Visit to Sapperton Tunnel on The Thames-Severn Canal

Suggestions to link the Rivers Thames and Severn had been periodically made since the reign of Elizabeth I, in order to reduce the dependence of London on east coast trade, and allow Severnside collieries to compete with Tyneside.

The major obstacle to the link was the Cotswold Ridge, which was finally overcome in the late eighteenth century by tunnelling under Sapperton Hill. The tunnel was 15 ft wide, 15 ft high and 3817 yards long: the longest in the world at the time. The canal was filled in 1789.

Many miners were engaged as tunnellers, and the Daneway Inn (later known as the Bricklayers Arms before reverting to its original name) was built to house them. Tunnelling started at both ends and also from 25 intermediate shafts sunk along the route.

A group of about 12 went to Sapperton on 26 April 1994, and starting from the church, went down to Daneway, found the Daneway Inn, and walked up to the Western Portal. Returning to the cars, the group then travelled on to Coates, and found the now fully restored Eastern Portal. There was a notice that the Thames and Severn Society were restoring the tunnel and that a boat would be run into the tunnel on bank holidays. (The section of canal below this portal is called the Kings Reach, presumably in commemoration of a visit by George III in 1788 whilst visiting Earl Bathurst during a convalescence at Cheltenham).