

Stover Canal and Hackney Canal



THE INLAND WATERWAYS ASSOCIATION

in association with the Stover Canal Trust

STOVER CANAL

1. Origins

Extending nearly two miles to the north of Newton Abbot into the tranquil Devon countryside, the now disused Stover Canal is a reminder of the local heritage which made this area what it is today.

Built in the era of Canal Mania, the canal was the idea of James Templer II who inherited Stover House and the extensive estate on the death of his father James Templer I in 1782. Valuable Ball clay had been dug from the local Bovey Basin area for many years but the carriage overland to the docks at Teignmouth for onward delivery was difficult and arduous.

A canal, linking to the man-made Whitelake Channel which drained into the River Teign estuary would cut transport time and cost. Ball clay has a very fine consistency and exhibits a distinct whiteness when fired. It was used in the making of clay pipes and latterly was particularly favoured by Josiah Wedgwood for his fine pottery products.

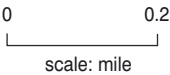


Construction of the Stover Canal was financed by James Templer II and cut through his own land under the direction of engineer Thomas Gray of Exeter. Work started at the Jetty Marsh in January 1790 and by March the first cargo left for Teignmouth Docks from Teignbridge on the Old Exeter Road. The canal reached its terminus at Ventiford in 1792.

Originally, all the locks were turf or wooden sided but later some were rebuilt with Haytor Granite.

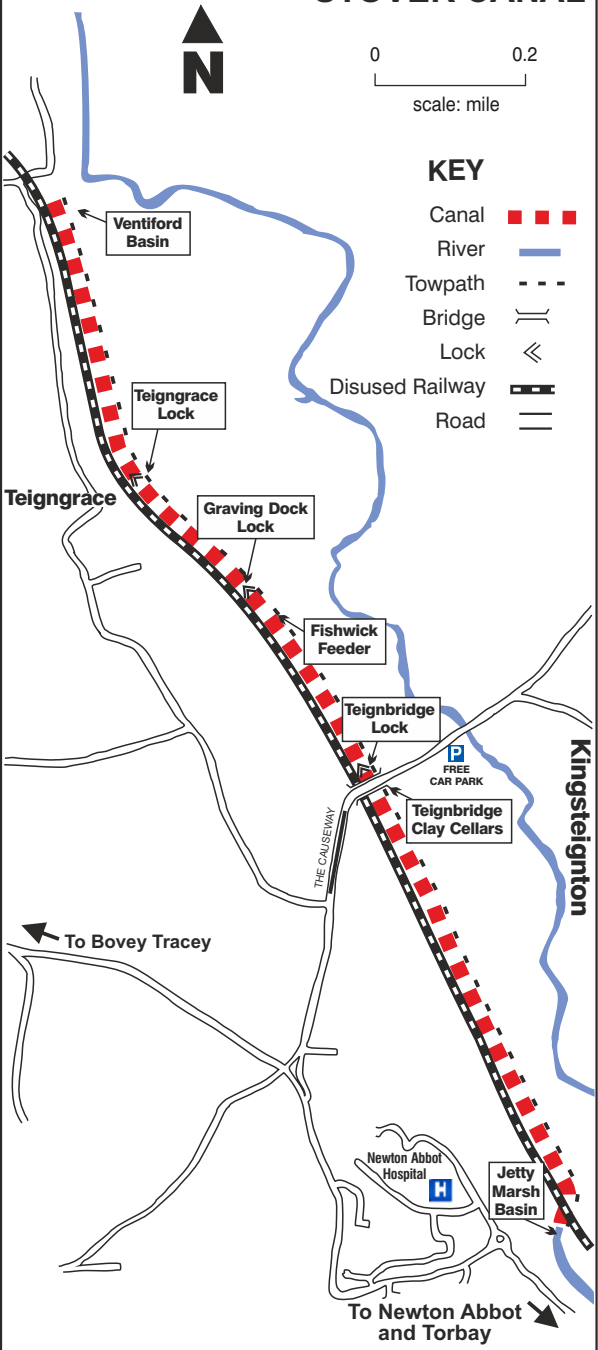
Barges were moved along the canal by distinctive, Viking-style sails or when that was not possible, physically hauled by the bargees.

STOVER CANAL



KEY

- Canal
- River
- Towpath
- Bridge
- Lock
- Disused Railway
- Road



The canal allowed trade on the Teign to increase from 400 barges a year in 1790 to 1,000 per year by 1854, each barge carrying some 25 tons of clay.

In 1820, James's son George Templer opened the so-called Granite Tramway linking the family quarries at Haytor to the canal at Ventiford and began to ship granite to London.

Other cargoes included coal, sand and local iron haematite.

