



The **R**oile **C**anal
& Northern Devon
Waterways Society

SOCIETY NEWS & VIEWS

SUMMER ISSUE

August 2016

CONTENTS

COMMENTS FROM THE CHAIR	Page 4
WALL BUILDING AT SEA LOCK	6
Adrian Wills reports on the wing wall reconstruction at the mouth of Lord Rolle's Canal	
MAKING SENSE OF A MESS	13
Ian Harrison describes volunteers' activities at the head of Lord Rolle's Canal at RHS Rosemoor	
THINKING OUTSIDE OF THE BOX	17
Norman Richards provides an insight to an extraordinary engineer	
MORE THAN JUST CLAY	21
Adrian Wills receives a significant but humble present	
THE COST OF MOVING SAND	25
Chris Jewell uncovers some fascinating data about the sand trade on the Bude Canal	
LAST WALK OF THE YEAR	32
Helen Drake describes a walk in the woods	
WHAT WAS GOING ON!	35
Newspaper articles from the past	

Front cover illustration:

Norman Richards, our Archives Officer, on his beautifully restored Massey Ferguson 35 Tractor

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Already there is a definite autumnal feel in the air and, once again, we have come to the end of this year's programme of guided walks along sections of Lord Rolle's Canal: as always led with great knowledge and dedication by Chris' Hassall. However, our commitment to promoting the canal is far from over.

The work to create a diversion around the collapsed section of the towpath behind Beam House by a small group of volunteers, orchestrated by 'Tony Barnes, is complete, the path reopened to the general public and is an ever-increasingly popular attraction of the Tarka Trail.

Rolle Canal & Northern Devon Waterways Society volunteers working on the head of the canal at RHS Rosemoor, led by Ian Harrison, are making tremendous progress and the RC&NDWS committee is in the process of formulating a long term development plan which we can offer to the administrative body of Rosemoor in order to take this project further.

RHS Rosemoor has always been very supportive of our society. It allows us the use of its lecture room for our AGMs and access to its grounds in order that we might view the leat and lime kiln areas as well as permitting us to work on the canal basin within its ownership, not only free of charge but with a large measure of practical assistance. This is invaluable support for which we are very grateful and bodes well for our future plans.

The course of the canal increases to attract and fascinate members of the general public and the site of the wheel pit and inclined plane is certainly a popular place for visitors to stop and investigate this feature. Unfortunately 'Mother Nature' cares

little for the works of man and rapidly reclaims her own with a wide variety of fast-growing plant life. Much work has been undertaken by our volunteers here to keep the site clear and visible but not without considerable effort. This is, of course, an on-going problem.

Reconstructive work at Sea Lock has been somewhat spasmodic for a while but has restarted with a vengeance. The outer, western wing wall is undergoing a facelift. Much of the wall had been removed / demolished / collapsed (?) but is now growing well, hampered only by time and the changing levels of the tides.

The various tasks worked on in the name of the RC&NDWS are all undertaken by volunteers. You might be forgiven to think that there are hundreds of them but that is far from the truth. I am not going to name them all but essentially the total number of people within our volunteer work force is only about 10 excluding your committee. These volunteers cheerfully donate a huge amount of time and effort, and without them the resurrection of Lord Rolle's Canal would be severely limited and desperately slow.

Since its inauguration in 2003, the RC&NDWS has made huge strides forward towards achieving its stated aims and with the continued help of these volunteers and organisations such as RHS Rosemoor, the IWA and hopefully more new faces then we can look forward to greater things to come!

Adrian Wills

(H)Adrian's Wall?

With apologies to the Emperor!

For various reasons there has been something of a lull in rebuilding operations on the site of Lord Rolle's Sea Lock over the past few months. Despite acquiring a 10 ton load of facing stone from Beam Quarry, thanks to a donation of funds from IWA (West Country Branch) topped up by the RC&NDWS, and the accumulation of a quantity of recycled concrete blocks and bricks, there has been a lack of actual construction for quite some time.

I had been quite concerned about the poor state of the western wing wall for a long time. Much of it had collapsed or been demolished and what was still standing was suffering from the lime mortar being washed out; many stones were very loose, insecure and a very large section of wall was bulging out quite dangerously.



The western wing wall at the mouth of Lord Rolle's Canal in July 2012 showing the start of some repair to the inner skin.

In order to bring about repairs, this section would require the erection of scaffolding and this was far from straight-forward. One solution to the scaffolding problem was to construct a short section which could be craned into place in such a way as to have the vertical poles, (the standards) stuck in the silt but the platform still suspended securely from the RB22.

Ironically a platform of scaffold upon which builders stand is called a 'lift'. So Trevor and I set about fabricating a scaffold lift which we could lift (as well as lower!). The section of wall to be rebuilt needed to be power-washed to remove years of silt and debris build-up as well as to clean out the joints between the stones which would then require refilling. In some cases it may have been prudent to remove all the loose stones and rebuild from a sound basis but how much to take down was in itself a problem. The rising tides weren't helping either as the picture below shows.



Power-washing the wing wall, as if it isn't wet enough already!

Having constructed the lift and lowered it into the required spot in the mouth of the lock chamber, we then discovered that trying to get building blocks and mortar down to the platform was going to be extremely difficult, potentially dangerous and quite laborious due to being only able to move very small quantities at a time.

