'leading from the front' will require a strong commitment from members of the S.C.C.S. committee. An Extraordinary General Meeting of the Society has been scheduled for 23 February 2023 to discuss the way ahead for the S.C.C.S.. If you have experience of fundraising or developing project proposals, and would like to get involved in the exciting work ahead of us, please get in contact with <secretary@coalcanal.org> or come along to the E.G.M. at 7:30 at Radstock Working Men's club on 23 February.

MARTIN TURNER

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## EXTRAORDINARY GENERAL MEETING

An Extraordinary General Meeting of the Somersetshire Coal Canal Society  
will be held on  
Thursday 23rd February 2023  
at the Radstock Working Men's Club, Radstock, BA3 3PR  
commencing 7.30 pm.

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## DONATIONS

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

Mr.M. Anderson	Mr.S. Diegutis	Mr.P. Jenkins	Mr.& Mrs A. Trinder
Mr.C. Axon	Mr.P. Evans	Mr.D. Messom	Mr.A. White
Mr.S. Bryant	Ms.S. Flint	Mr.R. Pearson	Mr.C. Winpenny
Mr.P. Buckland	Mr.D. Francis	Mr.J. Smith	Mr.G. Woodward
Mrs.S.E. Camburn	Mr.G. Holland	Mr.D. Storey	Mr.R. Wyatt.
Ms.J. Copeland	Ms D. Jane	Mr.G. Taylor	

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## NEW MEMBERS

The Society welcomes the following new members:

Mr S. Hill	Bath	Mr.D. Schafer	Thornbury
Mr.G. Holland	Shoscombe	Mr.M. Wilson	Westbury on Trym
Ms.D. Jane	Bath	Mr P. Wilson	Trowbridge
Mr.R. Ladd	High Littleton		

## FROM THE MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY

We are now requesting that from 2023 everyone pays at the full rate of £10 per year. This includes Individual, Senior, Couples, Family or Corporate memberships. We feel this is still good value compared with many other societies.

If you pay your annual subscription by Standing Order, and are still paying at a lower rate, you will need to contact your bank and ask them to increase the Standing Order to £10 per year.

We use "Groups.io" as a way of communicating with the membership by e-mail. It is a convenient way to send an e-mail to a large number of people simultaneously whilst maintaining privacy - nobody else can see your e-mail address. If you are not already receiving e-mails from us by this means, please send me your e-mail address, so that you can be added to the distribution list.

Gift Aid - this can potentially bring in a significant amount of revenue for us. If you have not already done so, and are eligible, please sign a Gift Aid declaration. It is possible to sign on-line through our website [www.coalcanal.org](http://www.coalcanal.org) in the Membership Renewal and Changes section, or you can print off a form to complete and post to me. If you are not sure whether or not you have already signed a Gift Aid form please get in touch. My contact details are on page 2 of Weigh House.

Thank you for your continued support.

STEVE PAGE

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## CANAL INFILL AT TUCKING MILL

*In Weigh-House 83, Derrick Hunt's article mentions the canal infill near Tucking Mill which triggered a memory. I lived with my parents at the boarding kennels in Upper Midford from 1953 until the early 1980s and therefore know the area (as it was then of course) reasonably well.*

Apart from the rubber that can be seen in Figure 5 of Derrick's article, which I assume might be a more recent addition because it is visible, I believe that at least some of the main infill is household refuse. I recall the lorries tipping and the smell of burning rubbish. Whether the fire was started by someone deliberately or inadvertently or it was a result of decomposition of the contents we'll never know but the burning smell seemed to go on for a very long time. In those days (late 50s, early 60s perhaps?) refuse lorries were much smaller with curved sliding tops and the rubbish was tipped by the refuse operatives (i.e. binmen) straight into the truck at the sides. The capacity of these was therefore much less than current vehicles and needed to be emptied more frequently which presumably led to the need for many landfill sites in many localities.

As an aside, as you might know, the Upper Midford accommodation bridge is (or certainly was in my time there) on land owned by the boarding kennels. One school holiday in the late sixties or early seventies I was commissioned for pocket money purposes to clear what had become dense vegetation around the bridge and the land either side of the track from the bridge to the Cam. Until that time the bridge had been very difficult to see from Upper Midford Lane and its "sudden" appearance was noted by many who had previously been unaware of it. I note from Google Streetview that this view is now blocked once again by vegetation.

