

THE WHARFINGER



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

**50p
free to Members**

**Edition 41
Winter 1993/4**

WHO DOES WHAT . . .

VICE PRESIDENTS

R. E. Barnes TD, *Sir John Knill Bt.*

CHAIRMAN

Cliff Penny

VICE CHAIRMAN

To be appointed

TREASURER

Liz Connors

RESTORATION GROUP

Roger Chandler, Brian Fox,
*Simon Hayward, Mike Potts,
Ian Reid*

PRESS & PUBLICITY OFFICER

David Williams

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY

Roger Morgan

FUNDRAISING OFFICER

David Penny

SOCIAL EVENTS GROUP

Tony Austin-Bailey

BOATS GROUP

Nigel Jefferies, *Derek Gray
Ray Moses*

THE WHARFINGER

Cliff Penny, David Penny

MINUTES SECRETARY

Volunteer required !

TRUST ADMINISTRATOR

Lesley Lowe

TALKS/WALKS

N Jefferies, M Potts, D Williams

WHARFINGER POSTMASTER

Bob Fairclough

Those in italics are not Directors on the Council of Management

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

HONORARY POSTS:- AUDITOR Davies, Edwards & Co., Leominster.

SOLICITOR Sue Newbould, GABB & CO., 25, King Street, Hereford.

MEB

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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

WHAT DO YOU THINK ?

In recent issues of *The Wharfinger* there have been a number of references to our review of strategy; including a brief reference in this column in the previous edition. As I explained then, we have established a Strategy Committee (the second meeting of which will take place a few days after this edition has been completed). After ten years it has to be a good idea to review *everything* that we do - and identify some things that we don't do but, perhaps, need doing !

Our requests for *your* views have, so far, resulted in three or four letters to me from Members with constructive suggestions - some "strategic" and a couple that can be regarded as *good ideas* ("the talks about Oxenhall tunnel were so popular why not publish a small booklet, with photographs, about the tunnels on the Canal - for fund raising and publicity ?"). All comments and ideas will be carefully considered by the Strategy Committee (and, in the case of certain items, such as the suggested "Tunnels Booklet", will be passed on to the appropriate part of our organisation - in this specific example, the Trading Company - for research, evaluation, and possible implementation).

At the Annual General Meeting we received a verbal observation that we will have to consider carefully - I may as well be honest and say that it came as a surprise to me as I *thought* that we were doing very well in that specific field ! It shows the benefit of asking for *your* views as we can get so involved in the massive (and seemingly ever-increasing) amount of voluntary work that there *is* a real danger that we will overlook some key issue.

So what was the observation ? That our communications with our Members were inadequate; that you are not kept informed *frequently* enough of what is going on. With *The Wharfinger* being published quarterly it was thought that we needed some other means of keeping you informed of progress, of restoration activities (*so more people could participate* ?), of promotional events that we were attending (*so more people could volunteer to help* ?) . . . A monthly single sheet "update" was suggested - to my personal horror at the thought of the compilation, production and distribution task - plus envelope and postage costs.

Another (self admitted "armchair") Member expressed satisfaction with our current communications with our Members. Our Restoration Group pointed out that they produce an

continued on page 2

CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTS . . . (ii)

occasional single sheet of restoration news that was sent *only* to those who *regularly* attended restoration activities (and the Trading Company *always* sends a letter to all who have helped, in any way, with a specific promotional/sales event). Could we, *should we*, do more; and if so how? We need to carefully consider this. *Please*, write *now* and let me know what *you* think about our communications with you (and any other points - good or bad !). *Thank you*.

LOCAL PLANS

Thank you to the many Members who wrote to the Forest of Dean District Council following the article on page 7 of the last edition (and the letter that we sent to all Members and supporters) regarding the inadequate Policy in the Local Plan relating to the Canal. The Council were inundated, with letters from all over the country, (and one from Australia !). [see p.10]

The Wharfinger

As regular readers will appreciate we have been very fortunate as Midlands Electricity plc. have Sponsored the printing of **The Wharfinger** for the past two years. The Company are now targeting their Sponsorship towards medical charities and this edition is the last that will be printed by them on our behalf. Whilst **The Wharfinger** forms an *essential* part of our communications with our Members it's importance now extends way beyond a "newsletter" *just* for our Members - it is our "ambassador", promoting the work of the Canal Trust throughout two counties, nationally - and now even to Switzerland ! The greatly improved standards that we, as volunteers with no print or publications knowledge, have achieved (and which we are striving to better) has been largely due to the professional printing standards made possible *only* thanks to this generous Sponsorship. *Thank you* to Mike Dernie, the MEB's Public Relations Manager, and everyone else who has been involved with the past eight issues; your support will be sadly missed.

At the time of writing we are urgently seeking a new Sponsor as our hard won funds are directed towards restoration of the Canal and not running a publishing business ! As Midlands Electricity plc. would testify we have widely acknowledged their support *and it has not been taken for granted*. If you know of a potential print Sponsor *please* contact me as soon as possible.

Cliff Penny, Chairman/Liaison Officer

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COMMITTEE MATTERS

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

JULY COMMITTEE

■ A site meeting had taken place with an Officer of the Forest of Dean District Council, regarding their Derelict Land Register, so that appropriate lengths of the Canal could be included.

■ Concern was expressed at the condition of the Ell Brook Aqueduct; it would be added to the list of structures that our Honorary Structural Engineer had been asked to inspect.

■ An invitation to subscribe to the Parliamentary Waterways Group, at £50 per annum, was declined - however the Trust Administration Officer would ensure that all relevant MP's and Euro-MP's were kept fully aware of our objectives and progress.



■ Arrangements for a group of trainees from RAF Credenhill (near Hereford) to work on the Canal in September were warmly welcomed.

■ Progress on restoration was reported - not of the Canal but our plant and equipment !

■ The Canal Trust display had attended events at Tewkesbury and Oxenhall. The lack of a suitable trailer was still causing problems.

■ Preliminary arrangements for the AGM were agreed.

■ The Boats Group reported that polite requests for small quantities of hardwood supplies to be sponsored, addressed to a major timber importer in Herefordshire, had been completely ignored.

