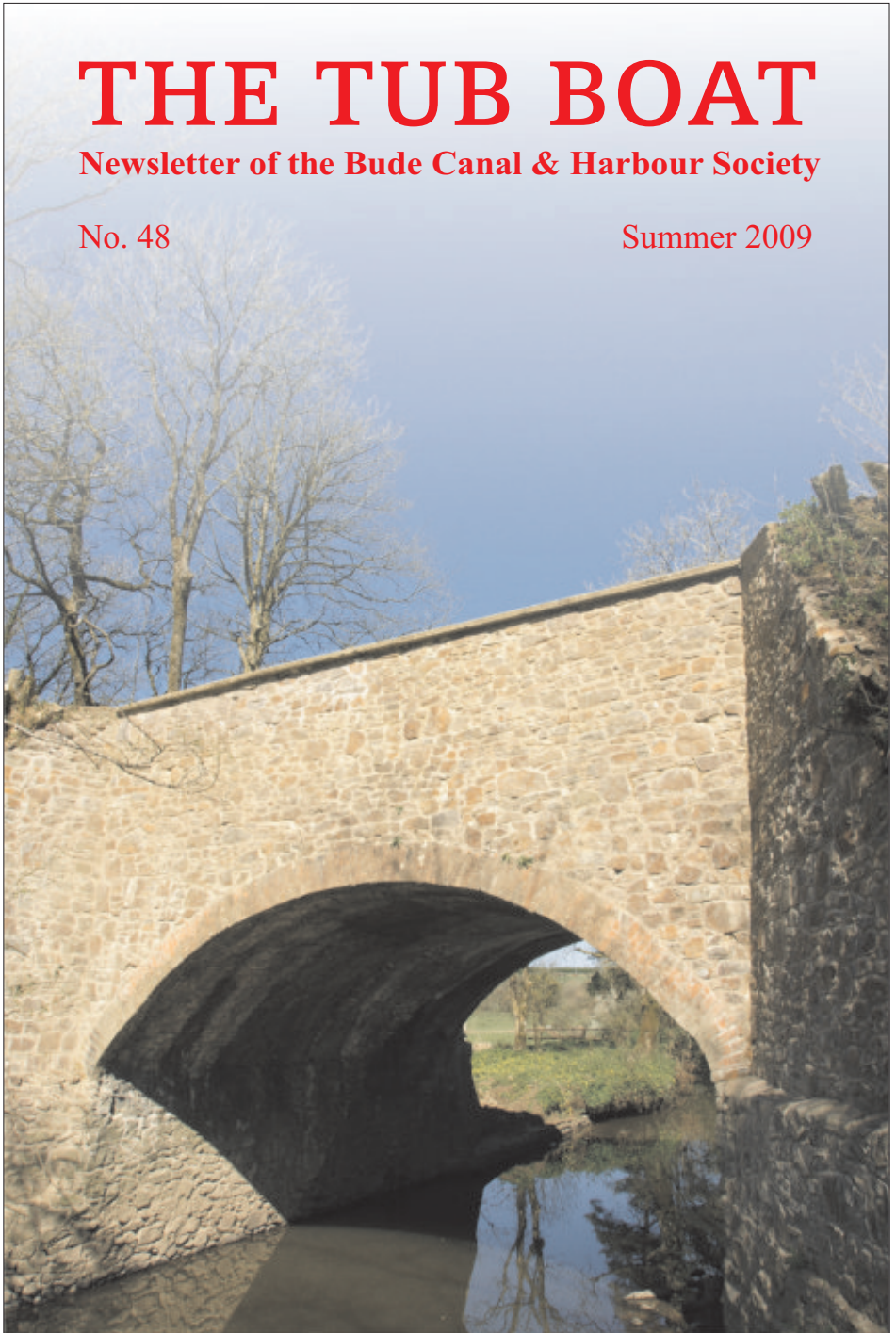


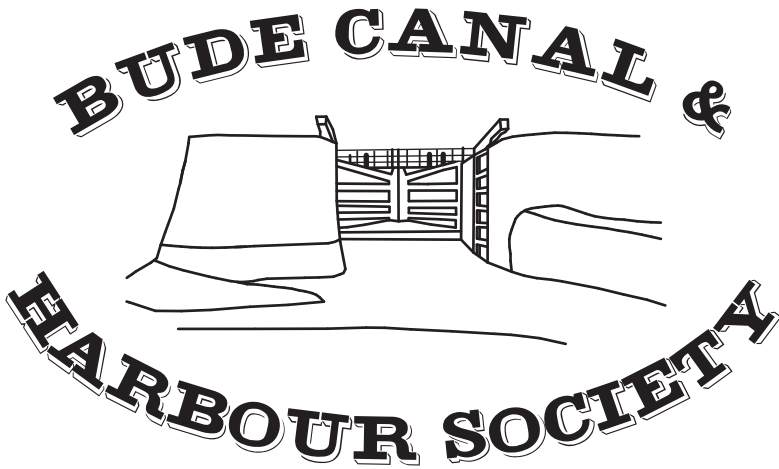
# THE TUB BOAT

Newsletter of the Bude Canal & Harbour Society

No. 48

Summer 2009





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## **Bude Canal Day 26th July 2009**

