

# The Chard Canal



## Canal at Wrantage

Leading to incline and tunnel. Crimson Hill in the background

## Chard History Group

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The Chard Canal opened in 1842. It was the last of the main English canals and technically one of the most advanced. Yet it never paid its way and was closed within 25 years of its opening. Today it lies forgotten and abandoned, but its remains are still an impressive monument to the past, and its story still has lessons for the present.

## THE REASONS WHY

### The memory of earlier schemes

There had been dreams of a canal passing through Chard long before 1842. Soon after the canal era began in 1760, the idea of a ship canal joining the English and Bristol Channels had been put forward. It was certainly an attractive idea. It would cut out the long sea passage around Lands End, always arduous and dangerous in the days of sail. Various schemes were promoted, in 1769, 1794, 1809, 1824. They varied in their details, but all chose the obvious route across the waist of the S.W. peninsula, beginning at Beer or Seaton, and making use of the river valleys of the Axe the Ile or the Tone, and the Parrott; all crossed the Blackdowns where they were narrowest and lowest, at Chard (see inset map, centre page) It is strange, today, to think of how ships might have been seen passing along the Furnham Road. However, any such canal, even for small sea vessels, with its 30-odd miles of works, and the surmounting of the 250 foot high watershed, was bound to be expensive - indeed the most ambitious project, of 1824, was expected to cost £1<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> million. In their day, these schemes aroused considerable interest. Surveys were carried out by leading engineers, like John Rennie and Thomas Telford, and subscription lists were opened. However, at the first hint of a recession the ambitious schemes faded, and in fact they were not seriously revived after 1830. But the memory and the hopes endured, to feed the more modest project of the Chard Canal.

### The need for cheap transport in Chard.

By the early 19th century, Chard, like many other places had a growing need for cheap transport, particularly of bulky and heavy goods. There was a good network of turnpike roads radiating from the town, but their charge, for wagons were high. Moreover the quantity of heavy goods needing haulage was growing rapidly. Coal, mainly from South Wales was

replacing wood as the common fuel. The Industrial Revolution was having its effect in Chard with the growth of large water driven woollen mills and the new lace mills - and all of them took in and gave out large quantities of goods. And the population of Chard Borough and Parish had increased by one third between the censuses of 1811 and 1831, causing an increasing flow of food and other products, and of building materials for the flood of new houses which can still be clearly seen in the town and the surrounding villages. Moreover, wherever canals had been opened elsewhere there had been a dramatic drop in transport costs. So most educated people in Chard fully appreciated the advantages a canal would bring.

### James Green and the West Country Canal.

Canals in the West Country, however, presented a special problem, quite different from those in the industrial areas where they were first developed. The sparser population strictly limited their revenue, and the hilly character of the country created engineering difficulties. However, an able engineer, James Green, Surveyor of Bridges to the County of Devon, had by the 1830's developed a type of canal which was specially suited to the West Country needs. Taking up ideas first developed in Shropshire, he made use of short tub-boats instead of the traditional narrow-boats of the normal canal. Because of their size these tub-boat could negotiate a change in level of the canal with either a lift or an inclined plane, fitted with rails, and a suitable wheeled vehicle. This completely cut out the need for locks, with great saving in construction running cost. It also saved water, and operating time.

Green first successfully used the system on the Bude Canal, 1817, including one incline rising 225 feet. Then in 1824 came the Torrington Canal, and in 1829 the Grand Western, running from Tiverton to Taunton. This latter canal relied mainly on lifts rather than inclines, although as it turned out they were much less reliable. Thus Green had developed a formula for a successful canal to suit West Country conditions, and had a good reputation in the region as a canal engineer. As far as Chard was concerned, he find already been involved in two schemes for a canal passing through the town, the second being the last and greatest of the ship-canal schemes of 1824, for which he had carried out surveys.

### The final moves.

So far we have seen that the need for a canal to serve Chard was felt; that the grander ship-canal schemes had aroused interest, and that James Green had shown that a canal in this area was practicable. But there was still no drive towards building one. The townspeople themselves lacked the capital, and the local wealthy landowners were either apathetic or hostile. The final impetus, in 1833-34, came from right outside Chard, and for reasons which had nothing to do with Chard itself. As it turned out, this was unfortunate.