■ A revised draft of the Canal Trust's formal "Objectives" Statement was considered. Further amendments were suggested.

■ Due to ill health, our Inland Waterways Association's formal "Nominee" on the Council of Management, Ken Goodwin, was unable to continue. Very great concern was expressed that Ken should have been taken so ill and the prompt action of the Chairman, in writing to Eva Goodwin expressing our good wishes, was endorsed.

■ It was agreed to contribute £50 towards Waterway Recovery Group costs of reprinting their directory of restoration groups.

COMMITTEE MATTERS . . . (ii)

AUGUST COMMITTEE

▪ A formal objection had been sent to the Forest of Dean District Council in respect of the revised proposals for a gypsy site, on the line of the Canal, at Rudford.

▪ David William's (Press and Publicity Officer) offer of the use of a van, to transport display materials and sales stock to the National Waterways Festival at Peterborough, was welcomed.

▪ The Canal Trust had been invited to submit an article for IWA International's publication "World Wide Waterways".

▪ Further details regarding the AGM were discussed.

▪ It was hoped that a temporary (improved) recruitment leaflet would be available for the National Waterways Festival.

▪ A Grant Aid bid for a 6 ton articulated dumper was agreed.

▪ Jim Dunn, Graham Ettles, Derek Gray, Ken Goodwin and Karen McKay would not be seeking re-election at the AGM. Roger Chandler, Roger Morgan, and Lesley Lowe (who had been co-opted during the year) would be proposed for election. *continued on page 20*



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AUTUMN CANAL CAMP '93

A view from the towpath

By David Williams

A full report on this years canal camp at Yarkhill will be found in the Restoration Update elsewhere in this issue of *The Wharfinger*, but I was asked to make a few personal observations.

This was to be a new experience for me - a work camp on the Canal enabled me to see actual restoration work in progress for the first time and it proved to be of absorbing interest. The camp was held to the north of Monkhide and the Hereford to Worcester road, accessed by driving across a recently cut corn field.

The first thing that hits your eye entering the camp is the sign warning that hard hats must be worn and a bag from which you must select a colour of your choice. Does a red one or a yellow one look most becoming - no, I shall go for the white. After some minor adjustment to the plastic internal strap, surprising comfort and security is achieved. In fact, it was good to see the emphasis being placed on safety, and this was to be reflected by all the volunteers I saw, not just those operating machinery or equipment.

I had walked this section of Canal in July and at that time had found the narrow towpath near impassable in places due to undergrowth - particularly brambles and nettles. It came as something of a surprise therefore to discover that this meandering sylvan little path had been quickly transformed in just two days into a fairly firm and level earth roadway now some 10' wide, but still attractively and thankfully bordered by trees on either side.

However, an even greater transformation was being made to the impenetrable mass of vegetation that had constituted the Canal bed itself for the past century. Since I had last seen it, despairing inwardly at the sheer amount of work involved in its clearance, the first few hundred yards had been completely restored down to the original clay in just a couple of days. It clearly demonstrated the requirement for an accompanying wide and firm towpath, for with the onset of the inevitable rain mid-week the cleared Canal started filling with water and quickly became an impassable squelch of clay - genuine puddling! Obviously, experience and technique gained in previous years is being put to good use.

So therein lay the real surprise - the speed of progress achieved along the cut using a large bulldozer (somewhat dramatically known as "THE BLADE") and a 360° excavator. This tracked machinery was served by a pirouetting quartet of dumpers which busily carried the top soil off along the towpath and deposited it unceremoniously on the top of the

AUTUMN CANAL CAMP '93 *continued*

hill in the middle of a nearby field - presumably from whence it came. As clearing progressed along the original line of the cut, levels were being taken to ensure that the Canal was being excavated to a fairly constant depth.

Meanwhile, other volunteers concentrated on cutting up and burning the considerable amount of undergrowth and trees that lay in the line of the Canal or towpath. However, some of the willow trees in the Canal bed itself were of a size to defy any attempts to shift them using saws or machinery and had to be blown out later using explosives [*by professionals - Ed.*]! Back at base camp, a further team of constant helpers prepared breakfast, lunchtime sandwiches and tea to keep the inner man and woman happy.

The result of the canal camp, despite several days of constant rain which at times made the use of the dumpers somewhat hazardous, is a length of 1000yds of cleared Canal and towpath. There is still a substantial amount of work to do, however, to finally grade the banks, and still more soil to be removed from the last couple of hundred yards up to Barrs Lock. The major work though has been completed, the back of job the broken, with great success, all achieved by a relatively small but hardworking team.

I understand that nature will quickly take its course, in the spring, covering the raw earth with a new layer of vegetation which will stabilise the ground, and we now have ready access for maintenance.

It becomes clear to anyone witnessing just how much can be achieved using modern earth moving machinery and an enthusiastic team of professional volunteers in a very short time, that full restoration of the Canal is not just a pipe dream. Indeed, the re-excavation of the Canal itself appears relatively straightforward and rapid, given permission and co-operation from the landowners, somewhere to deposit material removed from the Canal, and reasonably good luck with the weather. The more major and difficult tasks for future years will obviously be the progressive rebuilding of locks, bridges and aqueducts.

With more machinery, more trained operators, and increased financial resources, a substantial rate of restoration can be achieved. I would urge anyone with time on their hands to join the Restoration Group and assist with the future clearance, reinstatement, and maintenance of the Canal. It certainly is enjoyable and all who helped this year will have a firm sense of achievement from the significant progress made.

COUNCIL OF MANAGEMENT

The following Council of Management Members "stepped down" at the AGM:- James Dunn; Graham Ettles; Ken Goodwin (IWA Nominee); Derek Gray and Karen McKay. In a number of cases we already know that "behind the scenes" help will continue. To all - *our sincere thanks.*

PRESS & PUBLICITY

By David Williams

Having taken on this role from Chris Clark in February, it quickly becomes obvious to the incumbent that the job is really much bigger than the available hours in the day for any individual with a day job to do it full justice. Indeed, I have discovered that it would easily be a full time job exploiting all the media and publicity opportunities that exist for promotion of the Trust, which in a commercial operation would be backed up with a number of outside specialist agencies fulfilling particular tasks.