This year's event will be held on the Castle Green in conjunction with Town Council's Gurney Day. The event will be open from 11am with the official opening at 1 pm by Count Nickoli Tolstoy. Count Tolstoy spent time at the Castle when it was a private residence before the second World War.

There will be the usual stalls and displays as well as steam vehicles, vintage cars, musical entertainment by brass bands, jazz, Irish folk music and medieval Cornish music and dance; also children's entertainment: Punch & Judy and a magician. New for this year will be a Hog Roast to satisfy the appetite.

On the Barkhouse Green will be Bude Pilot Gig Club offering free rides in a gig boat and commercial adventure groups offering a free try at kayak sessions, both operating on the canal.

In addition the gaff-rigged ketch 'Ruth' will be on the canal. This fine vessel will be open to the public to view for a mere £1 per person. Five large motor yachts of the Severn Motor Yacht Club are expected and will be moored in the Lower Basin Area, all, of course, subject to weather and tidal access to the Canal. We hope the weather will be kinder than last year and we will all have a terrific day. Come and join us. *Chris Jewell*

## **Lecture Saturday 25 July 09.**

Mr Phil Hoskin of the Trevithick Society will be giving a lecture on the Cornish Steam Pioneers - Trevithick and Gurney.

This is a ticket only event at £5 per person including a glass of wine and nibbles. It will be held in the Gallery, Castle Heritage Centre, Bude, from 7.30pm to 9pm. Seating is restricted to 60.

If you are interested in attending please contact me asap. First come first served; telephone 01288 352298 *Chris Jewell*

## **Unique Features of the Bude Canal**

With the completion of the extensive Regeneration Scheme covering the first two miles from Bude to Helebridge, it's time to look at the other 33 1/2 miles of this remarkable canal. We forget the marvellous engineering structures that were built all those years ago.

Construction actually started on 23 July 1819. Quarries were established

close to the canal and at frequent intervals along its length. Stone was needed in large quantities as the sides of the canal were lined, bridges had to be built and culverts were necessary to take streams and water either to the River Tamar, or to the various mills along the route of the canal. Two excellent examples are at Grove Farm, 1 mile south of Red Post and at Haunch Bridge, near Crossgate, which is still worked today.

There are superb well constructed bridges, mostly of one design, and usually to cross a farm track or to unite a farmer's fields that had been split by the canal. Good examples will be found at Burmsdon Farm, Thornemoor Bridge at Thorne Farm, 1 mile from Burnards House, and Haunch Bridge near Crossgate. Aqueducts were also built over roads and rivers. A prime example is the one at Burmsdon Farm taking the canal from Devon into Cornwall. Features such as low-roofed store houses, wharves and wharfingers' houses can be seen at Hobbacott, Stanbury, Blagdon Moor, North Tamerton, and Crossgate. In the grounds of Haven Cottage at North Tamerton is a delightful sunken rose garden, once a thriving wharf basin. One can only gasp in wonder at the skill and expertise that went into the construction and operation of the underground waterwheel pits. I've been down all three that still exist. These cathedral-like edifices no longer have the waterwheels in them but are very impressive indeed. They supplied the power to pull the boats up the inclined planes on rails. The openings (or skylights), through which the chains operated, can be seen today. The adits at the bottom of each pit are extremely large - the one at Werrington is carved out of solid rock.

Today we have bulldozers and dumper trucks, but then it was all picks and shovels and a horse and cart. The canal finally closed in 1901. I followed in the hallowed footsteps of Monica Ellis and Joan Rendell to explore this wonderful enterprise. The book, "Bude Canal Past and Present" has recently been reprinted by Bude-Stratton Town Council with an additional chapter covering the Regeneration Scheme written by Charlie David (the NCDC officer responsible). Bude can justly be proud of this ambitious and bold plan started way back in 1819. *Bill Young*

## **BCHS Library**

Due to the lack of support for this proposal the Trustees have reached agreement with Bude-Stratton Town Council that our collection of books is

to be on permanent loan to BSTC. They will become part of the Archive at the Castle Heritage Centre. Members and the public will be able to examine and read the books at the Archive Reading Room by appointment. Eventually, further details as to accessing the books will be published in The Tub Boat.