In 1827 the Bridgwater and Taunton Canal had opened. Naturally enough Chard people hoped to be linked with it by a feeder canal. In 1830, a group of them approached James Green, and he got in touch with the Bridgwater and Taunton Committee. They showed little interest.

Then in 1833 came a new development. A proposal was afoot to improve the navigation of the river Parrett up to and beyond Langport, with a canal leading off to Ilminster and Chard. A glance at the map (inset, centre pages) will show that this immediately threatened the toll revenue of the Bridgwater and Taunton on goods from this area - the loss was in fact estimated at £1, 200 per annum. Immediate action was taken. James Green was commissioned to make a survey for a canal from Chard, via Ilminster, to the Bridgwater and Taunton Canal at Creech St. Michael. His survey was complete by the end of 1833, with the cost of the canal estimated at £57,000.

Green's proposals were accepted with minor modification, and in 1834 the Chard Canal Company was launched and the necessary Act of Parliament promoted (received royal assent June 1834).

It is important to note that the main figures behind this sudden development were not Chardians, but five wealthy Bristolians (Isaac Cooke, John and William Cave, Joseph Cookson, Joseph Reynolds). In fact only £3,250 of the first subscription of £46,850 came from Chard people.

We can now see why the Chard Canal came to be built. But one obstinate question remains: Why a canal and not a railway? Certainly in 1834 railways were very much in people's minds. The Liverpool and Manchester

railway, the first to carry passengers, was already an outstanding success. By 1833 the movement to found the Great Western Railway was already well under way, beginning in Bristol in January with an inaugural meeting under John Cave, one of the Chard Canal promoters, as chairman. And within two years of the Chard Canal receiving its Act of Parliament, the Bristol and Exeter railway, passing through Creech and Taunton, had received its Act too. Once again the answer lies with the ‘big-five’ Bristolian investors. A feeder railway to the Bristol and Exeter would do nothing to cover their investment in the Bridgwater and Taunton canal, and so it was not considered. Perhaps one can say the Chard Canal was the victim of decisions taken under pressure; five years later it would probably have not been built at all, as the case for a railway would have been immeasurably stronger.

### THE CANAL IS BUILT

#### The Canal Acts, 1834, 1840, 1841.

From the three Canal Acts we are given interesting and often amusing insight into the minds and characters of the people, and the conditions of the times. The Acts went into great detail. The company was empowered ‘to bore, dig, cut, trench, drain, sough (trench), get, raise, remove, take, carry away, lay, use and manufacture any earth, soil, clay, stone, rubbish, trees, roots etc. - owners to be compensated’. ‘Every steam engine used by the company must consume its own smoke’. Even rules of conduct were laid down by the acts. ‘Penalty for throwing rubbish into the canal - £5.’ ‘Anyone travelling on barges found guilty of poaching fish or game shall be fined £5.’ Even gentle relaxation was restricted. ‘No bathing without permission. Penalty 40/-.’ Half the fines collected were to be paid to the informers and half to the poor of the parish in which the offences were committed.

Faint echoes of feudalism are heard in the statement - ‘Earl Poulett, as Lord of the Manor, shall be given the sole rights to shoot wild fowl or game on or near the reservoir made by the canal company. He has the sole right to build and maintain a decoy to be used for killing the said wild fowl.’

The Canal Acts also laid down the wharfage or storage charges. These include :-

Hay, straw, peat and dung	- ½d. per ton.
Coal, iron ore, lime, bricks	- 2d. per ton.
Pig Iron	- 2½d. per ton.

Tolls for carriage were at similar rates, per ton-mile. The Acts also stated the times during which the canal could be used. These ranged from 6 a.m. until 6 p.m. in Winter and from 5 a.m. until 10 p.m. in Summer.

It was planned to build the canal in 7 years.

The main outline. (see large map and diagram 1, centre pages).

