

THE TUB BOAT

Newsletter of the Bude Canal & Harbour Society

No. 99

Spring 2022



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Forthcoming Events for 2022:

Sat 17th/Sun 18th July

Bude-Stratton Heritage Festival from 11am to 4pm where we hope to have tables in The Parkhouse Centre or in the marquee on the Sunday. Further details in the next edition of The Tub Boat.

Under the present circumstances we are unable to plan any further events during 2022 at this stage. We will give another update in the next edition of The Tub Boat.

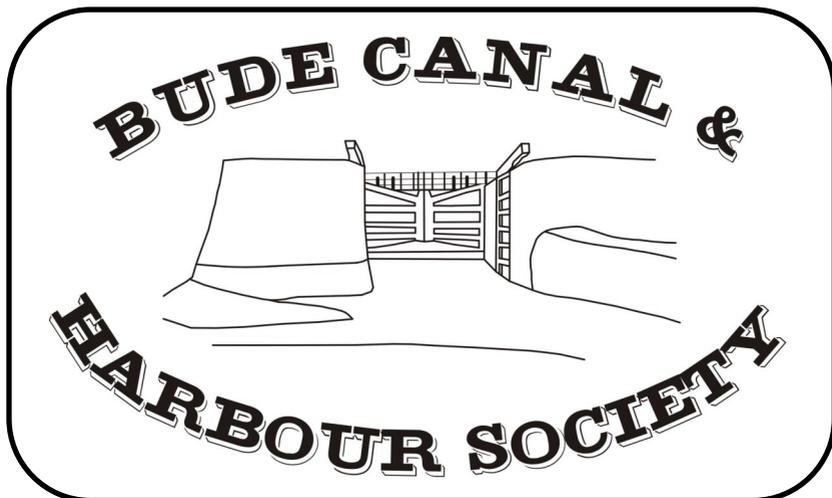
Forthcoming Events for 2023:

Saturday 8th July 200th Anniversary of the opening of the Bude Canal between Bude and Holsworthy.

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 June 2022.

	Officers	Other Trustees
Chairman	Chris Jewell	Lesley Moores
Vice-Chair	Vicki Herbert-Coulson	Lucille Opie
Secretary	Peter Daniel	Michael Coulson
Treasurer	Martin Shannon	Sandy Faulkner
Membership Secretary	Martin Shannon	Stuart Spooner
Events Secretary	Vacant	Tim Martindale
Minuting Secretary	Vacant	
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.



Registered Charity No.1086646

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Cover photo: FebFest walkers at the weir on 21 February

Creaks from the Chair

The AGM on 6th March in the Gallery at The Castle went well. We were ably supported by the staff at The Castle and the presentation about the regeneration of the Sea Lock in 2000/01 and the repairs in 2020/21 was well received. The most significant matter at the formal AGM in the afternoon was the election of trustees. This involved the re-election of two of the current trustees, Lesley Moores and Martin Shannon and the election of five new trustees, Vicki Herbert-Coulson, Michael Coulson, Sandy Faulkner, Tim Martindale and Stuart Spooner. They were all welcomed and thanked for their commitment to the society. The new trustees will have to deal with a steep learning curve, but they have some interesting ideas which will be discussed at forthcoming committee meetings.

May 2022 is the 21st Anniversary of the formation of BCHS as a registered charity and next year will be the bicentenary of the opening of the canal for trade between Bude and Holsworthy on 8th July 1823. We are considering the best way to celebrate this important event which was the catalyst that encouraged the development of the town which we now know as Bude. This added to the investment in the infrastructure of the town by Sir Thomas Dyke Acland, 10th Baronet in the early 19th century.

Finally, we hope to be able to be more active in the public view by attending appropriate events during the year and opening the Barge Workshop for BSTC. We intend to expand the use of social media to promote the society to a wider audience and inform them about other matters which concern the future of the Bude Canal.

Chris Jewell

AGM 2022 – Chairman’s Report

This report is unusual in that, due to COVID-19 it covers two reporting periods. In the year of 2020 the effect was quite dramatic as the total shut down started in March and Bude became almost a ghost town. Face to face committee meetings ceased and BCHS adopted a circulation of



Members & visitors at the AGM

reports by the Executive Officers and the use of emails and text messages. There were no public events to plan for and the Barge Workshop was not opened by BCHS at all between 1st July and 30th September 2020. Likewise, the Sea Lock remained inoperable with both outer gates removed and stored on the lock heads.

There were no works on the canal either dredging or waterproofing of the outer gates of the inland locks which we had offered to part fund. However, we managed to continue production of The Tub Boat.

As 2021 dawned, hope was in the air as the first vaccine for COVID-19 was about to be rolled out nationwide. I had my first one on 1st February and my second on 1st May, both at Holsworthy. The monthly reports to committee continued for the time being. BCHS attended a scaled-down version of Heritage Day and opened the Barge Workshop from 1st August to the end of September on Sundays from 2pm to 5pm as usual. An effective one-way system was used and there was a reasonable number of visitors who came to visit this important heritage asset and its contents.

In September face to face committee meetings recommenced at The Falcon Hotel at 2pm on every 3rd Wednesday of each month. In November we used social media to seek new trustees to ensure that there was the minimum of six to comply with our constitution. This resulted in five local people offering to be nominated in 2022. They all have good local connections and later this afternoon they will be elected as trustees increasing our number to ten which ensures that BCHS can continue to operate legally in the future. In December the trustees held their Christmas lunch at The Falcon.

During the two-year period 2020/21 a new group was set up called "Bude Canal Stakeholders" which partially replaced the Bude Valley Management Advisory Group. It met by Zoom quarterly and was focussed on achieving a planned maintenance regime for the canal rather than the current reactionary system.

At the end of 2021 our colleagues, The Bude Canal Trust, announced that they were in negotiations with Devon Wildlife Trust with a view to transferring the ownership of the Aqueduct section of the Bude Canal to DWT. In principle, BCHS support that idea as did the Westcountry Branch of the Inland Waterways Association. See reports on pages 19 to 22 of this edition for further details.

