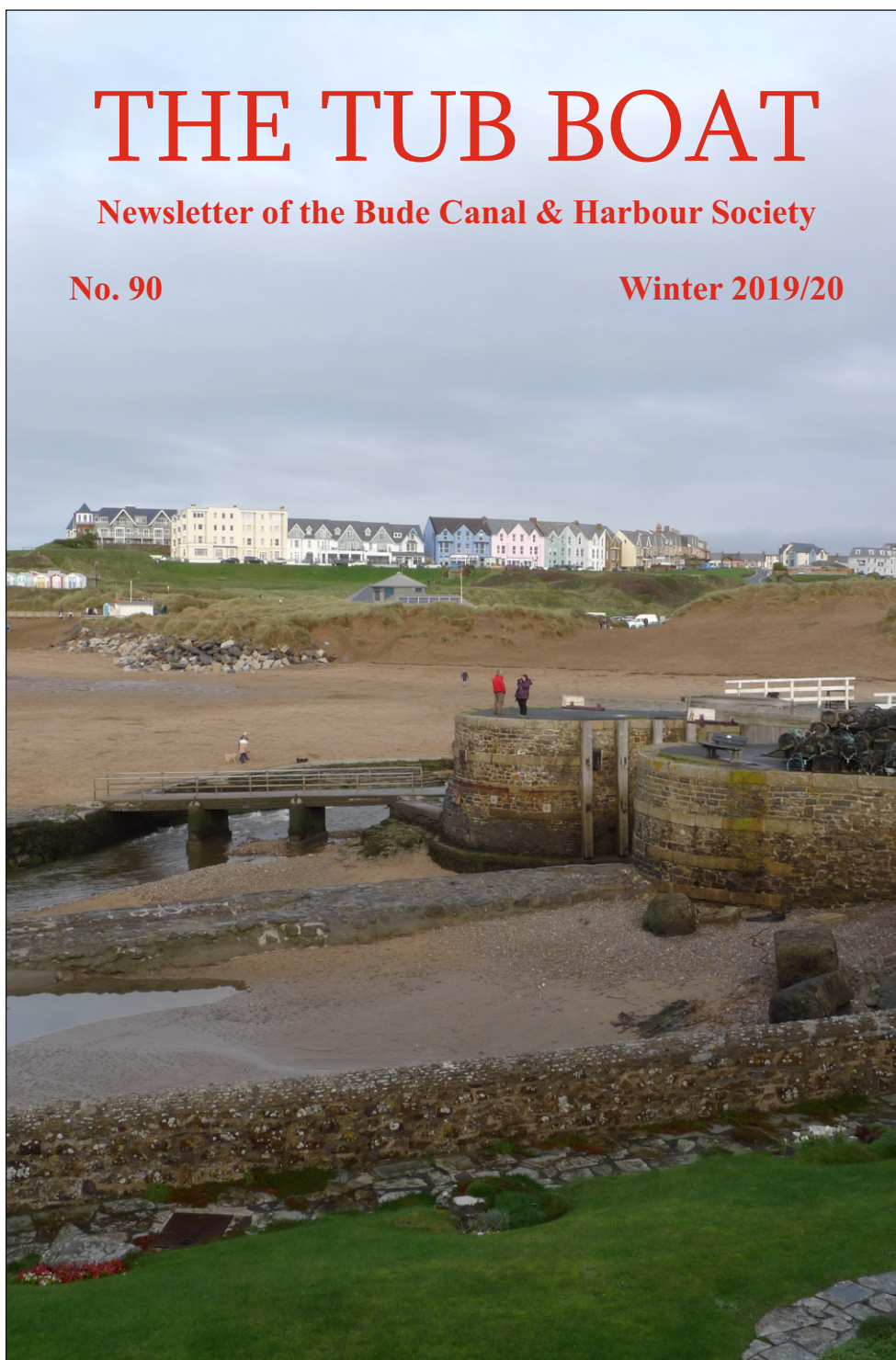


THE TUB BOAT

Newsletter of the Bude Canal & Harbour Society

No. 90

Winter 2019/20



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Forthcoming Events:

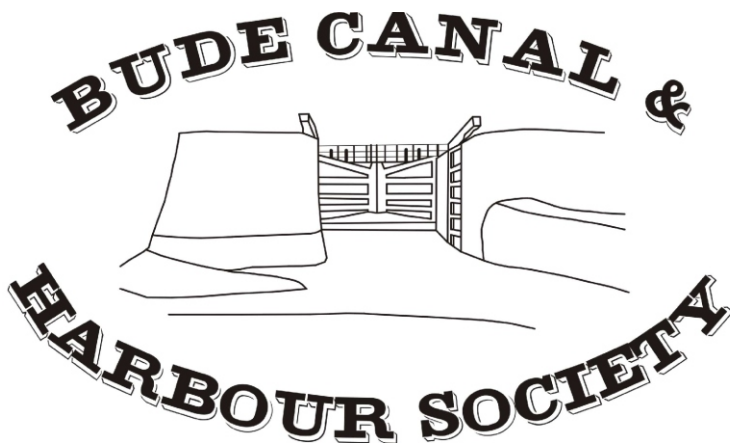
Sunday 23rd Feb AGM at The Castle Heritage Centre, The Castle, Bude. See pages 2 & 3 for full details.

