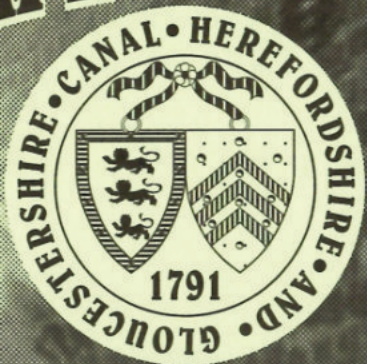


THE WHARFINGER



**Newsletter of the Herefordshire &
Gloucestershire Canal Trust**

50p
free to members

Edition 38
Spring 1993

WHO DOES WHAT . . .

VICE PRESIDENTS	R. E. Barnes TD, <i>Sir John Knill Bt.</i>
CHAIRMAN	Cliff Penny
VICE CHAIRMAN	Mike Potts
TREASURER	Liz Connors
RESTORATION GROUP	Roger Chandler, Brian Fox, <i>Simon Hayward</i> , Karen McKay, Mike Potts, <i>Ian Reid</i>
PRESS & PUBLICITY OFFICER	<i>David Williams</i>
MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY	Roger Morgan
FUNDRAISING OFFICER	David Penny
SOCIAL EVENTS GROUP	Tony Austin-Bailey, Mike Potts
BOATS GROUP	Nigel Jefferies, Derek Gray
MINUTES SECRETARY	Nigel Jefferies
THE WHARFINGER	Cliff Penny, David Penny
HISTORIAN/TALKS	J Dunn, N Jefferies, M Potts
IWA/WATERWAYS LIAISON	Ken Goodwin

Those in italics above are not Directors on the Council of Management

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For addresses and/or telephone numbers please see
CONTACTS on the inside of the back cover.

HONORARY POSTS:-	SOLICITOR	Sue Newbould
	STRUCTURAL ENGINEER	Ron Munden

MEB

Midlands Electricity plc

Printing of The Wharfinger
has been kindly sponsored
by Midlands Electricity plc.

We greatly appreciate this support for
our voluntary work which is intended to
be for the long-term benefit of the
community - *thank you.*

CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTS

THE SAME AS LAST YEAR

In the middle of January I was a guest on the BBC Hereford and Worcester "Afternoon Extra" programme. I briefly outlined our achievements during the past 12 months and "plugged" (*three times!*) the "Tunnel Talk Number 3" that (by no coincidence) was being held the following week [see page 10]. BBC presenter Phil Simpson [no relation to our intrepid explorer Bob Simpson] then asked what I hoped the Canal Trust would achieve in 1993 - "*much the same as last year*" I replied.

At first that seems an inadequate response. Yet (as I explained to the listeners) I would be very satisfied if we could continue as we had in 1992. Why? Simply because, when you review almost any aspect of our work, 1992 was a year of substantial growth and achievement. This was not achieved by accident! A great deal of hard work, by a small number of volunteers, is what turned the work of a larger number of our Members into the positive results that we saw last year. *More people than ever before played a part in our activities - and the results speak for themselves.*

However, we cannot just sit back and say "well done" in the hope that it will just continue as before ... *it won't!* Every aspect of our work [see Chairman's Comments in Edition 36] has to be *effectively planned and managed* in order that 1993 is "much the same as last year" - a credit to us all and a year that we can look back on with a sense of achievement.

So if you played a part in the successes of 1992 - in *any* way - *please* do your bit to help again this year. If you didn't then why not become involved; it really is satisfying (whether with pen or spade - or somewhere in between!) and you will be made most welcome. Just contact the most relevant person from our "Contacts" list to, hopefully, gain a sense of achievement in 1993!

LOCAL AUTHORITY LIAISON

Our last edition of *The Wharfinger* carried details about the Draft Local Plans that were at the consultation stage along the length of the Canal. As a result of that article, and some extensive lobbying, a large number of excellent letters of representation were sent to the Forest of Dean District Council by our Members - and from a number of respected local and national organisations. Whilst we are still hoping that the Council will discuss a significant revision with us (and avoid the

continued on page 2

CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTS . . . (ii)

need for us to "do battle" at the Public Inquiry in respect of the Plan) regrettably we have only received an acknowledgement postcard so far ... Another local authority responded to our representations (*in less than a week*) with a draft revision that largely meets the points that we raised (and discussions are ongoing) - it just shows what can be done. [There will be an "update" in a future edition of *The Wharfinger*.]

WORKING TOGETHER

We are all volunteers. It should not be forgotten that it is the "day job" (*in many cases a demanding one*) that pays the mortgage! The "spare" time we devote to our wholly voluntary endeavours is very precious. We are, therefore, very grateful for all the support that we are given; by our Members, local and national businesses and (in most cases) the local authorities.

Over the past few years we have demonstrated that we have the voluntary resources, and professional abilities, to effectively tackle one of the largest voluntary projects in the two counties. Our motto is "Working *together* in the present, to revive the past, and secure a better future". Let us hope that 1993 will see more "*togetherness*" than ever before!

GRAND PRIZE DRAW

Hopefully, you should find some Grand Holiday Draw tickets enclosed with this edition of *The Wharfinger*. As reported previously, last year we raised just over £2,000 from our draw - a magnificent achievement. Our (repeated) thanks to *everyone* concerned, those who bought and/or sold tickets and, of course, those who donated the valuable prizes!

Whilst full details are on page 13, I should like to thank, very much indeed, those who have donated prizes this year and Sun Valley Poultry, Hereford, who have paid for 32,000 tickets to be printed. This significant support for our voluntary efforts is *greatly* appreciated - thank you. Please "do your bit" and sell a couple of books *now* (before you forget!) - you don't need a mathematical degree to work out that two or three books per Member would take us well over half way to last years total ...

[We fully appreciate that some of our Members do not, as a matter of principle, purchase (or sell) draw tickets. Please do not bother to return them (the print cost is less than the postage) and accept our apologies for the unsolicited mail - it is not practical for us to exclude the few Members concerned from the mailing.]

Cliff Penny, Chairman/Liaison Officer

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1993 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Regular readers will be expecting this edition of *The Wharfinger* to contain full details of the AGM (which the Canal Society regularly held in the Spring). However, our new Charitable Trust status brings with it a number of legal requirements which, together with those of being a Registered Company, mean that the first AGM of the Canal Trust will not be held until the Autumn.

This is to allow for the auditing of our accounts (the financial year end being the 28th February) and for the audited accounts (and a brief Annual Report - a specific legal requirement) to be circulated to our Members prior to the Meeting with a mailing of *The Wharfinger* (in order to reduce postal costs). Therefore the Managing Council have agreed that the AGM should be held in the Autumn in future, to allow our Honorary Treasurer (and the Auditor) time to complete their work and enable us to get the essential paperwork together to coincide with the publication of *The Wharfinger*.