I talked this problem through with Mike Chambers which he overcame for me by using a spare section of lattice boom from the Priestman Cub, a length of scaffold tube and a few pulleys to produce an overhead gantry. A pulley ran out and back along the length of the scaffold pole which was suspended on one end of the vertically held boom section and the other locked into the block hook of the crane which was supporting the lift. From the top pulley another set of pulleys was attached which allowed a bucket or basket to be raised or lowered safely and completely under control anywhere along the length of the pole. It works brilliantly!

Now that a safe working environment had been established, and after some deliberation, I decided that it was good enough to just give the wall a thorough blasting with the pressure washer, push any loose stones as far back into place as I could and then re-mortar the joints around them. Another 2 problems then arose!

In the past I have used a mixture of cement, lime and coarse sea-sand when bedding or repointing stones. Taking my trailer to my usual supplier of coarse sand, I was somewhat dismayed to discover that it is no longer available since the Environment Agency has placed an embargo on its dredging. Apparently the banks from where it is usually extracted are becoming seriously depleted. The recommended alternative to coarse sea-sand is grit-sand which is a by-product of the granite quarrying industry. Much of this is imported from Cornwall.

When buying any construction materials I now make a point of carefully comparing prices from different builders merchants. It is just as well I did when researching suppliers of grit-sand!

One of the companies with which I have had a trade account for nearly 40 years, wanted £42 per dumpy bag, which contains approximately 850 Kg (1000Kg to the metric ton) whereas another company from where I actually got the sand, admittedly I had to collect it loose in my trailer as opposed to the conveniently delivered dumpy bag, was £20 per ton. *So not much difference then?!* I hate to think of how much money I have wasted in the past by purchasing sand and gravel in dumpy bags rather than collecting it myself in my trailer. But, 'you live and learn', as the old saying goes.

The second problem regarding rebuilding this section of wall is the tides. Being at the mouth of the canal and very low down where the work was needed, it is often inundated by even small tides. To solve the problem of new mortar washing out of joints before it had set properly I decided to use hydraulic lime in the mortar mix as opposed to standard builders hydrated lime. Hydraulic lime sets rapidly even underwater where as standard lime requires the presence of carbon dioxide to set. It will eventually set underwater but much more slowly than the hydraulic stuff. An article about the idiosyncrasies of lime mortar can be found in the Winter Issue February 2011 RC&NDWS newsletter.

The prices asked for hydraulic lime, like that of sand, vary dramatically but a source of reasonably priced material was found and a few bags were duly collected from a local supplier. (The manufacturer is a French company!)

Once the power-washed section of wall had been given sufficient time to drain and dry, Trevor and I started the long

process of repointing and rebuilding. The work is progressing well and its extent is quite evident due to the whiteness and brightness of the new mortar mix. This will, of course, soon dull down with age, and exposure to the elements. Certainly the lower sections are already becoming the same brown / grey colour as the older sections simply due to staining from the silt in the river water.



Rebuilding the inner skin of the wall with reclaimed concrete blocks and back-filling lost ground

Not only has the face of the wing wall been subject to work so has the back. In order to provide a better working foundation, Trevor and I have been rebuilding the back of the wall where it had been radically reduced, to re-establish the curve of the wall and the working level of the wharf side. A stone built wharf wall

is effectively 2 skins. The outer being what is on show and the inner skin which is often quite roughly constructed and retains the raised ground level. The space between the 2 skins is a mixture of 'ugly' stones and bricks. For quite some time I have been stockpiling reclaimed concrete blocks and bricks for the sole purpose of rebuilding the back of the wall. The good stone facing skin can be built later and infilled accordingly.



Work in progress on the western wing wall. Above shows the face being rebuilt. The following picture shows the rear of the wall coming up and re-establishing the curve.

Working with stone is very satisfying but challenging because of the irregular shapes and sizes. Laying concrete blocks on the other hand, in this instance flat rather than on edge, is also very satisfying, creates a good, strong retaining wall and is so much quicker!

Another problem we frequently discuss, is that neither Trevor nor I are getting any younger (now there's a surprise!) and we both tend to forget (among many other things, just ask the wives!) that concrete blocks and buckets of mortar are jolly heavy and just how physically demanding wall building is.

Still it keeps us out of trouble!

The wall, both inner and outer skins, is growing significantly and the efforts of our labour are quite apparent. There is of course, still much to do and my stock pile of usable reclaimed blocks, facing stone and even infill is rapidly being depleted.

The search is on!



The outer or western wing wall as it is today.

ROSEMOOR PROJECT PROGRESSING WELL

The RC&NDWS, with the support of RHS Rosemoor, is working on the restoration of the terminus basin of the Rolle Canal. Work commenced in November 2015 and there have been weekly working parties since then. A number of new recruits came forward in the early days who have been the mainstay of the working parties – thanks especially to them and everybody who has helped to get us this far.

When we started the canal bed was totally obscured by vegetation, trees, soil and rubble as seen in the picture below.



Work commenced by removing large amounts of scrub which allowed us to dig to find the edge of the canal bed. Fortunately a wall forming the edge of the basin was found to be largely insitu albeit in poor condition.

All our work has been carried out by hand but Rosemoor have been really helpful in removing material that we have dug out with a mini-excavator they allocated to us for a short time.