Details of other events in 2020 will be published in the next edition of The Tub Boat.

Contributions for the next edition of the Tub Boat should be sent as an e-mail attachment to bude.canal@gmail.com or copied onto a USB memory stick or CD and sent to Mike Moore (Tel: 01288 361878) to reach him by 15th March 2020.

Trustees:	Chairman	Chris Jewell
	Vice-Chairman	Lesley Moores
	Secretary	Peter Daniel
	Treasurer	<i>Vacant</i>
	Membership Secretary	<i>Vacant</i>
	Events Secretary	Betty Moore
	Minuting Secretary	<i>Vacant</i>
	Other trustees	Lucille Opie, Anne Longley
	The Tub Boat Editor	Mike Moore (<i>non-trustee</i>)

The views expressed by the contributors to this newsletter are not necessarily those of the Bude Canal & Harbour Society which does not accept responsibility for them.



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Cover Photo: The Sea Lock and Iron Bridge

Creaks from the Chair

When you read this, Christmas and the New Year will have come and gone so I wish you all season's greetings and best wishes for 2020 and all that will come to be during the year.

But as you can understand, I am writing this to a deadline for The Tub Boat to be printed. I am in my favourite place, as I write this, which is overlooking Widemouth Bay. The sun is shining and the sky is blue/grey. The tide is in and the sea is calm. It is very pleasant and not Christmassy in any way. However my greetings and wishes are sincere for 2020.

I thank all members who have renewed their memberships for another 12 months. You will be aware that the Trustees decided during 2019 to increase the subscription rates. There is never a good time to do so but I assure you it was necessary to ensure that BCHS remains able to function. Various necessary commitments do not decrease in cost so each year running costs increase bit by bit. Many of you have accepted the increases and have changed your standing orders to incorporate the increase. Thank you. If you have not, please consider doing this and complete a standing order form which will be used for the 2020 renewal, next September.

We are still seeking new Trustees, in particular, persons who have the relevant skills in using a computer based accounts system and membership records etc. At present we have six Trustees which is the minimum number allowed under our constitution. If we drop below six, as a Registered Charity, we would be reminded by the Charity Commission that to operate at that level is unlawful. My dream solution would be for three or four new Trustees with modern skills, who live in the Bude area, to come and join us. So if that is you, or you know someone who would be, or is interested please make contact.

I am sure you would find what we do interesting and important.

Finally, the Bi-centenary 1819-2019 which celebrated the start of construction of the Canal is over. We look forward to 2023 which will be the 200th anniversary of the opening of the Canal on 8th July 1823. Hopefully BCHS and myself will be around to take part in some appropriate celebrations.

Chris Jewell

Annual General Meeting 2020

The AGM will be held on Sunday 23rd February 2020 with activities between 10am and 4pm in the Willoughby Gallery at the Castle Heritage Centre, Bude.

The programme for the day will be:

- | | |
|------|--|
| 10am | Set up the display 'Bude Harbour and Canal – the early days' |
| 11am | Presentation by Darren Hewings of the Stover Canal Trust |

12.30pm	Set up room for lunch
1pm	Buffet lunch – lunch to be booked in advance
2.30pm - 4pm	Annual General Meeting

Please use the booking form to book your lunch and return with a remittance of £10 per person by 9th February 2020.

N.B. To comply with our constitution we need the attendance of either 10 members or 10% of our membership whichever is greater, for the meeting to be quorate otherwise the meeting will not be lawful. Could you please consider attending the AGM even if you are unable to come to the presentation in the morning or the Buffet Lunch to ensure that the meeting is quorate. Thank you.

Chris Jewell

Bude Valley Management Advisory Group Meeting – 30th Sept 2019

The following matters were of interest to BCHS

1. Planekeepers Path

CC are looking at changing the route to avoid the damaged boardwalk ie to follow the original route of the canal. Enquiries are in hand with landowners.

2. Bude Harbour Master's Report

The lock pier on the south side is capable of taking the load of a 60 ton crane to do the necessary works. Both outer gates will be checked and will have the walkway and railings removed, and also the balance beams? There is no date for the start of the work but the contractors are to provide an estimate of the cost. CC has some funds set aside but if insufficient an application for further funds will need to be made. Work will only be able to take place during neap tides. This may mean works will be done in November. *(but not yet done. Ed)*

3. Licencing update

Licencing in East Cornwall to be renewed at the same time starting in 2020.

4. Capital funding

Dredging is due in 2020. A lot of the logistics work has been done but a funding bid in early 2019 failed. A bid for £300,000 for dredging and safety repairs will be made in early 2020. The lock repairs were originally programmed to start on 3/10/19. Works on both locks include repointing the lock structures, leaks above the locks, repairs to bywash masonry, new cill for paddle on Rodds Bridge Lock. However, Cormac Solutions, who are contracted to do the work, have discovered that there is water vole activity close to the areas needing to be repointed. This work is on hold and will probably be deferred to a future date in early 2020. Water voles are European Protected Species and licences and other procedures need to be followed.

5. Delay to works

The meeting asked Cllr Paula Dolphin, Chairman, to take this delay up with the cabinet and to express BVMAG's concerns at the time these repairs were taking and the lack of faith in Cormac Solutions in carrying out specialist works. As you may know we have also sent an email to Don Martin at Cornwall Council raising concerns about the failure to do these various works.