PHOTOGRAPHIC COMPETITION

In the Summer 1992 Edition of *The Wharfinger* we launched a Photographic Competition to try to find a really good, high definition, photograph of Skew Bridge so that the cover of *The Wharfinger* could be improved. By our initial closing date we had received *one* entry (shame on you all!) so the deadline was extended - and that brought in another *three* entries. To those who took the trouble, *thank you*. Unfortunately the re-modelling of the cover has been delayed. In order to put our competitors out of their misery (although they should have received their entries back by now) we have no overall winner. Our search continues for just the right photograph (further details next time)!

COMMITTEE MATTERS

Three Committee meetings are reviewed by our Chairman in order that our Members and supporters are kept up to date ...

NOVEMBER COMMITTEE

■ The Trust had lodged a formal objection to a Planning Application for a golf course near Dymock, as a number of the greens and tees lay on the line of the Canal. Work had commenced, without authorisation, earlier in the year. Specialists engaged by the applicant had specifically recommended that the Canal be reinstated but this had been ignored. The application stated that there had been liaison with the Canal Trust - this was incorrect - there had been no reply to a letter to the applicant, from our Chairman, offering to work together to find a mutually acceptable solution.

■ The Restoration Group's commencement of an occasional newsletter, to provide information for active restoration volunteers, was welcomed.

■ The Vice Chairman reported that a Gloucestershire Parish Council had expressed a wish to assist the Canal Trust.



■ Arrangements for the third "Tunnel Talk" were agreed.

DECEMBER COMMITTEE

■ The Chairman had contacted a number of interested bodies regarding the Planning Application for the proposed golf course on top of the Canal, near Dymock. The

Gloucestershire County Archaeologist had written recommending reinstatement of the Canal.

■ It was reported that a large number of individuals, together with respected national and local organisations, had written to Forest of Dean District Council making representations about the inadequate "Supplementary Planning Policy" that was contained in the Draft Local Plan.

■ The Trust had booked a display space at the 1993 National Waterways Festival (to be held over the August Bank Holiday at Peterborough) and were investigating the costs of a space at the new Inland Waterways Festival at Nottingham, in May.

■ Dr Alan Solomon (a leading international expert on computer virus matters) and Managing Director of S&S International, had donated virus detection software to the Trust, following a request

COMMITTEE MATTERS . . . (ii)

from our Chairman. [see page 23.] This generous action was greatly appreciated.

■ Thanks were expressed to Member Peter Miles for organising the recent social event at "The Barn", Canon Pyon. Unfortunately only a small number of Members attended what was a very enjoyable evening. It was agreed that a similar social event should be arranged, in due course, in Gloucestershire.

■ The Christmas Dinner, held for the second year at The Colwall Park Hotel, was very successful but, again, only a small number of Members attended.

■ As 1993 is the tenth anniversary of the formation of the former Canal Society it was agreed that this milestone should be commemorated by a special social event in the Red Cross Hall, Hereford, where the inaugural meeting was held [see page 12.], and later in the year a similar event should be held in Gloucestershire.

■ The Restoration Group were investigating various safety and first aid courses.

■ Excellent progress was reported on work at the main Gloucestershire restoration site at Oxenhall. The "first Sunday in the month" work party was replaced by "the first weekend" and a number of additional days were also being worked thanks to the enthusiasm of those concerned. [see Restoration *Update*, page 14.]

■ The Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust had prepared, at our request, a detailed Conservation Report for the main Gloucestershire restoration site at Oxenhall. This ongoing co-operation was greatly appreciated. The Report would be fully discussed with the landowners prior to implementation.

■ Correspondence with Waterway Recovery Group was discussed. It was agreed that we should liaise with WRG with a view to a main WRG Work Camp being organised for 1994, with plans being finalised by June 1993.

■ The Managing Council welcomed the news that Mr Keith Merrick, of Kings Acre Road, Hereford had become our 500th Member. It was agreed that Mr Merrick would be presented with a Canal Trust tee shirt to commemorate the occasion. [See photographs.]

■ The Boat Group were hoping to organise the complete overhaul of the hydraulic drive system of "Mallard". Arrangements for the use of a Welsh Water workshop, over the winter months, to enable additional work to be undertaken on "Mallard" had run into difficulties. These would be resolved if a suitable double axle trailer could be found for the boat so that it could be easily moved. [Page 23]

continued on page 18

BETTER SAFE THAN SORRY !

By Roger Morgan

Have you ever thought about having your own narrowboat? Having done so, perhaps you thought you would like to get a boatbuilder to construct one to your own design? If so, the Trust has a number of excellent boatbuilders who are Corporate Members whom I'm sure would be delighted to talk to you. However, with such a large purchase, one needs to be careful. Let me tell you a cautionary tale.

Last year, having spent 15 years hiring boats to cruise the canal system we decided that we would end our association with Black Prince, Hoseasons, the Blue Riband group and others and get a boat of our own. After talking to a number of our boatbuilder Corporate Members, and visiting a few of them, we decided to order our boat from an exhibitor who we had met at the Braunston boat festival.

Given the current state of the economy with the papers telling us about record numbers of companies going bust, we were rather concerned about the safety of our money, even though our selected builder appeared to have a thriving business with a full order book. Most builders operate a stage payment system for the boats that they build and will sign over the boat to the owner as it is constructed - but what about the deposit! As part of the stage payments, builders often ask for 10% of the cost of the boat as a deposit to confirm the order. Bearing in mind that the average boat is 40-50 ft. and will cost £700-900 per foot, this can mean that such a deposit can be as much as £3,500 with nothing to show for it if the builder goes bust. In order to overcome this problem, the builder we chose agreed to sign an agreement to hold the cost of the boat in a trust account which would be paid over to them (together with the interest) only on the satisfactory completion and delivery of the boat.

The sad part of this story is that the builder did fall victim to the current economic environment and went into liquidation in December. The good news is the agreement worked and we got all our money back (plus the interest) within 2 days, so we are back looking at boatbuilders!

If you are thinking about buying a boat and would like a copy of the agreement for your own use, please get in touch with me (address on the Contacts page). It would be appreciated if you could send a small sum to cover photocopying, postage and also a donation to the Canal Trust.

In the last couple of years the number of sales lines we stock has increased very dramatically. However, until we have our own permanent shop (a little way off yet!) we have to bear in mind that we only have a limited space to exhibit our goods at the various events we attend. We have therefore adopted a policy over the last year of not taking on many new lines, but instead expanding the range of items available within specific lines that we already stock. This is particularly evident with one line, that of Greetings cards, where there are now 6 designs to choose from as opposed to 1 a year ago.

Within this policy 1993 see's a brand new item to add to our line of clothing that will hopefully see the message "Help restore the Canal" carried even further - and higher - than ever before! It is (you've guessed it!) of the very highest quality and very stylish in our traditional colours of black with yellow print. But what is "it" you ask? Well it's the very height of practicality for our lovely, sun drenched, summers that we have in this country - a baseball cap! They are very good value (of course!) at only £4.95 each from the sales stand, or £5.45 (to include P+P) direct from "Him from Sales" (David Penny - see Contacts for address).