NIGEL NICHOLDS

## WORK PARTIES AT PAULTON

*Our focus at Paulton in the last two years has been at Terminus Bridge. This bridge was built to give towpath access to the northern side of Timsbury Basin and also carries a public footpath. Having dug out the trough between the bridge abutments some years ago, with a great deal of help from the Waterway Recovery Group, we were obliged to provide an alternative footpath across the top of a temporary bund just West of the bridge. We have now started work on the bridge abutments.*

At first the work was slow because we had no idea what lay below ground level on the site and had to be careful not to disturb any valuable archaeological artefacts. The available maps are confusing, some indicating a swivel bridge, others a fixed bridge and some not specifying the type of bridge at all. We also haven't been able to find any historic photographs that would have shown the bridge in situ or even the remains after it had been demolished.

The lower sections of the bridge abutments had been protected from the ravages of one hundred years of weather by the infill of soil, when the infill was removed, they were exposed and could be seen to be in reasonable condition,. The upper sections, however, have suffered significantly from frost and 'recycling', so they have to be dismantled and rebuilt. The first step was to use a digger to pull back the huge coping stones on the south-east corner, so that the wall beneath them could be rebuilt.



**LARGE COPING STONES ON TOP OF THE WING WALL AT THE SOUTH-EAST CORNER**

Volunteers then set to work dismantling the damaged stonework and repointing the lower courses. The work was done with traditional materials, using stone recovered from the site and a lime mortar mix that was appropriate for wet structures on clay soil. The construction appeared to be typical for canal and many other structures of the 1800s: a faced stone wall backed by mortared rubble infill.



**Right: THE DIGGER REMOVING THE COPING STONES**

*Weigh-House 85*



**Left: JOSH GOULD WASHING OUT EARTH AND DEBRIS FROM THE DISMANTLED WALL**



**VOLUNTEERS REBUILDING THE WING WALL**

*Weigh-House 85*





**THE SOUTH-EASTERN WING WALL  
REBUILT TO COPING STONE LEVEL**

The remaining walls are being rebuilt up to coping stone level at which point some serious lifting gear will need to be brought onto site to replace what remains of the 300 – 400 kg coping stones. There was a lot of rubble and earth covering parts of the site, which was getting in the way of the work. Slowly, this has been sorted into good stone which can be re-used, poor stone which is good for backfill and shaley soil which is being used to build up a gentle slope on the towpath so as to avoid a steep ramp to a possible bridge deck at a later date.



**FOUNDATIONS COMING TO LIGHT ON THE NORTHERN ABUTMENT**

Before any water can be put back in that section of canal, there is another job that must be done: a drainage sluice just West of Terminus Bridge is in a bad state of repair and needs to be rebuilt. The sluice gate mechanism was set into the end of a stone-built culvert that leads from the canal to the adjoining Cam Brook, its purpose is to drain the canal for maintenance.

When the soil was removed from the top of the southern abutment, there were signs of stonework which could have been the foundations of a pair of splayed wing walls. Alternatively they might just have been sub-surface retaining walls for a ramp up to the deck level of the previous bridge.

The northern side had apparently been churned over a few times, with jumbles of stones and earth rising from bridge level up to the field behind. Gradually this part of the site has been cleared and the original ground level is beginning to become visible. The latest discovery had been another pair of splayed foundations, similar to the southern ones, but not identical.



**STONEWORK ON THE SOUTHERN ABUTMENT**



**THE SLUICE OPENING  
WITH A TEMPORARY PIPE IN POSITION**

The sluice gate, which was probably wooden, might have rotted away in the hundred years since the canal was last used or simply been thrown aside and lost, but a surprisingly robust frame remained rebated into the stone surround. Sadly, the frame was beyond re-use and so it has been removed and will shortly be replaced by a new frame and sluice gate. The stonework is also in poor condition, with leaking joints which would be unable to withstand the water pressure for long. Parts of this will have to be dismantled and rebuilt with good quality lime mortar of an appropriate grade for the soft stone and wet conditions. Installing this new structure is an essential step towards making the canal watertight.

