

**1. Edford Bridge ST 668489**

About 75 yards north of the Duke of Cumberland, a footpath heads west (over a wooden stile) along the bed of the canal. It leads to the old packhorse bridge over the canal. The underside of the arch has been infilled to prevent its collapse. The west face of the bridge can also be seen, but the canal westwards has disappeared. Returning to the main road, there is a masonry-lined chamber, still retaining water.

**2. Eastwards towards Ham ST 670489**

Taking the footpath east, to Ham; follow the field edge then go through the gap in the hedge. Beyond this, the footpath follows the towpath on the south side of the canal bed, clearly defined for some 100 yards. In the woodland beyond, there is little trace of the canal and the footpath is difficult to follow.

**3. Westwards from Ham ST 677487**

Opposite a pole-mounted electricity transformer (labelled Ham Corn Mill), a waymarked footpath heads west over a stile, then over another stile into woodland. It runs along the towpath for 200 yards, with the canal bed on the north side.

**4. Ham to Coleford ST 677487**

From the road, over a wooden stile, the waymarked path runs between hedges. After 100 yards the canal becomes visible. After crossing a stile, the canal can be followed through woodland. The path rises around the edge of a cutting and then, after another stile, descends to rejoin the towpath. Alongside a wooden footbridge and stile, a short stretch of the cut retains water. The canal disappears across an open field; follow the path along the northern boundary of the field and beyond, to join the road in Coleford.

**5. Coleford Aqueduct ST 685488 ("Huckyduck")**

From the road, a signposted footpath heads northwards to the aqueduct. From the path, there is a good view of the stone-faced two-arched aqueduct which spans the valley. Although now lacking any parapet, it was described in an 1825 pamphlet as a 'noble and stupendous aqueduct'.

**6. Coleford Embankment ST 687489**

Pass through a stile in the stone wall just north of the Methodist Church. The course of the canal is by the line of trees. Take the path over a stile; it continues via the towpath, over an embankment. The canal bed

disappears as it crosses a field; but reappears before it enters a cutting which was intended to lead to a tunnel.

**7. Vobster Bridge ST 707494**

Just south of Vobster Cross, the road crosses the canal by a bridge. On the west side, the bridge arch (filled in) and course of the canal bed can be seen. East of the bridge, the line of the canal can be seen as a line of trees curving round the south side of the field.

**8. Conduit Bridge ST 730506**

There is no footpath here, however the bed of the canal is visible on both sides of the road, north of the railway bridge.

**9. Murtry Aqueduct ST 762498**

Take the footpath from the layby at Hapsford, over the stile. Follow the path beside the river which leads to the aqueduct.

**10. Whatcombe Wall ST 771494**

Leave the road by a gate to cross the railway diagonally via a footpath and through a gate. The path gradually descends alongside an increasingly tall stone wall which is the face of the canal embankment. A short length of canal bed continues southwards.

## FUSSELL'S BALANCE LOCK

The iron master, James Fussell, of Mells, patented in 1798 a 'balance lock' or boat lift, and a trial 20ft lift for the Dorset & Somerset Canal was built at Barrow Hill, near Mells. It had a large masonry chamber, divided into two parts. Each part contained a caisson (or tank) of water, to accommodate 10-ton boats. The caissons were counterbalanced and supported by chains. The lift was successfully demonstrated in 1800 and the pits for four other "balance locks" were also dug. However, their remains are not accessible by any public footpath.

## FURTHER READING

*The Dorset & Somerset Canal* Kenneth Clew  
*Old Mendip* Robin Atthill  
*Canal Inclines and Lifts* David Tew  
*The Canals of South West England* Charles Hadfield  
*Ordnance Survey Map* — Landranger 183 Yeovil & Frome

## TOURIST INFORMATION

The Round Tower, Bridge Street, Frome, BA1 1 1BB  
Tel: 01373 467271

## BUS SERVICES

Check with Tourist Information Office (above)

