

West Dean Village History Trail

SALISBURY – SOUTHAMPTON CANAL

No 10

This board has been placed where this canal once ran. The Act of Parliament authorising construction of the canal was passed in May 1785. There was already a canal from Andover to



CANAL STONE IN THE RIVER TODAY

Redbridge, at the head of Southampton Water. This one was designed to link with that one at Redbridge to extend to Northam on the Itchen River in Southampton and to run from a point on the existing canal near Kimbridge to Salisbury. The cost was estimated at £48,929 16s 6d. After some delays in obtaining the land, work began in 1786. The width of the canal was to be 15 feet at the bottom and 27 feet at the top water level and its depth 4 feet. There was to be a short tunnel near Salisbury and 17 locks to cover the 14 miles from Kimbridge to Salisbury, each

able to take a boat up to 60 feet long and 8 feet wide. To supply these locks there were to be two water reservoirs, one at West Grimstead and one at Alderbury.

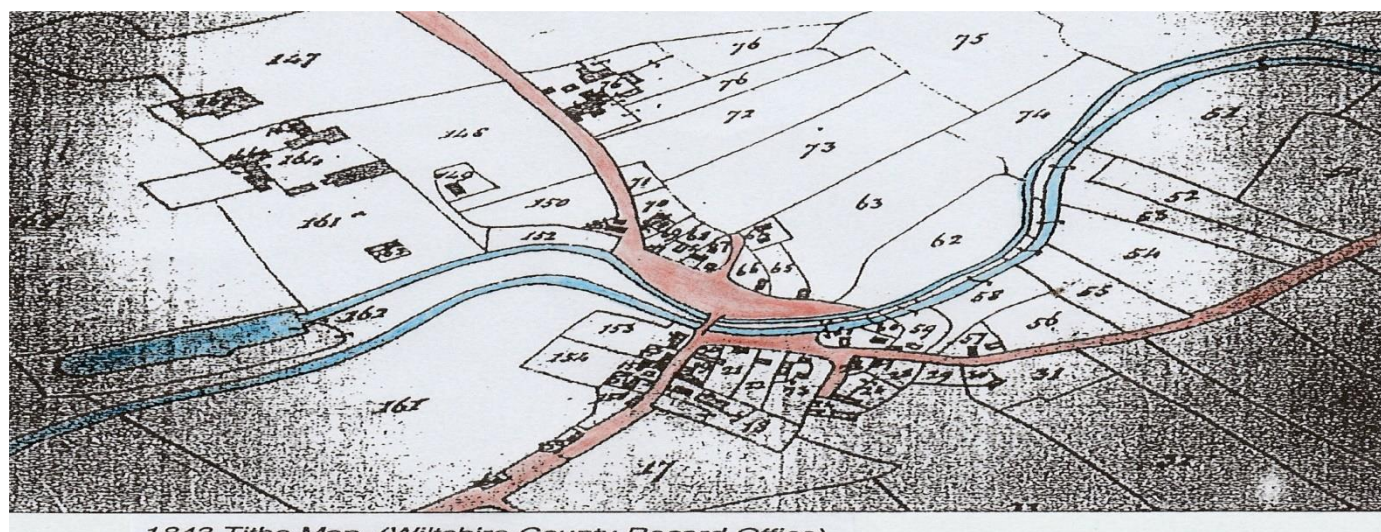
By April 1802 the Salisbury arm was navigable through 7 locks as far as West Dean and opened to traffic, the charges being 2d per ton per mile with chalk, lime and other manures allowed at half toll, 1d a mile. By the end of that year barges carrying 25 tons of cargo could go as far as the 15th lock at Alderbury where a wharf was made and a horse tram-road built to link to the turnpike road.

Costs, however, had risen substantially and shareholders were somewhat more than reluctant to invest further. A further £2500 was needed to complete the remaining three miles from Alderbury and could not be found. In 1803-04 the canal company continued to try to raise money, including widely advertising the availability of the open part of the canal, but usage instead tailed off and by 1808-10 had ceased. The canal gradually faded away, some areas became dry, local people reclaimed their lands, pulled down the locks and found other uses for the bricks and stone used in construction.



OLD BRIDGE SHOWING DRY ARCH ON LEFT

In the West Dean area, as the map shows, the canal ran parallel to the river and was still doing so as late as 1843. The bridge which was constructed here had two arches, one for the river and one for the canal. It remained in use until replaced by the present bridge in the 1930s. Once the canal dried up and was filled in through the village centre, the dry arch was used for many years by Mrs Beauchamp to house the carriage used for her horse and carriage taxi.



1843 Tithe Map (Wiltshire County Record Office)

YOU ARE
STANDING BY
THE ROAD
BRIDGE IN THE
CENTRE OF THE
MAP