Dear Mr Martin

The level of disappointment at the Bude Valley Management Advisory Group's meeting on Monday 30th September 2019 was palpable when it was announced that the planned works on the inland locks, due to start on 2/3 Oct 2019 would be cancelled due to the proximity of water voles close to the work area. We wish to make the following points:

- 1. We all understand that the water voles are a protected species, which is right and proper.*
- 2. This work had been scheduled to be done for at least the past year and there has been at least two start dates during 2019, not including the one scheduled for October.*
- 3. As I understand it there is a procedure where a licence can be obtained to have the water voles moved when works need to be done.*
- 4. I also understand that 'Cormac Solutions', who are to do this work, are fully aware of the legal protection of the water voles and of the procedures to obtain a licence to move the water voles if necessary.*
- 5. This begs the question - does 'Cormac Solutions' know what they are doing, and makes me think that they may be unreliable.*
- 6. They have had months and months to organise the moving of the water voles so that work can start on whatever date has been agreed.*
- 7. The new start date is in early 2020. Can I assume that the proper procedure will have been followed and that the work will be able to start on whatever actual date in 2020 is agreed, and that the water voles will have been moved prior to the start date?*
- 8. I am assuming that it is 'Cormac Solutions' responsibility to obtain the licence etc. If not, will the body responsible have achieved the necessary removal of the water voles as legally permitted? And who would be the body responsible?*
- 9. Please advise me if my understanding of this matter is wrong, inaccurate, or misunderstood. I only want to be sure of what is the current state and the way forward so that I can advise my fellow Trustees accordingly.*

BCHS understand the difficulties that the presence of water voles create, but this work needs to be done to maintain the structures of the Bude Canal, which as you know are approaching 200 years old as the construction of the Canal commenced on 23rd July 1819.

Thank you.

Chris Jewell, Chairman, BCHS

A reply has now been received from Mr Martin which explains some of the reasons for the delays experienced and he apologised for the poor communications with BCBS during 2019. He intends to meet with us in January and we now expect work to commence soon in 2020.

6. Navigation event

The deferment of these works means that the Navigation event that the Bude Pilot Gig Club were going to do in the autumn as part of the bi-centenary celebrations cannot now take place in 2019. However I hope that in 2020, when the work has been done, that they will complete their navigation of the canal from Bude Sea Lock to the A39 road bridge using both locks on the two legs of the navigation.

Chris Jewell

Bude Sea Lock

A report in a recent edition of the Bude & Stratton Post gave an update on the progress of the plans to repair the damage to one of the outer gates of the sea lock (see the report in the Autumn edition of The Tub Boat). In order to make the repairs, heavy machinery is required to lift the gates and therefore some preparatory work was required to check the safety of the ground around the harbour front to ensure the machinery would not cause any damage. The repair work has now been delayed until early spring when the weather should be more suitable. Both outer gates will be removed and overhauled with new pivot pins and there will be some repainting. Thanks to Councillor Peter LaBroy for providing this update.

Mike Moore

Information Panel – Bude Canal

Bude-Stratton Town Council have agreed the design and content of an information panel about the lower canal and sea lock. The panel, 1200mm by 900mm, has now been affixed to the Castle Heritage Centre's boundary wall adjacent to the canal near the rear entrance to the Heritage Centre.

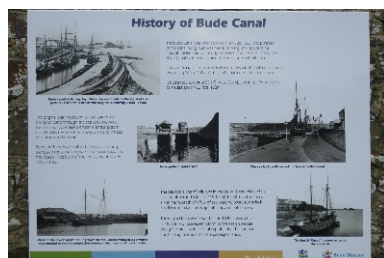


Photo by Jeff Dover

BCHS were able to give advice about the content and the panel has good photographs and concise text which will give a good start for the public to have some understanding of the Canal, its origins and purpose.

Chris Jewell

Bi-centenary 1819 – 2019

The past year has seen various activities and events take place to celebrate this important anniversary. BCHS organised events with the support of The Bude Canal Trust but other events took place with the cooperation and expertise of other bodies. BCHS is grateful to everyone who assisted in the past year.

The following is a list of specific events and activities that took place, and the group, body or persons involved.

February 2019. New display – 'Bude Harbour & Canal – The Early Days'. Researched by BCHS. Designed by Martin Group Services, Bude and BCHS it was funded by Community Chest Fund of Cornwall Council and an anonymous donation from a Life Member. This display consisted of 16 panels of A2 size which have now been increased to 18 panels. The exhibition was well received and there was a suggestion that perhaps it could be made into a booklet at some stage. The Trustees have discussed this idea and have agreed that the best solution would be to convert the whole display to a digital file in PDF format and add it to the BCHS website to allow free access by members of the public. This should be completed by early January and will be available to anyone with a smartphone, tablet or computer. It will be well worth reading.

February 2019. Commemorative Bicentenary booklet – Bude Canal 1819-2019. Researched by BCHS & BCT and designed and set up by Jacki Stephens, Jacdesigns, Bude. Funded by anonymous donation from a Life Member. Printed by Launceston Printing Co. Many thanks to Jacki Stephens for her commitment.