### **Bude Canal Regeneration Project**

Whilst the project ended on 31 March 09, when NCDC ceased to exist, some works had not been completed, mainly the fish pass at Whalesborough weir and the remedial works on the sea lock gates. All of this work is now completed. The photographs show the work done.

(We hope that Rodds bridge will at some future date be raised to permit the passage of boats larger than canoes and rowing boats. Ed.) *Chris Jewell*



The Sea Lock with cladding on the right hand gate only. Photo Chris Jewell



The fish pass alongside the weir at Whalesborough. Photo Chris Jewell

## **Aqueducts and Cream Tea - 2nd May 2009**

About five miles along the canal towpath from Virworthy Wharf in Devonshire, where Geoff Lowe lives and writes "Virworthy View", is Vealand inclined plane which raises the canal to its summit level. In the canal's working days Vealand plane was on the main Bude to Holsworthy line of the canal and a short distance from the top of the incline at Brendon Moor, is the junction where the feeder arm from the reservoir (Tamar Lake) joined the main line. Nowadays the old main line into Holsworthy, though visible at this point is not accessible and the bridge which once took the towpath across the canal has gone though its position is still apparent. The towpath and canal bed of the feeder arm are now as one with those of the erstwhile main line to the top of the plane.



Visitors on the IWA South West Region AGM weekend inspecting Burmsdon Aqueduct.  
Photo Mike Moore

This alteration was brought about after the Bude Harbour & Canal Company had sold the canal back to the landowners in 1891 and in 1901 sold this piece of main line from the top of Vealand incline with the whole of the feeder arm and the reservoir, to Stratton & Bude Urban District Council as a water supply for Bude. Hence it became known as Bude Aqueduct.

Our walk began at Brendon bridge which has been strengthened and rebuilt after much abuse by overlarge farm vehicles. First we walked back towards Virworthy to inspect a nicely rebuilt farm bridge financed by the newly formed Bude Canal Trust Partnership.

In the area of the National Nature Reserve at Dunsdon Farm the canal bed is clear and the bridge across easily accessible with the culm grasslands and surrounding woodlands a beautiful backdrop. Round about here, information boards have been sympathetically installed for the benefit of walkers to the area. Everywhere stiles have been replaced by gates which make access so much easier than hitherto, the towpath now being a public right of way.

We retraced our steps to Brendon bridge, crossed the road and headed off towards Burmsdon. The towpath everywhere along the aqueduct is well kept and walking easy. All around us Spring was very apparent and bluebells in abundance; it was fascinating to spot the fox and badger runs crossing through the undergrowth from one side of the canal bed to the other and once, the very clear signs of deer crossing. Humans too have been busy, laying hedges and maintaining fences.

Soon we arrived at the old junction with the now truncated Holsworthy main line, the bridge gone and the towpath taking us smoothly round towards Vealand as though the junction had never been. Before reaching the top of the plane we stopped for a breather at Vealand bridge which carries Devon Wildlife Trust's private road to the SSSI in this area which is managed by them. From this bridge to the top of the plane the going is good and on the left hand side below the level of the canal can be seen the dry leat to the once important and busy Kingford Mill.

Around the top of the incline are indications of various earthworks. First, the remains of the filter beds which were sited here where the open waterway ended and the water was piped down the incline and onwards to Bude and secondly, where Waterway Recovery Group excavated in vain for the elusive wheelpit some years ago. This wheelpit, common to five of the

six inclined planes on the system, has never been located though theories abound as to its actual position, if indeed it still survives after all the upheaval that must have occurred when the filter beds were being constructed.

Onward then to our destination, Burmsdon aqueduct. From the bottom of Vealand incline and along a short well defined length of canal we walked out on to the famous stone aqueduct over the River Tamar at Burmsdon. This beautiful single arched structure is a listed building and has recently been restored to something like its former glory but without the parapets, within the programme of the Canal Regeneration Project. We were able to go down to the river level the better to view the excellent work done on this wonderful piece of our heritage. One is surprised at its width between the walls, standing as we were in the centre of the partially dug out stone-lined trough of the actual waterway with the towpath running alongside. The views of the infant Tamar and surrounding countryside here are lovely and the peace and tranquillity profound, with birdsong all around one. The chance to cross and explore Burmsdon aqueduct was a rare privilege because the Aqueduct path as such ends just before the bridge since the piece of canal containing the bridge and beyond is not yet available to complete the desired circle. We remain optimistic.