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BOOK NOW !

The Canal Trust has a long history of very successful trips to neighbouring canals arranged by Mike Potts. These have been very popular, and resulted in cries of more, more, *please!*. This year the Social events Group are responding to the requests and organising more trips than ever before, as you will see on page 12 of this (and the next) Edition of *The Wharfinger*. The trips will take us venturing far and wide for, what by past experience should be, very enjoyable days out. We will be cruising along beautiful canals, seeing the work of other restoration groups, and even, on one trip, taking a journey on the mountain railway as well! I hope you will join us, but I am told you will have to book early if you want to secure a place - so book now to be one of the lucky ones!

SNIPPETS CORNER

British Waterways are leading the Canals 200 celebrations throughout the country. This is to commemorate the bicentenary of the Canal Age which reached its height in 1793 when 62 canals - half the



canal system - were either being promoted, planned or built [construction of the Herefordshire and Gloucestershire Canal commenced in 1792]. No less than 24 Acts of Parliament passed through The House in 1793 in respect of the construction of canals!

For the Herefordshire and Gloucestershire Canal Trust the year has added significance - being the 10th anniversary of the formation of the former Canal Society - to be celebrated on 21st April [see page 12].



BOTTLE MONEY !

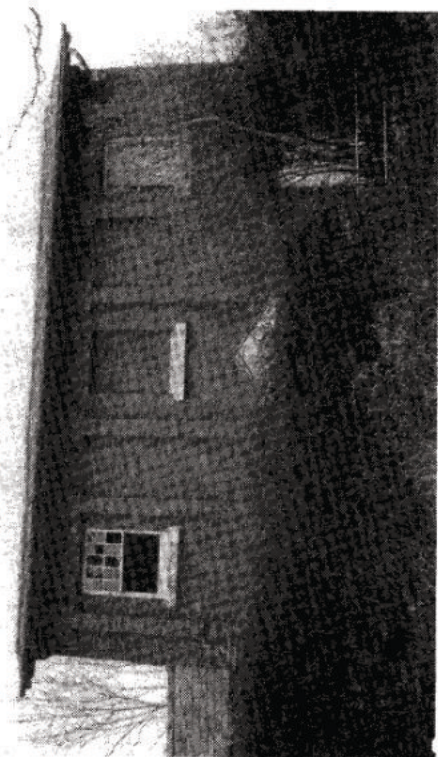
Apart from the *huge* success of the Grand Holiday Draw one of our other (tried and tested!) money makers is the Bottle Stall that forms an essential part of the Canal Trust display. The donation of bottles by Corporate Member Messrs H P Bulmer Limited, and another local drinks manufacturer Davies Brook and Company, plus the *many* bottles donated by some of our Members, meant a clear profit of *over £4 per bottle* last year - to all concerned a most sincere *thank you*.

This item is not, as most of you will have guessed, just to pass on our appreciation for last year but to make our annual plea, please, for even more bottles! Anyone listed on the Contacts page will be pleased to receive or collect. *Thank you*.

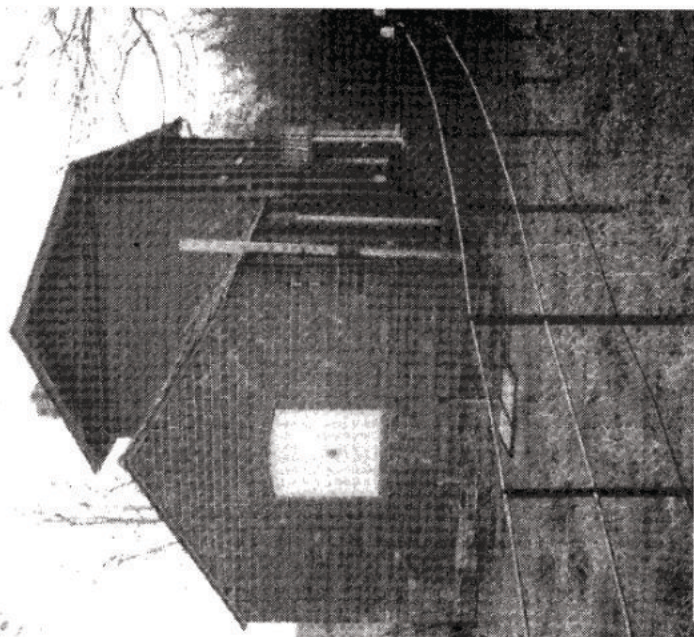
PARISH WATCH

A few editions ago the idea of *Parish Watch* was first mentioned. We asked Members living near the Canal to keep an eye on what is going on in the locality to try and make sure that we were given the earliest possible notice of anything that might have an adverse effect on the Canal - *in any way*.

The destruction of a Canal embankment, in the Dymock area, was swiftly halted thanks to *Parish Watch*. A future edition of *The Wharfinger* will tell the full story (once we are certain that the situation is fully under control). There have been a couple of other telephone calls - about other developments - so it shows just what can be done. *Please* keep up the good work!



ABOVE AND TOP RIGHT: Listed Building Lock
 Cottage, Oxenhall, still vandalised even though
 the lower windows and doors have been clad in
 steel by the Bristol owner.
 LOWER RIGHT: A recent view from Cold Harbour
 Lane Bridge showing the greatly improved Canal.



TUNNEL VISION

A look back through time into the Oxenhall Tunnel

By David Williams

A good story stands repeating and this was certainly proven to be the case on January 21st when Robert Simpson once again presented his ever popular "Tunnel Talk" to an enthralled 'full house' audience of 125 at Ledbury.

Following two equally successful outings for the talk at Dymock and Newent last winter, this unique archive slide and 1960's cine film presentation has now given over 500 local

residents a very fascinating insight into the interior of the 2109 yard long Oxenhall Tunnel. Recording details of the speaker's adventurous and detailed explorations of this long abandoned

construction of the Hereford and Gloucester Canal made with his late father in the 1960's, paddling several times into the dark unknown in double seater canoes, Mr. Simpson's obvious interest and knowledge in the geology of the ground through which the navigators of the eighteenth century had to manually dig, made this talk particularly illuminating. Ably conducting us through the portal and into the depth of the complete black beyond, the first problem encountered and described was finding the actual technique of photography through trial and error. With very high humidity, water constantly dripping through the ceiling wetting camera and

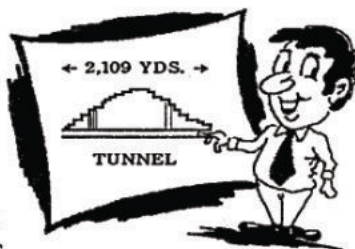
film, and with long distances to illuminate, everyone present had to simply wonder at the sheer ingenuity and quality of pictures eventually produced, in extremely difficult circumstances, without any of the benefits of modern film speeds and waterproof equipment.