The canal was 13½ miles long. It was to have five main levels, or pounds, linked by four inclined planes at Chard Common (86 ft), Ilminster, (82 ft.), Wrantage, (27 ft.) and Thornfalcon (28 ft.) The last two were originally intended as lifts. The levels were also adjusted with a lock near Dowlish Ford, so that in all the canal rose 231 feet. The canal was to have two long tunnels at Crimson Hill (2000 yards) and Lillesdon (500 yards) and during construction a third was added at Herne Hill (300 yards).

### The Ilminster Tunnel

Originally it was intended that the canal should cross the shoulder of Herne Hill in a deep cutting, and pass 16 ft. above the Chard-Ilminster turnpike road on an aqueduct. The Herne Hill cutting was actually begun, to a depth of some 10 ft., before it was realised that the extensive embankment needed for this route all the way to Chard Common could be avoided by dropping the line of the canal so that it now crossed Herne Hill by tunnel and went under the turnpike road. The lock 1 mile S.W. of Dowlish Ford was a further improvement in the level of the canal.

### The inclines

That at Chard Common was a single track incline - the only one in Britain. A tub-boat was fastened onto a strong carriage mounted on two pairs of wheels, one pair smaller than the other, to keep it level. This was pulled up

the incline, on rails, by a rope - which broke so frequently it was soon replaced by a wire cable - powered by a water turbine. At the apex of the incline the carriage ran down a short reverse slope, using a different pair of wheels, on the same axle as the smaller pair, on a special set of rails, to keep the boat reasonably level (see daigram 2, centre pages).

The other three inclines - at Ilminster, Wrantage, and Thornfalcon, were double-track. The boats were carried in water in 6-wheeled caissons 28 ft. 6 in., by 6 ft. 9 in, joined by a chain passing round a drum at the top of the incline. When the top caisson was filled with more water it over-balanced and so pulled up the lower caisson. The inclines were approximately 1 in 9.

The consultant engineer for the inclines was Sir William Cubitt.

### Water Supplies

The water for the canal was supplied primarily by the Chard Reservoir, the construction of which was started in 1839. Other supplies were obtained from the River Eley and from the flood water arising in and around Chard. Water could not be spared from the Taunton and Bridgwater Canal so lock gates were built at the junction of the two canals at Creech to prevent losses. Water for the lower pounds was obtained by running it down a duct from the next pound above.

### The Chard Basin (see diagram 3, & plate 4)

The basin of the canal at Chard was on the site of the present flour mill occupied by B. G. Wyatt Ltd. Two unloading towers still remain today. They have very interesting and unusual roof trusses.

### The building of the canal.

The work on the canal actually started at Wrantage in June 1835 and by the Autumn of 1837 work on the tunnels at Crimson Hill and Lillesdon was sufficiently advanced to enable the cutting of the canal on the Chard side of Ashill to begin.



3. CRIMSON HILL TUNNEL, north entrance.



4. CHARD CANAL BASIN, Furnham Road.  
 A - original facade; B, B - original warehouses;  
 C - (gap between B & B) - width of canal basin.

We know little about the labour used, but from Hadfield's 'British Canals' we glean some general knowledge. The manual work was often carried out by Irish and casual labourers who were paid 2/- to 3/- a day. There were frequent cases of drunkenness and often riots.

The bulk of the excavation work was carried out using ordinary spades, wheelbarrows and horses and carts, but occasionally horses with a 'special tool' were used. The tunnels were built by sinking vertical shafts in the centres of the hills and excavating outwards.

During the work on Chard Common, Arthur Hull, the Chard antiquary, recorded in his diary 'a human skeleton was dug up, supposed to be Hankins, who was hanged there for killing Mr. Burton, a glover returning from Chard market.'

The canal was probably 23 ft. wide and 3 ft. deep, with sloping banks.

By early 1841 the canal, with work already behind schedule, was largely complete and the committee decided to open part of the canal as far as Ilminster.

On the 15th July 1841 came the ceremonial opening, although the inclined planes were not yet working properly. However, on the 24th May 1842 the Chard Common Incline was opened and the canal was complete.

### THE CANAL AT WORK

Trade at first was quite promising, but soon shrank with competition. By the 1850's, daily traffic to Chard could have averaged only about 10 of the small tub-boats (26 ft. by 6'6in.). Most must have returned empty.