Our gratitude to Steve Church and Tim Dingle of the Trust Partnership cannot be overstated. Not only did they arrange and lead this expedition but regaled us with much fascinating information about the recent works all along the aqueduct for which they have been largely responsible and of the abundance of flora and fauna along the way. Thanks also to Gerald Fry who told of his experiences of much dedicated work over the years.

Climbing back up Vealand plane was good exercise and not too challenging even for the aged among us. On reaching Vealand bridge again we then turned off onto the private roadway which we followed out to the lane and thence to Venn Cottage where a warm welcome, a much appreciated sit-down and a stupendous elevenses/lunch/tea awaited us courtesy of Thelma and Mick Stanton of Venn Cottage, Pancrasweek.

In the garden in bright sunshine, we tucked into wonderful homemade scones, jam and lashings of cream (which also found its way in some instances into the luscious sponge cake also on offer), all washed down with hot tea or coffee.



Our sincere thanks to Mick and Thelma for putting such a thoroughly enjoyable finishing touch to an excellent morning walk. Thanks also to Tim Bacon of Lishaper Hill Farm for the use of his farm yard as a temporary car park which was a comfortable staggering distance from Venn Cottage for our well-filled company to manage at the end of a good morning.

*Audrey Wheatley*

## **Dunster & West Somerset Railway trip**

On Saturday 27 June some 27 members and friends set off by coach from Bude to travel along the North Devon link road turning left before Tiverton along a road I have not noticed before. This took us through the marvellous wooded country of Exmoor National Park much of it along the valley of the young Exe, eventually arriving at the picturesque village of Dunster where we disembarked for an exploring stay until 3pm.



Our train after arrival at Bishops Lydeard. Photo Mike Moore

Audrey & I explored the castle, now a lovely 19th century house, home of the Luttrell family for six hundred years. There had been a castle on this site since at least Norman times, seeing its share of treachery & bloodshed

including a besiegement in the Civil War. The 13th century gateway still survives but the present building was remodelled in 1868-72 by Anthony Salvin and is now owned by the National Trust. I had my card but Audrey's was at home in her wallet. However, her membership was confirmed by a phone call by the officials to HQ. This is now standard procedure by NT.

After a satisfying lunch in pleasant surroundings, we all rejoined the coach and set off for Minehead where we enjoyed a double tour of this large watering-place as, at the first attempt, the coach driver missed the turning for the railhead of the West Somerset Railway.

Here we found a reserved coach on a train headed by a 2-6-2 steam tank engine in which we travelled with many views of the Bristol Channel at Bridgwater Bay before turning inland to Bishop's Lydeard where we rejoined the coach for the journey home. A most enjoyable and interesting day for which grateful thanks go to Chris Jewell and Betty Moore for impeccable organisation. Ed.

## **A Wet Afternoon**

On the 17th June the committee played host to a group of people from Devon, who were interested to see the canal and locks and the newly restored area at the foot of the Marhamchurch inclined plane. It rained.

But these were hardy folk, members of the Buildings Group of the Devon Association, used to exploring old structures and disregarding the weather! We opened up the Barge Workshoip at Helebridge, and set up a display of photographs to show them some of the recent work done on the canal, and also our bookstall in the hope they might want to buy something. Also the Town Council's display of old machines etc were on view, not to mention the star of the show, the tub boat.

Our visitors were very knowledgeable and had some interesting questions to ask. Some of them belonged to other west country canal groups and had heard of our canal and its regeneration. It was an enjoyable afternoon, in spite of the rain - which stopped, of course, as soon as they made their way to the nearby tearooms for some refreshment.

The organizer wrote us a nice thank you card afterwards, and said that some of the group were likely to want to come again and see Hobbacott inclined plane and the wheelpit at Merrifield. Let's hope for a sunny day if they do!

*Anne Longley*

## Visit by Filleigh History Group

On Sunday 28 June 2009 BCHS hosted a group of 18 members from the Filleigh History Group for a visit to the Bude Canal.

After a short stop at the new Canal Visitors Centre in the Crescent car park the group was shown the Upper and Lower Basins and the sea lock with explanations and information about the canal and the recent regeneration works. The weather rather dampened this part of the visit.