For this reason, I would like to try to form a Publicity Group, whereby the role of press and publicity can be undertaken by a number of people contributing a wide range of professional skills but essentially working in conjunction for a co-ordinated and controlled approach to the publicity task.

I am therefore looking for Trust Members with experience in any of a number of skills of use to the Trust, but short of wanting to shift muck and cut down brambles. *[Although we have many of the resources, listed below, available to us it is essential to bring some "fresh blood" in to reduce the burden on those already heavily committed and allow our work to expand - Ed.]* You could contribute greatly to the work of this Group if you could undertake any of the following:-

- Reporting on Trust events
- Drawing sketches or cartoons
- Preparing Press Releases
- Writing feature articles about the Canal and the work of the Trust
- Maintaining a Press Clipping service
- Taking photographs of the Trust at work
- Researching and writing about the history of the Canal
- Writing about the route of the Canal, or architectural features
- Preparing artwork
- Computer based work - word processing, graphic design, CAD etc.
- Presentations of the Trusts work to interested external societies

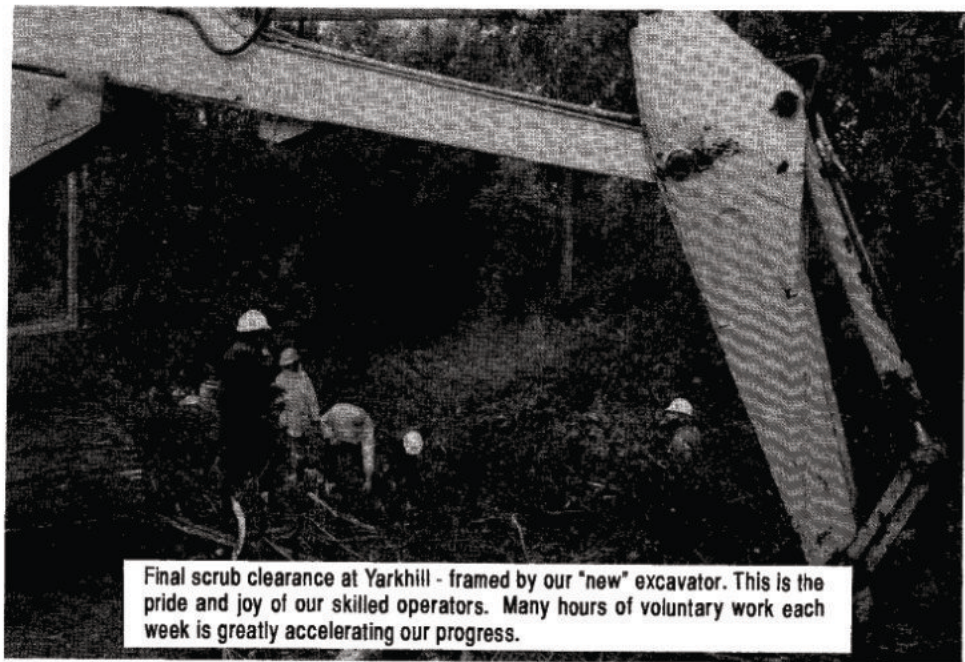
You will see from the above list that a wide range of skills, experience or interest can be encompassed within the Press and Publicity role, in support of the Trust.

If there is an area in which you feel you could assist the Trust, or would like to be part of a new Publicity Group, please let me know (see **Contacts**). *[Please do not do anything, however good an idea it may seem, without first contacting David Williams and getting his express approval ! - Ed.]*



ABOVE: Corporate Member Michael Stimpson pulls out the winners in our Grand Holiday Draw on the last day of the National waterways Festival at Peterborough - the crowds gathered behind the camera...

BELOW: Work gets under way on the Yarkhill site; the location of our major Canal Camp this year. Further photographs of the Camp are on p.16.



Final scrub clearance at Yarkhill - framed by our "new" excavator. This is the pride and joy of our skilled operators. Many hours of voluntary work each week is greatly accelerating our progress.

TWO WORDS DESTROY THE FUTURE ? . . . PART 2

A great deal of effort (and, unfortunately, a fair amount of cost) was needed to bring the news to our Members (and supporters) of the inadequate Planning Policy, relating to the Canal, that was contained in the "Deposit" version of the Forest of Dean Local Plan. It was essential that we broadcast the facts swiftly as it was critical that your representations were made within the formal "Deposit" period of six weeks. So we took the unusual step of writing to all our Members, many other supporters, the Members of Parliament, the Euro-MP, the Parish Councils along the route; anyone and everyone who we felt had a legitimate interest in securing the future of the Canal. As the last edition of *The Wharfinger* was received by our Members within the consultation period, pages 7 and 8 were also devoted to this very important topic.

The outcome was most rewarding - nearly 150 letters copied to our Chairman (and we know that others were sent as well) - to say that the Council were "inundated" would be a fair statement !



However, the Chairman's telephone then began to ring so frequently that it really did break down. The Council were sending out a welter of forms that were serving to (greatly) confuse the recipients. So more "midnight oil" was "burnt" by the Chairman, advice was obtained from our

numerous sources, and yet another letter was distributed (at yet more cost) advising on the completion of the forms.

As a consequence of these representations Senior Officers of the Planning Department of the Council have promised to discuss the wording of the Policy with our Chairman. We will advise you of the outcome in the next edition of *The Wharfinger* [when we hope to also bring you up to date on progress with the four other Local Plans - in *each* case we are enjoying excellent co-operation and it seems exceedingly unlikely that we will need to call on your support - we hope !]. To all who took the trouble to write - *thank you*. When we succeed in gaining full protection for the whole 34 miles (including essential diversion routes) *you* can justly claim to have played a vital part in securing the future of the Canal for the benefit of the local community, future generations, and the national waterways network.

We are aware that a number of individuals and organisations did not receive forms to complete nor did they receive any acknowledgement of their letter to the Council. If this applies to you *please* write immediately to the Council, enclosing a copy of your original letter, and request a formal acknowledgement. Please advise our Chairman (by way of a copy of your letter) so that we can monitor the situation.

REMEMBER - even with supportive Planning Policies it is critical that our local Members remain vigilant. If you are aware of *any* development proposals on or near the Canal please tell the Chairman immediately.

