

THE WHARFINGER



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

**50p
free to Members**

**Edition 39
Summer 1993**

WHO DOES WHAT . . .

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CHAIRMAN	Cliff Penny
VICE CHAIRMAN	Mike Potts
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PRESS & PUBLICITY OFFICER	<i>David Williams</i>
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WHARFINGER POSTMASTER	<i>Bob Fairclough</i>
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Those in italics above are not Directors on the Council of Management

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David Penny; Liz Connors; Karen McKay; Cliff Penny

Please see CONTACTS, inside back cover, for addresses/phone numbers.

HONORARY POSTS:- STRUCTURAL ENGINEER Ron Munden
SOLICITOR Sue Newbould, GABB & CO., 25 King Street, Hereford.

MEB

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has been kindly sponsored
by Midlands Electricity plc.

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

CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTS

HEREFORD BYPASS

The day after the last issue was safely passed to the MEB printers in Birmingham we received the (long awaited) formal decision following the Public Inquiry into the proposed A49/A465 Hereford Bypass. So you may already have heard the very good news that the Inspector found in favour of the Canal Trust. The Secretaries of State for Transport, and The Environment, endorsed parts of the Report - including that part referring to the Canal. This recommended that a navigable culvert be provided *as part of the £38 million road scheme* to permit the Canal to be restored, at a future date, under the Bypass - if the Bypass is built to the east of Hereford.

After such a lengthy delay (it was March of 1991 when I first appeared before the Inspector !) a very large number of people in the Hereford area are concerned at the outcome of the Public Inquiry as the whole Trunk Road scheme is to be reviewed and the Bypass may not be built at all. We have made it very clear, from the outset, that *the former Canal Society (and now the Canal Trust) did NOT object to the Bypass*. This was specifically stated in the formal "Proof of Evidence" presented to the Inquiry and the Inspector acknowledged this fact in his summary of our case in his official Report. What we sought (and achieved) was the provision, *at no cost to the Canal Trust*, of a navigable culvert to permit the Canal to be restored at the point where the plans would have resulted in the proposed Trunk Road blocking the route.

The favourable decision is causing considerable interest nationally. What we have achieved is a commitment by the Secretaries of State to provide a navigable culvert (single-way working on the Canal *plus* a towpath) as part of the contract to construct the road at a point where: -

the Canal does not exist at present.

it is close to the terminus of the Canal; some 32 miles from the national network (River Severn at Gloucester).

there is no specific date for restoration at this location.

the current land owner made representations to the Public Inquiry objecting to the restoration of the Canal.

When any of the local authorities debate the future of the Canal I sincerely hope that they will remember this significant decision!

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CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTS . . . (ii)

NOW FOR THE A40 . . .

We must not be complacent, however. Discussions are about to be revived with the Department of Transport regarding the proposed A40 link road in Gloucestershire to the SE of Newent. The proposed road lies on the line of the Canal in places, and crosses it in others, threatening to totally prevent restoration of the Canal within a few miles of our link to the national network.

As reported in the last Edition of *The Wharfinger* [*Committee Matters*, page 19] a slight modification to the Preferred Route also threatens our planned partial restoration of the former Coal Branch in the lovely landscape at the foot of the sloping grounds to Oxenhall Church.

Following the favourable Hereford Bypass decision we would hope to gain adequate provision (as part of the road contract), to permit the Canal to be restored, without the need to "do battle" at a Public Inquiry in a year or so. Experience in other parts of the country has shown, unfortunately, that each point of conflict has to be challenged at an Inquiry - *a shocking waste of public funds* (and of our valuable voluntary resources as well).

Having secured the navigable culvert within 2 miles of the terminus of the Canal it would be somewhat irrational for the A40 Trunk Road proposals to prevent, or greatly hinder, restoration within a few miles of the River Severn ! There can be no doubt as to the substantial cost of our three appearances at the Hereford Bypass Public Inquiry - *the DoT expert witness, the consulting engineers, the Barrister, the Inspector, the "hidden costs" of putting on the inquiry, the "behind the scenes" administrators, etc.* ... These costs would all be avoided, and the length of the A40 Public Inquiry reduced, if the DoT were now to accept that there should be provision for the Canal within all other road schemes proposed in the two counties. We hope that common sense prevails. Watch this space !

MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

Your Membership really does matter. Membership rates have remained unchanged since 1990 (we have introduced Life and Joint Senior Citizen rates more recently). Our Membership Secretary reports that he is having to send out more reminders than ever before. *Please* pay by Bankers Order; you won't forget to pay then !

Cliff Penny, Chairman/Liaison Officer

TEN YEAR CELEBRATION

Over 40 Members attended our celebration, at the end of April, of the birth of the Canal Society 10 years ago in the Red Cross Hall at Hereford. It was perhaps fortunate that the numbers were less than the estimated 150 who attended the inaugural meeting - the Red Cross Hall has been substantially altered over the intervening years and the meeting room now only holds about 50 people!

Our guest speaker, Michael Handford (Chairman of the Inland Waterways Association's national Restoration Committee) gave us a brief review of the national restoration scene and explained how the Herefordshire & Gloucestershire Canal ranked in the 130 or so active projects nationally. He expressed his delight at the decision regarding the provision of a navigable culvert, if the Hereford Bypass is built to the east of Hereford, and encouraged us all to

continue our professional approach to the restoration of the Canal.

Other contributors to the success of the evening were Nigel Jefferies, Tony Austin-Bailey, Major Robert Barnes and Mike Potts who traced the development of the Canal, the Ballard family, and the Canal Society in what was an exceedingly full Members celebration evening.

CANAL'S QUIZ

Vice Chairman Mike Potts acted as quiz master for what proved to a most enjoyable evening, at Yarkhill, at the end of March. His extensive choice of slides led to a colourful two hour tour of the inland waterways network punctuated by home made scones and copious amounts of tea. The high point of the evening was one geographical question that nearly led to a Member dashing to his car for an atlas to verify the quiz masters ruling on the correct answer!



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Perhaps we should be talking!

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Tel: (0923) 770425 & 770255 Fax: 721559

COMMITTEE MATTERS

Two Council of Management meetings are reviewed by our Chairman in order that our Members and supporters are kept up to date ...

FEBRUARY COMMITTEE

▪ Further revisions had been received relating to the proposed golf course at Dymock. As they still obstructed future restoration of the Canal a further objection had been lodged.

▪ Due to the high costs involved it was reluctantly decided not to attend the new Inland Boat Show at Nottingham in May.