George Templer sold the estate, including the canal, to the Duke of Somerset in 1829 who in turn sold the canal to the Moretonhampstead & South Devon Railway Company in 1862. The canal was leased to a succession of clay companies but the top 0.8km (half-mile) was closed to traffic in 1867. The clay trade continued and in 1931 sixteen barges were still in use. However, trade finally ceased in 1939.

The canal is still owned by Network Rail which has granted a lease to Teignbridge District Council. The Stover Canal Trust has been granted a sub-lease in order to administer restoration of the line of the canal and its features.

Thanks to the work of volunteers of the Stover Canal Trust, it is possible to walk the whole 2.7km (1.7miles) length of the canal. Features of the canal are described in the order of original construction.

2. Jetty Marsh Locks

At this point, the canal joins with the tidal Whitelake Channel. Inside the sea lock was a large holding basin for craft waiting for the high tide. It was enlarged in 1841 when the canal was owned by the Duke of Somerset.

A second lock lifted the canal 1.9m (6'6"). This lock was destroyed when the railway bridge was rebuilt in the 1950s by which time the canal was disused. The canal path is now accessed via a metal walkway through a by-wash arch under the railway embankment and heads due north.



3. Clay Cellars, Offices and the Canal Bridge

The 'Old' Exeter Road between Newton Abbot and Kingsteignton crosses the canal by a Grade II listed bridge bearing the inscription "Erected by order of Thomas Taylor Esq., Thomas Love Esq., Thomas Kitson and Rev. B.W.Wrey. Magistrates of this County 1798". Examples of Coade stone are visible in the shape of a goat's head on the upstream keystone and the face of Neptune on the downstream keystone. An artificial ceramic material named after Eleanor Coade who perfected the process, Coade stone can be moulded and then carved and retains sharp profiles and resists pollutants much longer than Bathstone and limestone. Other examples can be found in St George's Chapel Windsor Castle, Royal Pavilion Brighton, Royal Naval College Greenwich, and Buckingham Palace.

The listed buildings to the south of the bridge were clay cellars and offices of the clay company Watts, Blake, Bearne. Next to the railway crossing, the small building of the industrial unit is believed to be associated with the canal and is also listed.

4. Teignbridge Lock

Lock 3 immediately north of the canal bridge was turf sided, 33.5m (110') long and had a rise of just 0.15m (6"). It was later lined with timber but little remains to be seen of the lock at present.



5. The Fishwick Feeder

In its day, the canal used a huge amount of water. In addition to the feed at the head of the canal at Ventiford, water was diverted from the River Teign by a sluice mechanism,

channelled across the fields to the east and into the canal at this point. The sluice was adjacent to Fishwick House which stood near the river but was demolished in the mid-1960s.



6. Graving Dock Lock

Lock 4 had a rise of 2m (6'9"), was 17m (56') long and originally 4.3m (14') wide. However, with the loss of the yard at Teigngrace Lock in the 1860s and the closure of the canal above this point, a dry or 'graving' dock was created. The eastern wall was moved outward and a raised base created. Barges would be floated in on a full lock, pushed to the side and, when the water was drained, would settle out of the water to allow inspection below the water line. Wooden planks were steamed to shape in the boiler structure and fitted in replacement of damaged or worn planks on the hull. An overflow weir is present just north of the lock.





7. Teigngrace Lock (also known as Locksbridge)

The granite chamber of Lock 5 is intact and had a rise of 1.7m (5'6") and length of 33.5m (110') allowing two barges to use the lock simultaneously. The area to the west was the original boatyard but this was destroyed when the railway was driven through in the 1860s.

The buildings are now in private ownership. Crossing the canal by the bridge you will find a level crossing and along the line to your right is what remains of Teigngrace Halt. Following the footpath ahead leads to the Teigngrace road.



8. Ventiford Basin

The basin is the terminus of the canal and where it met the Granite Tramway which ran from the Templer quarries at Haytor. The western side has granite walls and evidence of the base of a crane and was where Dartmoor granite was loaded onto barges.

Any trace of workings has been effaced by the railway embankment which was constructed in the 1860s. However, on the eastern side, the granite tramway can be seen and here, clay, coal and other minerals were loaded. There is a winding hole which allowed barges to be turned through 180 degrees.

The stream at the northern end, the Ventiford Brook, was controlled by a sluice (now gone) which raised the level allowing water to feed the canal through a culvert under the track. During excavation of the silt in the basin, volunteers exposed the remains of four hulked barges. A clay-cored dam has been constructed at the southern end to retain water and a replica crane was unveiled in September 2021.



THE HACKNEY CANAL

1. Introduction

The Hackney Canal runs for just over half a mile from Kingsteignton to the River Teign and was constructed for Lord Clifford also to carry clay to Teignmouth avoiding the overland journey by packhorse. It had just one sea lock to join the Hackney channel of the Teign.

It opened in 1843 and the Clifford Estate's clay traffic lasted until 1928. In 1958, drainage and flood relief works were carried out for the local area and the racecourse which obliterated the short canal. However, some features remain.