NATIONAL WATERWAYS FESTIVAL

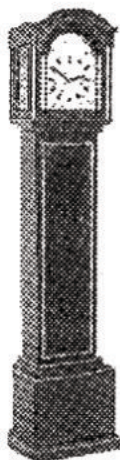
By David Williams

The August Bank Holiday weekend once again saw the Trust putting up its stand to establish an important presence at the National Waterways Festival, this year in Peterborough. Many of you reading this will have seen on television the BBC Songs of Praise recorded during the Festival and giving some indication of the scale of the event. And what a weekend it was. This is THE narrow boat gathering of the year and 500 boats attended, stretching for over two miles double breasted along the river. Unlike last year at Wakefield, the weather was kind too, with almost unbroken sunshine. The Trust had a 20'x 20' marquee and over fifteen members of the Trust attended over the three days of the show to help "man" the stand.

Whilst our main purpose in being at the National Waterways Festival is for essential Public Relations - getting ourselves firmly on the national map as an active restoration group with a worthwhile project - we took sufficient in sales to cover the costs of attendance. In view of the competition from other similar restoration groups, this is excellent and a tribute to those actively soliciting contributions to our cause from the stand. Thanks too are due to the catering team back at the campsite. Whether you are a canal or boat(ing) enthusiast, or both, the "National" is well worth a visit with plenty to see and do. In fact the Trust attends many events every year so please let us know if you are interested in helping us make a bob or two, and also getting ourselves known to an ever wider audience. [Our "manning co-ordinator" is Liz Connors - see Contacts - why not get on her list ready for 1994? - Ed.]

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Dates For Your Diary

Friday 3rd December - 7.30 for 8pm

Colwall Park Hotel, Colwall, Nr. Malvern
Christmas Dinner '93, see below, and the enclosed leaflet.

Sunday 5th December

Dymock:- "Restoration Group Christmas Party"
Dymock Village Hall, behind the Beauchamp Arms PH.

Social Events in 1994

We apologise for the fact that we do not have *any* Social Events for the first three months of 1994 - please see *HELP!* on page 23.

Advance Notice

Mike Potts, our coach trips expert, has arranged the following:-

May, 1994

Trip on the famous Paddle Steamer "Waverley"

The exact date to be confirmed. Further details in the next edition

Saturday 11th June

Coach excursion to the Llangollen Canal/Railway

*Cruise along this beautiful canal whilst enjoying lunch, crossing the magnificent Pontcysyllte Aquaduct and a trip on the Llangollen Railway.
Book early - approx. £15 including lunch. Full details in the next edition.*

Information & tickets from:

Restoration Group Christmas Party - any of the Contacts on page 15

Christmas Dinner - David Penny

Paddle Steamer "Waverley" and trip to Llangollen Canal - Mike Potts

Christmas

**H&G
C&S**

Dinner 93

To be held on 3rd December, with guest speaker Tony Condor [curator of the National Waterways Museum], at the Colwall Park Hotel, Colwall, Nr. Malvern. £16.50 each, payable HGCS, to David Penny (see *contacts*) by 30th November, please. Accommodation available - see enclosed menu.

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,

This is to let you know how we enjoyed our 2 day break being the prize that we won in your *Grand Holiday Draw*.

We left home in the morning of Thursday 14th October and headed towards the Malverns - the sun came out about lunch time and we had glorious autumn sunshine for the rest of the afternoon. We put on our walking shoes and explored Midsummer Hill and the Eastnor Park areas and took pictures from the Obelisk towards Eastnor Castle.

As the sun started to go down we decided to make our way towards the Colwall Park Hotel. On our arrival we were impressed by the old world charm and warm welcome from the kind and helpful staff and we were shown to our pleasant en-suite room at the front of the hotel overlooking the village. After unpacking we went to explore Colwall village, finding to our surprise that it is the home of Malvern Water.

In the evening our table was waiting for us in the restaurant - and this was where we encountered our first problem - what to eat from the extensive menu! Finally the choice was venison in red wine sauce. Absolutely delicious! The same table was waiting for us the following morning when we both enjoyed a large English breakfast which set us up nicely to enjoy walking on top of the Worcestershire Beacon. The day was another crisp autumn one and we were able to see the Black Mountains in Wales and the Cotswolds beyond the Severn Plain.

All of this for the price of a 25p draw ticket to support the work of the Canal Trust. Thank you everyone for your trouble, we really enjoyed our two day break.

June and Rodney Barnes, Kenilworth.

[We were delighted to hear that Mr and Mrs Barnes - no relation to our Vice President - enjoyed their stay at the Colwall Park Hotel. The Canal Trust would like to thank everyone who bought tickets and, especially, the donors of the three holiday prizes - Pauline and Ian Cundy of Starline Narrowboats, Michael Handford and, of course, Elizabeth and Basil Frost of the Colwall Park Hotel. Over £2,000 was raised towards restoration of the Canal - Ed.]

GRAND HOLIDAY DRAW - RESULTS

- ★ 1st Prize - NARROW BOAT HOLIDAY FOR 3/5 ★ Mr and Mrs Roberts,
One Week (April/May 1994) Donated by STARLINE NARROWBOATS Solihull
- 2nd - LUXURY COTSWOLDS COTTAGE (SLEEPS 4/5) Mr and Mrs Hayes,
One Week - Adj. to Stroudwater Canal - Donated by M HANDFORD ESQ. Gloucester
- 3rd - TWO DAY BREAK FOR TWO IN MALVERN Mr and Mrs Barnes,
Donated by THE AWARD WINNING COLWALL PARK HOTEL Kenilworth

RESTORATION UPDATE

By Brian Fox

If you want to know when not to book your holidays then check when our main restoration effort is taking place because you can be sure it will rain! This year was no exception although we did have almost 4 dry days before the rain came and what a difference that made.

