

Spooners Tunnel, Rivelin Valley, Sheffield (SK 3201 8836)

History

The tunnel running through the cliff on the north side of the Rivelin between New Dam and Spooners mill dam (now a children's playground) formed part of the head goit bringing water from a weir (now the site of the Rivelin Chair Sculpture). It is presumed that the tunnel was built in the 1630s at the same time as Spooners Wheel, although may possibly have been refurbished in 1850s when New Dam was built to provide extra water supply to Spooners Wheel. Figure 1 illustrates the course of the tunnel indicated on a map of 1814 and Figure 2 the actual course of the tunnel.

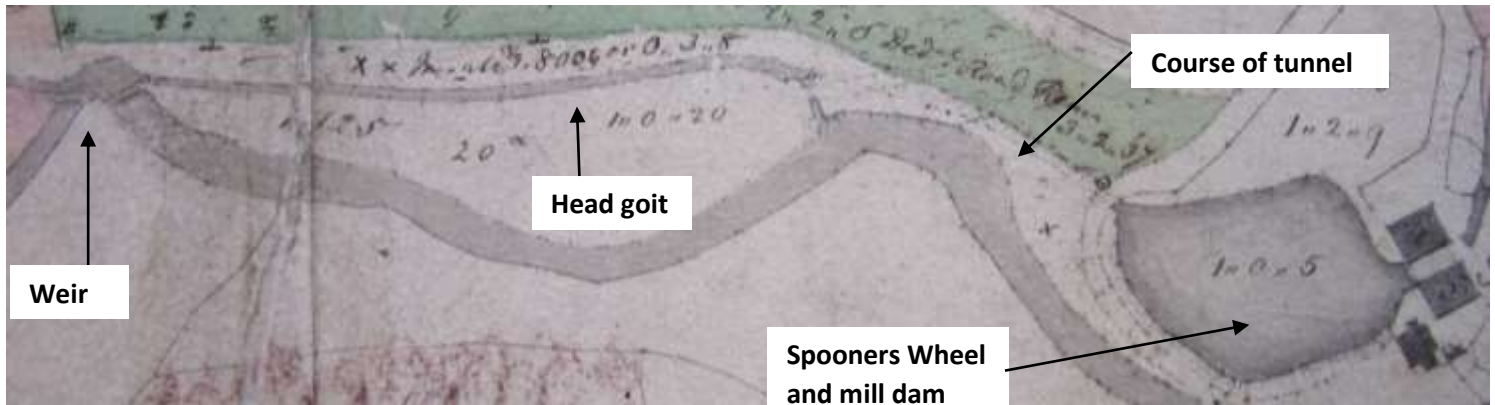


Fig. 1. 1814 Fairbank map showing the course of the Spooners head goit (shown dashed). Sheffield City Council, Libraries Archives and Information: Sheffield Archives FC/P/SheD/486L

Re-discovery of the tunnel in 2009

A small hole appeared in the exposed face of the north bank of the river in January 2009 (probably due to erosion of the bank). This led directly into a rock drivage leading either way from the entrance – 36m in an approximately westerly direction (266°) and 38m in an approximately easterly direction (103°) and blocked at either end. The tunnel is stone-lined in parts; the roof of unlined sections consists of large gritstone slabs. There is a collapse a few metres east of the entrance where one of the roof slabs has dropped and fallen debris partly blocks the passage. Future collapses were thought likely. Some three years later the entrance was sealed with the present bat grille (Photo 1) to prevent further access.

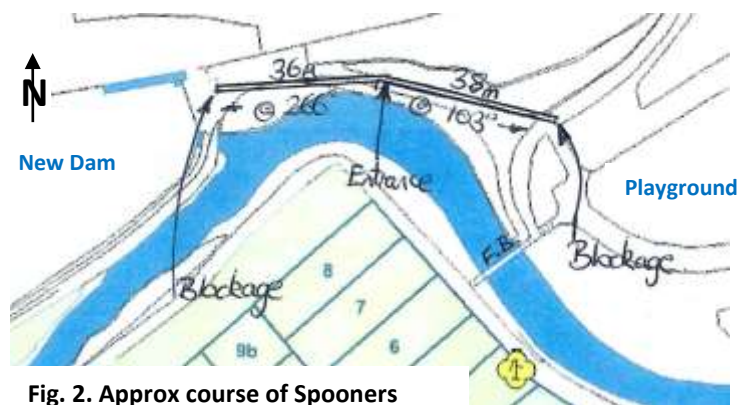


Fig. 2. Approx course of Spooners tunnel as observed in 2009.

Photos 2 and 3 are looking west near the end. The tunnel profile here changes from vertical pack sidewalls with gritstone slab roofing to a (reduced height) stone arching. A 'tide-mark' from what may represent what was the normal operating water level is visible at about the height of the subject's neck. Photo 5 shows one of the large roof slabs. Photo 6 was taken from near the entrance looking east. The collapse (which could be climbed over) is illuminated by the subject. The change in tunnel profile from unlined strata to partial stone arching can be seen.



1. A bat grille in the riverside cliff marks the position of Spooners tunnel.

Article based on information provided to Rivelin Valley Conservation Group, 2016.



2. Spooners tunnel looking west nr the end



3. Spooners Tunnel West End



4. Spooners Tunnel East End



5. Spooners tunnel: roof slab



6. Spooners tunnel from entrance looking east