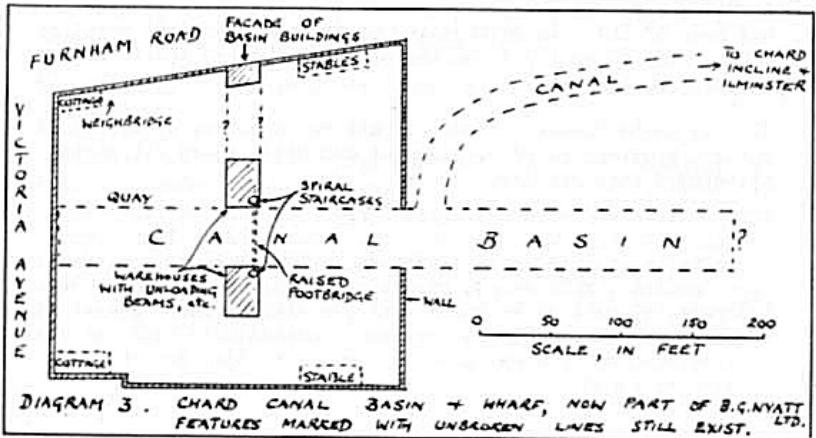
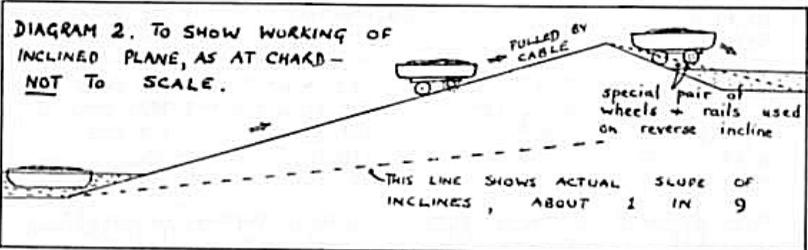
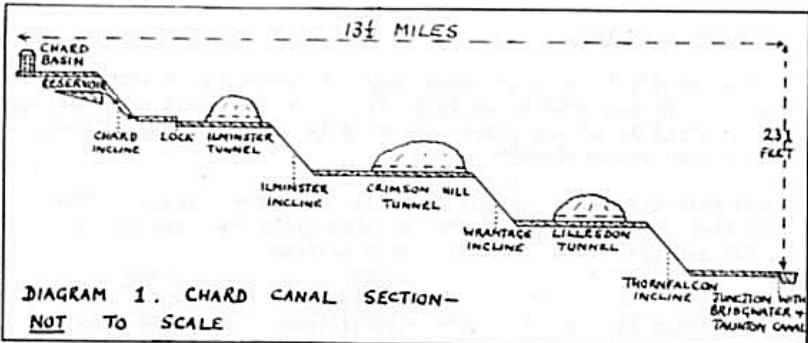
The only surviving records of goods carried are found in the British Transport record office which gives the figures for 1855 and 1856. The recorded items include -

	<u>1855</u>	<u>1856</u>
Coal	11,050 tons	12,235 tons
Culm (coal slack)	3,621 tons	4,476 tons
Coke	266 tons	112 tons
Stone	4,496 tons	3,768 tons
Bricks	139 tons	307 tons
Slate	284 tons	142 tons
Pig Iron	139 tons	166 tons
Grain	803 tons	1,324 tons
Manure	295 tons	326 tons
Salt	310 tons	296 tons
Wool	241 tons	355 tons

With other items, these represent a total tonnage of 23,653 for 1855 and 25,168 for 1856 with corresponding tolls of £1,914 and £2,071 respectively. In 1845 the total tonnage had been 33,284. An interesting point comes to light here, for 1 - 2 cwts. of coal per ton was allowed to cover thefts or losses.

The tub boats themselves were in all cases pulled by horses although, previous to 1838, gangs of men often towed the boats allowing 3 tons per man.

The canal served a surprisingly large area. An invoice book of Hill & Turner, Wharf Agents, for June and July 1858, recorded Welsh coal being carried from the Chard basin to Sidmouth, Lyme, Axmouth, Whitchurch, Broadwindsor and even Uploders near Bridport, as well as to local villages like Membury, Stockland, Tatworth and Wambrook. The carriage charged on 12 cwt, of coal to Axminster by road was 2/9d compared with 8½d. for the same mileage by canal.