Our planning had been meticulous for a fortnight's excavation. Tom Bennett, our excavator operator, mechanic, and master of many trades, was our adviser too and guided us round all the possible pitfalls. We had enough money, thanks to a large Grant from the Local Projects Fund (supported by the DoE), our own recently purchased excavator (thanks to the LPF Grant), 4 large dumpers and a very large bulldozer especially hired, the small dozer from Oxenhall, and our own dumpers, tractor and trailer. On site was our own recently purchased (£30 !) mobile fitted kitchen. It wasn't fitted initially and didn't have a proper roof but this was quickly rectified by skilled volunteers and the roof was soon tested and proved secure when the rain came. A mobile filling station consisted of the trailer with 7 x 200 litre drums of diesel plus assorted oils on the back - all towed around the site by the Trust's tractor.

At this point I must say a word of thanks to Mrs Oram who owns the stretch of Canal on which we were to be working and to Mr Mess who kindly allowed us to park this

motley assortment of vehicles plus our own cars in the corner of his field adjacent to the Canal and also gave us a dump site for the soil removed from the Canal bed.

In the end we concentrated all our efforts into a 9 day period from 4th - 12th of September rather than the 2 weeks originally planned, but with the benefit of some additional Plant. The Grant application had stated that our target was to restore about half of the 900 metre (1000 yds.) stretch of old Canal which forms the Yarkhill Project. This was almost dry and filled with

vegetation of various sorts along its length, with an estimated volume of soil to be excavated of 4000 cubic metres (5250 cubic yds.) and most of the towpath needed regrading and widening. The Canal and towpath had

about 100 trees of varying sizes blocking progress including 6 large willows and about 10 ash in the bed which we reluctantly removed but they would have had the roots submerged and become unsafe if we had left them. *[Many hundreds more trees at the back of the towpath, between the towpath and the Canal, and especially on the non-towpath bank remain, retaining the fantastic "double archway" of trees over the Canal and towpath - Ed.]* Many of the trees and scrub had previously been cleared by various groups of volunteers but the stumps still remained. The largest willow stumps were loosened and split using dynamite (done by a professional!). This was the scene.



RESTORATION UPDATE continued

The weather prior to the 4th had been dry for about 3 weeks and we were optimistic about our chances. By 7.30am there was movement in the camp and after a quick cup of tea and a check on all the equipment we were away, putting the excavator, dozer and the 4 dumpers through their paces. A second party went on ahead to clear scrub whilst the 2 caterers at base camp were left to prepare brunch for the 11 o'clock break. Apart for a small leak of hydraulic fluid from the excavator which was very swiftly resolved,



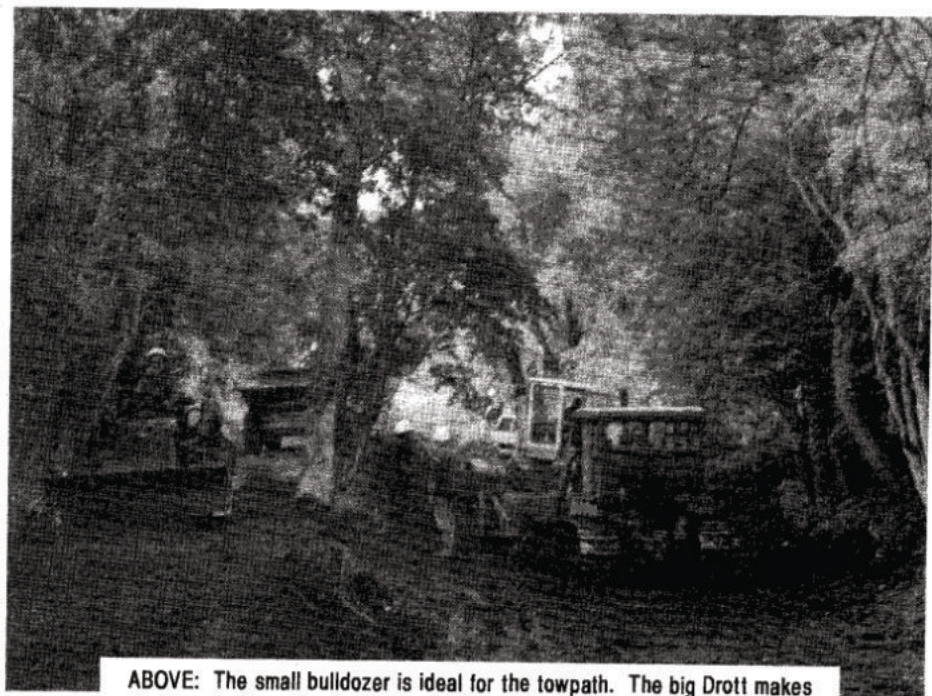
everything went like clockwork and by 7.30pm we were 100 metres (110 yds.) down the Canal. More dry weather and by 4pm on the 4th day we had cleared and restored 400 metres (440 yds.). All soil and vegetation was removed and, apart from some tidying of the banks, ready to fill with water. The occasional dumper had been stuck in the odd boggy patch or slid off the towpath but our spirits were high and we were dreaming of finishing within the 9 days... and then it rained!

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. You can find the Restoration Group actively engaged at either Oxenhall or the 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 ?*

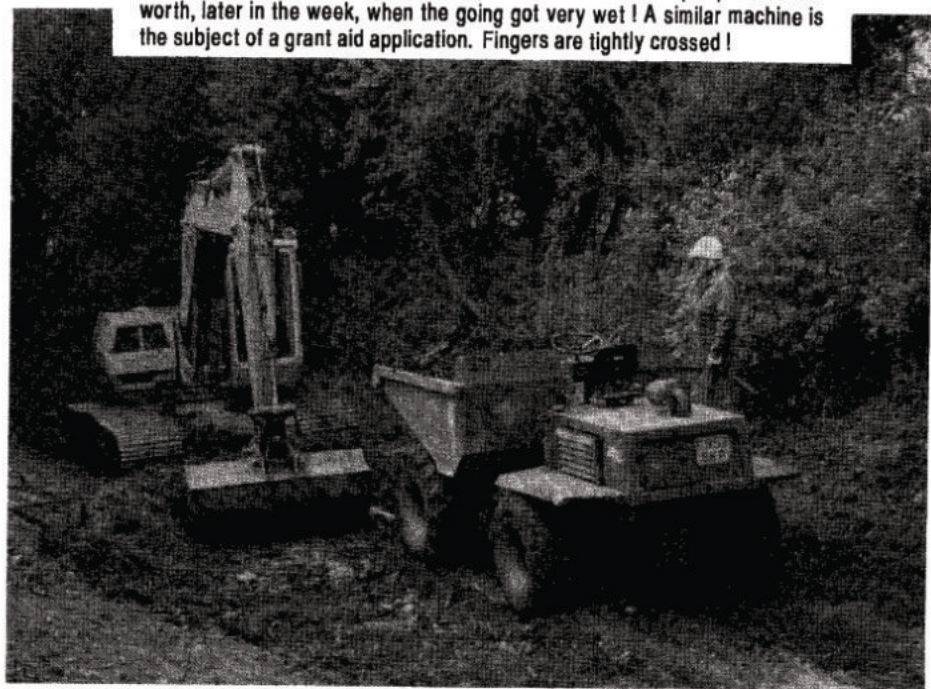
There is a very wide range of work to be done, from the very heavy, dirtiest digging out wet silt by hand, the more sedately reconstruction of brickwork structures, the clearance of general undergrowth (out of nesting season), to the "manning" of bonfires for a few hours (or even making the tea !) - 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 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 Gloc. (0452) 305572