▪ Display Solutions Limited, the exhibition systems specialists owned by our new Press and Publicity Officer David Williams, had kindly donated a number of display panels and lighting. This was greatly appreciated.



▪ Further progress was reported on the publishing of the memoirs donated to us by one of our Vice Presidents, Sir John Knill.

▪ The Chairman was to write to Councils in Herefordshire regarding a bid that they had lodged for major

EC funding for the County to remind them of the potential that the Canal presented in terms of the rural economy.

▪ Future AGM's would be held in the Autumn to allow time for compliance with statutory requirements [see p.3., Edition 38].

▪ Work on the Canal by London WRG had, once again, been cancelled at very short notice due to their transport problems.

▪ Restoration Group were authorised and encouraged to attend a Health and Safety course in Swindon.

▪ The co-operation of landowners in Herefordshire in respect of our "new" Yarkhill Project site, was welcomed.

▪ The Herefordshire Nature Trust Conservation Officer had been invited to inspect the site of our "Yarkhill Project" prior to work commencing and had appreciated the prior liaison.

▪ In less than 2 years hire charges for excavators had almost exceeded the cost of a second-hand machine. With the volume of work increasing so rapidly it will not be long before hire costs each year equalled the cost of purchase of our own machine. It was

COMMITTEE MATTERS . . . (ii)

agreed to carefully investigate the economics of purchasing a suitable machine now that we were fortunate to have a number of skilled drivers. Maintenance and repair costs would have to be taken fully into consideration.

- Social events were reviewed and, following comments from Members, it was agreed to try and arrange some coach trips other than on a Sunday [see p.13. of the last edition].

- Council meetings would, in future, be held on a rota of different week days to avoid individual Council Members having a regular clash of dates with other commitments.

MARCH COMMITTEE

- Forest of Dean Planning Committee had approved the proposals for the golf course at Dymock as the land owner had agreed to first enter into a formal Section 106 Agreement (under Planning legislation). This would commit the owner to remove those parts of the golf course that lay on the line of the Canal (or where fairways crossed the Canal) when restoration of the Canal commenced on the adjacent stretches.

- The Chairman reported on an amicable site meeting with representatives of the Gloucestershire Regional Health Authority and Tewkesbury Borough Council regarding re-development of the Over Hospital site. The future of the Canal and the Lock Keepers House had been discussed in some detail. Permission had been given for the Trust to undertake some limited trial excavations at the site of the lock close to the west channel of the River Severn.

- The Vice Chairman had been in discussions with Highnam Parish Council and we welcomed their positive reaction, and interest, in our work.

- The favourable decision regarding the provision of a navigable culvert under the proposed Hereford Bypass (if it is built) was welcomed [see p.1.]. Concern was expressed that in some quarters the Canal Trust was reported as welcoming the lack of a Bypass - this was totally incorrect. The Chairman reminded the Council of Management of the very clear statement that had formed part of his submission to the Public Inquiry that the Canal Trust was neutral to the case for, and against, the new Trunk Road.

- Further good progress at "first weekend of the month" work parties was reported in both Herefordshire and Gloucestershire.

- About 10 restoration volunteers had attended several evening courses on first aid. Member Mrs Beryl Bayliss was warmly thanked for her valuable instruction.

continued on page 21

ANOTHER SORT OF CANAL HOLIDAY

By Elizabeth Lloyd

I am fascinated by Canals but unfortunately it is an interest not shared by my family. Being female, and of pensionable age, canal holidays were really out of the question until I came across hotel boats. I had heard of them years ago but when I wanted to go on one I couldn't find an advert. Typical!

Last year I found the magic advert (for Willow Wren Holidays) [*Corporate Members of the Canal Trust. Ed.*] and I was off. I had

made a booking with them for a cruise on the River Thames from Maidenhead

to Oxford. Apart from the instruction to take no more than a medium suitcase and casual clothes - jeans etc., and how to find the mooring, I was in the dark as what to expect.

In some ways a cruise on the Thames is not typical - the boat was wider, the Thames flows quite fast, you don't get a chance to walk on the towpath (you are, it seems, "belting" up the middle of the river) and the locks are all manned.

I reached the *Tranquil Rose* and was met by the crew, three girls, two of them Australian. We were not full, only six of us instead of ten, and three of them were Australian. But the boat was comfortable, the food marvellous and the company pleasant. It was all so peaceful and a total rest.

The next morning we set off for Windsor and moored up before lunch. After lunch we set off into Windsor and most of the party made straight for the Castle where the Australians were thrilled to see the Queen who was reviewing the St. George's Day Parade.

We stayed over night at Windsor and the next day set off (back up stream) and reached Marlow by tea time. What a beautiful town to explore! It was

"so taken by the whole holiday that I rapidly booked another one!"

fascinating to see all these riverside towns that one never normally visits or only rushes through in

a car - Cookham (and the Stanley Spencer Gallery), Henley, Sonning, Wallingford and Abingdon. Luckily I had a good map with me and was able to identify many landmarks that we passed and places that I had often seen from the train - Mapledurham, Basildon Park, and Dorchester Abbey to mention but a few. The wildlife that we saw was fascinating too and I was amazed by the number of herons on the river. We arrived at Oxford on the Friday afternoon; the cruise through the city to our mooring was a revelation in itself.

I was so taken with the whole holiday that I rapidly booked another one! The cost *really* had been inclusive and on that week, apart from my train fare to Maidenhead and home from Oxford, the only money I spent

ANOTHER SORT OF CANAL HOLIDAY... continued

was on a daily paper and six post cards. Everything else (excluding drinks) - meals, morning coffee, afternoon tea, fruit etc. etc. - was included.

My second expedition was to be on the Oxford Canal, from Oxford to Rugby at the end of September - on a pair of narrow boats. I set off, as before, but when I got to the mooring we were met by the owners who had to tell us that our boats were stuck at

Reading. There was so much water in the river that nothing could go through

the locks. They had been there for three days already and stayed for nearly a week in all. I got to know Reading rather well! But the company was delightful, 3 South Africans, 2 Canadians and an Australian, plus 2 other English people. The conversations we had about life in our respective countries was most informative.

*"a delightful exploration
whetting our appetites
for it even more"*

Unfortunately, even with a tow, we only got as far as Abingdon by the end of the week. It was disappointing as we had all especially wanted to see the Oxford Canal but one afternoon we were taken there in a mini bus and had a delightful exploration, whetting our appetites for it even more. However, the Oxford Canal had been in an even worse state than the Thames, with the Cherwell in flood, overflowing into the Canal.

The ironic thing was that for most of the summer there had been far too little

water in the Kennet and Avon and the boats had not been able to "do" the spectacular Devizes staircase (Caen Hill flight) - and now it had gone from one extreme to the other!