## THE CANAL FAILS

Financially the Canal was a fiasco. Originally intended to cost £57,000, it actually cost about £140,000 to construct. Bad underestimating, it seems, was as common in the nineteenth century as the twentieth. At any rate this meant that the company had been led into undertaking expensive capital works far beyond what would be justified by any reasonable estimate of probable revenue. And the original estimates of probable revenue were not reasonable. In 1834 it had been thought that about £6,000 per annum should be raised from tolls - but in fact the normal annual figure seems to have been about £2,000. This second miscalculation was equally disastrous, although easier to understand. As the previous section shows, the Canal did in fact develop a good trade in coal over a wide area. However, its trade in other merchandise, particularly in agricultural products and household goods, was less successful; the promised trade in stone from the Crimson Hills quarries proved modest; and there was competition in the north of the area from the Bristol and Exeter Railway, opened in the same year as the Canal. There is also some suggestion that the company's tolls were unduly low. Certainly some of the leading canal shareholders had formed a carrier company which had a near monopoly of the canal trade - to the financial detriment of the canal itself.

At any rate, from the beginning the canal company was unable to pay the full interest on its substantial and increasing mortgage debt. The Chard Canal had proved a very poor investment. It may be asked how it was that people could invest their money so unwisely. At the time it didn't look so foolish. Outside of fixed interest government stock, canals were one of the few outlets for profitable investment with limited liability. Some canals showed a very good return. In any case the Bristol investors were obliged to invest heavily in the Chard Canal to safeguard their investment in the Bridgwater and Taunton. At any rate, within four years of opening the prospect seemed dismal, and a scheme was launched to convert the canal into a railway. Since however, this required the paying off of the mortgages and the raising of even more capital it had no chance of success, although two Acts of Parliament were obtained. By the 1850's the position appeared hopeless, and in 1853 one of the principal mortgagees obtained the appointment of a receiver. He also made yet another attempt to convert the Canal into a railway, again without success.

The final closing of the Canal, like its opening, came from forces far outside Chard. The "battle of the gauges" was still being fought at this time between the broad-gauge Bristol and Exeter Railway and the narrow gauge London and South Western. The former were worried by the thought of the London and South Western buying up the Canal, converting it to a railway, and so obtaining running rights over the Bristol and Exeter Railway lines beyond Taunton. To forestall this the Bristol and Exeter Railway promoted its own Taunton-Chard railway, and bought up the Canal for the trifling sum of £5,945, less than one twentieth of its original cost. And so, Arthur Hull wrote in his diary - 'Sept. 29, 1866 - Chard Canal ceased to work, being considered useless'. The incline machinery and other serviceable equipment was sold, as was the reservoir to Earl Poulett, and other useful pieces of land, such as the basin, to purchasers. Other parts of the canal reverted to the previous owners. The two aqueducts across major roads, at Wrantage and Creech, were dismantled, and the canal began its long and continuing process of decay.

### THE CANAL TODAY

In places the Canal has disappeared without trace. Elsewhere human ingenuity has converted it for other purposes: houses have been built on it, rubbish tipped in it, stone taken from it, trees planted in it; it has been used for wartime defences and as a source of water supply. But large stretches are still well preserved, an impressive monument to the engineers who built it.

The canal is best studied with the aid of the following 2½ inch to the mile O.S. maps: ST.30, ST.31, ST.32, ST.22. However, the following itinerary is arranged for the casual visitor, being broken down into easily accessible sections. The appropriate 6-figure map references are given. No references below should be taken as implying rights of way, and permission of Landowners should always be sought.

Figures in brackets refer to map on centre pages.

329093 - Chard Canal Basin (1) See diagram 3, centre pages.

The southern stretch of the canal serving the basin has virtually disappeared, and the southern arm of the basin, now in the centre of B.G.Wyatt's yard, has been filled in. However, traces of the northern arm



1. ILMINSTER INCLINE. Incline, now straddled by low hedge, continued behind hedge, left foreground, into lower pound of canal. Cutting at top of incline leading to tunnel is just visible (A).