ABOVE: The small bulldozer is ideal for the towpath. The big Drott makes short work of levelling the bed and sides of the Canal.

BELOW: The large tyres of the (hired) 6 ton articulated dumper proved their worth, later in the week, when the going got very wet ! A similar machine is the subject of a grant aid application. Fingers are tightly crossed !



RESTORATION UPDATE continued

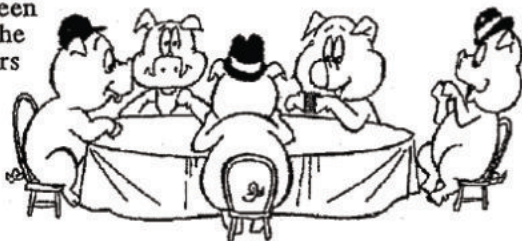
Our dreams were shattered and for 44 hours the dumpers hardly moved. It quickly became too dangerous to drive along the towpath with the possibility of slipping down the bank and the Canal bed was by now far too wet - in fact we were tempted to stand and watch the Canal filling as it rained. But the time wasn't wasted as there was much scrub clearance to do whilst the excavator and bulldozers went on ahead removing tree stumps and opening up the towpath. By midday on the Thursday the ground was dry enough for dumpers to operate at the far end of the Canal and so a start was made on removing the 4 large earth dams which had been built across the Canal in years gone by - for what purpose we do not know. This soil was then transported a short distance and used to

build up and widen the towpath. Further showers on Friday slowed our progress but 2 of the dams finally disappeared and we were still moving forward rapidly.

There was one problem with working at the far end of the Canal - it was 800 metres (875 yds.) or so to walk back for brunch or a cup of tea, so it was decided to call up our mini dumper for duty. The skip was far too small to consider shifting soil but fill it with a large pot full of tea, a dozen cups, biscuits etc, and drive down to the troops and it becomes a mobile tea wagon! At last a use has been found for it and I promise not to suggest again that we should scrap our little dumper. We still had to assemble at 11 o'clock at base camp

for our brunch but that was well worth the walk. The various cooks all did a magnificent job feeding a maximum of 16 on one day and after washing all the pots then prepared sandwiches for the afternoon shift. Thank you ladies.

The rain finally forced a halt at midday on Sunday and this really was rain so it became a mad scramble to get all the dumpers cleaned, fuelled and taken over to Crews Pitch Wharf for collection the following morning. The tea wagon, our dumpers, trailers, tractor plus all our personal vehicles had to be out of the field before it became a



Not Restoration Group - but a good cartoon!

quagmire but by 3 o'clock it was done and the field was once again empty except for the two dozers and the excavator.

In the end all 4 earth dams had been removed, the towpath levelled to about 3 metres (10ft.) width for the whole 900 metres (1000 yds.), and the section of the Canal that was remaining after the 4th day was largely clear of vegetation. Some stumps remain *[these have just been removed - Ed.]* and there is still some soil to come out of the Canal bed before we get down to the original puddle clay but we are hoping that this can be cleared and the job completed by the excavator and dozer which remain on site with minimal assistance from our dumpers. The soil which we dumped on the field has been levelled by the dozer and is ready for ploughing - Mr Mess should get a good crop off it next year. There are still 3 large breaches in the far bank

RESTORATION UPDATE continued

and there is much finishing and tidying to do before we can re-water the Canal - hopefully during the winter of 1994. So volunteers don't think you can rest on your laurels - we shall continue working at Yarkhill on the first Sunday every month and probably a few others.

That is not quite the end of the story. At precisely 3.15 on Sunday afternoon an appointment had been arranged with a local farmer to discuss drainage of his fields which adjoined the Canal. It



was still pouring with rain but 5 intrepid bodies (including our Chairman) were duly to be seen tramping fields and clambering over fences in the course of their voluntary duties. At times like these, one wonders why do we do it? I got wetter then than during the whole of the previous week! The outcome was that we have now agreed to re-cut the drainage ditches on both sides of the Canal so that hopefully the local farmers will have no more trouble draining their fields once the Canal is filled with water.

A few facts and figures:-

Soil removed during the week ...	1600 m ³ (2100 yds ³) [more still to do !]
Tree stumps taken out	70
Diesel fuel used	2100 litres (470 gallons)
Volunteers	39 different faces
Voluntary hours	1100
Breakfasts cooked	100

Artifacts found:-

- Whisky bottle dated 1915 (empty)
- 2 pint milk bottle from local farm (empty)
- Eel fork (rusty)
- 2 bricks with R. BALLARD stamp (he built the canal)

Final thought - If the weather had been kinder and the whole of the second week had been worked we would have finished before the end -

if you see what I mean! But still a fantastic effort and excellent value for the Grant Aid received. Thank you one and all.

RESTORATION FOCUS

By Roger Chandler

A new column focussing on Restoration in Gloucestershire.

The summer has been a quiet time as most of the work-force moved to help the major work at Yarkhill, in Herefordshire. At Oxenhall work continued on maintenance of the restored section and other odd jobs in preparation for some excavation later in the year. Work was also

undertaken on the stable near the Tunnel, which has taken a long time, but it is being treated as a hospital job being done in the "dry" when other work is impossible. I know this is a short report and I am confident that there will be more to report in the next edition.