March 2019. Musical Play 'Hidden Depths' by Bude Youth Theatre in partnership with BCHS. Written by Richard Wolfenden-Brown. Funded by grants from Blanchminster Trust, Bude-Stratton Town Council, 'FEAST', and Cornwall Heritage Trust – applications made mainly by Mr Ian Saltern of 'StratNeet' Grant Consultants.

April 2019. BCHS – Guided tour of former tub boat canal, funded by BCHS. Bude Canal Trust – Guided walk of the Aqueduct Section owned by BCT, funded by BCT. Our thanks to Phil Dean who volunteered to drive the minibus used on these tours.

July 2019. Bude Junior School had a project about various aspects of the Canal, and a Poetry competition. Prizes funded by BCHS. There was a 1 hour question and answer session with two year 3 classes at Bude Junior.

BCHS provided both Bude Junior and Primary Schools with material for research by children. Outreach work by Richard Wolfenden-Brown on the Canal using themes from 'Hidden Depths' to encourage understanding by pupil participation which was worthwhile and interesting for the school.

July 2019. Bude-Stratton Heritage Day. BSTC funded the attendance of two full-size replica tub-boats which had been built by Mr Adrian Wills and his late friend and colleague Barry Hughes. BCHS, BCT, Rolle Canal, and Stover Canal groups attended with displays etc about their own canals.

July 2019. Bicentenary Anniversary Buffet and entertainment at Falcon Hotel. Presented and funded by BCHS and BCT. Fortunately the event was well attended and ticket sales almost completely paid for the costs. A commemorative plaque was presented by BCHS to Bude Stratton Town Council.

July 2019. From 13th July until 1st August, Mr Harry McConville, a well-known local artist, held an exhibition of his paintings in the Castle Heritage Centre, Bude which he had kindly dedicated to the bi-centenary of the start of the construction of the canal and the celebrations of that event organised by BCHS. Many thanks to Harry for this contribution to the Bi-centenary Year.

September 2019. Repeat of events as in April, by BCHS and BCT.

The following events had been planned during 2019 but did not take place:

- i. Visiting boats would have locked into the Canal and stayed for some period. Paul Vincent, Bude Harbour Master, had designed a commemorative tide table and a certificate for any visiting boats. But unfortunately, in the spring, the Sea Lock became unusable due to the outer north gate coming off its pivot. Thus there have been no boats, local or visiting, using the sea lock since then. Currently Cornwall Council have had all the safety checks done to allow a suitable large crane to come on to the lock pier to do the necessary lifting. Contractors gave a window of availability between October and December 2019 but the work has still not commenced. See the update on page 5.
- ii. The Bude Pilot Gig Club had agreed to do a 'navigation' of the canal from the sea lock to the A39 road bridge near Whalesborough, using the two inland locks on the outward and return trips. This has not taken place due to the delay in starting the repair works planned for the inland locks. These works are fully funded. As you will know, the canal has a 'population' of water voles as a result of re-introduction a few years ago. Water voles are a European Protected Species. Works cannot disturb or threaten them. Licences can be obtained to permit their removal to allow works to be done. It would appear that no such licences have been obtained. These works are now postponed until 2020.

We have asked the Gig Club if they would do their navigation when the work has been completed so that the re-established locks will be used. BCHS have asked for some clarification about the postponement and licences.

Chris Jewell

Financial Report on the Bi-centenary

A separate bank account has been used to monitor the income and expenditure associated with the activities relating to the Bi-centenary celebrations during 2019. The total income during the period of these events was £8,862.99 which included £4,200 in grants which were received from the following bodies:- Cornwall Council, The Blanchminster Trust, Bude-Stratton Town Council, FEAST, and Cornwall Heritage Trust. We wish to thank all of those organisations for their assistance which enabled us to fund our activities during the year. We were also fortunate in receiving generous donations amounting to £1,630 from two of our longstanding life members for which we are very grateful. The total expenditure incurred during the same period was £7,910.68 giving a net surplus of £952.31. This will be carried forward to fund future events and pay for any future exhibition expenses. The major item of expenditure was £3,600 paid to Bude Youth Theatre to fund their production "Hidden Depths" which was the main event of the year. Following the success of the commemorative booklets we arranged a re-print during the year with some updates. However, sales of the commemorative mugs have been rather slow so if you are interested in buying one of these mugs (see below) they are still available at £6.50 each. Thank you to everyone involved in the bi-centenary celebrations for supporting us and especially to Chris Jewell who masterminded the whole thing.

Mike Moore, Acting Treasurer



Update of the BCHS Website

As part of the 200 year Bi-Centenary Celebrations for the Bude Canal a dedicated website was set up and I thought you would be interested to know the place the websites have held and the contributions they have made to the promotion of the event etc.

Firstly the *budecanal-200.co.uk* website which I registered has proved very popular despite being a relatively small site and one not particularly advertised. I am pleased to report that in the last six months unique visitor numbers have been as follows, 266 249 235 417 325 242 making a total in the last six months of 1,734

Visitors seem to have had a good look around and visited all the pages.

Regarding the main site – that continues to expand its influence and ranks high in all search engines. As reported in previous years the history pages, maps and regeneration project pages are the most popular virtually every month, alongside downloads of The Tub Boat. There is a tremendous amount of information on this now complex site and it appears that people are delving into the detail every month. The figures are unique visits per month which means if someone visits several times, they are only counted once, giving the figures real value. The last six months figures are as below, and are very high for the website of a local charity albeit one with worldwide interest!