The audience was able to trace the path of the Tunnel through the relatively stable Old Red

Sandstone up to the change of rock strata, where full brick lining was introduced as the tunnel passed through the soft marl. One marvelled at the engineering feat of maintaining direction and level with only the most basic instruments as

Mr. Simpson explained that the Tunnel was not dug out from one end, but from the bottom of shafts sunk from the hill above.

The Tunnel was fully in water throughout its length, right up to the point where the roof had collapsed leaving an open cavernous void above. Not being content with leaving their exploration at that point, sufficiently far from natural light for the bravest of us, Bob then explained how they started digging a deep hole down through the collapsed marl in order to penetrate the roof of the closed off section. And this led ultimately to the most interesting and frightening section of all - a short



TUNNEL VISION... *continued*

length demonstrably showing all the effects of the immense pressure of the surrounding rock on the 200 year old brickwork. The original round section of the Tunnel lining was being squeezed unmercifully into distorted shapes until it too eventually collapsed.

The highpoint of the evening was yet to come. With a dinghy load of freshly charged batteries and a tow from another canoe, Bob Simpson took us back into the Tunnel afresh, this time with the benefit of colour cine film. This was all done before the age of video and camcorders, and again, the filming was remarkable in such extremely difficult difficult waterborne circumstances. The extent of crustation and ripples of stalactite-like formations of calcium carbonate could only be wondered at, forming beautiful shapes and colours. Looking at the Tunnel one could almost sense the

physical exertions of the boatmen 'legging' their way (walking literally along the walls lying on their backs on planks laid across the narrow boats) to propel their heavy loads over one mile through the total darkness of the Tunnel.

In giving a vote of thanks to Bob Simpson yet again for re-living his enthralling adventures in the Oxenhall Tunnel, the Chairman of the Trust Cliff Penny stressed again the danger now inherent in venturing into such places. Until full restoration is set in hand, nature will progressively reclaim the space that man has borrowed.

The evening was rounded off once more with a slide show presented by Mike Potts and accompanied by music, indicating the extent of restoration work being carried out and the beauty of the flora and fauna associated with the Hereford and Gloucester Canal.

WELCOME !

Welcome to our two new volunteers for "active service". David Williams has joined the Managing Council as our new Press and Publicity Officer and Mrs Lesley Lowe has offered to assist us with our administration. Both are much needed offers of help and *greatly* appreciated.

David may live in Reading but he has many connections in our area *and* has some very valuable experience that he is willing to draw on for the benefit of the Trust - as will be explained in the next edition of *The Wharfinger*. A very warm welcome to both Lesley and David - thank you.

One of the first Press Releases to be issued under our "new management" was to announce the recruitment of our 500th Member, Keith Merrick of Hereford, who was presented with a Canal Trust tee shirt by Chairman Cliff Penny [see photograph]. *In addition* to our 500 Individual, Senior Citizen and Family Members we currently have over 30 Corporate Members; a sound start to the life of the Canal Trust. However, we are always happy to welcome *even more* Members, and if you would like to become more involved in the work of the Trust then you will be made *very welcome* !

Dates For Your Diary

★ Wednesday 31st March - 8pm

YARKHILL:- *"Canals quiz and social evening"*
Come along and pit your wits, or just enjoy the fun. £1 per head. Many prizes, and refreshments. Yarkhill Village Hall.

★ Wednesday 21st April - 8pm

HEREFORD: *"Ten years of the Society/Trust"*
Social evening, with guest speaker, to celebrate 200 years of British Canals and Ten years of the Society/Trust. Red Cross Hall, Blackfriar Street [by the football ground] Hereford.

★ Sunday 16th May

"Coach Tour and Canal Cruise"
Morning tour of the Stratford Canal. Picnic lunch, followed by a cruise along the Droitwich Canal. A full day, picking up at Hereford and Ledbury. Tickets £10. Places limited, please book early. [Nb. The boat has wheel chair access, advance notice required please.]

★ Sunday 20th June

"Canal Cruise and rail trip"
A full day excursion. A Narrow Boat Cruise from Brecon along the Monmouth and Brecon Canal, through Brynich Lock (very pretty) across the aqueduct and return. Coach to the Brecon Mountain Railway, followed by a train ride. Coach, Cruise, & Train, £12.50. Please book early, limited space.

★ Sunday 11th July

"Explore the H & G Canal"
See the work we have been doing, and remnants on other lengths of the old Canal. Followed by a visit to the National Waterways Museum and Gloucester Docks. Journey by mini-bus. Guided Tour £5; Museum £3.80. Limited space, please book early.

Tickets & information from:-

Mike Potts or Tony Austin-Bailey - see inside back cover
or Tickets from:- Hereford Camera Centre, 53 St. Owen Street
Monmouth Photo Centre, 6 Church Street

★ A Herefordshire and Gloucestershire Canal Trust Event

The BIG prize DRAW!

Enclosed with this edition of The Wharfinger should be some draw tickets. Last year we raised just over £2,000 thanks to the generosity of our prize donors *and* the efforts of many of our Members who bought tickets (and sold some to their friends and colleagues - or even total strangers!). *Please* help us to beat last years magnificent total. A small amount of effort by a large number of people will bring amazing results!

Here is *your* chance to help us build up our restoration fund finances; every pound raised last year was more than doubled by grant aid so please see if *you* can be our star ticket seller! [For more tickets please write to our Treasurer (and official Promoter of the *Grand Holiday Draw*) Liz Connors (see Contacts page) - a stamped addressed envelope would be *greatly* appreciated. *Thank you*.

No 000000	Herefordshire & Gloucestershire Canal Trust - H & G C S	No 000000
H&GCS Grand Holiday Draw (Stubs and money to be returned to Promoter by 21st August 1993) [No coins sent by post please]	GRAND HOLIDAY DRAW =====	
Name	★ 1st Prize - NARROW BOAT HOLIDAY FOR 3/5 ★ One Week (April/May 1994) Donated by STARLINE NARROWBOATS	
Telephone	2nd - LUXURY COTSWOLDS COTTAGE (SLEEPS 4/5) One Week - Adj. to Stroudwater Canal - Donated by M HANDFORD ESQ.	
	3rd - TWO DAY BREAK FOR TWO IN MALVERN Donated by THE AWARD WINNING COLWALL PARK HOTEL	
	=====	
	Promoter: Mrs. E. Connors, 16 Stratford Road, Hereford, HR4 9TW Draw to be held at the National Waterways Festival, Peterborough on Monday 30th August, 1993 Reg'd Hfd. City Council under S.5 Lotteries & Amusements Act, 1978	
	- TICKETS 25p EACH -	
	PRINTING SPONSORED BY SUN VALLEY POULTRY, HEREFORD Davis Brothers, School Lane, Leominster, Herefordshire, HR6 8AA	

We should like to thank, most sincerely, *Starline Narrowboats of Upton on Severn; Michael Handford; and Colwall Park Hotel* for their very substantial support in donating all of the prizes. *Every* pound raised will go directly towards our work as *Sun Valley Poultry, Hereford*, have generously sponsored the entire cost of printing the Draw tickets. *Thank you*, once again, to all concerned.