Finally, and perhaps most important of all, during the late summer of 2021 the sea lock was restored to full operational capacity having had repairs and updates to comply with design and Health and Safety protocols. Some vessels were locked in and out of the canal - the first for just over two years. There was also a promise that the Upper Basin would be dredged at last.



Presentation of card and gift voucher

Following the formal AGM, I presented a “thank you” card and gift voucher to Betty Moore who had just retired after 21 years as a trustee. During this time in her role as Events Secretary, she helped the society raise hundreds of pounds through the sale of “Bric- a -brac” and organising raffles on our annual coach trips.

Chris Jewell

Treasurer’s Report for 1st January – 31st December 2021

A summary of the annual financial statements of the society, which have been independently examined by Leonard & Co, is reproduced opposite.

The notable points to report are as follows:

The main elements of income for the year were membership subscriptions and donations with accompanying Gift Aid. Fortunately, we were able to hold Barge Workshop Days over the summer months and attend Bude Heritage Day which resulted in modest income from publication sales.

The only significant expenditure was in the following areas:

- The production and distribution of the quarterly newsletter.
- Web site updating and hosting
- Annual public liability insurance
- Storage costs
- Cost of publications printing

The magnitude of these expenses is in line with previous years and expectations.

The Project Fund includes £4,500 designated to future works.

ACCOUNT 1	£
Balance as at 1 January 2021	1616.99
Add Income	2563.89
Less Expenditure	<u>-1952.45</u>
Balance as at 31 December 2021	2228.43
Add Cash in hand	<u>88.00</u>
Total of Funds available	<u><u>2316.43</u></u>

ACCOUNT 2 - EDUCATIONAL FUND	£
Balance as at 1 January 2021	248.92
Add Income	691.30
Less Expenditure	<u>-273.98</u>
Balance as at 31 December 2021	<u><u>666.24</u></u>

ACCOUNT 3 - PROJECT FUND	£
Balance as at 1 January 2021	4626.23
Add Income	2.37
Less Expenditure	<u>0.00</u>
Balance as at 31 December 2021	<u><u>4628.60</u></u>

ACCOUNT 4 - COMMEMORATIVE EVENTS	£
Balance as at 1 January 2021	1450.19
Add Income	0.79
Less Expenditure	<u>0.00</u>
Balance as at 31 December 2021	<u><u>1450.98</u></u>

ACCOUNT 5 - ARCHIVE PROJECT	£
Balance as at 1 January 2021	379.51
Add Income	0.00
Less Expenditure	<u>0.00</u>
Balance as at 31 December 2021	<u><u>379.51</u></u>

Membership Report

	Number
Paid Membership 31 st December 2021	
Life Members	27
Annual Members	80
	<hr/>
	107
Additional family members	7
	<hr/>
Total members	114
	<hr/>

We are extremely grateful to have received the continuing support of the majority of our membership including some generous donations. Sadly, since my report in the Spring 2021 edition of The Tub Boat two long standing members have passed away and 6 have decided not to renew. However, on a more positive note we have welcomed 6 new members in 2022, one as a life member.

Thank you all for your continued support and please let me know if your contact details change or if indeed your circumstances change such that you are able to make future subscriptions under Gift Aid and should anyone require any further information, please contact me directly on 01288 356367 or bude.canal@gmail.com.

Martin Shannon
Honorary Treasurer and Membership Secretary

Obituary – Tim Dingle

Readers will be saddened to learn of the death just after Christmas 2021 of Tim Dingle. Tim died in a nursing home in the New Forest, where he spent his last years close to his family in a battle with Alzheimer's.

Tim was born into a farming family in Hampshire and spent the early part of his life on the farm before moving to North Cornwall in the 1980s. Here he joined the Heritage Coast and Countryside Service of North Cornwall District Council, spending the next 30 years working for and promoting the interests of nature and local heritage.



Tim Dingle

Tim's promotion of local walking opportunities involved the improvement of many local footpaths (including the establishment of the Widemouth viewing point and bench, accessible to all), the publication of promotional walks leaflets and countless guided walks. He also had a wide knowledge of wildlife, with birds and butterflies an especial interest, and was involved with the establishment of the Bude Marshes Nature Reserve.

His interests also included the local heritage, and he was instrumental in securing grants and an international award for the 16th century Poundstock Gildhouse. He was involved in the restoration of local holy wells, stone crosses and other ancient monuments. This interest included the Bude Canal. While at the District Council he was closely involved with the Bude Canal Regeneration Project of the early 2000s and also, jointly with Devon County Council, in securing and using grant aid for the canal from the European Union.

His involvement with the canal continued after his retirement, when he became closely involved with reforming and re-establishing the Bude Canal Trust so that the 5½ mile length between Lower Tamar Lake and Burmsdon, the longest single length of the canal remaining intact, would be retained in beneficial ownership. He became a Trustee and the Trust's Secretary and was instrumental in setting up the Trust's work party to ensure that the original clearance work undertaken by Gerald Fry and his team would be continued. His wildlife and heritage knowledge were invaluable in this work, which included arranging and undertaking renovation work on heritage features as well as keeping the towpath clear and walkable while ensuring the canal's wildlife was protected and enhanced.

Tim moved to the New Forest in order to be close to his family in 2015 as his health began to suffer. His legacy is continued by the Trust's work party, ongoing to the present day, nearly 15 years after he set it up.

Appropriately, Tim's final resting place is back in North Cornwall. His well-attended funeral took place on 16th January at the parish church at Poundstock. He was then interred in the church graveyard, a fitting resting place in the area where he had spent so much time and contributed so much.

Tim will be a great loss to North Cornwall, to Bude and to the Bude Canal, and to all those who care about the local environment.