Once we had defined the walls of the basin, it became apparent that a number of larger trees would need to be removed mechanically. This exercise would be complicated by overhead power cables running close by but again Rosemoor came up trumps and removed the trees during a power outage while they had a new generator installed. This really opened up the site. Trees, mostly sycamores seem to have a propensity to grow immediately above, below and within the basin walls so lots of energy has been expended in carefully digging these out without further damaging the masonry.

As spring turned into summer we have had to control the vegetation growth and one week concentrated in destroying Himalayan Balsam before it flowered and set seed.

Working parties take place on Wednesday mornings. Anyone who can lend a hand would be very welcome - you certainly do not need to come every week.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you need any info.

Ian Harrison

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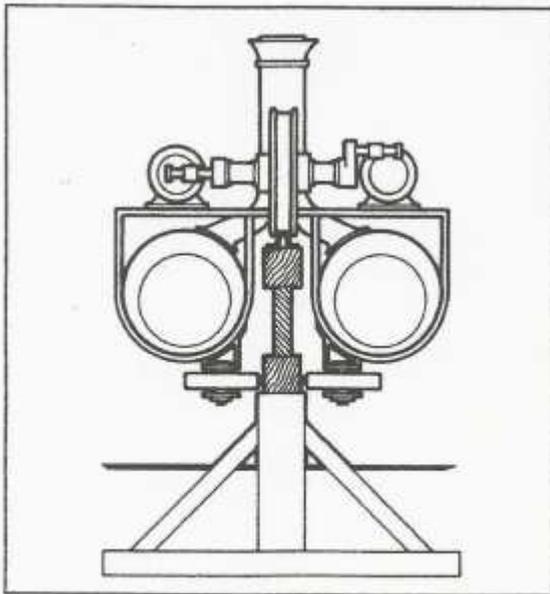




RC&NDWS volunteers at RHS
Rosemoor clearing invasive
vegetation and removing tree
stumps from the canal basin.

JOHN BARRACLOUGH FELL (1815 - 1902)

Engineer and pioneering lightweight railway builder. Born in London in 1815, his family were living in the Lake District by the 1840's where he became involved with the Parkhouse Mineral Railway. Originally he built a mono-rail system, for which he became famous but the carrying capacity was uneconomic. This was replaced by two close-coupled rails at eight inches apart acting as one. The boilers were hung either side in a pannier style with the cylinders and driving mechanism above. Below the boilers were horizontal wheels either side of the rail to keep the engine upright and also applied to the carriages or wagons. These dual rails were in fact narrow gauge but often seem to be referred to as a monorail.

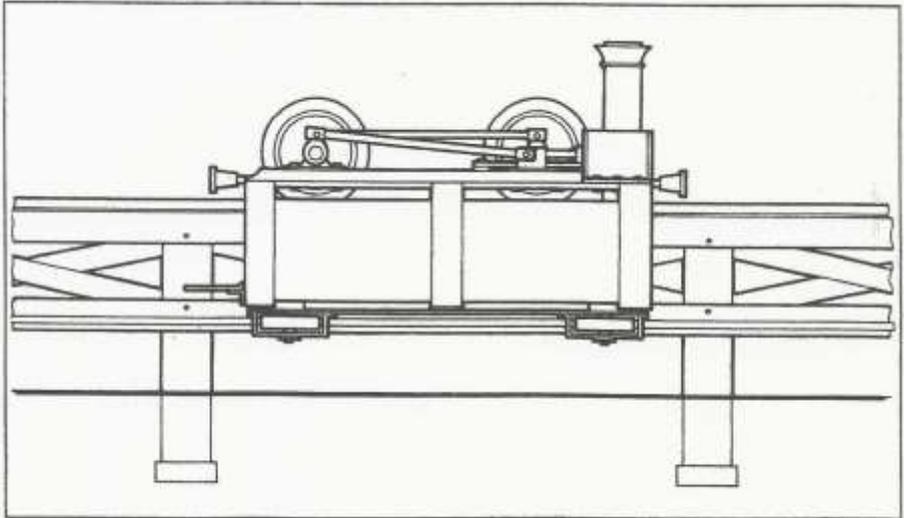


THE MONORAIL LOCOMOTIVE
from patent number 766 of 1868

J. B. Fell's idea was to produce a rail system that was lightweight, cheap to build and could be erected without huge earthworks. The latter being overcome by erecting trestle type viaducts, which could vary in height from about 10 to 40 feet to keep a level contour.

From about 1840 he was designing and patenting

improvements to his engines and viaducts, during the Victorian rail building period. His inventions were put to use in the Mont Cenis Pass to improve transport from France to Italy through the Alps. His expertise was put to building railways in Brazil, New Zealand and the Isle of Man. The latter being still in use, but the others were later superseded.



THE MONORAIL LOCOMOTIVE from patent number 766 of 1868

The war office and the army were interested in his designs, as they were portable and he gave many talks to interested bodies with reference to their particular circumstances. Many people supported his ideas but some claimed them to be unworkable.

In the 1860 to 70's he did a lot of work and built a prototype system at Aldershot for the war office, with more patents being taken out. In 1873 he built, or rather improved, the trackway for the Pentewan Tramway, being previously hauled by horses.

