

Bude Canal

Barge Section:

Bude to Helebridge



1. Sea Lock and Breakwater

The lock is still in use today and measures 116ft by 29ft 6in. It has massive wooden balance beams for the gates and traditional rack and pinion paddle gear. The sea lock had major refurbishment work done in 2000 to ensure its future use. The works included two new sets of gates, dredging and re-pointing of lock chamber and the stabilisation of the structure which is a scheduled ancient monument.



The breakwater that includes Chapel Rock was originally built in the 1820s to protect the harbour and sea lock entrance to the canal. In 1838 the original breakwater was destroyed in a violent storm and was then re built to the construction that exists today.

2. Sand Railway



Along the north east edge of the Lower Basin of the Canal, you can see the rails of a 2ft gauge railway. This was used to carry trucks of sea sand off the beach to tub boats and barges on the canal. At times a turntable and rail sections may be exposed in the sand. The original 4ft plateway built in 1822 no longer exists; it was replaced by the above mentioned 2ft gauge system in 1922 used during the construction of the Recreation Grounds.

3. Canal Exhibits

The Castle Heritage Centre is in The Castle, Bude, which is adjacent to the canal and is clearly signed. It includes old photographs, artefacts, model of an inclined plane and the restored 1817 map by James Green and Thomas Shearm showing the proposed lines of the canal. There are also other exhibits and displays to reflect the heritage of the area.



4. Lower Basin and Wharf

The Lower Basin and Wharf was where the Bude Harbour and Canal Company operated their business, charging dues for storage, loading, mooring of vessels, etc. The Basin and Wharf were an important part of the regeneration project which was completed in 2009. The Basin was dredged and returned to the original depth of 10ft 6in. Works to the stone walls including some rebuilding have ensured the structures are safe for many years. The Wharf area has been resurfaced

with granite sets and is mainly a pedestrian area. Water and electricity columns have been installed for visiting boats. On the Barkhouse Green, four workshops were built to encourage trading activity in the area. All the workshops are occupied and the whole area has a lively atmosphere on a sunny afternoon. The local fishing boats still occupy the wharf area for over winter storage and maintenance.

5. Falcon Bridge

The low road bridge by the Falcon Hotel replaced the last of the two previous swing bridges in the 1960s and now severely restricts headroom for boats. The original swing bridges were required to allow boats to pass onto the Upper Basin and wharves.



6. Upper Basin

Above Falcon Bridge the canal towpath passes on route to the Upper Basin. On the far bank is the former 1865 Lifeboat Station built from a donation by a grateful family for the saving of family members in a shipwreck off Bude. The lifeboat was launched either via the canal (at high tide in fair weather) or by means of a horse drawn carriage. The Upper Basin was the private basin of Sir Thomas Dyke Acland, local landowner and a main subscriber to the Canal Company and is substantially larger than the Lower Basin. The large building 'Granary Court' was Acland's warehouse for his trading ventures. There were other industrial premises along the wharf which have now been converted

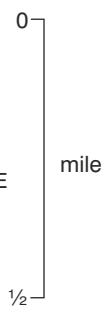
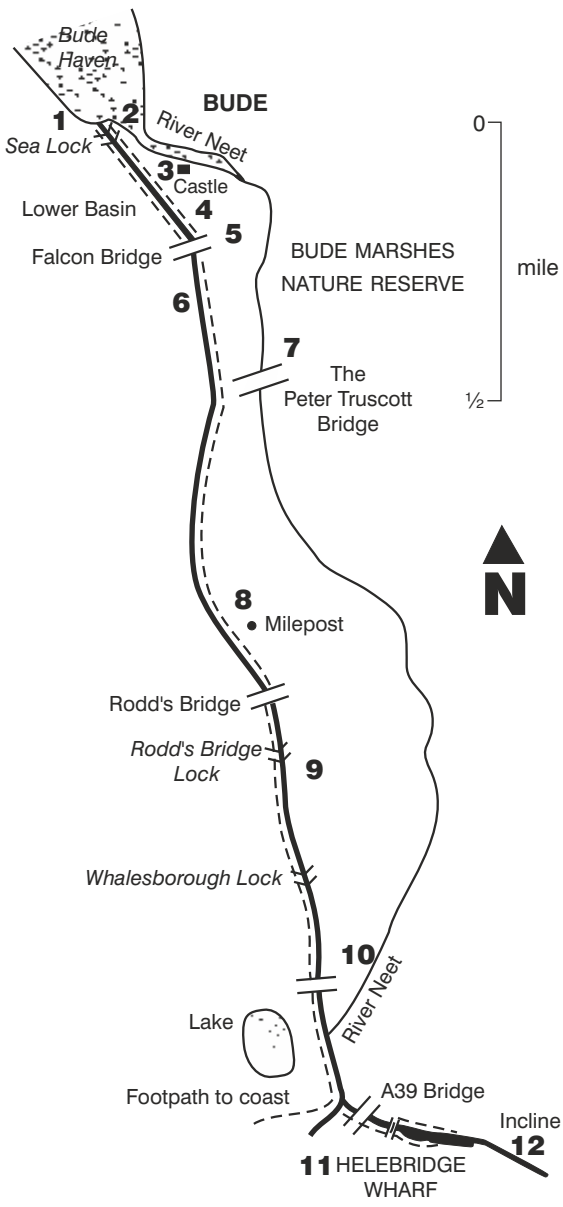
for residential use. Where the brick built flats next up from Granary Court stands there used to be a granary mill owned by the Petherick Family a major shipping and merchant family, who were the owners of the famous ketch 'Ceres'.