Steve Church, Chairman, Bude Canal Trust

Tim had been a member of BCHS since its formation joining the original Bude Canal Society in March 1998. He was very active in organising walks and special events for the Bude Canal Trust to which he always invited members of BCHS. I particularly remember the cream teas which he and Sandy arranged at Higher Penhalt Farm – always a very special occasion in beautiful surroundings. Condolences to Sandy and the family.

Mike Moore

Obituary – Commander Peter Kelly, RN

Peter Kelly who was a former IWA Trustee and member of the West Country Branch of the Inland Waterways Association, died on the 8th February 2022 aged 83.

Peter was born in Portsmouth on 24th March 1938. He attended Colchester Royal Grammar School but decided that the academic world was not for him and at the remarkably young age of 15 joined the Royal Navy as a Boy Seaman Grade II. Here his hidden talents flourished, and he made his way steadily through the ranks, becoming a highly regarded captain of the survey ship HMS Woodlark and eventually commander of a fleet of three ships.



Peter Kelly

On his retirement from the Royal Navy he took up a position with the Sultan of Oman, where he had stewardship of the Royal Yacht and also learnt Arabic, no mean feat in itself.

Returning to the UK, Peter became treasurer of the Hydrographics Society, which he held for 20 years, he bought a narrowboat, nb Sharazad, and joined the IWA, where he made many friends. He was an IWA Trustee from 2002 to 2009, represented the South West Region on the Navigation Committee for some 9 years, was Region Secretary from 2009 to 2013 and also edited Sou'Wester for 5 years. Throughout the time he was a member of the committee of the West Country Branch, Peter visited the Bude Canal on many occasions and strongly supported the work of the society. When I served on the Branch committee, he acted as Branch Secretary, so I had the pleasure of working with him for many years.

It was only a short while ago that Peter ceased being captain of his own narrowboat, having had a water-based life for more than 60 years.

Peter met Jackie in 1960, they married in 1965 and had 38 years together until Jackie died in 2003. He leaves a son, Mark, and his family, including two grandchildren and we wish them well. A true gentleman and friend of the waterways. We send our condolences to the family.

Mike Moore

Obituary – Jill White (formerly Pritchard)

We were very sad to hear from Ted that Jill had passed away on 5th February. Although originally from East Sussex, Jill lived at Ashwater and joined the old Bude Canal Society in November 1998. She was very active in the society and eventually became a trustee acting as Minutes Secretary until she and Ted made the decision to return to East Sussex. Both Jill and Ted attended many events over the years including manning the Barge Workshop and helping on our stalls. She will be remembered with fondness by the trustees who had served with her over the years. We send our condolences to Ted and family.

Mike Moore



Jill White



Recent works on the canal towpath associated with the EA flood defence project to raise the height of the bank behind the TIC



Bude Valley update

Inland Locks - Leakage Issues

Most of the work on the locks has now been completed. There is still a leak around Rodds Bridge Lock that needs to be sealed. Investigations in the autumn found that rather than leaking through the paddle chamber, which was the case at Whalesborough lock, water was leaking through the bank upstream of the chamber and piping around the lock. Puddle Clay was used to try and reduce the water leakage, but this wasn't successful, and more work will be carried out in the spring to try and rectify this issue.



The picture above illustrates the amount of leakage around the lock. A pit was dug just above the lock and was full of water within minutes.

Handrail Replacement

The handrails on each of the inland locks were deteriorating and becoming unsafe for users. To rectify this, sub-contractors were employed to replace the handrails and re-paint the paddle gearing. They have replaced the handrails with key clamp which will be longer lasting and stronger.



The picture on the left illustrates the amount of corrosion on the old handrails.

The picture on the right shows the new handrails which are of a better construction and should last at least 20 years.



Coppicing

Scrub such as Alder and Willow were starting to encroach along the far canal bank from the Weir to Whalesborough lock. Both species are very invasive and could soon revert the canal banks to woodland. The trees and scrub were coppiced out to keep the canal bank clear for access for repairs and dredging. Some Alder and Willow which had started to grow out of the bank on the tow path side of the canal was also removed. Tree damage was also caused by Storm Eunice, this has either been attended to, or work to rectify the damage has been programmed to take place soon.



Alder coppiced out next to the towpath at Helebridge

Fishing Platforms

The disabled fishing platforms next to the higher wharf needed repair. Some of the kick boards at the edge of the platforms had started to rot away and needed replacement. The kick boards are required to stop anyone in a wheelchair or buggy sliding into the canal. The platforms need to be replaced with a more robust design and this forms part of a wider scheme to repair the banks of the canal in the areas where improvements are needed.



Fishing Platform with new kick board

Gareth Cann, Cormac Countryside Senior Sites & Trails Officer

Barge Section update from Cornwall Council

Bude Canal Dredging - work completed

- Ecological Impact Assessment and surveys
- Bathymetric survey
- Silt sampling, analysis and testing
- Zebra Mussel survey
- Engagement with waste and land specialists to inform options for disposal
- Engagement with ecologists to identify mitigation strategies
- Engagement with specialist dredging contractors to assess best approach
- Engagement with landowners / disposal operators

Bude Canal Dredging - work in progress

1. Complete landowner engagement and finalise legal agreement to secure disposal site and finalising the disposal strategy
2. Detailed discussion with specialist contractors to agree the dredging methodology, and tender.
3. Develop the application to Natural England for consent to carry out the works, inclusive of the necessary supporting method statements based on the above.

Other matters

The Environment Agency have several ongoing projects happening in Bude including the Bude weir (downstream end of River Neet). As the Canal is integral to the management of flood risk from main river (Neet), Environment Officers are entering discussions with EA for collaborative working on the Canal and explore a business case to source FDGiA funding for investment.



Deteriorating canal bank just above Falcon Bridge

Canal Embankments

A recent survey of the canal banks and associated structures (excluding the locks) has highlighted several areas of erosion alongside several condition issues with a number of structures located along the edge of the canal and tow path. Concerning the banks, the greatest amount of damage appears to be as a result of water vole activity. CORMAC have been commissioned to investigate the best repair solutions in view of the complicated ecological constraints. The survey of the structures will also contribute to a longer-term strategy for the future implementation of seating and interpretation taking into consideration the changing needs of the people that visit the canal.