Pentewan is more or less south of St. Austell and has its own harbour including a till existing sea-lock and gates although badly silted up.

An interesting point here is that he built a wooden trestle viaduct along the harbour wall so that the wagons could side-tip their loads of china clay straight into the ships hold. The above mentioned trestle viaduct is now a wall, but some of the wooden structure can still be seen.

The year 1880 saw the start of the Torrington and Marland Railway, which ran from Torrington station to Peters Marland clay works. J. B. Fell was both designer and engineer of this six mile long line with its steady incline up to Yard Cottages. The main works was the trestle viaduct over the River Torridge with the trestles being prefabricated on site.



A train of clay trucks crossing the Torrington viaduct heading towards Peters Marland. Circa 1920

There were ten viaducts along its length carrying the track of 3 feet gauge. The viaduct over the river and valley was 266 yards in length and up to 40 feet in height. The viaduct, when tested,

could carry 50 tons. Three engines weighed approximately 9 tons apiece so was well within the viaduct's carrying capacity. The line cost £2,400 per mile and was considered economically viable. It opened on February 5th.1881 with Government dignities and a Chinese delegation present.

1925 saw the end of nearly 45 years of operation when the main line was cut through to Halwill Junction. The wooden trestle viaduct was replaced and realigned by the present steel one which today is part of the Tarka Trail from Torrington Station to Peters Marland but originating from Mr. Fells' Torrington & Marland Railway.

By this time the single rail idea had lost support and became forgotten in the 'mists of time', but the good news is that a lot of his material and drawings have survived likewise local photographs as can be seen in the Rolle Canal archives, during illustrated talks and displays or in reality on some of our guided walks.

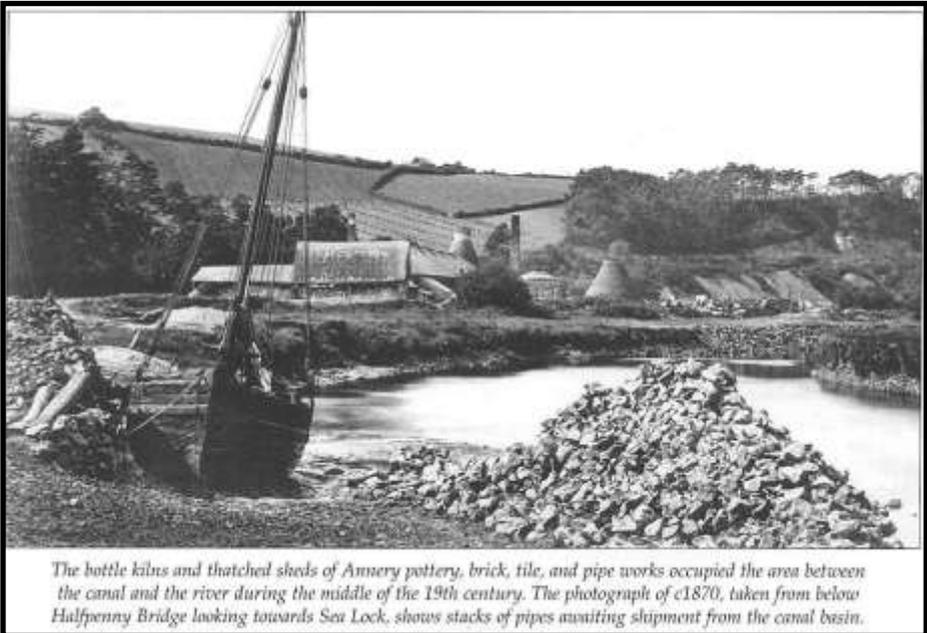
This article is researched from various sources and I hope gives a brief but informative insight to the engineering genius of John Barraclough Fell

Norman Richards

2nd Aug. 2016.

RELICS FROM A PAST INDUSTRY

The North Devon Pottery Company was once a major supplier of salt-glazed wares that were predominantly used for land and sewage draining. The photograph below, thought to be taken by Francis Frith, shows the site of this company to be quite substantial.



Situated adjacent to Lord Rolle's Canal and less than ½mile from its entrance at Sea Lock, today there is nothing remaining to show that it ever existed. This site has reverted to riverside meadow and was until recently used for summer beef-cattle grazing.

This meadow is part of a larger plot of land which is now subject to a Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries set-aside scheme and grazing is no longer permitted on it.

However, grass, nettles and thistles continue to grow and flourish on this small piece of land and a measure of mowing is required to control them.

The cover picture of this newsletter shows Norman Richards (our Archives Officer) sat upon his beautifully restored Massey Ferguson 35 Tractor, towing a vintage finger-bar mower. Norman had kindly volunteered to mow the field and along the edges of the towpath for me which meant driving his machine all the way from his home in South Moulton along the main road, a journey which took the best part of an hour and a half.



Norman mowing the field just about where the bottle kilns would have stood. (See previous picture)

When guiding visitors on walks from Annery Kiln to the Sea Lock site, I invariably make comment about the North Devon Pottery Company and the fact that nothing remains of it.

I believe that most of the buildings were demolished in the 1960's and since then I have infilled the depression where they once stood with dredgings from the canal. Mother Nature set about reclaiming her own, and what was once a significant industrial site is now a pastoral (excuse the unintentional pun) idyll.