The tickets are on sale a few weeks earlier than last year so we have over 5 months in which to sell as many as possible. *Please* support us by selling the enclosed *and* some more... *Thank you*.

[We appreciate that some Members may, as a matter of principle, not buy (or sell) draw tickets. If this applies to you then we apologise for troubling you - please do not feel obliged to return the small number of tickets enclosed.]

WHY NOT?

All of our coach trips/visits to other canals listed alongside are on a Sunday. A Member has pointed out that, for those relying on public transport, Sundays is a *very* difficult day to travel. Our Social Events Group have, however, been asked to try and include the occasional Saturday (or even mid-week) trip in the future.

RESTORATION UPDATE

By Brian Fox

My last report, you may recall, was all action packed drama describing our efforts at Oxenhall last summer. The heavier muck shifting type of work is normally done in the summer/autumn when the ground is drier (in theory !) and the winter/spring months are devoted to preparatory work. Last summer was not kind to us, but despite all the problems [*no, no, no definitely not problems - we only have challenges ! Ed.*] encountered we did achieve our target and excavated the old Canal to its original depth over a distance of about 600 yards - from the Top Lock to Cold Harbour Lane Bridge.

Our Sunday work camps since then have been devoted to tidying up this length to make it more presentable, as the towpath along this stretch is one of the few lengths along the Canal that is a public footpath. We found the ideal machine for the job - a small bulldozer, which has been hired at a reasonable rate. The towpath is now like a billiard table, as is the field belonging to Mr. Davies, next to the lake, where we dumped a lot of spoil. Unfortunately the main dump site in Mr. Goulding's field is still too wet for any machinery to work on and it will probably be the summer before this area can be levelled.

The Sunday work parties are continuing to work between the Bridge and the Tunnel portal as well. This is mostly removal of trees that the Nature Trust requested, but work has also started on rebuilding the towpath under the Bridge where the

original edging stones and supporting walls have crumbled away. This involves cutting the stone back to a level section on which bricks can then be built up to the original towpath level. Drains have been relaid to take surface water from the road directly into the Canal, and we hope to complete the reconstruction of the "Leggers Cave" near the Tunnel very soon.

As I mentioned above, the winter/spring months are generally occupied with all the necessary preparations for the physical work later in the year. This of course, includes the "jungle bashing" etc. mentioned above, but other tasks are equally important.

Before any work can start on a new site it is essential that we contact the owner and establish a friendly relationship from the outset. All of the Canal is privately owned by various different farmers/ landowners along the route, and in the past the Society/Trust has worked on an informal basis and this has worked very well. But the Trust feels that it is now only proper to establish a formal relationship with all owners in the form of a Licence agreement which gives the Trust some legal standing and rights when working on the Canal. The Trust is spending many thousands of pounds restoring the Canal, plus the thousands of hours of voluntary, unpaid labour involved and we feel it is not unreasonable to have a legal agreement. The landowners for their part, are gaining a restored Canal,



RESTORATION UPDATE continued

full of water and which it is the Trust's intention should be maintained, by us, as such. We are currently negotiating with 6 landowners who have been given landowner agreements for their comments and we are hopeful that we shall have our first one signed soon.

Once the owners permission is obtained the site has to be visited to assess what work is involved, how we will tackle it, and what tools/machinery and materials will we need. A programme of work is prepared and we then get down to how much it will all cost. At this point I feel I must mention one member of our



Restoration team in particular. Our excavations at Oxenhall last year were largely due to the organisation, planning, co-ordinating (call it what you want) of Roger Chandler, a relatively new recruit from Dymock. He was persuaded to become a Member of the Trust's Council of Management at its inauguration last April and I'm sure, at the time, didn't really know what he was letting himself in for! The successful completion of our excavation target at Oxenhall was largely due to Rogers initial efforts and example on site, and a little drop of rain (!) wasn't going to make any difference once all his preparation had been done. *continued on page 17*

RESTORATION VOLUNTEERS APPLY HERE!

The traditional first Sunday in the month workparty is no more! Due to the rapid progress now being made, with more volunteers than ever, it has now been replaced by the first weekend, both Saturday and Sunday, of each month. In addition, there are also frequently workparties on other weekends, and even the occasional evening workparty once the longer evenings come around again! So you can now find the Restoration Group actively engaged at either Oxenhall or the new Yarkhill site on several days each month. Will you be joining the many volunteers who said they would just come to try it the once? You will probably meet some of them, as many found it so rewarding that they now come regularly. *It can't hurt to try one day, can it?*

There is a very wide range of work to be done, from the very heavy, dirtiest digging out wet silt by hand, the more sedately reconstruction of brickwork structures, the clearance of general undergrowth (out of nesting season), to the "manning" of bonfires for a few hours (or even making the tea!) - so if you feel like a day out with a difference why don't you find out WHEN, WHERE, and WHAT the Restoration Group are doing? If you are interested in helping, in any way, then please contact a member of the Restoration Group [during the evening, please].

Roger Chandler on Dymock (0531) 890671
Brian Fox on Hereford (0432) 358628
CONTACTS: *Mike Potts on Hereford (0432) 356392*
Ian Reid on Ledbury (0531) 635877
Simon Hayward on Glouc. (0452) 305572



ABOVE: Keith Merrick, our 500th Member, is presented with a tee shirt by Cliff Penny at Skew Bridge, Monkhide.
BELOW: A very muddy Canal Trust display at Wakefield. BMIF Marketing Director Denzil Lee picking out prize Draw winners.



RESTORATION

The money which is needed for the hire of machinery and purchase of fuel, fence posts, gates, bricks, etc. has to be carefully calculated and a budget prepared. This has to be done up to 12 months prior to any job in order to get applications for Grant Aid made in time. Site visits may have to be arranged so that representatives of Grant Aid organisations can see for themselves what we intend to spend the money on and again (should we get a Grant) at the completion of the job to see where the money has gone. It seems an opportune moment to give a vote of thanks to the Trust's Fundraising officer, David Penny, whose tireless efforts last year ensured that we had enough money in the bank to do most of what we had planned. I know David spends many hours filling out forms and getting on the telephone in his efforts to raise money and I hope he doesn't get too downhearted when the Restoration Group states after a week of muck shifting that we have spent all the money!

Looking to the future we are hoping this year to make it a working weekend, instead of just the first Sunday, every month. It is also hoped to have working parties at two sites, one in Herefordshire, and one in Gloucestershire. At the Oxenhall site we will finish off the brickwork on the Bridge and "Leggers Cave", but excavation of the Canal up to the Tunnel will not be completed. The problem is the dump site, which, as I explained above, is too wet at the moment and needs to dry and be levelled before any more spoil can

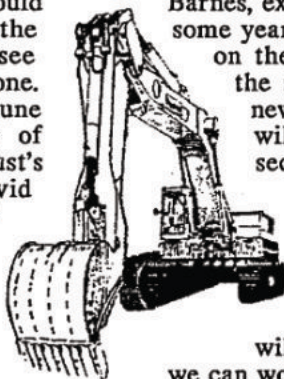
UPDATE continued

put on top. Although major excavation will be put off for this year at the Oxenhall site, we hope to make some progress at weekends here, and concentrate our major efforts on the new site at Yarhill, in Herefordshire.