Licencing

The tender for the Activity Licensing across the Canal is progressing. We have received several applications and are hopeful the Canal will continue to operate at full capacity. Will be contacting all the applicants shortly to confirm the final allocations.

Don Martin – Cornwall Council Countryside Team Leader

Bude Area Community Network Panel Meeting - 7 March 2022

I attended the above Zoom meeting courtesy of Cllr Peter Labroy as one of the items on the agenda was “The current plans of the Bude Canal & Harbour Society”. This gave me the opportunity to encourage Cornwall Council, as owner of the barge section of the Bude Canal, to make a bid for a government grant to complete the Bude Canal Regeneration Project. I emphasised that this would have significant benefits for the tourist industry locally and help address the current problems with dredging and the inland locks. Although there was a promise that dredging would take place this Autumn, I said that there was a need to return to a system of planned maintenance rather than reacting to problems as they arise.

I reminded the meeting about the important anniversaries coming up i.e. the 21st Anniversary of the formation of BCHS as a charity in May 2022 and the 200th Anniversary of the opening of the canal between Bude and Holsworthy on 23rd July 1823 which was the catalyst which led to the development of Bude into the town which we have today.

Chris Jewell

Bude Harbour update - October 2021 to March 2022

On 3rd October, Bude Harbour hosted one of the check points for the 2021 Club Triumph Reliability Run with approximately 100 classic Triumphs entering the Wharf car park check in. The event was a complete success raising a total of nearly £100,000 for charity. October also brought the end to our boating season with the last of the boats being trailered in and the last use of the sea lock. The storm chains and bars were then fitted ready for the winter storms! The over wintering boats were successfully craned out onto the hard standing and the security fencing erected. With boating activity halted for the winter, I was then able to catch up with some routine maintenance before going in for a hip operation in early December.

Back in on light duties, in February I had a new sign fitted to Falcon Bridge following reports of powered dinghies venturing up the canal. I have reclaimed two moorings that were not being used and passed them onto two new mooring holders from the waiting list. Storm Eunice took its toll on the Breakwater causing several granite slabs to drop on the far end between Tommy's Pit and Barrel Rock. I am currently in talks with Cormac arranging the repairs. I am also arranging the annual removal of sand from the sea lock for the end of March allowing us to remove the storm chains etc in early April ready for the first lock operations.

Enquiries have been coming in from visiting vessels wishing to use the lock over the summer and I am hoping to have a 40' Dutch built 1964 Yawl in for a few months.

Projects involve migrating safety inspections from paper based to Harbour Assist and manufacturing and fitting inner lock gate paddle gearing strap banding.



The successful refurbishment of the outer lock gate paddle castings and channels is to be completed and purchase orders are in place for tarmac and cobble repairs to the Wharf car park with work to commence shortly.

Paul Vincent (Harbourmaster)

The Sand Railway

As reported previously, Cornwall Council, as part of their coastal protection duties, are aiming to provide more resilience to the sea wall and platform that contains the sand railway leading down to 'Iron Bridge' and Summerleaze Beach. They are concerned that rising sea levels and more frequent storms due to global warming will cause severe damage to the platform and embankment behind it. In particular they are worried about excessive sea water ingress through the cobbled area into loose fill below. They have, in recent years grouted some of this and their intention has been to also extend the concrete apron further up the ramp. Unfortunately, this would not only cover more of the 1923 railway lines but would also cover the remaining stone sleeper blocks from the 1823 plateway. BCHS has reluctantly accepted that work needed to be done but had hoped for a compromise that involved some extra concrete slab but which also allowed some visibility of the original stone sleeper blocks.

However, Cornwall Council must satisfy Historic England because the railway is deemed to be within the curtilage of the Sea Lock Scheduled Monument. Historic England have objected to the extent of the proposed slab. Cornwall Council are, therefore, through their Contractors Cormac, working on alternative proposals. They believe the only option likely to meet with Historic England support will involve some level of reinstatement of the cobbles, albeit they would need to be in a form that would withstand the sea actions. They are currently putting together budget pricing for a cobbled surface option. Once this has been prepared, if deemed robust and importantly, affordable, then the Council will have further discussions with Historic England and with their own Historic Environment team, to ensure the proposals are acceptable to them.

We will provide further updates when we have additional information.

Peter Daniel

Photo: Participants on the FebFest Walk on 21 February inspecting the Sand Railway



Bude Canal Trust Work Report on the Bude Aqueduct

January

After identifying a wide range of issues between Virworthy Mill and Wooda Bridge the priority of burning the seven piles of brash that had been cut the previous year was a good place to start. The area around the large remaining stump over the Cape Horn Culvert was cleared and cordoned off and the contractor was brought in to remove the stump.

The storage area was tidied up and the weed clearing boat was moved there from its old storage location (*Photo on right*). Returning to the brash collecting site, all the brash was cleared over the next two weeks rolling over into February.



February

The second week proved the potential of the canal being able, with repairs to the odd leaks, to act as a linear, flood prevention lake, as there was too much water and deep mud for us to access the areas we needed to complete the required work for the following two weeks.

At long last, a feasible plan was prepared to attempt a salvage, repair operation on the larger culvert at Cape Horn. However, whilst working on the stump removal it was noticed that all three of the pipes had disappeared from where they had been stacked. Ongoing enquiries are in hand to investigate a possible theft.

March

The first mowing of the footpath was interrupted by a series of storm damaged trees blocking the mower access although walkers were still able to pass (*Photo on right*).



Mike Degnan, Bude Canal Trust

The Bude Canal Trust AGM – 28 January 2022

As reported in the last edition of The Tub Boat, apart from routine AGM matters, the major item on the agenda of this meeting was the proposal to transfer ownership of the Aqueduct section of the canal from BCT to Devon Wildlife Trust (DWT). Two officers of DWT, including the CEO, attended the meeting to explain why they were interested in acquiring the canal and answer any questions from members.