2563 2394 3757 3180 2433 2559 making a total in the last six months of 16,886. I am delighted with these figures.

Jacki Stephens, Webmaster

Membership Report

We welcome the following new members who have joined the society since September: Martin Shannon, Stratton and Mike Ellis, Killerton Road, Bude.

Unfortunately, we have recently lost another long established member. Fred Copeland of Stratton passed away on 28 September. We extend our condolences to his wife Thelma and her family (see page 10).

I must thank those members who have already renewed their subscription for 2019/2020 and particularly those who have given additional donations. Some have been very generous for which we are extremely grateful particularly considering that there was an increase in subscription rates on 1 September. However, some members have still not renewed. Would they please complete the enclosed renewal form by return to maintain their support for the Bude Canal & Harbour Society and receive future newsletters. Remember that only fully paid up members can vote at the AGM in February.

Some members who pay their subscription by Standing Order have still not updated their Standing Order Mandates to reflect the new subscription rates which applied from 1 September. It is important that all Standing Order mandates are updated now so that your subscription is renewed at the correct rate in 2020. Thank you for your co-operation and for your continued support.

Mike Moore, Acting Membership Secretary

Fred Copeland

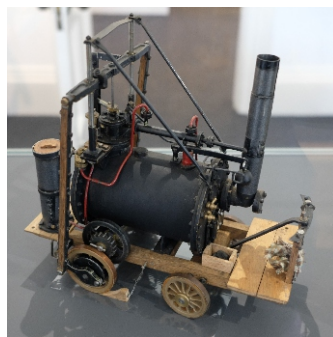
Fred was born in Derbyshire in 1931 and, at the age of 14, started work in the Belper Cotton Mill (now a UNESCO World Heritage Site) as an apprentice engineer and later he worked at E.W. Bliss in Derby before setting up his own engineering shop. Following the death of his first wife, Margaret, Fred sold his business and worked for Denby Pottery. In 1974 Fred met Thelma and they married in 1975. They lived in Breadsall, a small village near Derby until they moved to Cornwall in 1980.

Fred worked for the next 13½ years as a Porter/Handyman at Stratton Hospital and after his retirement he sometimes worked as a volunteer on the Swanage Railway when his friend, the late Trevor Knight, was driving a steam engine there. He also spent time at the Bodmin & Wenford Railway mostly helping out in the workshop.

Fred had been a member of BCHS since 1997 and has always kept in touch with us on a regular basis and until recent years has attended many of our events. During the restoration of the West Country Class locomotive “Wadebridge” he arranged for members of the BCHS committee to visit the site in Bodmin where the work was taking place. He was very enthusiastic about the restoration project and he was pleased to show us some of the components for the locomotive which he has made himself

I also remember visiting his workshop at the back of his home where he made all sorts of components for steam engines including complete working models for the miniature railway track which he built in his garden. During a recent visit to the Castle Heritage Centre, Bude I noticed a model of Richard Trevithick's “Puffing Devil” of 1801 which Fred had built and donated to them.

I have very fond memories of Fred and will miss his regular phone calls and our chats whenever I called in to see him at his home. He will be missed by many of us.



“Puffing Devil” by Fred Copeland

Mike Moore

Rodds Bridge



Could this be replaced by this during this new decade?

A major element of the Bude Canal Regeneration Project which ran from 2007 to 2009 was the proposal to establish full navigation of the Barge Section of the Bude Canal. Substantial work was carried out to achieve this including dredging the canal, reinstating the two inland locks and rebuilding Whalesborough Accommodation Bridge to give additional headroom.

However, proposals to replace Rodds Bridge were removed from the project when the level of funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund was reduced. At that time North Cornwall District Council gave a commitment that the replacement of Rodds Bridge would be treated as a separate project to be implemented as soon as funds permitted. The remaining elements of the project were completed in March 2009 and in April North Cornwall District Council was replaced by Cornwall Council as the unitary authority. We assumed that the commitments of the former NCDC would be taken over by Cornwall Council but to-date, despite prompting from BCHS, Cornwall Council do not have any firm plans to replace Rodds Bridge therefore rendering that section of the canal un-navigable except for canoes and rowing boats.

The Canal Regeneration Project Team considered various options for the replacement of Rodds Bridge including an opening bridge (lift or swing) but it was clear that they preferred to raise the height of the existing bridge despite the difficulty with the gradients of the approach roads. They seemed to be concerned about the possible ongoing operational and maintenance costs of an opening bridge. BCHS continue to press Cornwall Council to resolve this issue along with the provision of a slipway to give boats access to the canal. Will we see some action during this new decade? Don't hold your breath!

Mike Moore

Bude Canal Trust Report on the Bude Aqueduct

September

The guided walk on the 14th proved to be a warm sunny day for the twelve walkers, new to this section of the canal and where, with the information hand outs and displays at the Wharf building provided interest among all of them. As with the walk in April, a lunch break was taken at the picnic table before continuing to the car park at Vealand. All except two of the group continued through to the wheelpit adit exit, incline plane, the “aqueduct” over the River Tamar and Burmsdon Bridge.