Once the repairs to the bridge abutments and sluice have been completed we can restore water to this length of canal with all the improvements to the natural environment that this will bring. The current restoration work is being funded by a generous grant from the Paulton Parish Council, using Community Infrastructure Levy funding, for which the society is extremely grateful.

**MARTIN TURNER**

## WORK PARTIES AT COMBE HAY

*The recent events at Paulton have been attracting a lot of attention, so you may be forgiven for thinking that the canal from Upper Midford to the Combe Hay Lock Flight has been left to go back to nature. Far from it, a dedicated group of volunteers has been quietly beavering away, week after week, maintaining the key sites in this area. Two of them have finally been persuaded to put finger to keyboard and let us know what they have been up to.*

'We can't quite match a Teddy Bears' Picnic but there is a pleasant surprise if you go down to Engine Wood today - or at least we hope so! Just over two years ago, a group of us (well 3, actually) who also volunteer with the Canal & River Trust were chatting and discovered that we had a shared interest in the Combe Hay lock flight. "Wouldn't it be nice if they were revealed in all their glory", led to us wondering whether the S.C.C.S. might want some assistance. A short while later our journey began.

Since then, we have been clearing the stretch from roughly Midford Aqueduct to the Bull's Nose at Combe Hay. The aqueduct, and the surrounding area, had become overgrown with the usual suspects of brambles, Himalayan balsam, and stinging nettles. Clearing it will be an ongoing task but is becoming easier with each visit. The stretch from the aqueduct towards Combe Hay Lock Flight is a case of trying to make the course of the canal more obvious. Having it grazed helps significantly, so we have attempted to clear brambles, thistles, stinging nettles, to hopefully create more areas for grazing.

At Combe Hay Lock Flight itself we worked from the Bull's Nose down to Lock 15 - clearing all stonework, removing vegetation from the chambers and scything the pounds. The reason that it took so long, other than the sheer scale of the task, is that there were typically only 2-3 people, once a week undertaking the activity. The more we cleared, the more we had to maintain and, unfortunately, it has now reached the stage whereby the vegetation is fighting back strongly, and the overall task is unsustainable. We have therefore had to set realistic targets for the foreseeable future. Essentially, we will focus on 'stonework sites' and continue to manage the vegetation at Midford Aqueduct.

At Combe Hay Lock Flight we have decided to put all our efforts into clearing/revealing Lock 15 to try and make it a 'show lock'. A lot of stonework that we didn't expect to find was uncovered on the upstream approach to the lock. We are currently excavating a large enough area within the chamber to identify its depth. When we have, we will explore whether it would be possible to bring in mechanical digging equipment.

Of course, whilst this work is going on, the rest of the flight is being reclaimed. So, what can we do? Well, it all comes down to whether we can encourage more volunteers to help out. Tuesdays 10am to 3pm is our current work day of choice, but there is flexibility ie either moving that day, or with outrageous good fortune, enough people for a second day! Spread the word.'

**STUART ASHMAN**

As a small group we have been fortunate to work on some of the gems of the S.C.C., namely the Midford Viaduct and the Combe Hay flight.

We have been successful in exposing some of the architecture to be visible to walkers and passers-by. Also removing brambles, saplings *etc.* across a large section of the canal through Midford, enabling land owners to use the canal for grazing.

We are experiencing some frustration that the brambles and vegetation have been harder to conquer than we imagined — and so with only a small group we have revised our strategy for the short term, to focus on making Lock 15 a 'showpiece'. Once fully cleared we propose to make this Lock more visible to passers by, and propose to install new information boards.