Firstly, the chairman of BCT, Steve Church, explained the background to their initial approach to DWT which was outlined in his paper published in the last edition of The Tub Boat. He started by giving a brief history of the development of BCT over the years. In 2008 the original group of trustees retired and were replaced by new trustees who formed the basis of the current group. Over the years they have tried to enhance the canal but due to the lack of personnel with the appropriate expertise in promotion and grant applications, they have been unable to exploit these opportunities. As a result of this, they have been looking at ways in which the future of the canal can be safeguarded. When they became aware of the desire of DWT to increase its land holdings, they made contact and began initial discussions. It became clear that DWT saw the future of the canal in much the same way as BCT had outlined in their “Vision Statement” which was published in 2012. Following further discussions with DWT, the trustees of BCT agreed that this transfer of ownership should take place which is the reason for this proposal.

This was followed by an explanation from Harry Barton, CEO of DWT outlining how acquiring this section of the canal would fit into their future plans to increase their land holdings. He emphasised the importance of their existing sites at Dunsdon and Vealand and how this acquisition could enhance the value of those sites in the following ways:

1. It would build on the fantastic job that BCT had been doing in maintaining the canal.
2. It would maintain the attractive walk along the canal and its margins.
3. They would look at the canal as a spine to bring nature back to this part of Devon and North Cornwall.

He had presented the proposal to the DWT board who thought that it was an amazing development for the following reasons:

1. It aided the recovery of nature.
2. It fitted into their carbon agenda relating to climate change.
3. It would allow more people to interact with the natural world.

DWT would be delighted if this proposed land transfer could be made successfully.

He answered further questions from the floor mainly about future maintenance arrangements and whether the canal could be re-watered between Lower Tamar Lake and Virworthy Wharf. He mentioned that the canal through Dunsdon Nature Reserve had already been re-watered so it could be possible, but all these matters would be addressed as part of further detailed discussions. He added that their vision for the canal did not include full restoration, but it would include some scrub, some open, some wet and some dry sections. He said that DWT always works with neighbouring farmers to ensure a consistent approach to land management.

Other questions concerned the exact extent of the land to be transferred and the timescale. The land would extend from the start of the canal at Lower Tamar Lake to the Burmsdon Aqueduct over the River Tamar, but DWT would also manage the short stretch of canal beyond the aqueduct in Cornwall although ownership of this section in Cornwall is subject to separate negotiations. The timescale is unknown as unexpected issues could hold up the transfer, but September 2022 is a possibility if there are no undue obstacles or delays.

In answer to two questions raised by chairman of BCHS, Chris Jewell, he stated that BCT does have a copy of the DWT Vision for the canal and a draft "Heads of Terms" agreement has been drawn up. Steve Church said that it was paramount that any agreement must allow the transfer of ownership of the canal on terms which satisfied both BCT and DWT. On the second question, Harry confirmed that DWT had seen a copy of the IWA Leaflet No.12 covering the Aqueduct Section of the canal and that they would not have any objection to its continued distribution until stocks are depleted but in the longer-term DWT may consider producing their own leaflet.

Following a vote on the proposal to proceed with the transfer of ownership of the section of the canal as described above, the secretary reported that 7 votes were cast in favour by those present and able to vote with none against. He then reported that 27 postal votes were cast in favour with none

against. This was emphatic support for the proposal with 34 members in total giving their support out of a total membership of 52 with none against. Chris Jewell reiterated the support of BCHS for the proposal as an appropriate way of securing the future of this section of the Bude Canal.

In AOB the chairman announced that the trustees had agreed to give honorary memberships to Denis Balsdon, Mike Millard and Bill Bromell for their support given to the trust over the years. He also wished to give a vote of thanks to Mick Stanton, Denis Balsdon and Gerald Fry and to Tim Dingle who passed away just after Christmas.

The next meeting of BCT would normally be the half-yearly meeting in June but, due to the impending plans for the transfer of ownership of the canal, the exact date will be announced later.

Mike Moore

Bude Canal Trust – Proposed Transfer of Lands

As Mike Moore notes in the above article, the main item on the agenda at the AGM on 28th January was the proposal to transfer the Trust's lands to the ownership of the Devon Wildlife Trust (DWT), given appropriate safeguards for the canal and its heritage features. His report also indicates that, following discussion and the answering by officers of the DWT of queries from BCT members, a vote was taken on pursuing this course of action. A combination of the vote taken at the meeting, plus a substantial number of postal votes previously submitted, means that 65% of the BCT membership has cast a vote in favour of the proposal, with none against.

I have to say on behalf of the BCT's Trustees and Management Committee, and also on a personal level, that I am very happy at this outcome. The Trust feels it has done a good job to date looking after this length of the canal and its heritage features but given our limited resources we have to find a new and sustainable way forward that continues to guarantee the canal's future.

Having received the membership's go-ahead, the BCT's Management Committee will now enter into detailed negotiations with the DWT on the terms of the transfer, with our major red lines being an inclusion of an assurance from DWT that the canal's profile, its historic features, appropriate promotion and access will all be safeguarded.

The DWT has now drafted two papers in preparation for the possible transfer, the *Heads of Terms* and their *Vision for the Canal*, both of which emphasise their commitment to maintaining and guaranteeing the future of these elements. Further, it is proposed that an Advisory Body be set up, comprising interested parties, to help and advise DWT in their maintenance of the canal. The BCT is therefore confident that the canal's integrity will be maintained, and thus that the future of this 5½ mile length of the Bude Canal will be guaranteed.

If and when the proposed transfer is completed, the BCT will have to consider its future, since it will no longer be responsible for the vast majority of its current workload. A number of options will have to be explored, and these may include discussions with other bodies, including the BCHS, to determine the best outcome for the interests of BCT members and for the canal.

The final decision will be for BCT members to endorse and we will, of course, keep our BCT members updated on possibilities and proposals. We will also be happy to keep other closely interested parties informed.