Half way lunch break

The following two weeks working days were spent at Virworthy Wharf, continuing to build the stone wall which was then put on hold with onset of the seemingly continuous spell of very wet weather.



Donated stones

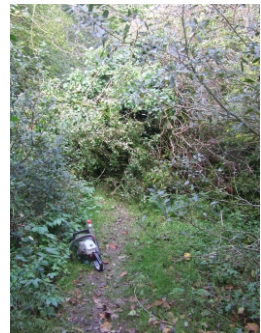


Good start with 1st, batch of stones

October & November

At the start of the month, responding to reports from walkers the previous week, urgent work was required to clear one large fallen tree across the footpath north of Wooda Bridge and a multitude of broken branches to the south of Dexbeer.

Large tree blocking footpath



The following four weeks of October and four weeks of November were devoted to removing a fallen tree across the footpath exposed to winds along the Vealand section and generally tidying up the mess left on the far bank (after the work carried out by the adjoining land owners, twelve months earlier).



Start of week 6



Overhanging trees

Returning to the Dexbeer section at the weekend for a quick survey, it was discovered that further smaller trees were leaning over which would prevent full access for the mower next year. With the continuing wet weather, issues relating to flooding raised their heads again.



Highest water marked with top of culvert

In several places along the canal water levels, although not the highest that had been previously noted, did highlight the number of places where drainage from higher ground was being introduced into the canal along with silt. This was either being filtered out by vegetation, leaving sediment behind or, flowing straight through into streams feeding the River Tamar.

In the last week of November, between Puckland and Dunsdon Nature Reserve, one Ivy laden dead tree had collapsed and another was also removed, a third tree also collapsed from the far bank but will wait until the water level has dropped. Eight of the boards on one side of the approach ramp on the DNR footbridge are rotting out and will require repairing.



Ivy Laden dead tree collapsed and to be removed

The trees noted earlier in the month, north of Dexbeer were sorted.

The national problem of “Ash Dieback” has also encroached onto the trees of the canal section that the Trust owns, with discussions having taken place with Devon’s Public Rights of Way officer to commence establishing the severity and a control management program beginning in spring 2020.

December

The start of the month on a possible good note, Steve and I had been invited to a revival meeting of the 'Tamar Catchment Area' where we presented our case to request help on future funding assistance, availability of larger mechanical equipment and qualified expertise assistance relating to the flooding and drainage issues we will have to deal with on concerns with culverts and out-flowing pipes. Information resources have also been sought with the Devon County Council Flood prevention dept.

The working week commenced with clearing the 2019 late growth between Aldercott Bridge and Virworthy Mill Farm, spilling over onto the next section to Virworthy Wharf.



Looking back at clearance completed

A start has been made to sort through all the paperwork records, photos and maps relating to the Trust’s ownership and work carried out, these will eventually be taken to the North Devon Record Office at Barnstaple for officially archiving in climatically controlled conditions for public access, thereby transferring them to a more secure and long term storage than we are able to provide.

Mike Degnan, Bude Canal Trust

News item recently published in the Bude & Stratton Post.

“Coastguard team called to Bude Canal”

Bude Coastguard and Rescue Team were called out on the late evening of 6 December following a report that a woman had fallen into the canal. On arrival at the Crescent car park they were aware that the woman had got out of the water so they searched the towpath. She was found in long grass near the towpath suffering from the early stages of hypothermia. She was wrapped in blankets and eventually taken to the Minor Injuries Unit at Stratton Hospital. There have been no further reports of her condition.

USAR Project

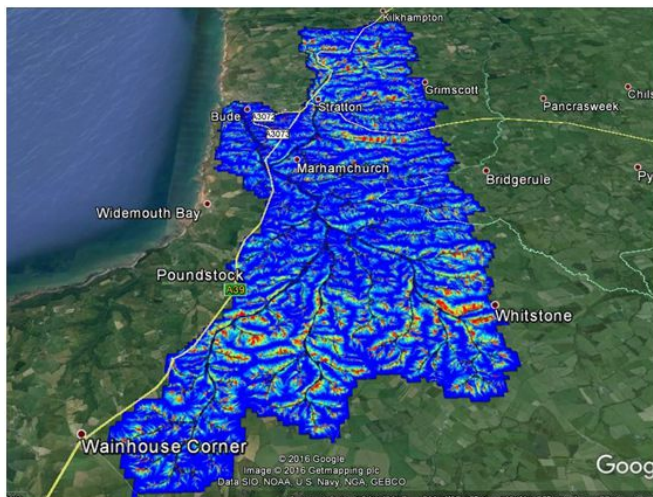
From 7th to 9th October delegates from England, the Netherlands, Belgium and France came to Bude to take part in a meeting of the USAR (Using Sediment As a Resource) project hosted by the Westcountry Rivers Trust - one of the partners in the project. The USAR project is funded by the EU Interreg 2Seas programme and aims to demonstrate novel ways of reusing dredged sediment rather than disposing of it at sea or dumping it in landfill sites. Once sediment is removed from a waterway it is classed as waste and must be tested for pollution before it can be disposed of. The role of Westcountry Rivers Trust in the USAR project is to help landowners reduce the amount of sediment getting into rivers in the first place and remains on farmland as useful soil instead. When soil washes into rivers - often via roads - it takes nutrients and pollution with it. Fine sediment also clogs riverbed gravels reducing the oxygen levels which has a negative impact on salmonid spawning rates.