All of this, however, has not put me off. I am booked on to a "proper" canal, again with Willow Wren, this year!

IN THE NEWS

Our new Press and Publicity Officer, David Williams, asks that anyone seeing the Herefordshire and Gloucestershire Canal in print sends

him either the original or a very good copy.



David is increasing the number of Press Releases that he issues to the local and

national press and is anxious to produce a comprehensive record of our publicity achievements. Address on *Contacts* page. *Thank you.*

DON'T FORGET

Don't forget that a Canal Trust Gift Membership makes an attractive (and unusual) gift at *any* time.

Just send the appropriate amount, plus clear details of the nature of the gift (Birthday, Christmas, or just good wishes!), together with the intended recipients address to the Membership Secretary. *Please allow at least 21 days* for us to produce a personal gift certificate, which is sent in a free "Hereford Basin" greetings card, to tell your friend of your unusual gift.

Between Two Rivers

A new guide to the route of the old Stroudwater Navigation and the Thames & Severn Canal from Framilode to Inglesham.

Inspired by the popular HTV programmes presented by Clive Gunnell

£3.95 (cheques made payable to Between Two Rivers)

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NEW BOOKS

Our nearest "competitor" is the Cotswold Canals Trust. Established for over twice as long as ourselves it is perhaps understandable that they have inspired greater television coverage [*so far* !]. The most recent, "Between Two Rivers" - presented by Clive Gunnell, was unfortunately only transmitted on HTV. A slim, pocket sized book has just been published that gives a brief history of the Cotswold Canals, photographs and maps; plus details of walks along, and in the vicinity of them - walks that literally are "*as seen on TV*".

In the next issue of *The Wharfinger* we will review a recently republished book that includes an account of the passage of "our" Canal. This fascinating book "Rowing Holiday by Canal in 1873" is available from H&GCS for only £2.40, including P&P, (David Penny see Contacts).

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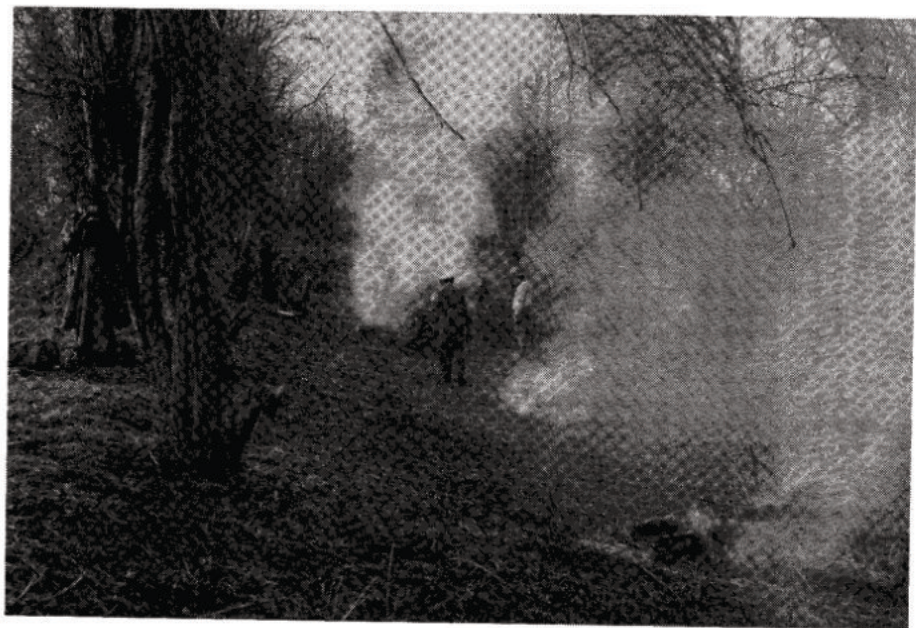
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ABOVE: An early stage in the restoration/rebuilding of the towpath wall under Cold Harbour Lane Bridge - in the midst of our main Gloucestershire restoration site.

BELOW: Earlier clearance work on the Canal at Yarkhill, to the N.W. of the A4103 Hereford to Worcester road - the site of our major work camp this autumn.





Egon Ronay



JOHANSENS

Corporate Members of the Herefordshire and Gloucestershire Canal Trust

An independent family run Hotel offering special discounts to Members of the Herefordshire and Gloucestershire Canal Trust and IWA.

Basil and Elizabeth Frost, owners of the narrow boat "Jersey Girl", are the proprietors of the Colwall Park Hotel, and are pleased to offer free facilities for meetings and fund raising activities to the Herefordshire and Gloucestershire Canal Trust and IWA.

Situated in the centre of Colwall Village, on the B4218 between Ledbury and Malvern, the Hotel has twenty en suite bedrooms, Conference Rooms, Ballroom, and a Restaurant specialising in English menus.

**Colwall, Near Malvern, WR13 6QG
Tel:- (0684) 40206 Fax (0684) 40847**

BARRS LOCK

When Stephen Ballard built the Herefordshire and Gloucestershire Canal between Ledbury and Hereford he managed to survey the line from Ledbury to Barrs lock, a distance of about 10½ miles all at the same level to form the summit pound of the Canal. Quite an achievement to say the least!

Barrs Lock, at grid reference SO 596448, was the first lock leading towards Hereford from the summit pound, and is about 1 mile from Crews Pitch.

At Easter, with permission from the landowner, a group of stalwarts from the Trust hired a small excavator from Sharpe and Fisher Co. Ltd. and positioned it, despite the torrential rain, at the lock site on Good Friday - but the heavy rain prevented any serious work that day.

On Easter Saturday three 4ft. deep trenches, about 25ft. long, were put across the cut. A few pieces of stone, brick and other rubble were unearthed, but nothing to show the exact position of the lock.

Easter Sunday it rained most of the day and to have attempted to forage further would have just created a mess.

On Easter Monday the search for the lock continued to no avail, but one whole brick with "R. Ballard" embossed on it was unearthed. Robert Ballard who was a builder, and had a brick manufacturing yard at Ledbury, was one of Stephen Ballard's elder brothers.

It was disappointing that no visible sign of the lock chamber was found, although after a hundred years of abandonment the whole area is covered extensively with earth. We believe that much of the stone and brick was robbed at the turn of the century for use in other buildings and on further investigation, if we go two or three feet deeper, the base of the chamber will still be there. [See page 17.]

My sincere thanks to the six who helped on this venture and to Mr. Turner of Sharpe and Fisher, Hereford, who were so helpful with the loan of the excavator.

