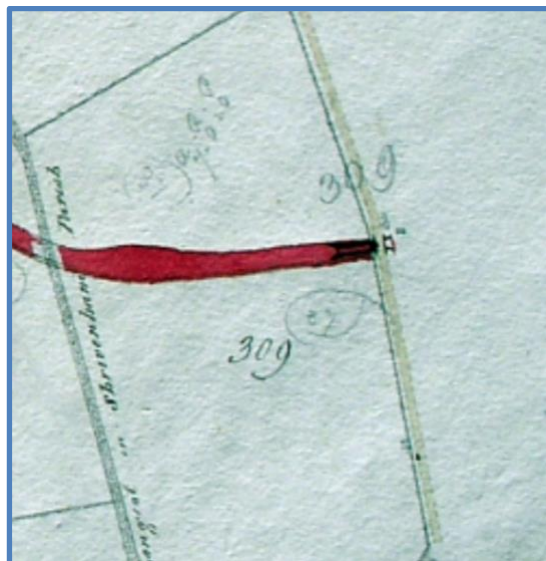




## The Jolly Waterman Public House - Longcott Lock

### What we know so far

The maps that were produced by the Wilts & Berks Canal Company do seem to show that there was a building at Longcott Lock that could have been the Jolly Waterman Public House. We're assuming that the little black rectangle does represent a building and the map is circa 1805, the date that the canal was opened for traffic through this area. The bulge on the red canal course represents where the lock was located.



At the moment we cannot be certain when the public house first opened for business. It's an event of tragedy that gives the first documentary evidence of it. The Reading Mercury of 2<sup>nd</sup> May 1857 reported that, *'a poor woman, named Jordan, whose husband keeps the public-house close to the Lock, in the parish of Longcot, was found drowned.'* The following week the same newspaper reported that the inquest had been held on the body of the woman and concluded that, *'no evidence being adduced to show whether it was by accident or design, a verdict of, "Found Drowned," was returned.'* The woman's name was Frizwith and she was the wife of Robert Jordan. There is more information on Robert a year later when the Berkshire Chronicle newspaper of 29<sup>th</sup> May, printed the cases heard at the law court, Faringdon, *'Robert Jordan of Longcot, beer-house keeper, was charged with keeping open his house after the time of closing, but the evidence not being conclusive, the case was dismissed.'* But whereas the article made no reference to the name of the licenced premises, another article, less than a year later made it clear, *'Robert Jordan, of Longcot, beer-house-keeper, appeared to a summons on the information of police constable Cross, charged with having on the 26<sup>th</sup> ult., at his beer-house called the "Jolly Waterman," wherein goods were then kept and exposed for sale on being requested so to do by Aaron Riddiford, Inspector of Weights and Measures, neglected and refused to produce for examination the measures there found. The bench fined him £1 with 13shillings and 6pence costs.'* (Reading Mercury 12<sup>th</sup> March 1859.) Even though we have established that Robert Jordan was the landlord in the latter part of the 1850s, the census of 1851 placed him and his family at the Old Wharf, Longcot. He is described as a Carpenter, age 56, and possibly he was running the pub at that time. Information provided by a family relative, Margaret Alexander, confirms that he died in 1867.

It was around this time that the Lock seemed to be referred to as the Old Wharf. This is curious as there is no evidence that it was a working Wharf as such, unlike the Wharf located  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a mile to the north that was located specifically to convey bricks from the yard next door to it, coal and general freight. The Beerhouse was located at the Lock and must have had an area where barges could tie up so that the crews could go ashore for refreshments, but its principal use was a Lock rather than a commercial wharf.

The census of 1871 for Longcot provided the information that William Jordan was specifically running the Jolly Waterman at The Lock. He's listed as age 49 and it's likely that he was Robert's son. The Reading Mercury, newspaper of 23<sup>rd</sup> September 1871, covered a court case involving a brawl at the beer-house kept by William Jordan.



The former Jolly Waterman pub facing, cottages opposite and Canal Wharf



We don't know when the Beerhouse closed. The Canal had been in decline with the opening of the Great Western Railway circa 1840, which had a huge detrimental effect upon it's trade.

The Wilts & Berks Canal Company was sold in 1877 and much of its assets were sold off. The Wharf lying  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a mile to the north was sold at the end of 1877. But the canal continued to be used and the Lock would have still been in operation to service it. Therefore, it's likely that the Beerhouse would have been operational to service the needs of the bargemen, but like the Canal, slowly declined in use.