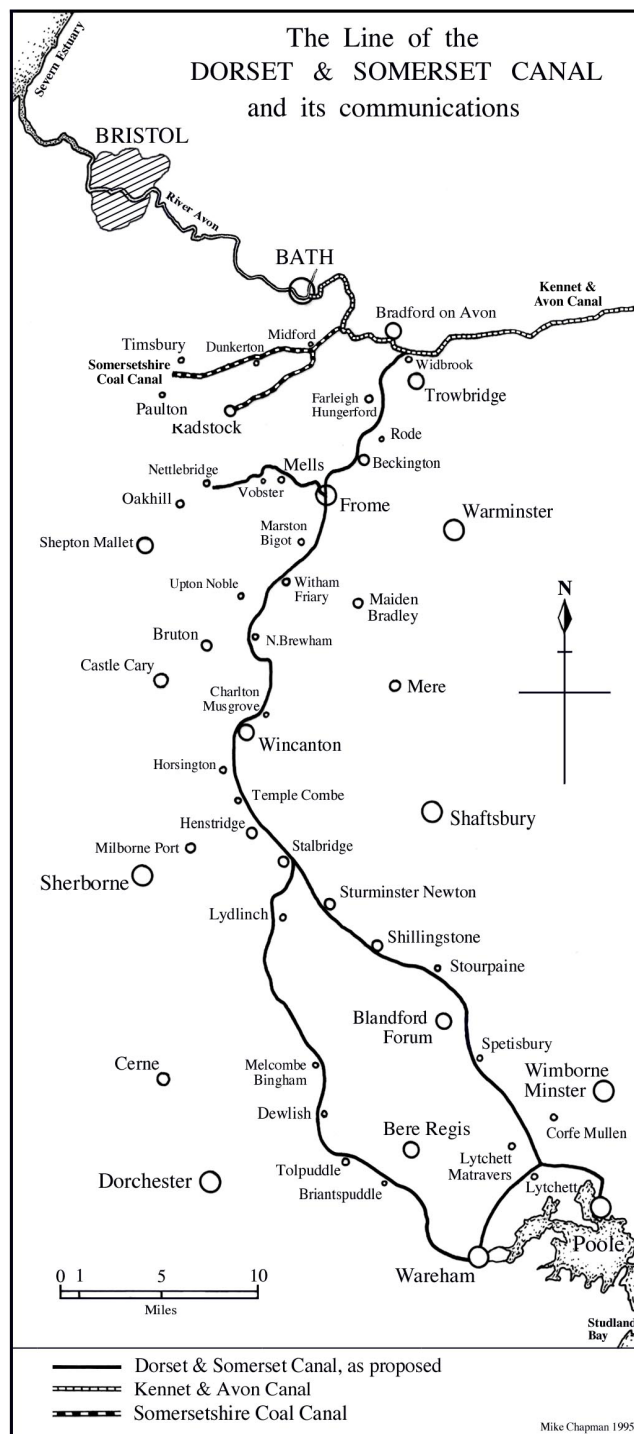
## REFRESHMENTS NEARBY

Edford	Duke of Cumberland PH
Coleford	King's Head PH
Highbury	Eagle Inn PH, Fish & Chip Shop
Vobster	Vobster Inn PH
Mells	Talbot Inn PH
Spring Gardens	Farmers Arms PH

Most of the canal is on private land.  
Please do not trespass as access can be organised.  
Contact: Derrick Hunt Tel: 01225 863066

Although great care has been taken in preparing this leaflet, no responsibility can be accepted for any errors or their consequences.  
*Feel free to copy this leaflet but please acknowledge the source.*

The Dorset and Somerset Canal Society  
<http://www.dorandsomcanal.org>



# Dorset & Somerset Canal

## BRIEF HISTORY

The Dorset & Somerset Canal was planned to connect the Bristol and English Channels and to connect the counties of Dorset & Somerset into the canal network. It was intended to be built from Bradford on Avon, near Bath, to Poole, Dorset.

The main line was planned to run from the Kennet & Avon Canal, southwards through Frome, Wincanton and Blandford to Poole. An alternative, *via* the Piddle valley to Wareham, was considered.

A branch line was planned to run westwards from Frome up the Mells Valley, *via* Vobster and Coleford to Nettlebridge (on the Fosseway, now the A367).

A route was authorised by an Act of Parliament in 1796 from Bradford-on-Avon, only as far as Shillingstone, but including the 11 mile branch from Frome to Nettlebridge. Work commenced on building some 8 miles of this branch but it was never completed. The main trade was to be coal from the Somerset collieries and clay from Dorset.

During the construction period it was badly affected by unplanned factors. The costs had been underestimated, insufficient funds raised and inflation (because of the Napoleonic Wars) devalued the company's capital. After unsuccessfully trying to raise more funds in 1803, work was finally abandoned. It is believed that only one contractor's boat ever used the canal.