REB

[Please remember that this is private land. Whilst the land owners do not generally object to our Members walking the towpath please respect all of the interests of the land owner and do nothing to prejudice our excellent relations. Ed.]

The BIG prize DRAW!

We hope that our Members are selling a record number of *Grand Holiday Prize Draw* tickets. *Every* pound raised goes towards restoration - and will enable us to obtain matching grant aid, effectively doubling what you raise - so it is *very* worthwhile - *thank you.*

Dates For Your Diary

Saturday & Sunday 3rd, 4th July

Tewkesbury:- *"Water Festival"*

We hope to have a small sales stand at this new event - organised in conjunction with the local carnival.

★ 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 NOW!

[We hope to have a Canal Trust display in Oxenhall Church Hall to support a Church fund-raising event on the afternoons of Saturday 10th/Sunday 11th July. If you cannot join us for the full tour call in for a cup of tea and a cream scone - support the Canal Trust and the local community.]

Sunday 8th August

Herefordshire:- *"Herefordshire Country Fair"*

at Hampton Court, Hope Under Dinmore

(A417 Gloucester to Leominster road).

Canal Trust display and sales stand.

Sat., Sun., Mon., 28, 29, 30th August

Peterborough:- *"National Waterways Festival"*

On the River Nene at River Embankment. Come and see the Canal Trust's 20ft square display at this annual IWA event.

Free admission if you help staff our stand - see page 17 for further details.

★ Thursday 16th September - 8pm

Dymock:- *"Fisheries & Conservation"*

Paul Hilder, Fisheries, Conservation, & Recreation Officer for the National Rivers Authority, Welsh Region, gives us a fascinating insight into his work. Dymock Village Hall, behind the Beauchamp Arms, at the junction with the Ledbury road, Dymock.

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 INLAND WATERWAYS ASSOCIATION

In the 1940's, Britain's waterways were perceived as derelict, dirty ditches. An ever decreasing number of working boats struggled in dreadful conditions to maintain the carrying trade and anyone who navigated the canals for pleasure was considered quite eccentric!

This changed with the formation of the Inland Waterways Association in 1946. Certainly not overnight - it took many, many years to convince government, local authorities and the public that canals had any sort of future - "fill 'em in" was the usual response.

Today waterways are increasingly seen as a valuable part of Britain's landscape. They are appreciated for their industrial heritage, for their contribution to urban landscapes and for their atmosphere of peace in a busy world. Their leisure value is accepted and there is increasing interest in the potential of some waterways for the development of waterborne freight carrying and the transfer of water supplies.

The Inland Waterways Association has achieved all this - and more. Working with its associated Waterway Recovery Group, the IWA has enabled hundreds of miles of disused canals to be restored for use by boaters, walkers and anglers. Restoration of many more derelict canals is underway, thanks to IWA Members, canal societies and



IWA

trusts such as the Herefordshire and Gloucestershire Canal Trust [which is affiliated to the IWA], sympathetic local authorities and others who support the work of waterway campaigners throughout the country.

Waterways are alive today - but still remain an endangered species. The IWA's campaign will continue - to ensure that Britain's navigable rivers and canals stay alive for all to enjoy.

The Herefordshire and Gloucestershire Canal Trust is indebted to the IWA for support, advice, grant aid and co-operation. As reported elsewhere the local IWA Branch (one of 33 throughout the country) has very recently changed its name to reflect the links with the *whole* of our Canal - so we welcome the continuing support from the IWA Gloucestershire and Herefordshire Branch.

Some of our Members already belong to the IWA. *If you don't why not join today and support the national campaign?* A SAE to The Inland Waterways Association, 114 Regent's Park Road, London, NW1 8UQ will bring full details.

Gloucestershire Tunnel Talk !

Our intrepid "explorer", Member Bob Simpson, will be presenting a talk on Sapperton Tunnel, in the Wheatstone Hall, Brunswick Road, Gloucester on Wednesday 17th November - full details in the next edition of *The Wharfinger*.

RESTORATION UPDATE

By Brian Fox

Preparations are now well in hand for our major excavation at Yarkhill this summer. We have been very busy clearing vegetation along the towpath and by the end of the summer will have cleared the Canal bed as well. The towpath is now clear for about a mile and is a very pleasant walk, although not an official footpath. *[Trust Members are welcome to walk along this stretch, but please remember that it is private land and do not stray from the towpath - thank you. Ed.]*

Some work has been done on removing tree stumps and levelling off old rabbit holes so that we can now drive our small dumper the full length. Where the Canal bed has been cleared of vegetation a good profile can be seen but unfortunately still obstructed by the odd large trees which we shall have to remove. There are a considerable number of mature ash(?) trees along much of this section, most of them growing on the edge of the towpath and can be left well alone, but there are the odd areas growing in the bed which will have to come out. There are also a considerable number of mature willows which will also have to be removed as they are firmly established in the Canal bed. These will probably pose our biggest problem as it could take an hour or more to remove each stump. We shall be working the first weekend in every month until the dig which commences Saturday, 4th September for between 10 days and 16 days



depending on how much money we raise and are granted. If you are interested in assisting in September please contact me (Brian Fox) so that we can organise a rota as we did at Oxenhall last year.

We shall be working a shift system for dumper drivers starting at about 7.30 a.m. till 1.30p.m. and the second shift from 1.30p.m. - 7.30p.m. The morning shift will stop for a full breakfast/lunch at about 11.00a.m. cooked to perfection by a full time cook and bottle washer! There will

be no choice in the matter as

our excavator driver on the morning shift will be partaking and when he stops everyone else has to!

There will be other work besides driving which will mainly consist of clearing any vegetation remaining and then burning or

shredding it, and it will

not be so crucial for these people to turn up at 7.30a.m!

Our other site at Oxenhall is now well on the way to becoming a good showpiece length of Canal in Gloucestershire. The section from the Top Lock to Cold Harbour Lane Bridge has been restored to its original width and depth throughout. The towpath is levelled and beginning to sprout a bit of grass (plus a few weeds). The banks have been graded, with new mixed species hedging planted on top where necessary. Even the tipping site has been cleared and levelled and is ready for more soil when we start excavation of the section above the Bridge. We do not anticipate any

RESTORATION UPDATE continued

major changed in that respect until next year for 2 reasons. Firstly the soil is still too wet to move; and secondly we haven't got the financial resources for major restoration work at two sites - yet. We shall keep working on lowering the water level this year, so that we will be able to undertake major restoration towards Oxenhall Tunnel next year, and soon after to run a trip-boat to show off to its best what we have done.