Steve Church, Chairman, Bude Canal Trust.

Bude Canal Trust Partnership – 15 March 2022

This meeting was called to update members of the partnership on the latest developments regarding the proposed transfer of the ownership of the canal from The Bude Canal Trust to the Devon Wildlife Trust. There was some discussion on the practical difficulties such as identifying the land boundaries, but the main focus was on the future role of the partnership once the transfer has taken place. As DWT may well set up a Management Advisory Group to advise on the maintenance and operation of the canal, the future of the partnership was felt to be uncertain so it may need to be dissolved. As there is no dissolution clause in the constitution, each member will have to withdraw from the partnership, and this will probably be done at the next meeting of the partnership which could be in September.

The remaining funds held by the partnership will then be transferred to DWT and ringfenced for use on the canal. It is hoped that current members of the partnership will be able to take part in the new Management Advisory Group as appropriate. The Bude Canal Trust intend to arrange a meeting with BCHS to discuss the options for the future of the Trust.

Chris Jewell

Tamara Coast to Coast Trail

For some time, the idea of a promoted walking route between the north and south coasts, following as closely as possible the line of the River Tamar, has been regarded as a desirable and potentially popular project. Now, after several years of investigating the proposal, funding has been achieved which means this project will be getting under way.

The funding will come from the National Lottery Heritage Fund as part of the “Tamara Landscape Partnership”, a wide-ranging series of projects under the auspices of the Tamar Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The walking route, the “Tamara Coast to Coast Trail”, is one of a number of projects under this Partnership, which include such measures as the monitoring and improvement of water quality, heritage apprenticeships and improvement works and promotion of local produce.

The Coast to Coast Trail, which it is hoped will be signposted, will follow the Tamar as closely as possible, and where possible on the Cornish side of the river, so that in conjunction with the South West Coast Path around the coast it will be possible to walk all around Cornwall – a “*Kylgh Kernow*” (Circuit of Cornwall). Initially, the route will follow existing public rights of way and minor county roads so that it can be established as soon as possible, with off-road improvements then sought in due course.

In North Cornwall, the route will start, or finish, at Marsland Mouth on the Devon-Cornwall border at the coast. However, because this is a remote location, walkers will be guided along the Coast Path to or from Morwenstow as the practical start or finish point, given its facilities and public transport links.

From Marsland Mouth the Coast to Coast Trail will go inland through the Marsland Nature Reserve then follow footpaths and minor roads to pass close by the source of the Tamar. The project will seek a public access to the source. Further minor roads and footpaths will then take the route to Tamar Lakes. From Upper Tamar Lake a link is proposed to Kilkhampton for its facilities, and then on to the coast at Duckpool.

The route will cross into Devon to follow the Bude Canal Aqueduct towpath to Moreton Bridge, then back into Cornwall on minor roads and footpaths past Launcells church to the top of the Hobbacott Inclined Plane.

It is then hoped the currently closed Planekeeper's Path will be followed to Cann Orchard. Another link route is planned through Marhamchurch to Helebridge and along the Canal into Bude, for its facilities, accommodation and transport links.

More minor roads and footpaths will return the route briefly into Devon, where it will pass through Bridgerule before heading back into Cornwall and continuing to North Tamerton. It will then run parallel to, and often close to, the Launceston branch of the Canal to pass its old terminus at Druyton before continuing south.

At present, there are some concerns regarding the costs of re-establishing the Planekeeper's Path and a couple of stand-by options have been proposed. One is to continue the route further along the Bude Canal Aqueduct and then follow lanes through Pyworthy to meet the preferred route approaching North Tamerton. The disadvantage of this is that it misses the historic church at Launcells, the Hobbacott incline, and the possibility of the Bude link. A better short-term option which keeps the route close to these features might be to use the public footpath parallel to the incline over Hobbacott Down and these will both be investigated and assessed.



Photo: Part of the Planekeepers Path which is now closed for safety reasons

It is proposed that the route will be accompanied by a promotional guide, combining walking directions with heritage information. Initially this is likely to be online, with a printed version possible later depending on demand and funding. It is hoped the route will be opened in 2023.

For further details see:

<https://tamaralandscapepartnership.org.uk/tamara-coast-to-coast-walk/>

The unfinished canal east of Blagdonmoor Wharf

Prior to the final approved scheme for the Bude Canal there had been a number of proposals, including the survey carried out in 1793 by the Nuttalls which involved 75 miles of waterway. Nothing came of these until James Green was commissioned to undertake another survey in 1817. His proposals had some similarity with the earlier scheme in that he envisaged several branches including a route through Dunsland to terminate at a point near Brightley Bridge, between Okehampton and Hatherleigh.¹ The full extent of his 1817 proposals might be worth exploring in a future article. The map in Bude Heritage Centre is of these 1817 proposals.

In the event, the Canal that was authorised under the 1819 Bude Harbour and Canal Act was a scaled back version of the 1817 scheme; and the canal that was actually finished fell short of even the 1819 scheme. Given covid lockdown conditions I have not been able to locate a plan of the 1819 scheme. The purpose of this article is to examine the unfinished part of the canal east of Blagdonmoor Wharf.

This branch was intended to continue to Bason Lane, Thornbury, which was as far east as it was possible to go in this direction without having to drop down into the valleys of the Rivers Waldon and Torridge. This would have involved further inclined planes and Green, in his 1817 report, did not think the extra cost was justified. The 1819 Act, therefore, also proposed the terminus of the Thornbury Branch would be at Bason Lane.

The route beyond Blagdonmoor Wharf involved a tunnel under a ridge of higher ground. There are references to work starting on the tunnel, and on the cuttings each side, and the evidence for this is examined below. Beyond that, however, there is no suggestion that any work was ever carried out. The extra length of canal to Bason Lane would have been about four miles.