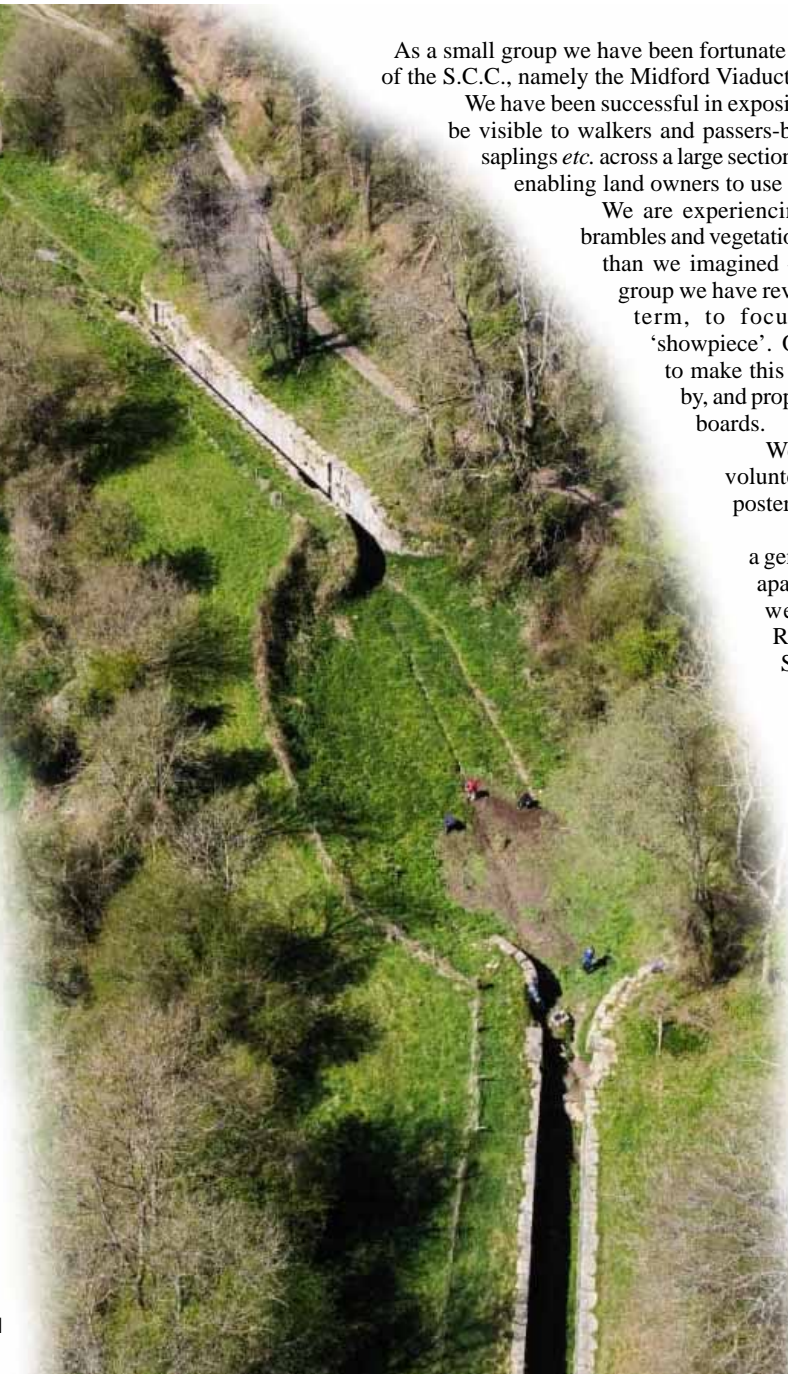
We have tried to recruit new volunteers, for instance by placing posters in the neighbouring pubs.

We are a friendly bunch, with a genuine interest in the canal, and apart from our volunteering work we have also made visits to Radstock museum, attended the S.C.C.S. A.G.M., undertaken walks along the other parts of the canal (including the Radstock to Midford section), and where possible have tried to engage with the local landowners and local community.

**RICHARD HALL**

**AN AERIAL VIEW OF  
LOCKS 13,14 & 15  
TAKEN DURING A  
WORK PARTY  
ON LOCK 15**

*Photograph:*  
**B.B. Aerial Photography**



## SOME MORE HISTORY OF THE CANAL COTTAGE IN PAULTON BASIN

*During a work party last Summer we were pleased to meet Vernon Vowles and family making one of their visits from Canada to members of the family who live in the Paulton area. His family had lived in the wharfinger's cottage, next to Timsbury Basin, some time before the Church family, whose reminiscences we published in W-H 61 . Mr Vowles has sent us some family reminiscences and photographs showing the cottage as it was before WWII.*

