

## HISTORY OF THE CANAL

The Bude Canal was opened in 1823-5 and was over 35 miles long, with branches to near Holsworthy, Launceston and the present Tamar Lakes. Its main cargo was sea sand, which was used to improve the soil.

The canal was mostly a narrow channel for small tub boats, which had wheels so that they could run on rails up or down the six inclined planes between different levels of the waterway. Only the lowest two miles of the canal were broader, to accommodate barges.

Trade on the canal did not meet expectations and was reduced by improvements to roads, use of artificial fertilisers and the arrival in 1878 of the railway at Holsworthy. Most of the tub boat section of the canal was formally abandoned in 1891, the broad section (which survives almost intact) in 1960.

Bude Aqueduct is the name given to the feeder arm, built in 1819-1823, which supplied water to the canal from its reservoir at Tamar Lake. Four miles long, the arm was navigable by tub boats as far as just beyond Virworthy Wharf, which is 424 feet above and 13 miles by canal from Bude.

The canal company sold its undertaking in 1901 for water supply purposes to Stratton and Bude Urban District Council, who used the feeder arm to carry water to Venn and then piped it to Bude and Stratton. The rest of the canal was formally abandoned in 1912.

Tamar Lake and the Bude Aqueduct were transferred to the North Devon Water Board in 1967 and the lake is now owned by South West Water. The aqueduct, by then disused, was sold in 1986 to North Cornwall District Council. The Bude Canal Trust Ltd acquired the aqueduct in 1996.

## PLEASE NOTE

The Bude Aqueduct footpath is a public right of way as far as the River Tamar at Burmsdon. There is parking available at Lower Tamar Lake.

## DISTANCES

Lower Tamar Lake to Burmsdon Bridge: approx. 5 miles. A shorter return can be made by road.

## REFRESHMENTS

Upper Tamar Lake:  
Peninsula Restaurant (April - October)

## INFORMATION

**Virworthy Wharf**, Canal Information Centre.  
**Bude Castle Heritage Centre**, The Castle, Bude.  
Open daily. Admission charge. Tel: 01288 357300.  
**Tourist Information and Canal Interpretation Centre**  
The Crescent, Bude. Tel: 01288 354240.

## 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*

## LOCAL CANAL GROUPS

**Bude Canal and Harbour Society** (a registered charity)  
Contact:- Mr. B. D. Stamp  
Ebbingford Manor, Bude, Cornwall EX23 8LN  
Tel: 01288 352808  
[www.bude-canal.co.uk](http://www.bude-canal.co.uk)

**The Bude Canal Trust Ltd** (a registered charity)  
Contact:- Mr. M. Stanton  
Venn Cottage, Pancrasweek, Holsworthy,  
Devon EX22 7JX  
Tel: 01288 381436

## Published by the

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This leaflet is one of a series being published by the West Country Branch of the IWA to encourage greater use and appreciation of the West Country's canals and rivers. The IWA is a national charity, founded in 1946, which cares for our waterways heritage. To find out more or to join, write to the IWA at: Island House, Moor Road, Chesham, HP5 1WA. Telephone: 01494 783453 Web: [www.waterways.org.uk](http://www.waterways.org.uk)

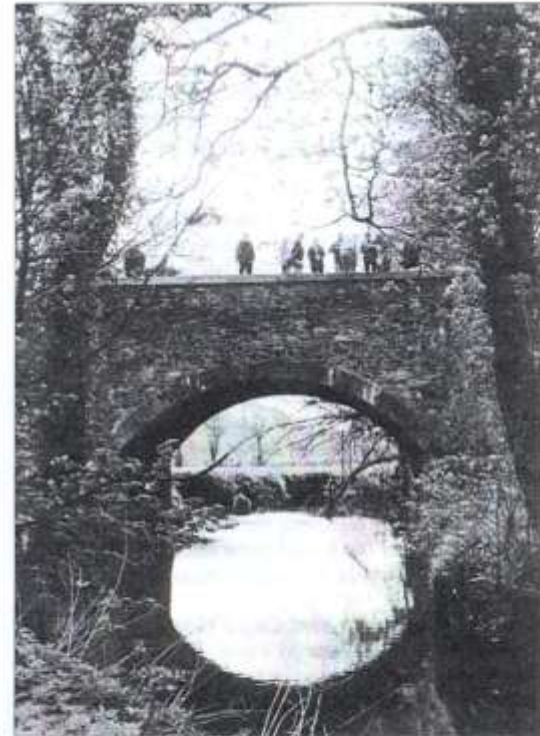
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The Inland  
Waterways  
Association

# Bude Aqueduct

The Feeder Arm of the Bude Canal:  
Lower Tamar Lake to  
Burmsdon Bridge



THE INLAND WATERWAYS ASSOCIATION

### 1. Lower Tamar Lake

A 70-acre reservoir (Tamar Lake) was constructed at Alfordisworthy, drawing water from the River Tamar to supply the Bude Canal. Today, it is known as the Lower Tamar Lake.

### 2. Side Weir and Water Channel

Leave the Lower Tamar Lake car park and take the footpath northwards along the west side of the lake, towards its north end, which is silted and shallow; the reed beds are feeding grounds for birds. Just beyond the bird hide, the path reaches the old side weir, which controlled flows of water into the reservoir. Return towards the dam.