Following a visit to Sea Lock from some members of Torrington History Group I received a telephone call from Sue Scrutton, author of 'Lord Rolle's Canal' published in 2006, who had been on the walk, asking if she could call on me. A date was arranged and she duly appeared carrier bag in hand!

She was in the process of trying to minimise her personal collection of books and artefacts and thought I might like to add to my collection of bits and pieces, that she had in her bag.



She produced a 'Barley Sugar' edging tile such as could once be found along garden paths and the borders of flower beds in countless homes and parks across the country.

Highly fashionable during the Victorian era, today most of the tiles have been grubbed up and destroyed despite being most attractive.

This particular salt-glazed tile proudly bears the name, *North Devon Pottery*, despite being stamped into the clay upside down!. I was very pleased to accept this donation!

Another artefact belonging to Sue which came from the pottery, is a small figurine, standing about 6 inches (150mm) tall of a 'navvy', also made of salt-glazed clay. Although the pottery specialized in industrial usage wares, it did produce some fine wares and examples of these were displayed at the Great Exhibition of 1851 in the Crystal Palace, London.

The 'navvy', seen below is however rather crudely made and I suspect was the product of a potter during a spare moment rather than an item for sale but I may well be wrong. Although not exactly handsome, he's a nice little 'chap' either way!



BUDE CANAL

TUB BOATS, BARGES & THE SAND TRADE

The Bude Canal was built between 1819 and 1825 by James Green for the Bude Harbour & Canal Company. The main purposes were to transport mainly the lime-rich sand from Bude beach into the hinterland of North Cornwall and West Devon, also to provide a 'safe haven' for coastal trading vessels. Both were achieved.

The canal as built had a total length of 35½miles. The 2 miles of broad canal from the sea to Helebridge basin was used by tub boats and larger barges. The remaining 33½ miles of waterway was a 'tub boat' canal being narrower and shallower. The tub boats were on wheels to traverse the 6 inclines along the tub boat canal.

The following was taken from a hand-written notebook – '*Bude canal works information 1830 – 1843*'. The author is not known but was obviously an officer of the company.

Dimensions of Boats & Barges

Barges

Average length 50 feet, breadth in the middle 14feet, breadth at each end 12 feet, depth 4 feet in the middle and 4 feet 4 inches at each end

Note: if a barge is more than 14 feet wide it will not pass the locks.

Boats

Average length 20 feet, Breadth 5 feet 6 inches, Depth 2 feet 10 inches

Draught of water of the boats and barges trading on the Bude Canal

Boats

An empty boat draws about 6 inches of water. When loaded with its proper cargo of 4 tons it draws 22 inches – that is 6 inches for the boat and 16 inches for the cargo.

Barges

An empty barge draws about 7½ inches of water. When loaded with a cargo of 45 tons, it draws 37½ inches, which is 7½ inches for the barge and 30 inches for the cargo.

Note: Every inch that a barge is loaded shallower or deeper makes 1½ tons difference in the cargo. For, if a barge is loaded with a cargo of 42 tons, it will draw out 35½ inches of water.

Length and Rise of the Planes belonging to the Bude Canal:

Plane	Length		Rise		No. of Rollers
	Feet	Ins.	Feet	Ins.	
Marhamchurch	836	1	119	8	89
Hobbacott	935	0	225	0	177
Merrifield	361	0	63	0	26
Tamerton	365	0	58	10	27
Werrington	259	8	51	2	15
Vealand	514	8	58	5	41

Total length of all the planes = 3271ft 5 ins or ½mile, 1 furlong, 28 poles, 3 yards.

The sand at Bude had a high content of carbonate of lime being 70 parts per 100, with 20 parts of muriate (chloride) of soda and 10 parts of silicon and other matter which made it ideal for improving the heavy clay soils in the surrounding area.

Sand was measured in 'Seams'. A Seam was 2½ cwts (hundredweights) or 280 lbs (pounds). Thus 8 seams = 1 ton (20 cwt = 1 ton Imperial measures). A tub boat normally carried 4 tons or 32 Seams. A 'train' of tub boats was usually 4 boats. Boats and barges were towed by horse.

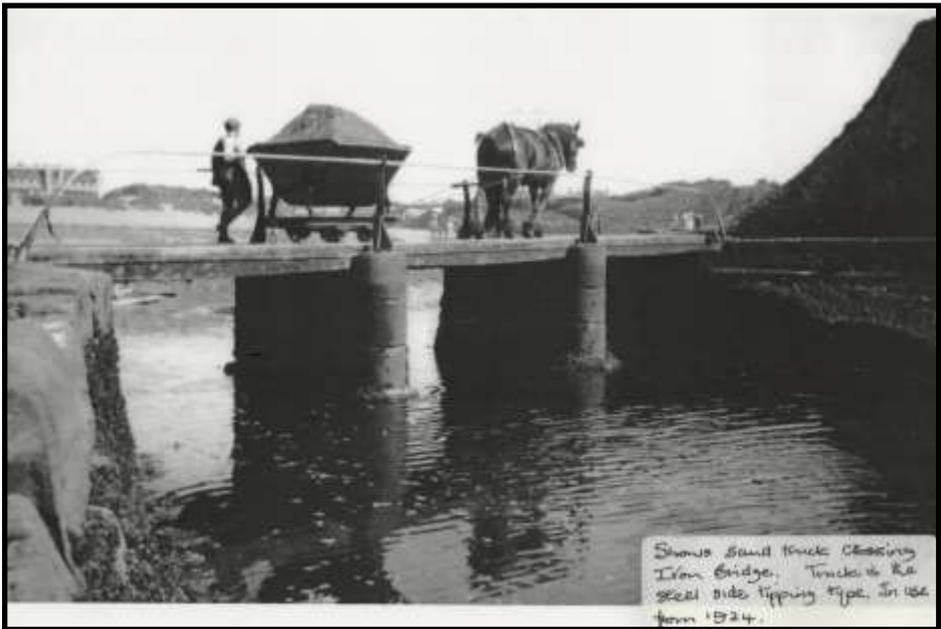
No. of boats and Barges belonging to each Trader