Now for a change, you might like to hear something else about our Canal other than scrub bashing and muck shifting. Those of you who know the Canal will probably be aware that there were originally 22 - 23 locks - depending on whether you count a double lock as 1 or 2! There

is now only one lock still fully visible (at Oxenhall) although badly in need of repairs. One at Withington has one side still intact although largely buried in someone's garden. The only other lock with visible remains is at Over where the Canal leaves the River Severn and this is largely buried by river silt and covered in vegetation. The remaining 20 have either been buried under the railway from Ledbury to Gloucester, possibly still partly intact, or their upper parts have been robbed by builders of the brick and stone to construct houses and walls in the vicinity. We think we will find that most locks, however, probably still have the invert, and possibly the lower part of the walls and the sill, intact once we

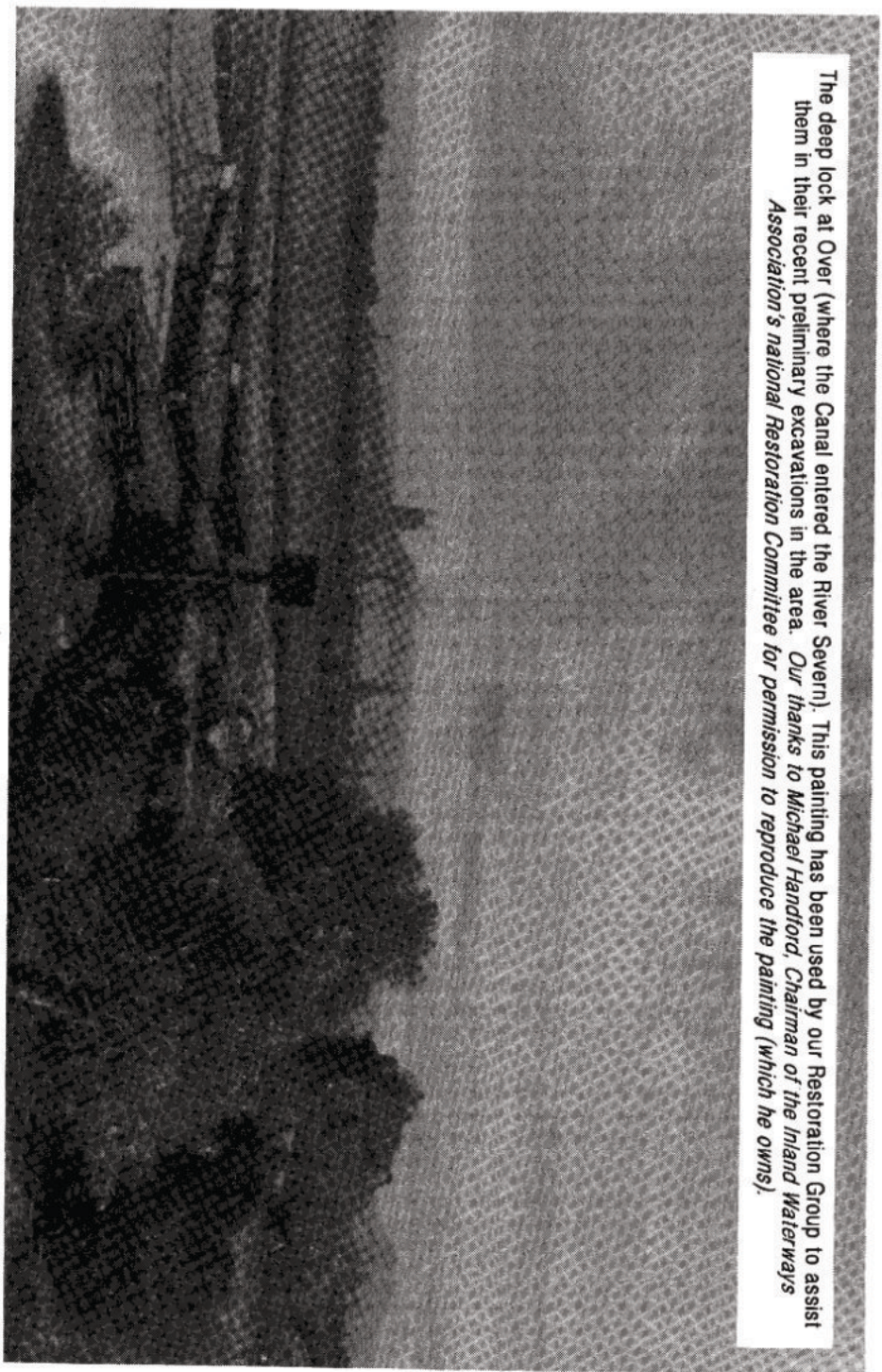
A DAY OUT WITH A DIFFERENCE !

The first weekend, both Saturday and Sunday, of each month the Restoration Group are to be found hard at work. In addition, there are also frequently workparties on other weekends, and even the occasional evening workparty now that the longer evenings are here again ! You can now find the Restoration Group actively engaged at either Oxenhall or the new Yarkhill Project sites on several days each month, and *frequently working on both sites simultaneously !* 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

The deep lock at Over (where the Canal entered the River Severn). This painting has been used by our Restoration Group to assist them in their recent preliminary excavations in the area. Our thanks to Michael Handford, Chairman of the Inland Waterways Association's national Restoration Committee for permission to reproduce the painting (which he owns).



RESTORATION UPDATE continued

start digging down to investigate in the future. The only reason that Oxenhall lock still exists is probably due to the proximity of the lock cottage which was occupied until recent times and would serve as a deterrent to stone robbers.

It came to our attention recently that the site of Over Hospital which includes the lock and part of the Canal was due to be redeveloped and there was a possibility that the restoration of the Canal here could be included in the overall cost of redevelopment. After meetings with representatives of the Council, Hospital Authority, and planning consultants, it was suggested that the Trust might be prepared to investigate the lock site and also do some research into the adjacent lock cottage. Members of the Trust spent a weekend excavating by hand around the visible remains and eventually located the bottom gate recess on one wall and revealed enough of the lock to see it was a massive construction in brick. There is an enormous willow tree growing in the middle of the lock but at least we have demonstrated that the lock is still there. However, we will not know whether it is capable of being restored, or if it will need complete reconstruction, until a more extensive investigation is undertaken

- requiring the removal of the tree. We also traced the history of the cottage through the Gloucester record office, and other sources, and proved conclusively that it was associated with the Canal, having been built by Stephen Ballard in 1831.