The summit level of the canal from the top of Vealand incline through Stanbury Wharf at Holsworthy and on to Blagdonmoor Wharf was at around 426 feet (or 130m) above sea level. The proposed route can readily be determined by looking at larger scale maps and following the 130m contour as shown in **Figure 1**. The east end of the tunnel would have been east of Vaglefield Farm, from where the canal would have looped north towards Brendon and then Forda to cross small valleys. It would then have crossed the Holsworthy-Thornbury road north-east of Portlane Bridge.

The Portlane name has nothing to do with being the road to the Canal Wharf at Blagdonmoor. It is the road to the Port Town of Holsworthy ie the market town; the original medieval meaning of port being market. Hence Newport in Launceston, and Newport in Barnstaple, being new markets established outside the old towns. Hence also the Portreeve of Holsworthy, an office that has existed since Saxon times.

From Portlane the Canal would have followed the 130m contour south of Woodacott and Thornbury Church to terminate on Bason Lane, about 600m east of Thornbury Church. Coincidentally, this would have taken it within 500m or so of the house I was born and brought up in. The contour-following four mile extension would not have involved any substantial engineering works apart from the tunnel and its approach cuttings.

At Bason Lane the terminus would have been adjacent to the road which runs from Thornbury to Bradford and onwards to Black Torrington; in the other direction the road would be used to get to Shebbear. The terminus would, therefore, have been able to supply sea sand to a wide area. Just to the east of the terminus there used to be small farm called Bason Close, although there is nothing there now. When I was young, in the 1950s, the house and farm buildings were still standing although unoccupied. Just below this, in the meadows beside the River Waldon, my father used to take us collecting hazelnuts; he called the area Tibb Yeo although I cannot find that name on any modern maps. A form of it does occur in the Tithe Apportionments that accompanied the Thornbury Tithe Map of 1840; plot no 74, a meadow forming an island between the River Waldon and the leat for Bradford Mill, and part of Bason Close Farm, is called Tibeo.²

But I digress. Let's return to the tunnel. Supervision of the canal construction was overseen by the Canal Company's Inspector and records made in a journal. The journal for the period 19 October 1820 to 11 January 1822 still exists and most of the entries were made by John Panchen (whose biography has featured in *The Tub Boat* previously, Summer 2020). Construction had actually started on 23 July 1819 (the date celebrated in the bi-centenary in 2019) and continued until 1825 so these records cover much of the early construction period. From the journal it is clear that work was proceeding at the same time at many points along the canal and this includes several references to the tunnel and its approach cuttings.³

On 4 November 1820 the journal records '....another party [of men] at the eastern part of the Tunnel.....'; on 18 November 1820 '.....parties working in Pancrasweeke valley and the Tunnel'; on 26 December 1820 '.....deep cutting each end of the Tunnel but not finished. Canal cut from west end of Tunnel say one mile or within 300 yds of the road near Stanbury Cross'. On 27 January 1821 there is a reference to 17 men working at the tunnel and another 9 there digging clay for bricks; there does not seem to be any subsequent references to work at the tunnel site. In May 1821 the Canal Committee, having worries about the costs being incurred, suspended work on the line to Thornbury.

The cutting at the west end of the tunnel, north-east of Blagdonmoor Wharf, was substantially completed, as can be seen by the marshy excavation shown on the 1st edition Ordnance Survey map surveyed in 1884 (**Figure 2**). The cutting is still there, overgrown with trees. Its intended depth would have been about 20 feet or 6m.

Assuming that the cutting at the eastern end was intended to be a similar depth then the length of the tunnel would have been just under half a mile, or 750m. The maximum depth below ground level would have been about 50 feet or 15m. It is intriguing to speculate whether any work was done on the tunnel itself. The references quoted above may refer to the cuttings on each side but they could just as easily refer to some work on the tunnel. If any work was started on the tunnel it wouldn't be the only unfinished tunnel in the south-west; at Coleford on the Dorset & Somerset Canal the tunnel construction was well under way when the project was abandoned.

At the east end of the tunnel, according to the inspector's journal entries above, there was also a deep cutting under construction. Clearly the intention was to dig the tunnel from both ends. The cutting excavation at the east end of the tunnel is not so clear on old Ordnance Survey maps but is contained within plot 587 on the 1st edition 1/2500 map shown in **Figure 3**. The location of this end of the tunnel was determined by the valley of a small stream which reduced the length of the tunnel to the minimum. On modern maps the excavations are marked by two small ponds and can be seen as a wooded depression on Google Maps. Joan Rendell, in 1979, described it as a deep overgrown pit and a short length of cutting.⁴

Further east the field boundary of plot 609 roughly follows the curve of the 130m contour whereas most field boundaries in the area are straight. Could this boundary be a relic of the start of further canal works? I looked at the Cookbury Parish Tithe Map and Apportionment of 1843⁵ (**Figure 4**) to see if field names or boundaries shed any further light on the amount of canal work in this area.

The canal cutting is plot 28 and is simply called 'Copse'. Plot 16 is called 'Homer Redda Marsh', plot 17 is called 'Furze Brake', and plot 18 is called 'Redda Marsh'. So some 20 years after the abortive start of canal construction the works had not produced any significant lasting field names.

Would the four mile extension to Thornbury have been worthwhile in business terms? It seems unlikely. The costs of completing the tunnel and the four miles of canal, albeit without any additional significant engineering works, would have been substantial. The canal terminus would have been more convenient for distribution of sea sand to Thornbury, Bradford, Shebbear and places beyond. On the other hand the extra three miles by road is direct, does not have steep gradients, and would not have been a major deterrent to farmers coming to collect their sand by horse and cart.

On balance it looks to have been a wise decision when the Canal Committee decided in 1821 not to complete the Thornbury line, and so the Morwellham Down tunnel on the Tavistock Canal remained the only canal tunnel in Devon and Cornwall.