In the top corner of the Basin, where the canal continues inland, from the mid 1800s to 1911 there was a shipyard run by the Stapleton family. Ships were built, repaired and maintained on this site. The ships were launched sideways into the canal. Above the green corrugated huts is a long tall stone-faced building which is now individual dwellings. This was the timber mill that supplied the shipyard and later became a steam laundry which closed in the 1960s. The attractive cottage next to these premises was originally a casting house, Rounds Casting House, where iron articles were made for use on the canal. The cottage, larger than when originally constructed, is now known as 'Casting House Cottage'.

7. Nature Reserve

The canal is now entering open countryside and on the left is the large area of reed beds part of the Bude Marshes Local Nature Reserve, in total a 10 acre home for a variety of birds, such as warblers, buntings, snipe, ducks and moorhens, etc. Access to the Environment Agency flood ponds and cycle route to Helebridge is gained by a new footbridge, 'The Peter Truscott Bridge' over the River Strat with direct access from the towing path.





-  Canal
-  Canal/River
-  Bridge
-  Lock
-  Footpath

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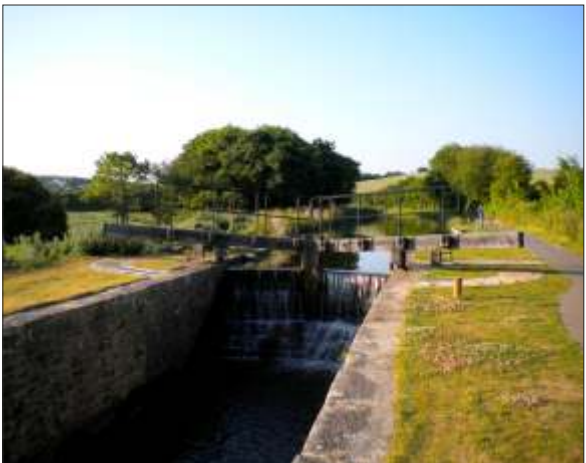
8. Milepost & Rodds Bridge

Standing in the grass at the edge of the path a mile from the Sea Lock is a cast iron milepost. Shortly afterwards the path crosses the canal by means of a low, concrete bridge. This is Rodds Bridge, which was a moveable bridge probably a lifting bridge when the canal was in full operation. This bridge needs to be replaced to a standard that will allow navigation on the canal. Continue up the towpath passing an attractive partly thatched farmhouse which is set back on the right hand side.

Further on beside the hedge is a green metal cabinet about 8ft tall and 4ft wide which houses the switch gear for the automated back pumping equipment which pumps water from below Rodds Bridge Lock to above Whalesborough Lock.



Under the towpath between these two points are two pipes about 4" diameter that carry the water up the canal. Set in the towpath by the cabinet are the steel covers to the wells that receive or take water for the system. The system operates when water levels drop due to the movement of boats on the canal between the two locks.



9. Rodds Bridge & Whalesborough Locks

Rodds Bridge is the lower of the only two inland locks on the canal each measuring 63ft by 14ft 7 in with a rise of above 5ft 6 in for each lock.

Both of these locks were completely refurbished as part of the regeneration project; with new gates, cills, dredging of lock chamber, some rebuilding of chamber walls as well as extensive re-pointing. Both locks have by-wash facilities installed in 1990s by the Waterway Recovery Group which were updated during the project implementation.

10. Whalesborough Farm Bridge & Weir

After passing Whalesborough Lock you enter a more wooded section, Whalesborough Pound. This is now fully dredged and close to original size. At the end of the pound is a fine new accommodation bridge with a 7ft headroom to allow navigation, built as part of the regeneration project.



After the bridge the canal channel broadens out; on the far side is the Whalesborough Weir an original canal structure which is now streamlined with a concrete facing, which lets the water spill into the lower length of the River Strat. A recent addition is the new fish pass to allow migration up and down the river systems.

The river and canal share the same course for the 70yds to the modern A39 road bridge. Take the

new pedestrian underpass which will take you under the A39 and onto the former canal bridge before Helebridge Basin.

11. Helebridge Wharf and Basin

Beyond the bridge is Helebridge Wharf and Basin. Access to the Wharf is a few yards to your right. The Wharf is mainly grassed over now but with a small car park. The Basin is now a stock pond for the local angling association. The Basin is the end of the two mile broad section of canal that comes up from Bude. It was here that cargoes were transhipped between barges and tub boats for the journey inland to the canal network after negotiating the Marhamchurch Inclined Plane at the end of the Basin.