Those who know the site at Monkhide, where we had the Open Weekend last year, may be aware that our Vice-President, Major Robert Barnes, excavated a stretch of Canal some years ago, at his own expense, on the other (Hereford) side of the main road. The proposed new site, owned by Mrs Oram, will be an extension of that section for about 1000yds, totalling a mile when completed. Normally there is no water in this section, although it regularly floods during the winter. Our task

will be eased considerably if we can work in the dry, but we shall have to keep our fingers crossed for a dry summer. In the meantime we shall concentrate on clearing the considerable amount of vegetation from the Canal bed and towpath.

We are planning to have a 16 day "dig" at the Yarkhill site later in the Summer which should make a major impact on this site. There will be enough money to pay for the equipment, and other expenditure, needed [*the confidence is very nice, but I did say I hope! Ed.*] and should some wealthy philanthropist come along with a few thousand pounds there is no doubt we could spend it. As I have already said, we have an ever growing band of volunteers, we are developing the expertise needed in canal restoration, all we need is the cash and the continued support of local landowners.



COMMITTEE MATTERS... (iii)

■ Following last years success, Council supported the proposal by H&GCS to hold another Grand Holiday Draw.

JANUARY COMMITTEE

■ Forest of Dean District Council had deferred consideration of the proposed Dymock Golf Course Planning Application, at their January meeting, to enable additional information to be obtained.

■ Following the Chairman's representations to the National Waterways Festival organisers, they had written to all canal related charities and societies greatly reducing the costs of a site at the annual event. In the case of the Canal Trust, the costs of our 6 metre square marquee would be halved. This positive response to our comments was greatly appreciated.

■ No response had been received to the appeal in *The Wharfinger* for postal bids in respect of the VIP tickets, rail travel and top hotel accommodation for the visit to the London International Boat Show in January. The Managing Council expressed great disappointment at the lack of bids from Members for this valuable and attractive "prize".

■ Our Chairman made a New Year's Eve appeal on BBC Radio Hereford & Worcester (which also covers north Gloucestershire) resulting in a successful bid of £120 for the above "Prize". Council thanked the Chairman for taking yet more leave to support the Trust.



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Perhaps we should be talking !

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6 Norfolk Road,
Rickmansworth, Herts.
WD3 1QE

Tel: (0923) 770425 & 770255

FAX: 721559

COMMITTEE MATTERS . . . (iv)

▪ Hereford City Council Planning Department were in correspondence with the Trust regarding our representations relating to the Draft Local Plan. The very prompt and helpful response was particularly appreciated.

▪ Members Mrs Lesley Lowe and Mr David Williams had volunteered to take over the duties previously undertaken by Graham Ettles and Chris Clark. This was warmly welcomed.

▪ Member Mr Eric Beasey had donated a second hand photo-copier to the Trust which had been gratefully received.

▪ The DoT had published slight modifications to their preferred route for the A40 link road in Gloucestershire. This may prevent the planned partial restoration of the Coal Branch in the vicinity of the Church.

▪ Details of a one day UK2000 course regarding Derelict Land Grant were discussed, and as the Fundraising Officer could not attend due to ill health, the Chairman would attend on his behalf.



▪ The Restoration Group were assessing a second hand grass cutting attachment for our small tractor, and it was agreed to purchase it subject to satisfactory trials. [This would allow our in-house maintenance methods to move into the 20th Century !]

▪ Lengthy delays were reported in obtaining Waterway Recovery Group Permits for volunteers to drive specified plant and machinery. As this had insurance implications it was agreed to pursue the matter.

▪ There was a preliminary discussion about the workload of certain Members of Council. It was thought that a previous initiative to produce "job descriptions" should be revived.

▪ Meetings with the Hereford and Worcester Countryside Officer were reported. The informal car park, picnic site, and interpretative signing, at Monkhide, should be in place in 1993 and a similar facility on the edge of Ledbury, to be completed early in 1993, had been modified so as to complement restoration of the Canal.

▪ Concern was again expressed at the deterioration of Lock Cottage, Oxenhall. The Chairman would approach the owner. CRP



Egon Ronay



JOHANSENS

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LETTERS to the Editor...

[Whilst we welcome letters on any topic relating to our work and the Inland Waterways System any opinions expressed do not represent the policy of the Canal Trust unless specifically stated.]

Dear Editor,

I was impressed by the quality and content of the latest Wharfinger, although calling it Winter 1992 took me slightly aback. I thought it was a year old as it was very much Winter 1993 when I received it! At school it was of course always autumn (term) before Christmas and winter (term) after Christmas. Perhaps Winter 1993/4 or even Winter 1994 next time as winter is officially December, January, and February - ie: more in the following year than the previous year?

David Williams MCIIMB So (Hons)