The project partners meet every 6 months and this Autumn it was the turn of Westcountry Rivers Trust to host the meeting. Bude was chosen as the destination as the Bude Canal and Strat-Neet catchment make a very interesting case study - sediment and soil eroding from farmland in the catchment runs straight into the canal where the two rivers meet at Helebridge. The layout of the intersection - with the river running straight into the canal, then continuing via an overflow weir - means that the section of canal inland of Whalesborough Lock works as a very effective sediment trap.



*Confluence of Rivers Strat and Neet
showing different levels of suspended sediment*

In this section a range of particle sizes will be retained - from coarse gravels that would provide good spawning habitat in the river to finer silt particles that can stay in suspension much longer and end up settling in the lower sections of the canal. Silt accumulation in the upper basin has now reduced the depth in places to less than 3 feet.



Sediment erosion risk model showing potential hotspots showing red (credits to Google and SCIMAP)

As Cornwall Council make plans to carry out dredging operations along the entire canal length - it was an opportune time to hold the meeting in Bude. Holding the meeting at The Castle meant that around the routine business of partner updates and financial admin, partners were able to visit the Heritage Centre and find out all about the history of the Bude Canal and the ingenuity of the engineering required to surmount the challenges presented by the hilly terrain. The partners from Belgium and the Netherlands, both regional waterway authorities, and no strangers to canals themselves, were particularly impressed by the concept of the inclined plane which is so engagingly brought to life by the working model. Raising tub boats hundreds of feet is not a challenge they face very often!

The visiting delegates were also taken to the Helebridge section to see the confluence of the rivers Strat and Neet, the overflow weir and fish pass, and the two inland locks. Those that could stay for the Wednesday afternoon were also taken on a tour of the Neet catchment to see some of the sources of sediment that eventually arrives in the canal.



Belgian waterways engineers discussing maintenance issues on the inland locks

As the USAR project draws to a close Westcountry Rivers Trust are hoping to secure additional funding to work with landowners in the Neet catchment to help restore soil health and reduce sediment levels in the river – which in turn will mean less frequent dredging is needed in the canal.

Simon Browning, Westcountry Rivers Trust

West Country Waterways Forum

On the 12th of October, four representatives from the Rolle Canal Society attended the first West Country Waterways Forum at the Globe Inn, Sampford Peverell meeting in the appropriately named Canal Room. We joined nearly 30 enthusiastic representatives from the Inland Waterways Association (IWA) and all the west country canal societies: the Bude Canal and Harbour Society and the Bude Canal Trust, the Friends of Exeter Ship Canal, the Friends of Grand Western Canal, Langport Town Council (the River Parrett), the Somerset Navigators Boat Club (River Parrett and the Bridgwater and Taunton Canal) and the Stover Canal Trust.

The first talk was on a riverside regeneration project at Langport on the River Parrett in Somerset, mostly funded by the European Union through the Rural Development Programme for England. This project has improved access to the river and the riverside for canoeists, walkers and anglers, installing steps and pontoons. A footfall monitor has also been installed to show sponsors that the project really has increased use of the waterside. Historically the river navigation was very important to Langport, and the increased activity on the river has been welcomed by locals and visitors. In its hay day you could buy a ticket in Langport to emigrate to America, and travel there from the town entirely by water.



View of Langport and the River Parrett from the air showing the pedestrian bridge and the riverside walk along Cocklemoor

The picture of the River Parrett at Langport was kindly provided by Val Saunders, Langport Town Council with permission of Jane and Chris Rees.

We then heard of the latest work on the Stover Canal (stovercanal.co.uk), including the restoration of its unique graving dock, a combined lock/drydock, and the granite tramway that took stone to the canal from Haytor on Dartmoor. This area looks well worth a visit and the Rolle Canal committee are investigating the opportunities for an organised trip.

Before the excellent lunch, Ellen Hawes, the IWA Fundraising Officer gave a talk with many useful tips on fundraising from individuals and organisations. She stressed the importance of proper project and canal society governance and the value of being a registered charity. National Lottery Grants for Heritage of £3,000-£10,000 for one-year projects are available, or for £10,000-£250,000 for a five-year project, without matching funding, for the right organisations that can show positive outcomes for heritage, skill-building, education, wellbeing and local people.

After lunch there were presentations on the Grand Western Park 'n' Glide project, the Exeter Ship Canal, the Bude Canal, and Bridgwater Docks and Bascule Bridge. Park 'n' Glide (www.parknglide.org) is a scheme to connect Silk Mills park and ride car park to the centre of Taunton by electric shuttle boat, with the side effect of improving flood defences.

The Exeter Ship Canal talk illustrated the highs and lows of the canal enthusiast. The owners of the Canal, Exeter City Council, had hired consultants, who proposed major residential development along the canal, relegating it to a sort of water feature. Fortunately, the need to replace the current lift and swing bridges at Countess Weir provides the opportunity for a higher-level crossing of the canal. These bridges are currently a notorious bottleneck to navigation. Their prospective replacement seems to have triggered a change of perspective from the canal being a nuisance, to becoming an asset to the city.