At the far end of the wharf is a low, stone building which once acted as the barge workshop. It has been restored and is used as a museum store. One of the Bude Canal tub boats is now on display in the barge workshop along with other local heritage artefacts owned by Bude-Stratton Town Council. The building is open every Sunday from late July to the end of September from 2pm to 5pm, manned by volunteers from the Bude Canal and Harbour Society. Close to the water's edge there is a large anchor stone with the inscription 6.12.17.

12. House, Milepost and Incline

Returning to the canal bridge, one of the old boundary stones of the canal company, marked 'BC 1839' can be seen in the wall between the canal and river bridges. On the north side of the basin is the towing path and adjacent to the path stands the house where George Caseborne (Canal Engineer 1832-1876) lived.



At the foot of the boundary wall is the two-mile milepost. Continuing eastwards the water ends at the foot of Marhamchurch inclined plane. Once derelict and overgrown this last section of about 100 yards, and the lower slope of the plane, have been cleared to show the actual channel and the incline. This work was done as part of the regeneration project.

The inclined plane had a rise of 120ft and is 836ft long. The remaining part of the plane above the pumping station is in private ownership and is not clear to see, having become part of gardens.

To the north of the path, by the pumping station, is the former Box's Iron Foundry, where canal ironwork was cast. An inclined plane rail can be seen above the door lintel in the gable end wall.

From Helebridge you can retrace your steps to Bude along the towpath or the cycle route or return via a longer route (signposted near the A39 bridge) which takes you to Widemouth Bay and back along the coastal path.

HISTORY OF THE CANAL

The Bude Canal was a remarkable venture, over 35 miles long, opened in 1823-25 and serving a sparsely populated rural area with branches to near Holsworthy, Launceston and the present Lower Tamar Lake, which was the canal's reservoir built in the 1820s.

Its main cargo was sea sand, used to improve the soil. It was mostly a narrow canal built for tub boats. These were wooden boats fitted with wheels which enabled them to run on rails up or down the six inclined planes between the different levels of the waterway. Only the lowest two miles of the waterway were broader to accommodate barges and it is this length that survives intact today. The tub boat section of the canal from Red Post to Druyton Wharf was formally abandoned in 1891.

The inland sections of the Bude Canal are well worth exploring by car and on foot, but a good map and guidebook are necessary to find the remains. The majority of these sections are in private ownership and consent is needed to access the land. The section of canal known as the Bude Aqueduct between Burmsdon and Lower Tamar Lake is owned by the Bude Canal Trust Ltd and is now a public path.

Between 2000 and 2009 extensive works were carried out on the canal from the sea lock to Marhamchurch Inclined Plane in two major projects. Firstly the restoration of the sea lock which included two new sets of gates, stabilisation of the structure, a scheduled ancient monument, dredging and other works which were completed in 2001. This work ensured the continued use of the lock to give access to the canal for the future.

Between 2007 and 2009 the Bude Canal Regeneration Project entered the implementation phase which saw the canal dredged, bank stabilisation, new towing path, reinstatement of the two inland locks and other works.

DISTANCES

Bude Sea Lock via the canal to Helebridge Wharf: 2 miles
Helebridge Wharf via coast to Bude: 4 miles

INFORMATION

The Castle Heritage Centre, The Castle, Bude

FREE Admission

Telephone: 01288 357300

e-mail: thecastle@bude-stratton.gov.uk

Bude Tourist Information Centre

The Crescent Car Park, Bude Tel: 01288 354240

e-mail: budetic@visitbude.info

www.visitbude.info

LOCAL CANAL GROUPS

Bude Canal and Harbour Society *(a registered charity)*

Contact: Mr. Chris Jewell, 4a The Crescent, Bude, EX23 8LE
Tel: 01288 352298 e-mail: info@bude-canal.co.uk
www.bude-canal.co.uk

The Bude Canal Trust Ltd. *(a registered charity)*

Contact: Mr Robin Edmonds, 29a Manor Park, Woolsery,
Bideford EX39 5RH Tel: 01237 431136
e-mail: budecanaltrust@gmail.com
www.bude-canal-trust.co.uk

FURTHER READING

The Canals of South West England - *Charles Hadfield*

Canal Inclines and Lifts - *David Tew*

The Bude Canal - *Helen Harris & Monica Ellis*

The Story of the Bude Canal - *Joan Rendell*

Walking Along The Old Bude Canal - *Bill Young*

Bude Canal Past & Present - *Bill Young*

& Bryan Dudley Stamp

Bude Canal Some Interesting Facts - *Bude Canal
and Harbour Society*

LEAFLETS - WALKS

The Planekeepers Path Leaflet - Cornwall Council

The Aqueduct Trail Leaflet - Cornwall Council

REFRESHMENTS

Bude: many pubs, cafés and restaurants

'The Weir', Whalesborough - Tel: 01288 362234

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This leaflet is one of a series published by the West Country Branch of the Inland Waterways Association to encourage greater use and appreciation of the West Country's canals and rivers.

The IWA is a membership charity that works to protect and restore the country's 7,000 miles of canals and rivers. The Association also provides practical and technical support to restoration projects through its expert Waterway Recovery Group.

To find out more visit the IWA website: www.waterways.org.uk or e-mail iwa@waterways.org.uk



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