Ed. Well spotted! I had never stopped to think about it but you are obviously quite correct in that it should have read Winter 1992/93. Since the Society's formation it has always been Winter, followed by only the year of publication. So, shame on the rest of you (and me) for not spotting it - we have been getting it wrong for ten years after all!

~~~~~

*Dear Editor,*

*Just a few lines to let you know we had a really lovely weekend in London thanks to your fund-raising on BBC Radio Hereford and Worcester.*

*We stayed at the Copthorne Tara \*\*\* Hotel just a short distance from High Street Kensington Tube Station. The hotel was lovely and we enjoyed a very good breakfast both mornings. On Saturday we went to the sale at Harrods, and in the evening went to see Paul Nicholas in Barnum at the Dominion Theatre.*

*All day Sunday was spent at the Boat Show. There were boats of all types and size. we particularly enjoyed viewing the canal boats and a Broads cruiser, and one year hope to have a holiday on Britain's Inland Waterways. Of local interest was the coracle maker from Leintwardine, who showed off his craft by paddling round the specially constructed indoor pool (where they also held wind surfing demonstrations and model yacht races). After a very full day we returned to our hotel and yes to watch on BBC2 a programme on the Boat Show! On the final morning we visited St. James' Park to feed the birds and the tame squirrels and had a brief look round the British Museum. Finally we packed our cases and headed home. Thanks again for our lovely break at a bargain price for us, but also a boost to your funds.*

*Mr. & Mrs. A.J. Brooks*

*Dear Editor,*

*May we take this opportunity to thank your Trust and Mr. Frost for the most enjoyable weekend we spent at the Colwall Park Hotel in December.*

*David & Elaine Sankey*

Ed. It is good to hear that both David & Elaine Sankey, and Mr. & Mrs. Brooks, both enjoyed their Grand Holiday Draw "prizes" [see page 18 to find out how the London "prize" was "won"], and we thank them for their kind letters.



## MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

### **WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS** *who joined since July 1992*

Mr. N.R. Arrowsmith, Malvern; Mr. D. Attwood, London; Mr. T. Barber, Newcastle upon Tyne; Mrs. R.M. Barber-Starkey, Newent; Mr. D. Bolton, Dymock; Mr. M.E. Braine, Weston, Staffs; Mr. N. Bursill, Hebden Bridge, W.Yorks; Mr. & Mrs. G. Buswell, Barwell, Leics; Mr. D. Carter, Weston super Mare; Mr. & Mrs. A. Cox, Ledbury; Mr. G.C. Davies, Ledbury; Mr. A.J. Dew, Hereford; Mr. R.D. Doherty, Bicknacre, Chelmsford, Essex; Mr. & Mrs. J.E. Drake, Hereford; Mr. I.G. Fair, Whitestone, Hereford; Miss E.A. Gadesdon, Dulverton, Somerset; Mr. S. Goodchild, Tewkesbury; Mr. M. Harrison, East Calder, W. Lothian; Mr. J.N. Hereford, Mordiford, Hereford; Mrs. M. Kershaw, Hereford; Mr. & Mrs. J.R. Major, Rodley, Westbury on Severn; Mr. K.R. Merrick, Hereford; Mr. A.L. Moore, Beaufort, Ebb Vale, Gwent; Mr. C.E. Moreland, Gloucester; Mr. R.J. Moreland, London; Mr. H.J. Orr-Ewing, Bristol; Mr. N.H. Peabody, Madley, Hfds; Mrs. D. Phillips, Lingen, Bucknell, Salop; Mr. D.K. Pick & Ms. L. Steans, Leicester; Mr. & Mrs. D. G. Reachill, Ledbury; Mr. B.P. Reynolds, Allensmore, Hfds; Mr. & Mrs. J. Richards, Moreton on Lugg, Hereford; Mr. C.P. Roberts, Catherine de Barnes, Solihull, W. Midlands; Captain P.S. Roberts, Huntingdon, York; Lady Roberts, Sutton St. Nicholas, Hfds; Mrs. J.A. Rollings, Wootton Waven, Warwickshire; Mr. J.H. Russell, Ross on Wye; Mr. P. Rutsch, Sellack, Ross on Wye; Mr. C. Scriven, Ossett, W.Yorks; Mr. I.A. Taylor, Alcester, Warwickshire; Mr. J.D. Tiffin, Hereford; Mr. R. Simpson, Longhope, Gloucs; Mr. J.M. Simpson, Bartestree, Hereford; Mr. & Mrs. N. Smith, Stroud; Mr. A. Stevens, Withington, Hfds; Mr. G. Stewart, Caudle Green, Cheltenham; Mr. D.H. Thomas, Ledbury; Mr. W. Van Essen, Hest Bank, Lancaster; Mrs. C. Walmsley, Ossett, W. Yorkshire; Mr. & Mrs. D. Weaver, Hampton Bishop, Hereford; Mr. & Mrs. D. Williams, Reading; Mrs. F.L.J. Williams, Little Dewchurch, Hfds; Mr. & Mrs. A. Willis, Bodenham, Hfds; Mr. & Mrs. M.W. Wright, St. Albans, Herts.

*Members joining after early February will appear in a future edition.*

## MEMBERSHIP NEWS

*By Roger Morgan*

Firstly, a warm welcome to our new Members who are receiving their first copy of *The Wharfinger*. In 1992 our Membership increased by over 60%, which must make us one of the fastest growing canal society/trusts in the country. However, in order to equal this record in 1993 we will need to recruit over 300 new Members!

Do you know a friend or relative who

- has been on (or might go on!) a canal holiday

- likes mucking around in boats

- is interested in the open air/walking

- is interested in wildlife; in nature; in local history ... ?

If so they may well be interested in joining the Canal Trust. *Even MY brother joined in 1992!* Membership Forms are available from me to anyone willing to act as a one-man or woman "*Membership Drive*".

Membership renewals are now due 12 months from the date of joining (rather than in April as in previous years). Each year we spent *many* pounds in postage, paper and envelopes (plus volunteers time as well!) in reminding Members of overdue subscriptions. *Please* help us to cut out this drain on our resources by renewing promptly. *Why not pay by Standing Order?* And, PLEASE, Covenant your subscription.



## THANKS...

to the following for their greatly appreciated support:-

### S&S INTERNATIONAL,

For donating a copy of Dr Solomon's Anti-Virus Toolkit for our computer.

### UK2000 GRANT FUND,

(Supported by the Department of the Environment), £2,694 towards our restoration work at the main Gloucestershire restoration site.

### GLOUCESTERSHIRE RURAL INITIATIVE FUND,

(Supported by Cheltenham & Glouc's. Building Society), £300 towards our plant hire costs.

### SHELL BETTER BRITAIN FUND,

A £600 grant specifically to purchase engineering bricks for use at the main Gloucestershire restoration site.

### STARLINE NARROWBOATS, MICHAEL HANDFORD ESQ., COLWALL PARK HOTEL, SUN VALLEY POULTRY, HEREFORD.

For making our 1993 raffle possible - see page 13.

### ERIC BEASEY ESQ.,

Donation of second hand photocopier.

### BASIL FROST ESQ., (COLWALL PARK HOTEL),

Donation of surplus engineering bricks.

**OUR SINCERE THANKS  
TO EVERYONE**