April 1836

Messrs. King & Co.	8 Barges	108 Boats
Messrs. Ham & Co.	4 Barges	65 Boats
Messrs. Gubbins & Co.	3 Barges	30 Boats
<u>Messrs. Hamer & Co.</u>	<u>1Barge</u>	<u>13 Boats</u>
Total no. of vessels	16 Barges	216 Boats

The sand was conveyed to the canal from the beach by a tram road in wagons pulled by a horse. The wagons then tipped the sand directly into the 'tub boat' or 'barge'. The total number of horses and wagons using the sand tram road per year is shown below:

Year	Horses	Wagons	Horses	Wagons
			(average per month)	
1835	2,577	3,426	215	286
1836	3,042	4,144	254	345
1841	2,672	3,608	223	301



Price of sand at Principal Wharfs

Location	Price in pence (d) per seam
1* Druyton	6½
Boyton	5½
Tamerton	4¾
Little Bridge	3½
Stanbury Cross	4¾
2* Blagdon Moor	5

1* Druyton being the terminus on the Launceston arm

2* Blagdon being the terminus on the Holsworthy / main line

Thus a tub boat carrying 4 tons or 32 seams of beach sand for Druyton, should make $32 \times 6\frac{1}{2}d = \text{£}0. 17s. 4d.$ for the whole load.

**Number of tons passed over Hobbacott from 1st April 1835
to 31st March 1836**

Cargo	Tons
Sand	36,574
Coal	2,342
Culm	487
Timber	79
Lime	8
<u>Iron</u>	<u>6</u>
Total	39,496

It takes about 7 tons 12cwt & 1qtr to raise one ton of cargo above Marhamchurch Plane. Since 39,496 tons were taken over Marhamchurch and Hobbacott Planes in the period mentioned above, the quantity of water consumed to raise the same amount is about 300,848 tons.

(Source – BSTC – Handwritten note book from Bude Harbour & Canal Company).

**Number of tons of Coal & Culm carried from 1st January to
31st December 1836**

		Coal/tons	Culm/tons
Lanson Arm	Druyton Wharf	1230½	257
	Eggborough Bridge	0	458½
	Tamerton Wharf	60	35
	Boyton Wharf	4	2

Little Bridge	56	0
Newcott Bridge	<u>4</u>	<u>0</u>
Totals	1345½	752½

Holsworthy Arm	Stanbury Cross	488	0
	<u>Blagdon</u>	<u>108</u>	<u>140</u>
	Totals	596	140

Totals of both arms 1950½ 892½

(Source – BSTC – Handwritten note book from Bude Harbour & Canal Company).

Number of tons of sand carried to the public wharfs by each trader from 1st January to 31st December 1836

Public wharfs	Traders			
	Messrs King & Co	Ham & Co	Gubbin & Co	Adams & Co
Druyton	2175	1079	1155	368
Tamerton	1804	5592	1268	312
Blagdon Moor	2872	3460	1416	0
Stanbury X	2937	4	72	0
Little Bridge	1718	0	0	0
Boyton	48	108	1855	0
Virworthy Wharf	72	1868	0	360
Tamer Town	272	0	204	16
<u>Anderton Wharf</u>	<u>192</u>	<u>96</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>168</u>
Total/trader	12090	12207	6030	31551

(Source – BSTC – Handwritten note from Bude Harbour & Canal Co.)

Amount of tolls for three years

	£	s	d
From April 1 st 1833 to March 1834	3,176	13	11
From April 1 st 1834 to March 1835	3,616	19	8¾
From April 1 st 1835 to March 1836	<u>2,660</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>4¼</u>
Total	9.453	16	0

Average amount of tolls for the last 3 years up to March 31st
1836 = £3,151 5s 4d

The sand trade continued on the canal until the 1890's. The coastal vessels used sand as ballast if not taking an 'export cargo' from Bude and they were allowed to take this free. The last vessel to do this was during the 1930's. There was some sand loaded into railway wagons after the branch line was extended onto the lower wharf in 1907. A special ramp was constructed to facilitate this operation. The sand being collected for distribution from railway goods yards rather than the Principle wharfs on the canal system. Apart from the arrival of the railway in 1898 the sand trade was being affected by general improvements in the availability of other fertilizers from imported guano and artificial fertilizers.