However, spirits were raised and replenished with lunch in the Falcon Hotel and by the time of the afternoon tour to Helebridge the weather had improved. Many admiring and complimentary comments were made on route about works done



Walkers from the Filleigh History Group crossing Rodds Bridge. Photo Mike Moore

to the canal and towpath. The group also visited the Barge Workshop to



Chris Jewell explaining about the Tub Boat to our visitors in the Barge Workshop, Helebridge. Photo Mike Moore

view the tub boat (courtesy of BSTC) and the bottom of Marham church inclined plane before diverting to the Woodlands Tea Rooms for some well-earned refreshments. The group are likely to return next year for an extended tour to include Merrifield

## Virworthy View

I didn't think the wild flowers could grow any bigger – but we have white umbellifers rising to six feet and grasses close behind - one shower of rain and they fall into the path making walking difficult.

The water leak at the spillway has been repaired, so hopefully the water in the Wharf will remain, even in a drought. The turtle, or terrapin, is still here and is an attraction to visitors. We now have fish too! That's Yvonne's idea, but I doubt the "goldfish" will last very long being sitting targets in their "day glow" orange coats! I am informed that terrapins are omnivorous so she/he may take a liking to fish.



The 'late' Mr. Mole! Photo: Geoff Lowe

Visitor numbers have increased – perhaps it's because more people are holidaying in this country this year. I still get those who ask "How far is it to the aqueduct?" and then "Do you do cream teas?". There must be an opportunity here for a Theme Park!

Our resident mole in the garden was finally caught. Sally, one of the dogs, spent hours watching and listening and working out how to catch it – she finally managed it. We now have a green lawn!

The peacocks still make their presence known but we are down to two peahens. The fox took two early in the year. One of the remaining hens laid her eggs on the top of the hay bales in the store again. The small camera was made use of to keep an eye on her and we were able to retrieve the chicks before they could fall down between the bales and move them to a safe location.

The other hen made a nest in the hedge across the road in a very vulnerable spot so she had to be moved – unfortunately she would not sit on the eggs

after that, but in defiance she made another nest also in a hedge but within days the nest was robbed and there were lots of her feathers – a close shave with a fox I believe.

The swallows are in abundance again this year with the first fledglings now fending for themselves. I think there are six nests here and two in the Wharf building together with one crows' nest. Frogs seem to be in short supply again. I did record a lack of frog spawn early in the year; is this a general decline? Looking forward to a fine summer. *Geoff Lowe*

## **Society Booklet**

The society has produced a booklet entitled "The Bude Canal - some interesting facts". It is based on the collation of a number of leaflets about various aspects of the canal. The booklet will be sold at £1.99 each. It is hoped that BCHS will supply this booklet to some local tourist centres for resale. If you would like a copy send your remittance of £1.99 payable to "Bude Canal & Harbour Society" to C R Jewell, 4a The Crescent, Bude, EX23 8LE. If you live in the EX22 or EX23 postal areas they will be delivered to you, otherwise add 50p for p&p.

## **110 years ago May 13 1889, from the 'Post'.**

The ketch Ceres (Petherick, master) Bude to Porterhousestock for stone, ran on to Barrel Rock at the entrance to Bude Harbour Saturday, the wind being rather shy for vessels leaving the harbour. Shortly after the crew had been taken off, the vessel freed herself and began going out to sea. She ultimately came back to the harbour again and was secured. (She probably felt she was old enough to look after herself! Ed)

## **Membership Report**

We welcome the following new members who have joined since March:

Mrs T Currie, Lochwinnoch, Renfrewshire & Mr M Stanton, Pancrasweek  
Could members who have given us their e-mail addresses please remember to send any updates or amendments to [info@bude-canal.co.uk](mailto:info@bude-canal.co.uk) so that we can continue to notify you when the newsletter is available on-line and for us to send any other notifications or booking forms etc. Thank you for your assistance. Thank you for your continued support. *Mike Moore*

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# THE TUB BOAT

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## Forthcoming Events:

- Tuesday July 14th Bude Canal Trust Open Day at Pancrasweek Parish Hall  
from 11.00am to 4.00pm
- Sunday July 26th Canal Day
- Saturday August 15th Bude Carnival
- Saturday August 29th R.N.L.I. Weekend
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Copy for the next edition of the Tub Boat should be addressed to:  
The Editor, Tregea, Lower Upton, Bude, Cornwall EX23 0LS  
to reach him by 29th September 2009.

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## Trustees:

Chairman	Audrey Wheatley
Vice Chairman	David Phillips
Secretary	Bryan Dudley Stamp
Treasurer	Chris Jewell
Events Secretary	Betty Moore
The Tub Boat Editor	Lawrence Wheatley
Other members	Jill White
	Anne Longley
Membership Secretary	Mike Moore ( <i>non-trustee</i> )
Minuting Secretary	Judy Crabtree ( <i>non-trustee</i> )

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The views expressed by the contributors to this newsletter  
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