My mother, Edith Vowles, (*nee* Collins) lived in the canal cottage with her mother, father, brothers, and sister Winnie around the 1920's to the 1940's. I'm not exactly sure when they moved in or out, but my Mom was born in 1923 and the attached pictures show her there when she was about fifteen years old. Sadly during one of the bombings on Bristol around 1940/41 her Mother, Frances, had a heart

attack and died in the cottage when a bomb was dropped behind the railway track which passed just behind the cottage. My Mom was seventeen at the time and she always remembered that terrible night when the sky was lit up with incendiary bombs while she was half way down the field between Paulton and the cottage. As far as I know she moved out of the cottage shortly after. She also remembered the good times living there and how her dad kept chickens and goats. Her favourite story was when she caught her dad wheeling a bicycle across the field just before Christmas. She was so pleased to get a bicycle for Christmas, but sad to realize her dad was Santa Claus. When she left school and got her first job in Paulton she would often walk home in the dark and sometimes trip or fall over a cow that had sat in the pathway. As there were no street lights down by the canal, she made her way home by moonlight and memory, being careful not to fall into the canal. And she always laughed when she told us how she would say sorry to the cows when she fell on one.

**FRANCES COLLINS**  
(the author's grandmother)  
Standing by the S.E. corner of the  
wharfingers cottage



“My Mother down by the Cottage when she was about fifteen years old.”



“My Aunt Winnie’s & Uncle Den’s wedding Day beside the Cottage.  
My Mom on the right.”



My Mom then married Wilfred Vowles, son of Reginald Vowles from New Pit Paulton, just beside The Somerset Inn. And although they moved to Holcombe where I was born, we visited my grandfather most weekends when I was a child. One summer around 1960/61 I stayed with my grandfather for several weeks during the summer holidays and I remember playing on the batch and in the old cottage which was just a stone shell by that time. I knew then about the canal history, the cottage, and the old railway line *etc.* so the area was and still is very special to me all these years later.

After we emigrated to Canada in 1969 I didn't return to England for twenty-eight years. However, I was looking forward to showing my wife the area and going down around the batch where I had made so many great childhood memories, but unfortunately the old cottage had been demolished only a few years earlier. Regardless, it was nice to visit the area again and take a walk down memory lane. Since then we have visited the area several times and this year we were fortunate to bring our two grandchildren along to share with them the stories of our family's past.

While going through the old pictures that had been e-mailed to me some years ago I realized that my Aunt Winnie and Uncle Den had some pictures taken on their wedding day beside the cottage. They lived in Clutton and their son now lives in Yorkshire.



"My Uncle Den in front of the Cottage."

Wishing you continued success with the canal restoration project.

VERNON VOWLES

## THE CONTRACTOR'S RAILWAY — Yet more information

The photograph of a contractor's railway discovered by Dr. Peter Holmes, which appeared on pages 12 & 13 of Weigh-House 84, has generated a lot of interest and discussion about the possible location and more generally about the part the contractor's railway played in the building of the Camerton to Limpley Stoke branch line.

Roger Halse has been looking through back-issues of *The Railway Magazine* and discovered several interesting clippings. The first [Fig.1] dates from October 1906, the early days when the

G.W.R. was still disposing of some of the canal's assets and generally clearing the way for the new railway. Despite the hopes expressed in this cutting, it was to be another six months before the first trains ran between Camerton and Dunkerton. The disruption caused to the quiet rural life of the area by the arrival of 100 navvies can only be imagined.

This was not the first time the Cam had been diverted: in the meadows between Upper Midford and the bottom of the lock flight, the canal company had earlier diverted the stream away from the canal embankment. The parish boundaries could not be so readily altered, so to this day they still follow the winding course previously taken by the stream in this area. Another similar diversion occurred South of the Dry Dock, leaving the parish boundary running across one corner of Paulton Basin.

THE work of preparation for the construction of the new branch of the Great Western Railway from Camerton to Limpley Stoke is being pushed forward in the parish of Camerton. The contractors, Messrs. Pauling and Co., of London, have over 100 men now engaged, and a big show has been made. Up to the present little has been done towards the actual construction of the railway, as a great amount of time and labour was required in the preliminary preparations. These include the laying of a temporary railway, the diversion of the stream, known as the river Cam, in two places by the cutting of long length of trenches, several feet deep, to obviate the erection of several bridges over the hitherto winding course of the stream, and the erection of machinery, etc.

It is hoped that railway communication between Camerton and the collieries at Dunkerton, 1½ miles distant, will be completed by the end of October.

