

A brief history of the importance of Bude sand and its resulting construction of the Bude Canal with this section relating to the Bude Aqueduct.

Due to the heavy, wet and cold acid condition of the soil on the Atlantic side of North Cornwall and Devon, much of the area was looked upon as extremely poor pasture land.

However, as early as the 14th century, land within the grounds of Tavistock Abbey had been enriched with the high level of calcium rich sand from Widemouth Bay which had been transported by pack mules.

In many areas where possible, burnt lime was being used to similar effect in the mid 1790s but Bude sand was being used locally in the mid 1700s.

Although the sand was available free of charge, loading and transport costs increased with the distance and with the poor condition of the road network this was still being done by pack mules. By the 1770s road conditions improved sufficiently to accommodate wheeled transport but the increased levels of traffic soon caused concern among locals with the associated increase in wear and tear.

1774 The first proposal for a canal was put forward by **John Edyvean** with **Edmond Leach** and **John Box** surveying a possible route.

All three presented evidence to the House of Lords Committee and the subsequent **Act received Royal Assent on 24th May, 1774.**

1777 **John Smeaton** estimated the costs as £119,201 and raised an alternative plan to reduce the costs but neither scheme was started.

1785 An attempt was made by **Edmond Leach** to revive the canal project by introducing some new ideas based on John Smeaton's report.

Early in the 1790's further interest by **Lord Stanhope** of Holsworthy supported yet another survey later carried out by **John** and **George Nuttall** in 1793 for a canal between Bude, through Holsworthy to Hatherleigh. In the same year another surveyor, **John Fulton** put further ideas forward similar to those of **Edmond Leach** using the weight of water to provide the power to work the inclined planes. He patented his ideas in 1774.

With the onset of the ongoing war with France none of these ideas progressed any further until:-

1817 **James Green** and **Thomas Shearne** were invited to re-survey the proposed route.

1819 The Bude Harbour & Canal Company was formed with 350 shareholders. James Green made a subscription of £3000 and was appointed as the engineer.

The 2nd Act of Parliament was obtained on the 4th June for the revised scheme with costs reduced to £91,617.00 and the inauguration start of work commenced on the 23rd July 1819.

1823 On the 8th July the canal from Bude to Holsworthy was officially opened with a water supply to the Hobbacott inclined plane via the Aqueduct from the new reservoir now known as Tamar Lake.

1825 The branch line to Druxton (nr. Launceston) was officially opened with the final overall costs now believed to be £120,000.

- 1832 – 1876** George Casebourne took over as the appointed engineer of the Bude Harbour & Canal Company.
- 1838** A terrific storm disastrously destroyed the breakwater and lock gates at Bude which had to be rebuilt.
- 1891** With the introduction of the railway the initial surge in trading reversed, with the taking away of the majority of additional transport usage of the canal and the increasing use of artificial fertilisers causing a continuing reduction of revenue and the canal was finally closed by the Bude Harbour and Canal (Further Powers) Act (54 & 55 Vict c 75) on 3rd. July for partial abandonment. The local authority was empowered to obtain water for Bude and Stratton with various ongoing negotiations for the purchase of the land and canal. The Stratton and Bude Improvement Act was passed and received the Royal Assent on 17th April 1902 (Edward VII c 258). This also enabled the selling off of disused sections of canal land.
- 1902** On the 1st January the canal between the reservoir and Bude harbour (excluding both the Holsworthy and Launceston branches) was purchased by the Stratton & Bude Urban District Council.
Construction of the filter beds and a piped water supply began immediately and for many years the land between Vealand and Helebridge lay disused.
- 1960** The passing of the Bude & Stratton Urban District Council Act empowered the disposal of the above disused sections.
- 1967** Tamar Lake was taken over by the North Devon Water Board although the ownership of the Aqueduct section through to Burmsdon was retained by North Cornwall District Council.
- 1996** North Cornwall District Council decided to relinquish ownership and handed over the Aqueduct branch to a newly formed Bude Canal Trust. The Trust, a registered charity, was set up specifically to take over the ownership and committed to maintaining and promoting the historical integrity of the Canal, particularly the length now in the Trust's ownership.
- 2006** An agreement was reached between the Trust and Devon County Council to establish a formal Public Footpath along the route of the old towpath on the Devon length of the Aqueduct branch. With a length of almost 8km/5 miles, this is the longest single Public footpath in Devon.
- 2007** Following discussions with the Local Authorities and other interested parties, the Bude Canal Trust Partnership was established. The Partnership is an arrangement whereby the member bodies consider the most appropriate means of managing the lands of the Bude Canal Trust. The Board of the Partnership, under the Chairmanship of the Trust, decides and agrees a priority list of appropriate works, undertaken on behalf of the Trust and of the Partnership as a whole.

The lands of the Bude Canal Trust, comprising the entire 8km/5 mile length of the old Aqueduct branch, represent the longest publicly accessible length by far of this very historic canal, and the most extensive section of which it is possible to ensure the maintenance and enhancement of the Canal's heritage features.