Research and article by Chris' Jewell

Rolle Canal Society walk through Rosemoor

We met at the entrance to the shady parking area on the Rosemoor Estate and walked through the woods to access a part of the estate that is generally closed to the public. The area that we were walking through was formerly Larch wood but following the Larch disease that hit the area a few years ago, the trees had to be removed. New hard wood trees have been planted in their place and the area has been allowed to return to a more natural landscape, with ferns in abundance but also heather, campion and other native wild flowering species. Our guide, Chris' Hassall, told us that the area was home to deer, rabbits and badgers, sadly we didn't see any but I imagine there were many pairs of eyes on us as we walked the track.

The track down to Darkham Weir, which is the location of the start of the leat that fed the Rolle Canal, was a steep stony path. We made it down in quick time though and reached the weir, which was absolutely beautiful and a real privilege to see as it is generally out of bounds for the public. The leat itself was easy to identify even though the level of it has changed significantly due to silt washing in from the river in the winter.

Then it was half way back up the steep hill to a crossroads where we took a left turn through a meadow path. Here we walked alongside what remains of the larch forest. We were told that whilst we could follow the leat itself it was better to make our way along this path and follow the valley. The path did become muddy at times and we spotted lots of infant frogs, about an inch long, making their way through the various puddles and crossing the path generally; hopefully.

We then came to the end of the leat and the location of an old tucking mill situated just before what is now Orford Mill. Chris

explained the history of tucking mills to us all and also some of the background to the area. We had no idea that Rosemoor came by its name from the original Rowe's Moor, i.e. it was originally a moor that belonged to Mr or Mrs Rowe! From this point also, there was a particularly spectacular view of the River Torridge.



We then took a right turn and came to the Lime Kilns and the canal itself. We were astounded at the amount of restoration work that has been done to the canal and the Kilns; we were able to walk into one of the kilns which was absolutely fascinating. The plan to see that part of the canal eventually full of water is admirable and we are looking forward to it coming to fruition. The width of the canal itself at this point, was a surprise.

Considering the size of the replica tub boats that are located in the canal where we live at Sea Lock Barn, it must have taken some serious manoeuvring to *swing them around at the end.

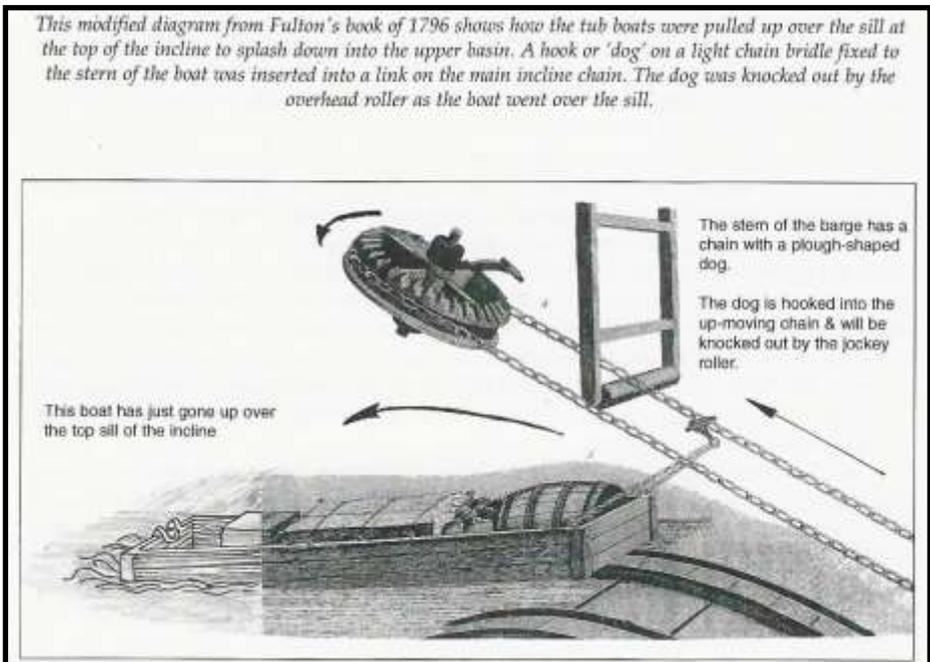
All in all we had a thoroughly enjoyable afternoon much helped by a very informative guide; well done Chris'!

HELEN DRAKE

*Editor's note.

A train of tub boats had to be turned through 180° at each end of the canal. The lead boat has a very obvious bow and stern but the butty boats despite being rectangular 'boxes' also have a front and back end. Getting them the right way round was important when it came to negotiating the inclined plane due to the way in which they were attached to the continuous chain that raised and lowered them. The illustration below, taken from Barry Hughes' book, '*Rolle Canal & The North Devon Limestone Trade*', explains how this was achieved.

This modified diagram from Fulton's book of 1796 shows how the tub boats were pulled up over the sill at the top of the incline to splash down into the upper basin. A hook or 'dog' on a light chain bridle fixed to the stern of the boat was inserted into a link on the main incline chain. The dog was knocked out by the overhead roller as the boat went over the sill.



BLASTS FROM THE PAST!

A look at some old newspaper reports.

Quite some time ago I was given copies of some newspaper extracts from Peter Blackaby of the North Devon Family History Group, who had unearthed them when researching archives for a particular family name.

