

Deborah Griffiths

The granite tramway.

Back along in the 1790s George Templer's father, James, built a canal from a place called Ventiford, which is about six miles away from here, to the head of the Teign estuary, and the purpose of that was to carry china clay that was being extracted in Bovey Tracey nearby, down to the sea so that it could then be taken away in ships. So when his son George opened the granite quarries, he built a tramway which connected the quarries to the head of the canal, so that the stone could then be taken again away, eventually, by ships. The tramway takes a very unusual form, if not unique; the rails are made out of granite rather than out of iron and essentially you've got rectangular blocks or setts of granite which are laid end to end and unlike in a normal railway where the wheels of the truck are flanged to stop them from falling off the rails, in this case it's the rails themselves, the granite rails which are flanged, and so an L shaped wedge is cut out of them, and in that way the truck would be sure of not slipping off the rails; and so you had this long, very gently sloping tramway upon which a series of flatbed trucks carrying the granite would have been pulled by horses from the quarries down to the canal.