## HELP!

Some of our "HELP!" columns are highly successful; in the last edition of *The Wharfinger* we asked for two volunteers - one to help with our administration, the other to take over the vital role of Press and Publicity Officer. You will see (elsewhere in this edition) that we have been very fortunate to secure two very able volunteers - *thank you* Lesley and David.

Unfortunately some of our requests meet with a deadly silence! Edition 36 (Autumn 1992) carried a plea for a large "tow-a-van" (or similar) lightweight box trailer in which to store and transport our Canal Trust display material from one event to the next. Whilst we always *hope* for a donation the funds will stretch to a reasonable amount if someone has - or knows someone who has - a likely trailer. The promotional events time of year is rapidly approaching and we are very anxious to get a suitable box trailer as soon as possible. Any leads will be welcomed. As we said before [*with rather misplaced confidence!* Ed.] ALL offers to the Chairman, *please*.

Our newly-formed Boat Group are also after a trailer - this time a flat bed, twin axle type, that they could *borrow* for 3 months or so. This is so the Trust trip boat can be left on the trailer whilst all of the final fitting out is completed. Welsh Water have kindly offered us the use of workshop facilities *but* with the special requirement that the boat be left on a trailer so that it can be moved out at very short notice. The boat is about 7'-6" wide and 22' long. Offers to Nigel Jefferies (see Contacts page) *please*. *Thank you*.

## THE WHARFINGER

Yet again we have a couple of *new* contributors to this edition of *The Wharfinger* - *thank you*. It really is encouraging to see our Members taking up their pens (and even computers!) to join our regular scribes (*who are also greatly appreciated*). Hopefully it makes for a more interesting newsletter - and that is very important. As each page is put together we try to remember that, for many of our Members, *The Wharfinger* is all that they see for their subscription; it is also our "ambassador" taking news and views into each of the five local authorities (and two county councils) along the line of the Canal; it is seen within the Department of the Environment in London; local and national press and radio/television receive regular copies as do *an ever increasing* number of influential individuals and organisations - both locally and nationally. So *please* keep your contributions flowing!

Thanks to the continuing hard work of Joyce Lynham sales of *The Wharfinger* continues in (yet again!) *an ever increasing* number of "retail outlets" in both counties. We are particularly grateful to the various businesses for taking *The Wharfinger* and selling it for us at no profit to themselves. It is a most valuable way of introducing our work to even more people and is a vital part of our promotional and recruitment work. If your local shop, garage etc. is willing to help us in this way please let Joyce know (see "Contacts" page alongside).

On this page you will have seen, over the past eighteen months or so, regular references to one of our younger Members, Velda West, for her considerable assistance with typing - and (especially) - as a very talented contributor to *The Wharfinger*. Sadly Velda has been taken very ill and it is going to be a long, slow, road to recovery. Our very best wishes go to Velda (and her Partner, Member Peter Miles) for the speediest possible return to good health.

*Thank you* to Ron Doherty, who has joined the ranks of our advertisers in this issue (page 3), for sending it to us on "floppy disk" - the marvels of the computer once again! *Thank you*, also, to our regular advertisers, Colwall Park Hotel and Michael Stimpson, for their ongoing support - *it is not taken for granted*. This edition will see the largest (equal with Ed. 36) level of advertising revenue yet - sufficient to cover the normal postage costs of an issue to our Members.

In the next edition of *The Wharfinger* we hope to include details of the various events where the Canal Trust will be exhibiting this year (*your chance to have a very interesting day out and help us at the same time!*); plus our usual mixture of reports, news, views, and lots, lots more . . .

**COPY DEADLINE FOR THE NEXT EDITION IS SATURDAY 24th APRIL**

This edition of *The Wharfinger* was compiled by Cliff and David Penny using *JetSetter* software.



## CONTACTS

R E Barnes, TD.,  
"Highway Cottage",  
LYDE, Hereford, HR4 8AA  
[Hereford (0432) 267168]

Mike Potts,  
3, Cranstone,  
UPPER BREINTON,  
Hereford, HR4 7PL  
[Hereford (0432) 356392]

Roger Morgan,  
59, Elmfield Avenue,  
TEDDINGTON, Middlesex,  
TW11 8BX  
[London (081) 943 2473]

David Williams,  
8 St. Stephen's Close,  
Caversham, READING,  
RG4 8BX  
[Reading (0734) 484353]

Nigel Jefferies,  
19, Wilcroft Park,  
BARTESTREE,  
Hereford, HR1 4DG  
[Hereford (0432) 850661]

Joyce Lynham,  
*HGCS Trade Liaison*,  
[Hereford (0432) 266931]

Cliff Penny/David Penny,  
"Coppice",  
BURLEY GATE,  
Hereford, HR1 3QS  
[Hereford (0432) 820420]

Liz Connors,  
16, Stratford Road,  
HEREFORD, HR4 9TW  
[Hereford (0432) 271657 -  
*Telefax Hfd. 342154*]

Simon Hayward,  
[Gloucester (0452) 305572]

Ian Reid,  
[Ledbury (0531) 635877]

Roger Chandler,  
Grove Bank,  
Marcle Road, DYMOCK,  
Gloucs, GL18 2AR  
[Dymock (0531) 890671]

Brian Fox,  
1, Holmer Hall Cottages,  
Roman Road,  
HEREFORD, HR4 9QH  
[Hereford (0432) 358628]

Tony Austin-Bailey,  
[Hereford (0432) 269704]

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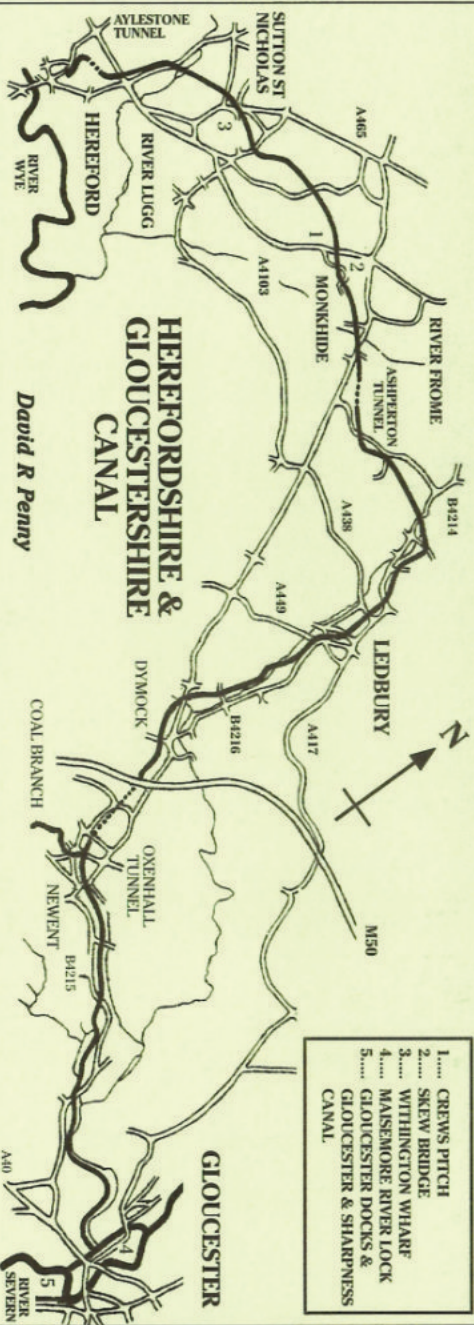
Cover:- Thanks to Sandy Wooldridge, Creative Labels Ltd., Rotherwas, Hereford.

Membership records are computerised. In accordance with the Data Protection Act 1984, your entry is available for inspection if you send a SAE to the Membership Secretary.

Whilst we try to ensure dates are correct please verify them with a relevant Organiser.

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*Please Note: We are working on the Canal with the permission and co-operation of the land owners. Unless specifically indicated it should not be assumed that there is any public right of way along the Canal towpath. Please help the Society to maintain its good relationships with the local land owners.*

Work began on the Canal in 1792 but there were many problems which meant that it was not completed until 1845 making it the last major route to be built in Britain but for the Canals of Birmingham and the Manchester Ship Canal. The Canal stretched for 34 miles and utilised 22 locks and 3 tunnels to overcome the problems posed by the undulating fields of Herefordshire and Gloucestershire.