Another lock recently investigated was Barrs lock at the end of the section we intend to start restoring this summer at Yarkhill. There is no evidence of it on the ground whatsoever - only a general mess of brambles, nettles, scrub, hop waste, etc. [See p.11 for the full story of the preliminary investigation with a mini-excavator. Ed.] The top of the lock was obviously missing but a JCB was hired to investigate by digging a couple of trial trenches across the estimated position. At a depth of 8ft. we eventually struck a solid wall and the other side was quickly located. It was impossible to dig down any further but a long pole graduated in 1ft. sections was rammed into the remaining soil between the 2 walls. The bottom was eventually struck at a depth of 14ft. below present ground level. This ties in roughly with what we know of the lock, the original drop being about 13ft.

Don't forget to book early for our September dig [Brian Fox (0432) 358628] to avoid disappointment!

ANOTHER DAY OUT WITH A DIFFERENCE ?

An increasing number of our Members experienced a *day out with a difference* last year - and we are not just talking about restoration volunteers ! Why not join them in 1993 ?

On page 12 is our regular list of events and you will see a number where the Canal Trust will be exhibiting and the Trading Company selling ! It doesn't all happen automatically ! Each "presence" depends on volunteers to help erect and dismantle our display and to staff the sales/information/recruitment areas. *It really is an enjoyable way of helping with our work* - full details from Liz Connors (see *Contacts*).

WE ARE NOT AMUSED

By David Williams

We were on the Staffs and Worcs, just a couple of locks north of Gailey and well into the second week of our holiday. Having already negotiated some sixty narrow locks in the previous week and having successfully guided 62' ALBERT around some fairly tortuous parts of the English canal system, meeting and coping with just about every conceivable type of unexpected navigation hazard encountered as the norm in any such enterprise, the skipper was at that dangerous stage of feeling reasonably competent and familiar with his boat. It was now the first week of August and it had rained constantly almost every day

since we left Braunston, having taken the financial plunge and purchased our own narrow boat whilst the country was still in the deepest depths of recession, but knowing that prices were at rock bottom. We had headed initially up the North Oxford and Coventry Canals and were now on our way south heading towards Stourport and the River Severn. It was a rare day of sunshine.

And it was not as if this was our first canal experience - we had been on canals and rivers in boats hired or borrowed for five years running before finally making that quantum leap into narrow boat ownership.

So there she was, our pride and joy, stuck ! Half in, half out, jammed in a lock. Now to be

stuck on the bottom is excusable, but we were stuck on the sides - we had left the fenders out !

Years ago as a teenage naval cadet at Dartmouth, playing at being professional sailors on the River Dart, I do recall the utter preoccupation with fenders. "Get your bloody fenders in number 6 !" or similar less printable words would echo across the water as a picket boat put to sea with fenders trailing. Not using fenders to come alongside, or forgetting to bring them in was a punishable

"Lock gates would often do justice to the hanging gardens of Babylon."

offence, almost as serious as leaving the mooring ropes hanging over the side. Miscreant skippers could

easily find themselves doubling round the 'ramps' which embraced the parade ground holding a SLR high over their heads until arms and legs groaned with physical pain and exertion.

As I came to learn, my nautical education was not complete. Locks, particularly empty locks, can be somewhat dirty, slime covered abysses. Wet ferns, creepers and nettles dangle out of the brickwork, brushing past you as you enter, reminiscent of your last trip on a ghost train. Dank dark fronds of turgid green weed hang down limply, dripping water like the shredded remnants of long rotted curtains, and the lock gates would often do justice to the hanging gardens of Babylon. And if you can keep that lot out of your boat, there is usually a nice

WE ARE NOT AMUSED . . . *continued*

metallic nut or retaining plate sticking out of the lock gate or brickwork somewhere, which is guaranteed to rent a nice deep long scratch along the fresh paintwork, the alter ego of the mindless vandal who runs a nail along the paintwork of the executive car.

Fenders are therefore something of a comfort factor in a nicely painted boat, holding you off from all that muck and construction hazard. The normal narrow boat is about 6' 10" wide. The typical fender is about 4" diameter. Most narrow locks seem to be around 7' 8" - room to spare? Well, the previous sixty odd locks had room to spare!

I suppose we had just softly wedged ourselves in; boat, against fender, against brickwork.

A nice little sandwich squeezing the soft filling. From sixty feet away on the tiller, one does not always appreciate the extreme delicacy of a situation and the engine certainly had solved such problems in the past, which had admittedly been more of the grounding nature. We had seemed to have stopped a little prematurely - perhaps not quite enough speed to take us in, or something on the bottom of the lock, someone disposing of their garden refuse or bicycle?

And so I gave it just a little burst of whammy. First ahead, and then astern (reverse if you prefer). And then a bit more whammy, ahead, reverse, ahead again, reverse

again. And then a lot of whammy, now strictly backwards like a rabbit trying to scuttle out of a hole in blind panic. Of course by this time, we were in a hole. The engine was screaming with full revs, I was shouting instructions to crew to rock the boat, and a large crowd seemed to have suddenly materialised from nowhere, all staring down from the side of the lock in considerable amusement at a very embarrassed skipper at the tiller of narrow boat which plainly wasn't going anywhere in a hurry. And then, perhaps thinking I too might need some entertainment a couple of teenagers struck up from the lock side with some pop song, the only strains of which I could hear

"Backwards like a
rabbit trying to scuttle
out of a hole"

wafting down with all that engine noise and the shouted instructions being "Solid as a rock".

They say trouble comes in threes. It did. The first indication of problems with the engine was a sudden whine. I looked at the temperature gauge - it was in the red. We were really in it; lock, stuck and boil. The whine stopped and a red ignition light came on. Fearing the worst I quickly stopped the engine and lifted the engine hatch.

Inspection quickly revealed steam hissing out from a split in a rubber cap - we had lost the engine coolant water. And we had lost a belt, there was a pungent smell of burnt rubber. And we were still stuck in a lock causing our very own private stoppage, with other boat crews from both

WE ARE NOT AMUSED... continued

directions now peering down in disbelief at our sorry state. First things first, a close look at the problem. The forward coir fenders were squashed down to about 2" on each side. This was a *narrow*, narrow lock - and it looked as if the walls were either tapering or bulging in towards the base of the chamber. Worse still, the thought occurred that perhaps we were now holding the walls up!

By this time, as so often on the canals, willing and practical help was at hand. Another boat skipper had brought over a steel "pushing off" shaft - most boats have wooden ones. Together we found the solution. Using the club hammer and a mooring stake as a chisel, I was able to progressively bash the squashed fender down whilst the steel shaft was used to lever the boat away from the wall, thus reducing the pressure on the fender as it was being hit.