2. ILMINSTER TUNNEL, north entrance. Each white mark on pole is 1 foot.

of the basin, north of Wyatt's premises, still remain, although overgrown and obscured by tipping. The stone-faced ends of the canal warehouse still remain, facing each other now not across the basin, as of old, but across a loading bay; from the high ground on the other side of the Furnham Road their slate hipped roofs may be picked out. Inside they preserve the original roof trusses, and two curious brick spiral staircases, which probably served an elevated footbridge. In line with these warehouses, on the Furnham Road the front of the canal buildings still stands, with its modest facade and pediment, now ornamented with neon lighting. The sturdy wall surrounding Wyatt's is largely the original wall of the canal premises; the interior level has been raised a good deal.

### The canal between the Basin and Chard Common Incline (2)

332098. The original bridge on the Chaffcombe road, over the canal, about 150 yards from the Furnham Road, is now filled in, but it still leaves a noticeable hump. In the field north of it clear traces of the canal may be seen, with its towpath and a walled embankment on one side. Further north only slight traces may be seen - 335101 - until a long field east of Higher Middlepane farm, where it is well preserved and still filled with water.

### Chard Reservoir (3)

Well preserved. Note large retaining embankment, There is a culvert for excess water.

### Chard Common Incline (4)

Best approach by footpath from Cider Factory near Reservoir. From a distance the slope and general position of the incline can be seen clearly. 337103 to 339345 - The incline itself, on its wide embankment, is well preserved. Very careful examination will show that the incline rose to an apex and then dropped slightly into the canal, a short section of which is preserved to the south west. There are traces of a small building about half way down the incline on the west side. The bottom of the incline is heavily eroded, and no trace now remains of the water wheel or its water supply.

### From Chard Common Incline to Dowlish Ford.

Between the Chard incline and the Knowle St. Giles road only slight traces exist, east of the railway. The water supply for the canal from the reservoir may be traced. North of the Knowle St. Giles road the canal becomes well preserved, although largely filled with undergrowth. 51123. - North of Bere Mills Covert are remains of a lock, (5) with masonry, probably 56 ft. long and 7 ft. deep. The line of the canal can be seen sweeping on to the north east, - 353125 - becoming an impressive high embankment over a stream. East of Cricket Malherbie road the line of the canal is still clear, although heavily overgrown.

At Dowlish Ford the canal is on a high embankment (6), with a wide culvert for Dowlish Brook. This embankment can clearly be seen by travellers from Chard to Iminster looking to their forward right just past the electricity station opposite Clark's factory, as can the Dowlish Ford cottages (7) - 359135 - built actually on the canal bed where it meets the A3037 further up the hill. The bridge there has left a slight hump, and the canal may be clearly seen north of the road heading for Herne Hill.

### Iminster Tunnel and Incline. (See plates 1 & 2)

357139 - The south end of the tunnel is (8) now completely blocked by rubbish tipping, although the cutting leading to it is well preserved. On the top of the tunnel traces of a cutting, begun but abandoned, can be seen. At the north end the brick entrance to the tunnel is well preserved, although the roof of the tunnel is now highly dangerous. Unlike the other tunnels, this would allow two barges to pass in it. After the canal was closed, a low dam-wall with sluice and windlass was built across the tunnel mouth and may still be seen. North of the tunnel the canal is in the open for a few yards, with stone revetted banks. The incline (9) 357140 - then begins, and can be clearly seen, straddling a hedge, running down to the bottom of the Iminster Boys Grammar School field. The entry of the bottom of the incline into the canal is well preserved on the west side with a masonry wall.

### Canal from Wharf Lane to Merrifield Aerodrome.

Well preserved at bottom of Wharf Lane - possibly the site of the Wharf serving the town centre. However there seems to have been an additional wharf at the junction with A303, where the Minsterstone works are aligned on the line of canal (10). North of the A303 the canal is of little interest, and has been largely obliterated on Merrifield Aerodrome.

### Canal from Merrifield Aerodrome to Beercrocombe

331192 - Carried on well-preserved embankment, with bed of canal clearly visible, best seen 400 yards east of Keysey's Dairy House (11). Canal is still preserved and filled with water as it approaches south entrance to Crimson Hill tunnel (12) though heavily overgrown. Tunnel entrance has collapsed completely.