### 3. Overflow Weir and Dam

Just below the signpost and stone plinth, a flat bridge spans the former outlet from the by-pass water channel. When the lake ceased to be used for water supply, the dam at its southern end had to be made safe and the water level has been lowered three feet. Cross to the far side of the dam and turn right over the bridge; turn right again, descend the slope and then bear left.

### 4. Bude Aqueduct

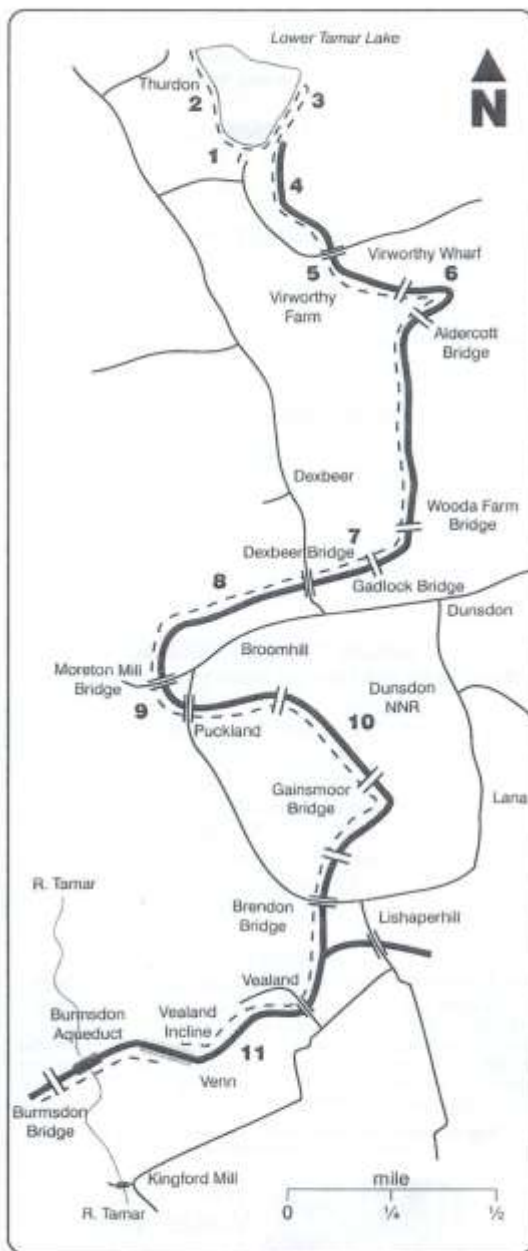
In the grass of the path as you bear left is a modern cast iron "Bude Aqueduct" marker; the water channel itself starts at a low stone arch on your left and then continues southwards. This length was not navigable, only a water feeder to the canal.

### 5. Virworthy Wharf

The bend north of the road bridge marked the upper limit of navigation. The road crosses the canal by a low, stone bridge. South of this bridge, the canal widens out into a basin; by its side is a stone former canal warehouse, which has now been turned into an information centre regarding the Bude Canal. Mounted close to the water is a bound stone inscribed "BHC" (for the Bude Harbour & Canal Company).

### 6. Virworthy Farm and Cape Horn

The canal reaches Virworthy Farm. Beyond the farm, the canal embankment can be seen curving sharply to the right (Cape Horn) to reach the opposite side of the valley. In the base of the embankment, there is a stone-arched culvert for a stream. The canal continues past the site of Aldercott Bridge, where its stone abutments remain.



### 7. Wooda Farm and Gadlock Bridges

The next bridge over the canal has a flat, concrete span but it retains the original cast iron arched supports; it also has stop grooves. A short length of the canal has been dammed, with a pipe laid to carry the water, at the point where the embankment crosses a stream. The canal continues through Gadlock Bridge, which also has stop grooves.

### 8. Dexbeer Bridge and Bound Stone

Dexbeer Bridge has been rebuilt with only a low, stone arch to allow water to pass. The damp, overgrown canal bed continues beyond and, after about half a mile, there is another "BHC" bound stone on the right-hand side of the towing path.

### 9. Moreton Mill and Puckland Bridges

Moreton Mill Bridge has also kept its four original cast iron arches. There is then a straight, wet length of canal to Puckland Bridge. This is a modern structure with just a small arch to allow canal water through.

### 10. Broomhill Bridge to Brendon Bridge

Broomhill Bridge has an iron stop groove on its east side. Continuing its route along the contour, the canal passes through Gainsmoor Bridge and an accommodation bridge, both simple, flat structures. Brendon Bridge has a pair of stop grooves on its north side.

### 11. Vealand to Burmsdon Bridge

After Brendon Bridge continue along the towpath and after about 200 yards the junction with the Holsworthy main Line is seen where the canal widens out. The next bridge is Vealand and the canal carries on to the top of the Vealand Incline Plane which is also the site of the former water treatment works. Carry on down to the bottom of the plane where the boat bays were sited. The path continues on the left-hand side of the canal bed until the embankment leading to the recently refurbished Burmsdon Aqueduct. The canal continues with permissive access for 600yds beyond Burmsdon Bridge which carries a farm track over the canal, but there is no exit after this point so you must return along the canal to Brendon Bridge.