Fig.1 RAILWAY MAGAZINE OCTOBER 1906

PROGRESS is being made with the works in connection with the Camerton and Limpley Stoke Railway. The fences which denote the course of the new line have now been pushed as far westward as Monkton Combe, about 2 miles from Limpley Stoke. The contractor's railway is also being taken forward in this direction along the bed of the old Somerset Coal Canal. At Midford the centring of the arches of the bridge which will carry the railway after it leaves the Southstoke cutting is well in hand. The contractor's line now crosses the main road from Bath to Hinton Charterhouse and Frome on the level. Crossing gates have been temporarily fixed here, with a flagman in attendance. The work of constructing the piers to support the bridge carrying the line under the viaduct of the Somerset and Dorset Joint Railway at Midford is proceeding steadily. Quantities of the "spoil" taken from the cuttings are being employed to fill in the old canal.

The bridge carrying the railway across the Wells Road at Dunkerton is now completed. It consists of a single arch, and is constructed, like the other works on the line of a similar character, in blue bricks.

Fig.2 RAILWAY MAGAZINE JULY 1908

Roger's second clipping [Fig.2] dates from July 1908. By then the work was well advanced and a number of major (and time-consuming) structures were being completed. The contractor's railway crosses the Bath to Hinton Charterhouse road (now the B3110) at Midford on a level crossing. The fact that this crossing needed to be manned shows that the contractor's railway was in constant use, so presumably it had already made a connection with the main line at Limpley Stoke and there must have been at least one bridge already in place across the Cam, somewhere near Monkton Combe. The line must have also crossed the Warminster Road; we see from the next clipping that the bridge carrying the road over the railway was not yet built, so presumably the contractor's railway went through one of the arches of the viaduct.

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It is doubtful whether the contractors would waste their efforts on filling in the canal to no good purpose. Either they had a load of spoil they needed to get rid of or they used the infill to support the contractor's railway where it crossed the line of the canal.

THE progress made with the Camerton and Limpley Stoke Railway has been such that the course of the new line has now been mapped out as far as the actual junction with the Salisbury branch. The junction will face in the direction of Salisbury, evidently with the object of giving the coal traffic a clear run in the direction of Southampton without the performance of unnecessary shunting operations. It thus follows that in the event of a "through train" being run from Camerton to Bath, some "Cannon Street" working will be required. The construction of the piers of the bridge under the Warminster Road close to this junction is in hand, as are the foundations of the piers of the bridge over the Frome in the meadows adjoining the main road to Limpley Stoke. At Midford good progress is being made with the viaduct, which will carry the line over the main roads from that village to Wellow and Hinton Charterhouse, and under the viaduct of the Somerset and Dorset Joint Railway. This work, like all on the line of a similar character, is being carried out in blue bricks. At Combe Hay the excavation of cuttings and the construction of embankments is proceeding apace. Two steam navvies are engaged here, and a third is busy at Dunkerton, near the Wells Road. At Midford also the construction of the embankment works is very far advanced. Six contractors' locomotives are employed on the new line, and a number of stationary engines of both the horizontal and the vertical type are used for driving the saw mills, mortar mills, and other machinery. The line is to be single, and at least a twelvemonth more is expected to elapse before it will be ready for traffic.

Fig.3 RAILWAY MAGAZINE NOVEMBER 1908

The massive embankment in the foreground must have been built for a purpose. The ground to the right of the possible location drops rapidly to form a gully, so an embankment would be needed to cross it. If that were the case, provision would have to be made to avoid obstructing the footpaths which the railway would have to cross at this point. Two footpaths converge on the North side of Southstoke Bridge, one coming down the hillside in a south-easterly direction from just below Bisham Bridge and another, an ancient holloway, coming southwards from the direction of Hodshill. At Southstoke Bridge they crossed the canal and proceeded across the Cam, leading eventually to Wells. A temporary trestle-type bridge, just out of the picture on the right [shown as a purple line on the map], would be adequate to carry the lightweight railway over these paths. It would have to be high enough to give headroom for horse riders, so the railway track could not begin to descend to canal level until it was on the eastern side of this bridge. The descent would then have to be fairly steep in order to reach the level of the towpath at the next point where we have photographic evidence of its location (Fig.6). The embankment would also have a steep slope on the South side (the side nearest the camera in Fig.4) where it was built up from the meadows below; this would make a check rail desirable on the North side to prevent any derailed locomotives from tumbling down the embankment.