Peter Daniel

References

1. For a fuller account of the background of the Canal see Helen Harris & Monica Ellis, *The Bude Canal*, 1972, Chapter 1
2. www.devon.gov.uk/historicenvironment/tithe-map/thornbury/
3. Helen Harris & Monica Ellis, *The Bude Canal*, 1972, Chapter 2, p39-40
4. Joan Rendell, *Along the Bude Canal*, 1979, p40
5. www.devon.gov.uk/historicenvironment/tithe-map/cookbury/

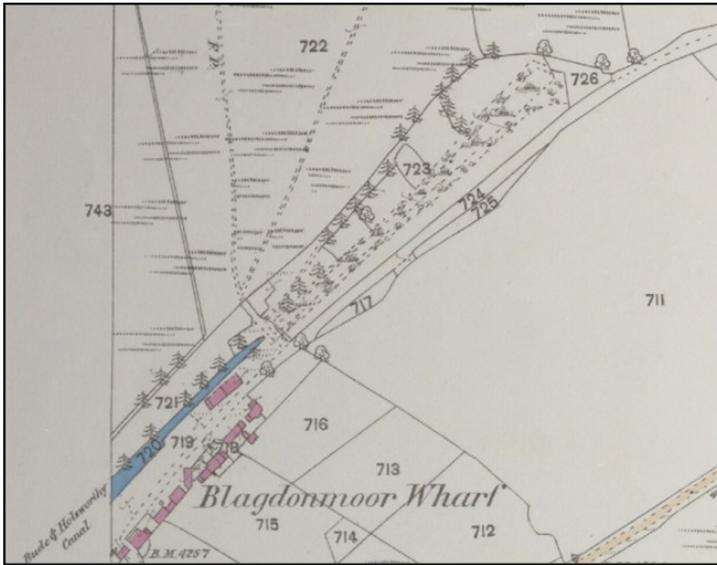


Figure 2. Blagdonmoor Wharf on the 1/2500 scale Ordnance Survey map of 1884. The cutting approaching the tunnel is shown running north-eastwards from the end of the canal (courtesy National Library of Scotland)

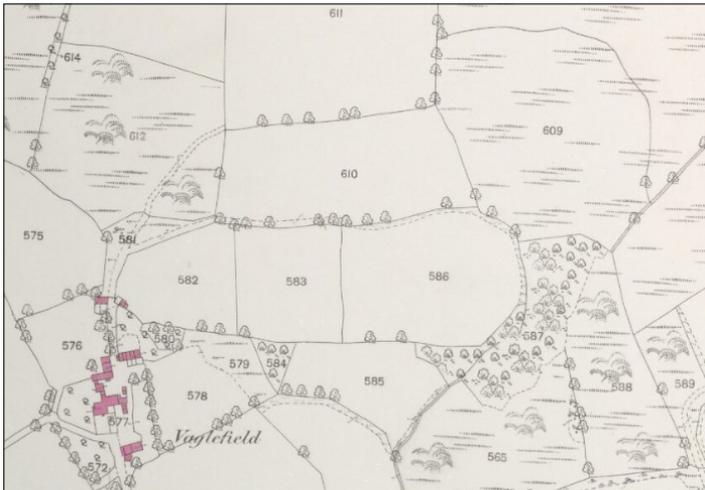


Figure 3. The east end of the tunnel as shown on the 1/2500 scale Ordnance Survey map of 1884. The east end of the tunnel would have been in plot 587 and close examination shows indication of a cutting at the western side of the plot (courtesy National Library of Scotland).



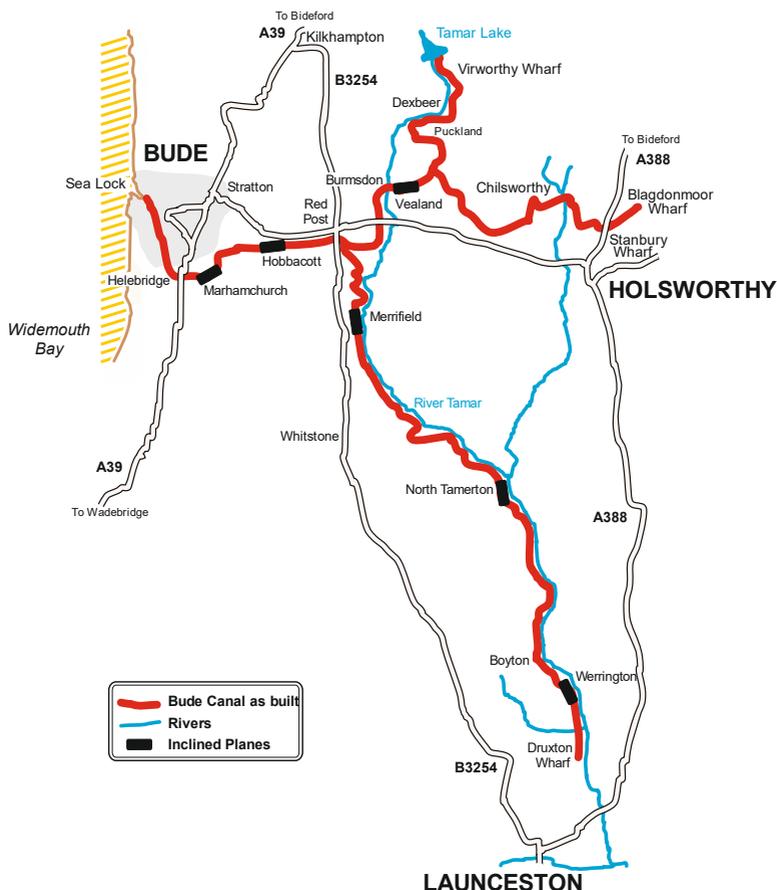
Figure 4. Extract from the Cookbury Tithe Map of 1843. The canal cutting and tunnel entrance would have been in plot 28. Note the curved eastern boundary of plots 16 and 17 following the contours (map courtesy Devon County Council, Historic Environment website).



Figure 5. Blagdonmoor Wharf as it was in September 1987 when the warehouse building still had a roof. The canal basin was to the left of the warehouse. The start of the unfinished cutting was beyond the warehouse (picture P. Daniel).

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