### Crimson Hill Tunnel, Wrantage incline and Aqueduct (all easily accessible from Canal Inn on Taunton - Langport Road A378)

311221 - The north stone entrance to tunnel (13) is very well preserved, simple but elegant (see plate 3). Slots for stop-lock just outside. Tunnel is stone lined, with regular holes in sides, possibly for drainage. Metal fittings in roof, probably for boatmen to hook on and haul boats through. Tunnel keeper's house close to tunnel. Nearby, track to quarries. Incline (14) is short, well preserved except for a new square pit at top end. At bottom of incline is pound for waiting boats, and well preserved canal. (See plate front cover) Embankment continues until the aqueduct (15) across the main road - well preserved to south, but trough removed and bank, stone etc., missing to north.

### Canal from Crimson Hill to Thornfalcon

301229 - North west from Wrantage, prominent embankment, gradually levels out. Typical underpass bridge under Lillesdon road, single width with tow-path, stone-built. Cutting continues, gradually deepening - canal well-preserved, 295234 - until entrance of Lillesdon Tunnel, (16) now silted up, only top of arch visible. North entrance of tunnel (17) well-preserved, similar to Crimson Hill, now wired off. Cutting continues, well preserved.

Thornfalcon incline to Creech St. Michael.

284241 - Thornfalcon incline (18) is preserved in its deep cutting, though side obscured by tipping. At bottom of incline stone outlet of culvert bringing water from upper pound is still visible. Nearby, "Canal Farm". Another well preserved underpass bridge under Thornfalcon-Creech road (19).

Canal continues first as cutting, then as high embankment, finally with railway alongside. 271250 - Crosses Ruishton-Creech road by aqueduct (20), trough missing but piers well preserved. Strong embankment continues to north across flood valley of River Tone, pierced by flood-water arches. 271253 - Crosses River Tone by impressive 3-arch aqueduct (21). Traces of approach to crossing of the railway (formerly Bristol and Exeter Railway) remain, though house built in place of part.

Final stretch of canal (22) is on embankment walled with stone and buttressed, unlike embankment elsewhere, ending in private garden, which preserves the original line, filled in 1910 but still sunken. Towpath is still garden path, and house has simple stone facing on canal side. Said to have been "White Lion" Inn, probably also toll-house. Sunken building in garden still called the "boathouse". Actual entrance to Bridgwater-Taunton Canal not now visible, originally had lock gates and bridge to carry towpath across.

## SOURCES AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A good deal of information is contained in James Green's delightful survey of 1833, the Canal Acts ( 4 & 5 Will. IV c.53, 3 & 4 Vic. c.1, 4 & 5 Vic. c.10) and the Two Acts of 1845 & 1846 to convert the canal to a railway (9 & 10 Vic. c.215, 10 & 11 Vic. c.175). All may be consulted in the Somerset Records Office.

The minute-book of the Canal Company is unfortunately missing and the only detailed figures for Traffic, for 1855-1856, are in the British Transport Historical Records (GW/431/3). Incidental references to traffic, and detailed references to the construction of the canal, may be found in contemporary newspapers, chiefly:

Taunton Courier.	
Chard Union Gazette	1838-1841.
Sherborne Journal	1840-42.

The wharf invoice book referred to is deposited in Chard Branch Library.

References to the inclines are scattered, the best being in the Minutes of Proc. of Inst. of Civil Engineers, Vol. 13, 1853-4, p.213. There is a useful account of incline-working in C. Hadfield: 'Canals of the West Midlands' p.155.

By far the best printed account of the canal is to be found in Charles Hadfield: 'The Canals of the South West of England', to be published late 1967, replacing his 'Canals of Southern England'. This gives a most detailed account of the background, construction, and history of the canal.

We are also greatly indebted to Mr. Hadfield for information given in correspondence; to Messrs. D Wyatt and G. F. Baker for information on the canal basin and the Ilminster Wharf respectively; and to Mr. J. Handel for assistance with field-work. The preparation of this pamphlet has been the joint and co-operative effort of some dozen members of the Chard History Group.