2. Clay Cellars

The terminal canal basin has been built over and is no longer visible. One of the clay cellars remains and is in use as a showroom of the Swanson Motor Company in Pottery Road on the Kingsteignton Trading Estate.

3. Hackney Lock and Wharf

Now situated within the Hackney Marshes Local Nature Reserve, Hackney Lock was the sea lock which lowered barges from the canal to the River Teign. Only part of the lock chamber survives, with hollow quoins for the lower gates. Originally it accommodated two 16.5m (54') by 4.3m (14') barges end to end but it has been partly filled in as part of a flood defence scheme.



RESTORATION

Since 1999 a group of enthusiasts have dedicated themselves to the preservation and restoration of the Stover Canal. Built in the 18th Century, the canal was used for nearly 150 years

to transport clay and other minerals from the Bovey Basin, and granite from quarries on Dartmoor, to the docks at Teignmouth.

After extensive negotiations between Network Rail (the owners of the canal) and Teignbridge District Council, who owned Jetty Marsh and Ventiford Basin, a lease in favour of the Stover Canal Trust was signed in February 2010 allowing restoration to commence in earnest.

Completion of the first phase whereby the lower section was opened to public access was marked in August 2013.

Restoration of the Graving Dock Lock was celebrated in July 2017. The Trust aims to preserve the line of the canal and restore the features.

CYCLING AND WALKING

The route of the canal is well served for cyclists and walkers. The Stover Canal Trust volunteers maintain the towpaths. Alongside the lower section from Jetty Marsh to the Canal Bridge is a walkers-only path.

The Devon County Council “Stover Trail” cycle and walkway connects Newton Abbot to Bovey Tracey and follows the line of the upper section from the Canal Bridge to Ventiford Basin. Walkers can divert from the Trail at various signed points to enjoy the towpath.

The section between the road crossing and Teigngrace Lock is also part of the Devon County Council “Templer Way”, a designated 29km (18 mile) walk from Haytor to Teignmouth following, as closely as possible, the route of the Templers' ventures.

WATERSIDE WILDLIFE

Many varied species of wildlife and birds can be seen along the canal as well as insects, grasses and fungi. A local enthusiast has noted nearly 1,000 varieties over a three-year period.



The environment ranges from the dry canal bed to the waterlogged area at the Fishwick Feeder as well as undisturbed, low-growing vegetation and high trees. Bats are known to use the

canal corridor from the South Hams Special Area of Conservation towards Dartmoor and a wide catalogue of birds use the area around the River Teign for nesting and foraging.

HISTORY OF THE CANALS

The Stover Canal

Construction of the Stover Canal was financed by James Templer II of Stover House and cut through his own land under direction of engineer Thomas Gray of Exeter. Works started in January 1790 and by March the first cargo left from Teignbridge for Teignmouth Docks. The canal reached its terminus at Ventiford in 1792.

The canal was built primarily to carry ball clay from the Bovey Basin to Teignmouth where it was transhipped to coastal vessels for its onward journey to the potteries. Ball clay has a very fine consistency and exhibits a distinct whiteness when fired. It was particularly favoured by Josiah Wedgwood for his fine pottery products.

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The Hackney Canal

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FURTHER READING

The Canals of South West England (*Charles Hadfield*)

Lost Canals and Waterways of Britain (*Ronald Russell*)

The Haytor Granite Tramway and Stover Canal (*M C Ewans*)

Walking the Dartmoor Waterways (*Eric Hemery*)

The Haytor Granite Tramway and Stover Canal (*Helen Harris*)

REFRESHMENTS

MT Tums Café, Teignbridge Sidings, Exeter Road, TQ12 3QJ
/// folk.laces.support Tel: 01626 685687

Locksbridge Tea Gardens, Teigngrace Lock, Teigngrace,
Newton Abbot, TQ12 6QP
/// skirting.items.alternate Tel: 07918 157031

TOURIST INFORMATION

6, Newton Abbot Indoor Market, TQ12 2RJ
Tel: 01626 215667

LOCAL CANAL GROUP

The Stover Canal Trust Tel: 01626 362609
www.stovercanal.co.uk

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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 Inland Waterways Association is a membership charity that works to protect and restore the country's 7,000 miles of canals and rivers.

IWA is a national organisation with a network of volunteers and branches who deploy their expertise and knowledge to work constructively with navigation authorities, government and other organisations. 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 email iwa@waterways.org.uk.



Although great care has been taken in preparing this leaflet, no responsibility can be accepted for any errors or their consequences.



STOVER CANAL

The aims of the Stover Canal Trust are to promote, restore, interpret and maintain the line and works of the Stover Canal as a valuable historical and recreational amenity for the benefit of all. Information about the Stover Canal Trust is available at www.stovercanal.co.uk

Front cover photograph courtesy of Paul Taper