Eventually the fender dropped below the strake with a splash into the lock, relieving the pressure on its partner on the other side and we were free. It only remained to fish out the offending floating article, already miraculously restored to its normal shape.

With no shortage of windlass-bearing boat crews now only too eager to help, amusement having turned to impatience, we were soon pulled forward into the lock and were quickly rising, upper lock gates opened, engine started and, with embarrassed

gratitude for assistance, we were on our way to find the nearest mooring to sort out the engine, still of course with no coolant and only one belt. And then the hunt for spare parts in the middle of nowhere - but that's another story.

You shall not find ALBERT using fenders in locks again. Since that memorable day of being stuck but floating, I've heard all those stories about boats being hung up in locks sitting on jammed fenders as the water disappears from underneath them. I am now quite happy to be in intimate contact with the weeds and the moss.

But what should I do about the numerous narrow boats I pass, gaily about to enter narrow locks with - yes, fat rope fenders hanging down each side. Helpful advice from the lock side? Stringent shouts across the cut? Echoes of the Dart?

No, on reflection, and in true Nelson tradition, I think each of us deserves the privilege of learning life's rich tapestry of canal knowledge the hard way. Anyway, no-one ever said anything to me about fenders in locks so why should I tell anyone else. They shall get their come-uppance one day. I've joined the conspiracy of silence - it makes for more amusement and for lessons better learnt!

And who knows, even Queen Victoria might have smiled, just a little, at ALBERT caught in an embarrassing position?

"With embarrassed
gratitude for assistance,
we were on our way"

COMMITTEE MATTERS ... (iii)

MARCH COMMITTEE ... continued

■ Concern was expressed at the cost of reminders that were needed to obtain Membership renewals. It was agreed to encourage the use of Bankers (Standing) Orders. [*We have investigated Direct Debits but, unfortunately, we are not yet - big enough to meet the Clearing Banks requirements for such a flexible service for our Members. Ed.*]

■ After ten years of the Canal Society/Trust it was considered an appropriate time for a sub-group to review strategy.

■ Thanks were expressed for the continued photographic assistance of the businesses of which our Vice Chairman is a partner - Hereford Camera Centre and Monmouth Photo Centre. Over the years this had been of significant assistance.

■ Following his attendance at the AGM of the Gloucestershire Branch of the IWA the Chairman reported that the Branch intended to change its name to the IWA Gloucestershire and Herefordshire Branch. The Fundraising Officer reported that the Branch had also donated £400 to our funds. Both actions were welcomed and greatly appreciated.

CRP

HEREFORD CAMERA CENTRE and MONMOUTH PHOTO CENTRE

are pleased to have assisted the Herefordshire and Gloucestershire Canal Trust with the provision of colour slides and prints over the past ten years and wish the Trust every success.

We will be pleased to provide all your photographic requirements, large and small - why not call in and see us?

HEREFORD CAMERA CENTRE
53, St. Owen Street, (0432) 279123
MONMOUTH PHOTO CENTRE
6, Church Street. (0600) 772258

IN THE BIN ?

Does your copy of The Wharfinger usually go in the bin after you have read it ? STOP - *please* "recycle" it ! Please place it in your Doctor/Dentists/Opticians waiting room and let it serve as an advertisement for the work of the Canal Trust. Or give it to a friend or neighbour, or colleague at work, (but not so regularly that they avoid joining !).

Or give it to the local school. Or ... If you can think of an unusual but legal place to put it why not let us know ? But whatever happens *please don't throw it in the bin !*

A REMINDER ... Don't forget that we accept both of the leading credit cards for any payment to the Canal Trust.

MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

WELCOME TO OUR NEW CORPORATE MEMBERS

Sun Valley Poultry, Hereford
Priday's Flour Mills, Gloucester Docks

We greatly appreciate their support - thank you.

WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS who joined since early February

Mr. & Mrs. A. Austin, Gorsley, Ross-on-Wye; Mr. S. Bence, Leamington Spa; Mr. & Mrs. Brace, Lugwardine; Mr. L. E. Brace, Hereford; Mr. & Mrs. R. T. Dudfield, Hereford; Mr. & Mrs. Furlong, Ledbury; Mr. S. Gittins, Hereford; Mr. R. Manning, Malvern; Mrs. E. Martin, Cheltenham; Mr. J. Mills, Newent; Mr. D. P. Pollock, Gorsley, Ross-on-Wye; Mr. R. Putley, Malvern; Mr. & Mrs. J. Ryan, Monmouth; Rev. G. Stickland, Gloucester; Mr. & Mrs. L. R. Thomas, Ledbury; Mr. N. J. Wright, Upton-upon-Severn; Mr. & Mrs. A. W. J. Yeandle, Newent.

Members joining after early May will appear in a future edition.

HARRY MILLER

Some people are well known locally and/or nationally for their tireless work for the benefit of the inland waterways. Others make a significant yet almost silent contribution, "behind the scenes", but are known only to a few.

Harry Miller sought no public acknowledgement yet a few of us know that he spent many hours at his computer for the benefit of the thousands who attended the National Waterways Festival held at Gloucester in 1990. More recently he answered our plea for help to "scan" into a computer a typewritten manuscript so that we could produce the book that one of our Vice Presidents had donated to us; the memoirs of Sir John Knill. Unfortunately the wonders of the modern computing world were not able to cope with the original text. Undaunted Harry enlisted the help of a couple of friends and the whole text was retyped into the computer, over many evenings, without complaint or query. (*"It didn't Compute ..."* p.7 of edition 31 of *The Wharfinger*.) Subsequently Harry spent many hours correcting early proofs, suggesting possible typesets and layouts and test scanning historic photographs.

Early in April Harry became very ill: One of the last things that he did, before being taken into hospital, was to print a master of the latest proof of the book on to paper and "floppy disk". This determination not to let us down, even when very unwell, was typical of Harry Miller. After two operations complications set in and, sadly, Harry (only 51 years of age) died early in May. *Although only known by a few his voluntary work will be missed by many.* CRP

THANKS...

to the following for their greatly appreciated support:-

**IWA GLOUCESTERSHIRE AND
HEREFORDSHIRE BRANCH,**

for the donation of £400 towards
our "Core Funding".

**PRIDAY'S FLOUR MILLS,
GLOUCESTER DOCKS,**

Donation of 3 substantial 18ft long
timbers worth £300.

DISPLAY SOLUTIONS - READING,

For donating display panels and
associated lighting.

HEREFORD CITY COUNCIL,

For their annual Grant of £200
towards our "Core Funding".