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Roger's final clipping [Fig.3], from November 1908, once again considerably misjudges the opening date; the line finally opened on 9 May 1910.

Turning now to Peter Holmes' photograph, [Fig.4] the possibility that it might have been taken near Lock 8 has been completely ruled out because that site had no trees at the time the photograph was taken. The only ancient heavily-wooded area that we know of along the line of the contractor's railway is the hillside above Lock 19. We can be fairly certain the contractor's railway ran through this woodland, although the exact route is not clear.

A definite 'shelf' feature has been discovered, running along the hillside between the road and Locks 17 - 19; this could easily have been an embankment for the temporary track. The possible course for this track has been drawn in white over the G.W.R.'s property map [Fig.6] which Roger has supplied from his collection. If the photographer's camera were set up in a position P1 [shown as a yellow circle on the map], with a field of view bordered by the yellow lines, the track behind the waggons could possibly lie along this embankment cut into the wooded hillside.



Photograph: Dr. Peter Holmes

Fig.4 PHOTOGRAPH MARKED: "Mineral Train, Somerset 1910"

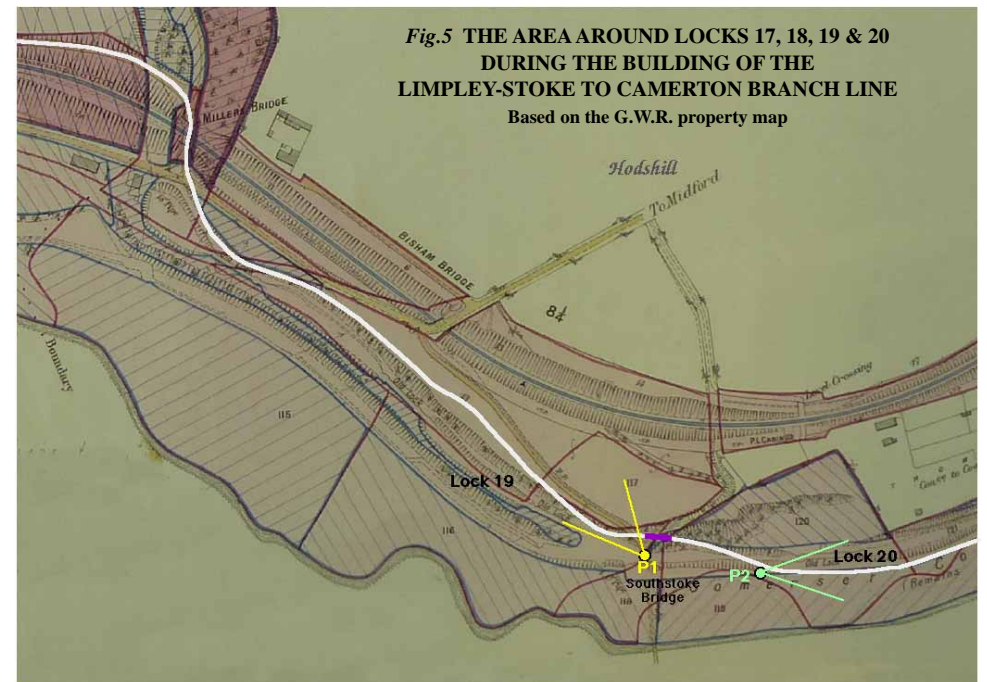


Fig.5 THE AREA AROUND LOCKS 17, 18, 19 & 20 DURING THE BUILDING OF THE LIMPLEY-STOKE TO CAMERTON BRANCH LINE Based on the G.W.R. property map



**Fig.6 PHOTOGRAPH TAKEN FROM POINT 'P'  
ON THE MAP**

The photograph of the contractor's railway on the towpath at Lock 20 [Fig.6] was taken at position P2 [shown as a green circle on the map] less than 100 yards from Southstoke Bridge. It shows an extra check rail on the left (which is the North side) and appears to have been taken from a short way up a slope. This corresponds exactly with the deductions from Fig.4.