The person Peter was researching had connections with the Rolle Canal and as a result he found a wealth of information about the workings of the canal and the lives of the people connected to it. Quite coincidentally Michael Morgan has recently been publishing on the Rolle Canal Society Facebook page similar extracts that he has found.

The language, spelling, punctuation and descriptions used in these reports makes for fascinating reading and I unashamedly plagiarize them for this and forth-coming RC&NDWS newsletters:

North Devon Journal 25th June 1857

TORRINGTON

Drowned in the Canal – Thomas Smith, an aged man of Halls Pill, in the parish of Wear Gifford, was drowned on Friday last, in the basin of the Rolle’s Canal in the parish of Landcross. The deceased had been home to supper and was returned to the lighter with a basket containing his food for the next day. On his approach to the water he asked his fellow boatman if he were going to turn in? which was answered in the affirmative. The latter was in the cuddy preparing his bed of straw on which to rest his bones to await the flow of the tide. When he heard a splash in the water: he listened a moment. and all being still again he

proceeded to occupy his berth, when he heard a second splash. He went up instantly, and saw, to his alarm, a hat and basket floating on the water. He aroused the men in the other boats lying in the basin, and after a search of an hour found the body, but life was extinct. It is supposed that his boat being laden with clay, and after much rain having fallen upon it, he preferred walking on the gunwale when his foot slipping he fell into the water. An inquest was held before R. Beaming Esq., at Halls Pill when a verdict of 'Accidental Death' was returned. Deceased was 63 years of age.

Bideford Gazette 20th August 1859

BALTIC TIMBER

The Rolle Canal Company beg to announce that they are now discharging a cargo of Prime Baltic Timber, ex- 'Hudcott' which will be on sale at their timber yard near the Custom House, Bideford, and at the Rolle Canal Wharf . Torrington. They have also on hand a large stock of Yellow Pine, American Red Pine, Oak, Elm and other Timber, also Prime Seasoned Deal at moderate prices.

THE ROLLE CANAL COMPANY are willing to employ Vessels to bring Limestone from St Margaret's Island, at current freights. Apply to Capt. Dunsford, Appledore or ROLLE CANAL COMPANY, Torrington. (also 20th August 1859)

20th August 1861

TORRINGTON

Narrow Escape – On Monday evening a little boy of about 2 years of age, son of Mr Bowden, sawyer of Mill Street, rambled from his home towards the Canal and fell into the water. A man standing on the lime kilns, seeing something floating in the water at a distance, called out to another man who was standing with his back towards the object, who on seeing it was a child, sprang in and rescued the poor little fellow from a watery grave. Had one minute more elapse he must have been drowned.

TORRINGTON

Accident – On Tuesday last, two men were engaged in taking down a hedge at the Rolle Canal, for the purposes of widening the clay yard. In order to expedite the work they proceeded to clear away the earth beneath and to undermine the hedge. When leaving work, a large quantity of debris fell in and one of the men named John Smale, jun., was buried beneath it. Alarm was instantly given by his companion, and the sufferer was with much difficulty rescued from his perilous position: and being conveyed to his home, he was promptly attended to by J.H. O Rouse, surgeon, who found that although severely bruised the man sustained no injuries that could lead to apprehensions of fatal results

10TH September 1861

TORRINGTON

On Monday, as a man named Taylor, a mason's labourer, was engaged in the Rolle Canal, wheeling a barrow across a plank, the plank gave

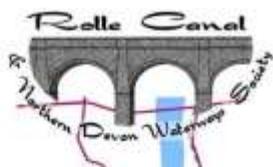
way and the unfortunate man fell, and sustained a serious injury by breaking the cap bone of one his knees. He was immediately removed to his house, and medical aid promptly secured, but it is feared that, should he survive the effects of the accident, he will be crippled for life.

22nd September 1868

SHIP LAUNCH – On Wednesday afternoon last a large company from Bideford and Torrington assembled at the Sea Lochs for the purpose of witnessing the launching of the new vessel built by Messrs Leonard & Pickard for the Rolle Canal Company. The arrangements for the launch were perfect, and shortly after 5 o' clock the vessel glided off the stocks in the most graceful manner, there being no hinderance of any kind. She was named the Sidwill Jane, is considered a fine specimen of naval architecture, is intended for the fruit trade, and is 262 tons burthen, builders' measurement. The vessel was towed down the river as far as 'Binny Slip' on Thursday and it is intended to take her through the Bridge [Bideford Long Bridge] on Wednesday (tomorrow). The men engaged in her construction had supper together at Tanton's Hotel on the Thursday following the launch.

Thanks to both Peter and Michael for supplying this wonderful stuff. Unfortunately Peter does not state the sources for many of his extracts although I think most of them were from the Bideford Gazette. However, if any readers would like more information about his sources I am sure that he would be only too pleased to supply them for me. More reports later!

Adrian Wills



The RC&NDWS always welcomes volunteers who are prepared to help with a wide variety of society activities. Many of these tasks do not require long term commitment or massive physical ability but are all equally important to the successful running of the society. If you feel you can help in any way then please do not hesitate to make contact with the committee through the address below:



SIDEFORD



Our archives Officer, Norman Richards, is always looking for material, maps, pictures or text, relating to the Rolle family and canal. If you have anything which may be of interest to him, please contact him by email at norm@fhsinternet.com or at the address given below:

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