On the Bude Canal, the saga of difficulties to maintain the locks, create a slipway, and repair the Sea Lock continues, as do the difficulties at Bridgwater docks and its bascule bridge. At least here the Canal and River Trust, who lease the docks from the town council, appear to have woken up to their responsibilities. They are in active talks on renewing the lease which currently expires next year.

At the end of the afternoon, some of the participants took a stroll along the towpath of the Grand Western Canal, with access directly from the pub car park. Finally, while another West Country Waterways Forum is not planned yet, hopefully the Rolle Canal Society will be able to make a presentation on its work at a future meeting.

Michael Elliot, Rolle Canal Society

IWA West Country Branch Walk

On New Years Day, the West Country Branch usually organises a walk on one of the waterways in the branch area. This year's walk was along a stretch of the Bridgwater & Taunton Canal starting at Creech St Michael.



On arrival, the Canalside car park at Creech St. Michael was already very full indicating a good response although the sky was rather overcast. Setting off in the Bridgwater direction, our walk passed Foxhole Bridge followed by a long field which usually has alpacas but none were seen as we passed by.



Foxhole Bridge



Charlton Engine House

After Foxhole Bridge we had a brief stop at the Charlton Engine House which was built in 1826 to pump water from the River Tone up into the canal using a steam-powered beam engine and two pumps. Later on, when the canal fell into disuse, this role changed and water was then pumped up to the nearby GWR main railway line to supply the water troughs which were used by steam locomotives to replenish their water tanks while passing at speed.

After Charlton Bridge we then arrived at the limit of our walk at Cogload Bridge. This was originally a swing bridge but when the canal was restored in the 1980's it proved possible to build a full-sized fixed bridge over the canal. This could be a solution to our problem at Rodds Bridge (see article on page 11).



Charlton Bridge

Our return walk to the Canalside car park was uneventful although during the whole of the walk we were surprised at the frequency of trains passing along the main railway line which followed the line of the canal in this area. Very good for train-spotting.

Thank you to Ray Alexander and Mike Slade for organising this walk. I wonder where we will be going in 2021. Exeter Canal is a possibility.

Mike Moore



*The unusual sight of Black Swans on the canal
Photo by Jeff Dover*

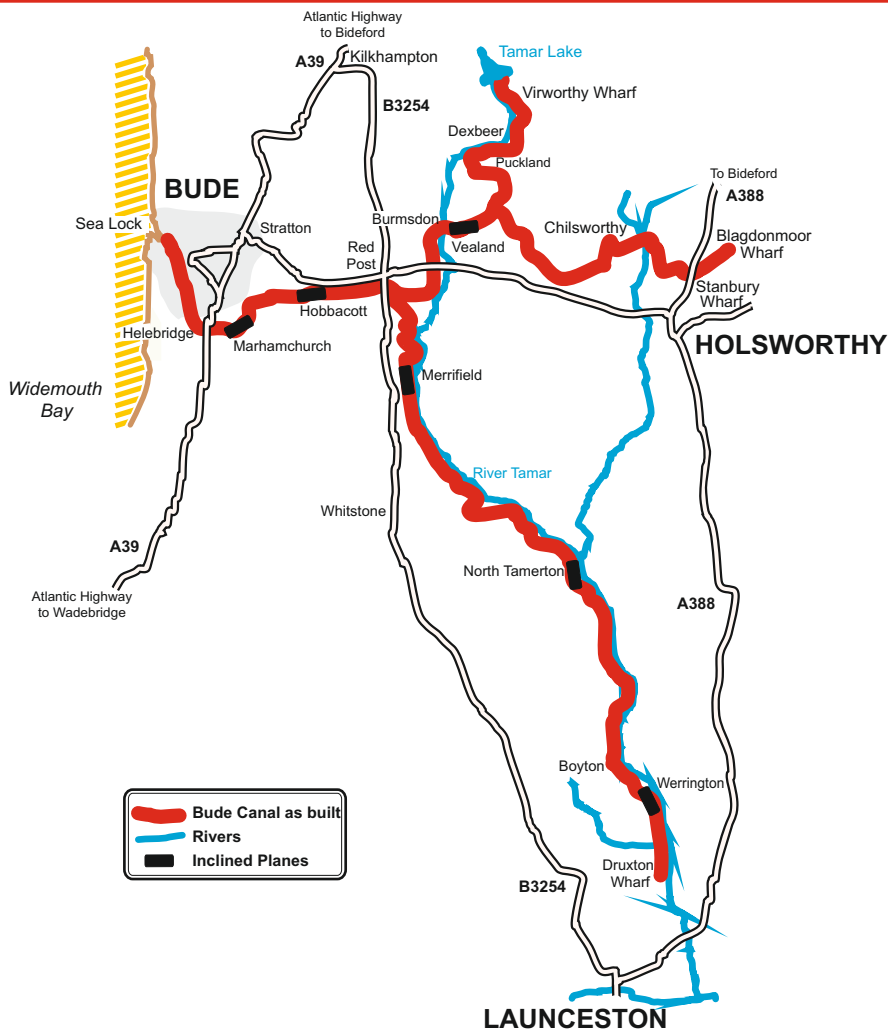


*A recent residential deveopment
alongside the canal near Rodds Bridge
- or is it just a big shed?*



THE TUB BOAT

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