On the left side of Fig.4 there appears to be some sort of masonry structure; whilst this may just be an illusion, it is tempting to think that it could be the top of the stone 'staithe' structure which is still in place on the bank above Lock 19 [Fig.7]. Some of the top stones are now missing, but extrapolating from the remaining masonry it is quite possible that the wall would have been high enough to be visible to the photographer. It is also possible to discern what might be the footpath from Bisham Bridge on the right of Fig.4



**Fig.7 THE 'STAITHE' STRUCTURE ABOVE LOCK 19**

Examination of the site has proved inconclusive and attempts to repeat the photograph have been defeated by heavy undergrowth, so the discussion above can only be regarded as speculation at present. With the speed at which new information about the canal keeps coming to light, we might eventually be able to identify the location of this photograph more positively.

## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY — 2023

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>  
**Combe Hay work parties:** Stuart Ashman ☎ 07759 336864  
**Paulton work parties:** Martin Turner ☎ 07976 601393

Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> January —10:00

**WORK PARTY — Combe Hay**

Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> January —10:00

**WORK PARTY — Combe Hay**

Tuesday 31<sup>st</sup> January —10:00

**WORK PARTY — Combe Hay**

Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> February —10:00

**WORK PARTY — Paulton**

Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> February —10:00

**WORK PARTY — Combe Hay**

Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> February —10:00

**WORK PARTY — Combe Hay**

Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> February —10:00

**WALK — EAST OF DUNKERTON**

*Meet:* Dunkerton Parish Hall

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

Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> February —10:00

**WORK PARTY — Combe Hay**

Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> February — 19:30

**EXTRAORDINARY GENERAL MEETING — To decide on the way forward for the Society**

*Meet:* The Radstock Working Men's Club.

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

Tuesday 28<sup>th</sup> February —10:00

**WORK PARTY — Combe Hay**

Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> March —10:00

**WORK PARTY — Paulton**

Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> March —10:00

**WORK PARTY — Combe Hay**

Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> March —10:00

**WORK PARTY — Combe Hay**

→

Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> March —10:00

**WALK — EAST OF CAMERTON**

Meet: Durcott Lane near New Pit

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

Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> March —10:00

**WORK PARTY — Combe Hay**

Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> March— 19:30

**SOCIAL EVENING — T.B.A.**

Meet: The Radstock Working Men’s Club.

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

Tuesday 28<sup>th</sup> March —10:00

**WORK PARTY — Combe Hay**

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## GATEWAY TO THE COAL CANAL WAY or ‘Don’t be a naked rambler’

The entrance to the Coal Canal Way beside the main gates of the Paulton Water Treatment Facility (“Sewage Works” in common parlance) was gradually becoming even less imposing than usual. It had suffered from lack of maintenance and had become so overgrown that it was a definite discouragement to anyone looking forward to a pleasurable walk. By mid-Summer 2022, the brambles had made the small gateway almost impassable, so a couple of us decided something ought to be done about it.

It required a surprising degree of persistence to remove those brambles, in particular because they were enmeshed in a chain link fence, but we were determined to make a good job of it and were eventually rewarded by the view shown below.



**THE ENTRANCE TO THE COAL CANAL WAY  
CLEARED OF OBSTRUCTIONS**

It’s just a matter of adding one small item to your pocket before you set out on a walk; you will soon become so used to having secateurs to hand whenever you need them that you will begin to feel naked without them.

The problem was particularly acute in this location because it is at the entrance to the Coal Canal Way and it had the potential to put off walkers from even bothering to follow the rest of the route. However, this is not an isolated problem: during the Summer this sort of obstructive growth occurs all the way along the canal footpaths. This is where members of the Society can help with a ‘little and often’ approach to the problem.

Dozens of S.C.C.S. members walk along the canal footpaths during the Summer months. The problem would soon be brought under control if every one of them carried a small pair of secateurs in their pocket or rucksack and stopped for a few moments to cut back the odd bramble that seemed determined to lash the faces of unwary passers-by — or the odd clump of nettles that leaves you with a painful reminder of negotiating a kissing gate.

**DERRICK HUNT**

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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Registered Charity N<sup>o</sup> 1047303

Registered under the Data Protection Act 1984 N<sup>o</sup> A2697068

Affiliated to the Inland Waterways Association N<sup>o</sup> 0005276

Inland Revenue reference code for tax purposes: CAD72QG

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### 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](mailto:membership@coalcanal.org.uk)

and on the Society Website: <http://www.coalcanal.org>

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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](mailto:liz@poppyrecords.co.uk)