ULTRA HYDRAULICS - STAVERTON,

Who have overhauled the hydraulics
of our trip boat.

SHARPE & FISHER - HEREFORD,

Who provided a mini excavator over
Easter at a substantial discount.

BERYL BAYLISS - LEOMINSTER,

For running a course on First Aid
for the Restoration Group.

A LEDBURY MEMBER,

For a £400 "Gift Aid" donation which,
thanks to the tax legislation and our
Charitable status, represents £532
after recovery of tax.

**OUR SINCERE THANKS
TO EVERYONE**

HELP!

In the last few editions of *The Wharfinger* you will have read about our continuing rapid increase in speed of progress. Unfortunately the more we do the more paperwork there is! This has led to some administrative problems in that our filing cabinets are now overflowing, and one has shown its dislike for its heavy load! We, therefore, desperately need 3 good quality 4 drawer filing cabinets; a dozen good filing trays; a "floating" backed adjustable typist chair; and a 900mm x 450mm x 750mm high cupboard for our stationery supplies. We constantly try to keep the amount of our hard won money we spend on "administration" to the absolute minimum. So if anyone could donate any [or all!] of the above we would greatly appreciate it. Any offers please to the Fundraising Officer, David Penny, see Contacts. *Thank you*

Please don't forget that the Canal Trust is *always* anxious to recruit "fresh blood" to any of our Groups or any part of our *essential* "behind the scenes" organisation (see inside front cover). Our Social Events and Boats Groups have been particularly stretched this Spring. They would welcome Member/s who either would be prepared to assist in the organisation of Social events in general (or to suggest a specific event and then totally organise it!) and to help finish the fitting out of the trip boat. If this does not appeal then any other part of the organisation would equally welcome a few hours of your time each month. Just contact Cliff Penny or Mike Potts for a "no obligation" [*honestly!* Ed.] chat.

THE WHARFINGER

This edition contains two articles about our Member's boating holidays, one doing all the hard work, and the other hotel style. But as we stress in one of our display posters *Canals are not just for boats* ! Many of our Members have not been on a boating holiday. Even after reading about the exploits of David Williams and Elizabeth Lloyd (in this edition of *The Wharfinger*) - and of other Members boating holidays in earlier editions - some of our Members may still decide to stay firmly on dry land. So if you have enjoyed a *canal related* holiday (or day trip), *not on a boat*, why not write a short article for *your newsletter* soon? Other Members may appreciate some new holiday ideas.

Joyce Lynham has recently undergone a successful major operation on her leg and is recovering slowly. She and our Trading Company Chairman (David Penny) have taken this period of her immobility (which will not be for long if you know Joyce !) to recruit a number of carefully chosen Members to take on a "divisional retail sales" role - persuading a number of their local shops, garages etc. to sell *The Wharfinger* for us. In this way we hope to not only reduce the considerable mileage that Joyce was undertaking on our behalf but also to expand our network of retail outlets who kindly sell *The Wharfinger* - *all* the proceeds being donated to the Canal Trust. To those who are becoming involved in this initiative, a most sincere "thank you"; we believe this is the start of a very exciting expansion of our activities promoting the Canal (and Canal Trust).

Hereford Member Bob Fairclough has kindly volunteered to take on the role of Postmaster for *The Wharfinger*. This is the quarterly task of inserting *The Wharfinger*, and any enclosures, into envelopes - plus all the label and stamp sticking associated with the task. He is also delivering a number locally, to save a few pounds on our (ever growing) postal bill. *Thank you*.

Above we report how an ever increasing number of Members are taking on work which centres around the distribution of *The Wharfinger*. However we have a slight problem in its actual production ! The cause of the problem is that most of the material we receive is still on paper - not "floppy disk". Is there anyone with a computer who could assist us by inputting, four times a year, a small amount of text and sending it back to us on disk, please ? If you can help we would greatly appreciate it !

Did our Members survive the Brecon Mountain Railway? Where is the new Herefordshire restoration site at Yarkhill ? Did the Restoration Group find any more of Barrs Lock, in Herefordshire, or Over lock, in Gloucestershire? Find out - plus a great deal more - in the next issue of *your newsletter The Wharfinger*.

COPY DEADLINE FOR THE NEXT EDITION IS SATURDAY 10th JULY

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

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

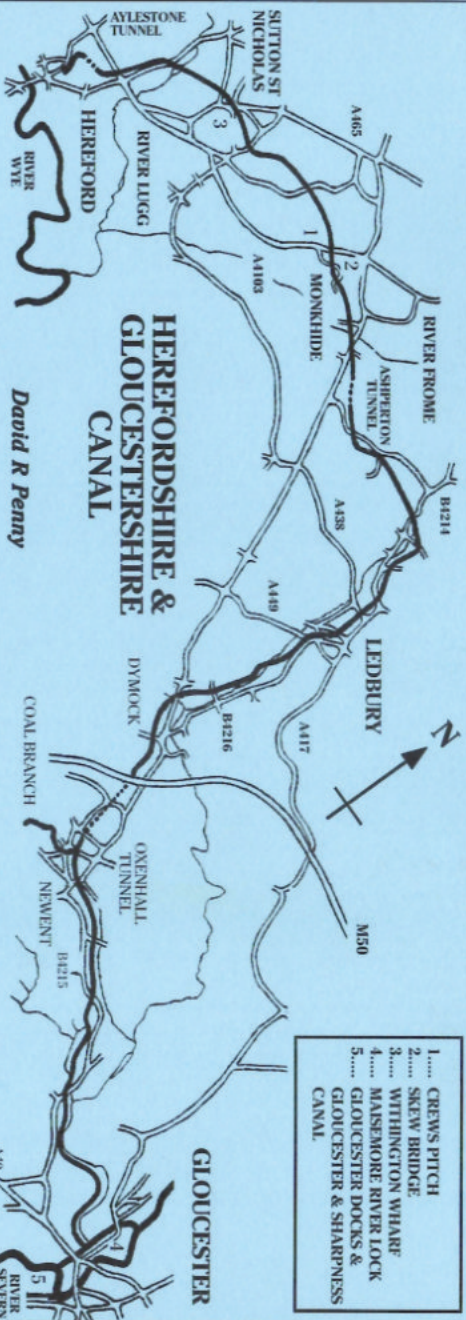
Cover:- Thanks to Sandy Wooldridge, Creative Labels Ltd., Rotherwas, Hereford.

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.

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<p><i>NOT A MEMBER ?</i> Details from The H&G Canal Trust, 6, Castle Street, Hereford, HR1 2NL (sae <i>please</i>).</p>

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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.