A GLIMPSE OF THE PAST

[or how the Canal was actually used]

By Roger Broomfield

As a student of Postal History, and particularly that of Ledbury and District, I have always been interested in finding proofs of the Canal and its usage. Sadly, I have only got one item of commercial mail relating to it - in fact this is the ONLY item of mail relating to the Canal which has ever come my way!

It is an "entire letter" (that is a sheet of paper on which the letter has been written and which has then been folded and sealed to have the address written on the outside) written by "Thos Gibbs" From Munsley, on June 8th

1842, and addressed to Hampton Court near Leominster, and has the postmarks of Ledbury and Leominster on the back.

The address panel bears the endorsement (on the left side)

"PrePaid in haste" but this is still further endorsed "Not", and the address shows a figure "2" indicating a postage due charge of 2 (old) pence had to be collected!



The contents of the letter give a very fascinating indication of life at the time and, even today, can easily be read.

Munsley June 8th 1842

Sir I have a boat laden of Coal come this day to Ledbury Wharf they will be a Staplow Wharf tomorrow evening please to send Wagons enough to take the 20 tons that was wrote about because that quantity will be stacked there for J. Arkwright Esq. Please to write and let me know the Day the wagons comes and they shall be met at the Staplow Wharf and what hour in the morning you will oblige.

Your obedient servant

Thos Gibbs

If any Member has further postal proof of the Canal and its usages, I would be very pleased to see them. [Via the Editor please - Ed.]

CHRISTMAS MAIL ORDER SALES

Enclosed with this edition of The Wharfinger is our annual Sales List. All the items are top quality and at competitive prices.

Please support our work and solve your present problems!

The last date for Christmas orders is 13th December.

COMMITTEE MATTERS . . . (iii)

AUGUST COMMITTEE . . . *continued*

▪ A report was received following a special meeting of the Council of Management called to consider major purchase procedures. Formal Purchase Orders would be required for all but minor items of expenditure. It was agreed that a Finance and General Purposes Committee be established to recommend overall budgets to the Council of Management and to monitor and review procedures. The Council of Management reluctantly accepted the resignation of Mike Potts from the post of Vice Chairman.

▪ The budget for the Canal Camp at Yarkhill was endorsed.

▪ Details of restoration and maintenance work on the Oxenhall Project Site were reported.

▪ A request, from the Gloucestershire Industrial Archaeological Society, for the Lock Keepers House at Over to be "Listed" had been rejected by the Department of the Environment.

▪ Following press reports that bats from Over Hospital would be rehoused in the Over Lock Keepers Cottage the Chairman had contacted the Protected Species Officer of English Nature and there did not appear to be any conflict between our respective organisations.



▪ The sixth draft of the Land Owners Agreement was endorsed, subject to any comments from our Insurers.

SEPTEMBER COMMITTEE

▪ Forest of Dean District Council had refused Planning Permission for the Gypsy site at Rudford.

▪ Our attendance at the National Waterways Festival, at Peterborough, was judged to be a success - although despite the good weather, sales had been very similar to last years (very wet) event.

▪ Consultants acting for the Department of Transport had requested comments from the Trust on the environmental impact of the proposed A40/M50 link road. The Chairman had responded, in detail, pointing out that the Canal from Oxenhall to the River Severn (nearly 10 miles) would be directly or indirectly affected by the proposals.

▪ Hereford and Worcester County Council had asked for comments on the proposed layout of the small car park and picnic area that they planned adjacent to the Canal at Monkhide.

COMMITTEE MATTERS ... (iv)

SEPTEMBER COMMITTEE ... *continued*

▪ Amicable discussions with a neighbouring landowner regarding drainage ditches adjacent to the Yarkhill Project site had led to an agreement that the Canal Trust would restore the ditches (on a "once only" basis) in return for a donation of fuel for our excavator.

▪ It was agreed that the Trading Company would submit a tender to the County Council in respect of the clearance of a partially blocked culvert under the main Hereford to Worcester road as the clearance of the culvert was essential to the resolution of the inadequate drainage of the land adjacent to the Canal.

▪ Final arrangements for the AGM were agreed - including contingency arrangements in case a quorum was not achieved.

▪ The first report of the new Finance and General Purposes Committee was received. This indicated that there was likely to be a potential shortfall of some £5,000 in the coming year unless additional grant aid was forthcoming or there was a severe (and unacceptable) restriction in restoration progress [this figure already allows for a more than 50% reduction in restoration expenditure]. Certain amendments to the preliminary budgets were recommended for consideration at the next F&GP Committee in December.

▪ The Restoration Group reported excellent progress during the Yarkhill Canal Camp earlier in the month. This was in spite of appalling weather conditions for the latter two-thirds of the Camp. The success was on account of good planning, working 7.30am - 7.30pm, and the use of an additional large bulldozer, and dumper - plus full on-site catering! [see p.14]

▪ A number of complaints had been received in respect of the lack of maintenance of parts of the Monkhide Project Site; it was agreed that it was essential to plan for maintenance even where restoration was incomplete. Certain works were also required so that maintenance could be more readily achieved.

▪ Following the success of the trips that he had organised in 1993 Mike Potts confirmed that he was at an advanced stage with plans for trips in 1994 [preliminary details on p.12].

▪ The Boats Group were seeking Sponsorship of electrical items for the Trip Boat.

▪ Copies of over 130 letters, that had been sent to the Forest of Dean District Council in respect of the "Deposit Draft" of the Local Plan, had been received by the Chairman. He was aware that other representations in support of our case had also been made. The Council had promised to discuss the matter with the Canal Trust once the formal consultation period had ended. [see p.10.] CRP

MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

WELCOME TO OUR NEW CORPORATE MEMBER

**Bromsgrove Boatbuilders, Hanbury Wharf,
Droitwich**

We greatly appreciate their support - thank you.

WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS who joined since early May 1993

Mr. Beaver, Hereford; Mr. & Mrs. F. Brewer, Worcester; Mr. & Mrs. K. Ball, Preston Wynne, Hereford; Mr. J. Beech, Redmarley, Gloucester; Mr. S. Buckley, Solihull; Mr. & Mrs. J.R. Child, Middleton on the Hill, Ludlow; Mr. M. Coxhead, Pyrford, Woking; Mr. & Mrs. M. Day, Wellington Heath, Ledbury; Mr. R.A. Dewey, Pentre, Wrexham; Mr. P.D. Dombrowski, Newport, Gwent; Mr. & Mrs. J. Davies, Upwell, Wisbech; Mr. & Mrs. D. Edwards, Oxenhall, Glos; Mr. & Mrs. C. Frost, Christchurch, Dorset; Mr. S. Hodges, Bromyard; Mr. J.H. Hill, Oakham, Rutland; Jean James, Yarkhill, Hereford; Mr. R.H. Judge, Wellington Heath, Ledbury; Mrs. A.F.R. Jefferies, Winterbourne Down, Bristol; Ms. D. Le Mehaute, Penhill, Swindon; Mr. & Mrs. C. Lenczuk, Newent, Glos; Mr. J. Lyons, Hereford; Mr. Marlow, Vowchurch, Hereford; Mr. & Mrs. A. Miller, Ridge Hill, Hereford; A.E. Moore, Cheltenham; Mr. & Mrs. A. Pierce, Tarrington, Hfds; Mr. & Mrs. P. Pocock, Credenhill, Hfd; Mr. & Mrs. J. Reid, Luston, Leominster; Miss J.M. Richards, Mordiford, Hfd; Mr. R.T. Richardson, Cradley, Malvern; Mr. & Mrs. Shaw, Ross-on-Wye; Mr. & Mrs. M. Weisskopf, Switzerland; Mr. & Mrs. A.R. Usher, Ross on Wye.

Members joining after late September will appear in a future edition.

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THANKS...

to the following for their greatly appreciated support:-

ALL OUR VOLUNTEERS

who worked despite the frequently appalling weather during our Yarkhill dig in September.

ALL OUR SUPPORTERS

who wrote to Forest of Dean District Council objecting to the Local Plan.

THE LANDOWNERS

whose permission, support, and cooperation enabled the Yarkhill dig to take place.

D&J HITCHINGS, ROSS-ON-WYE

for free transportation of a large bulldozer to and from the dig.

ACER UK Ltd

for assisting us with our computer monitor (*see p.24*)

WELSH WATER

who loaned us a computer monitor (*see p.24*) and have made available a small store for our exhibition display panels.

THE CATERING TEAM

at both the National Waterways Festival and the Yarkhill Canal Camp - well fed volunteers are happy volunteers!

DAVIES BROOK & Co., HEREFORD

for donating 6 dozen bottles for our "bottle stall" to raise funds at the National Waterways Festival.

LUCAS ELECTRICAL (HEREFORD)

for the donation of batteries, horn and other electrics for the trip boat.

**OUR SINCERE THANKS
TO EVERYONE**

HELP!

Our aim has always been to give our Members a range of Social Events and the details of these were "promoted" to the centre pages some time ago to reflect the importance of this part of our activities. This is probably one of the easiest single tasks within the Trust to run successfully - and does not require the organiser to sit on Council. Unfortunately this is an area where frequent pleas for assistance in organising Social Events have generally gone unanswered. For some time now we have been struggling to obtain Social Event details in time for the appropriate issue of *The Wharfinger* and this issue is no exception - except this time we have not received any details, at all, for the popular winter period.

We hope for a volunteer to co-ordinate all our Social Events - but if you want to help why not offer to organise just ONE event each year? A little effort by a few people could be the difference between the Canal Trust having regular Social Events - or none at all. [Mike Potts has already planned a couple of his highly popular coach/canal (and railway) visits for 1994 - it just shows what can be done!] Please telephone Lesley Lowe (*see Contacts*) in the first instance.

We ran out of room in the Thanks column (alongside) to thank Mr Miles Hanwell who promptly responded to our request, in the last edition, for a suitable postal address in Gloucestershire to complement that of Castle Street in Hereford. We had a number of offers (*thank you*) so we are keeping our fingers crossed that the same will be true for Social Events!

THE WHARFINGER

Just as we were completing the last issue, at the critical stage of being almost ready for the printers but not quite, the monitor forming part of the Canal Trust computer system decided it had been overworked; an unhealthy crackling sound plus a puff of (nasty smelling) smoke signalled it's demise. To make things even worse the draft of the Canal Trust accounts had only just been typed in - but not printed - and were urgently required. Now anyone who works with computers will know that they are excellent things to have around - until *any one part* goes wrong! Large organisations know this only too well and hold spares ... So it was thanks to **Welsh Water** that we soon had a loan monitor and were back in business. Through the **IBM PC User Group** (081-863 1191) the Canal Trust has comprehensive insurance cover (and access to expert advice). The Canal Trust monitor proved to be beyond economic repair so we were insured for most of the cost of an equivalent replacement.

A couple of letters to the Managing Director of Acer UK Ltd has resulted in the manufacturer supplying the Canal Trust with the next model up in their range for the price of the direct replacement monitor. So we now have a larger display to ease our work. To all concerned in this quite protracted saga - *our sincere thanks*.

The really sad news (see **Chairman's Comments**, p.2) is that Midlands Electricity plc are unable to Sponsor the printing of **The Wharfinger** after this issue. **The Wharfinger** is our "ambassador".



A good quality of print/production is important in continuing to promote the Canal Trust as a voluntary body that goes about everything that it does in a professional manner. We have greatly appreciated the support over the past eight issues - *our sincere thanks* to all concerned.

If you are reading this before Christmas, then the Trust (and Trading Company) Council of Management would like to take the opportunity to wish all Members - and those who have supported us in any way over the past year

A VERY MERRY CHRISTMAS

However, if you are reading this in 1994

A HAPPY NEW YEAR !

Spring will be well on it's way by the time you read the next edition and we hope that *your* New Year Resolution might be to help the Canal Trust in some way? We will include a few ideas for you to consider ... in the next issue of **The Wharfinger**.

COPY DEADLINE FOR THE NEXT EDITION IS SATURDAY 8th JANUARY

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.

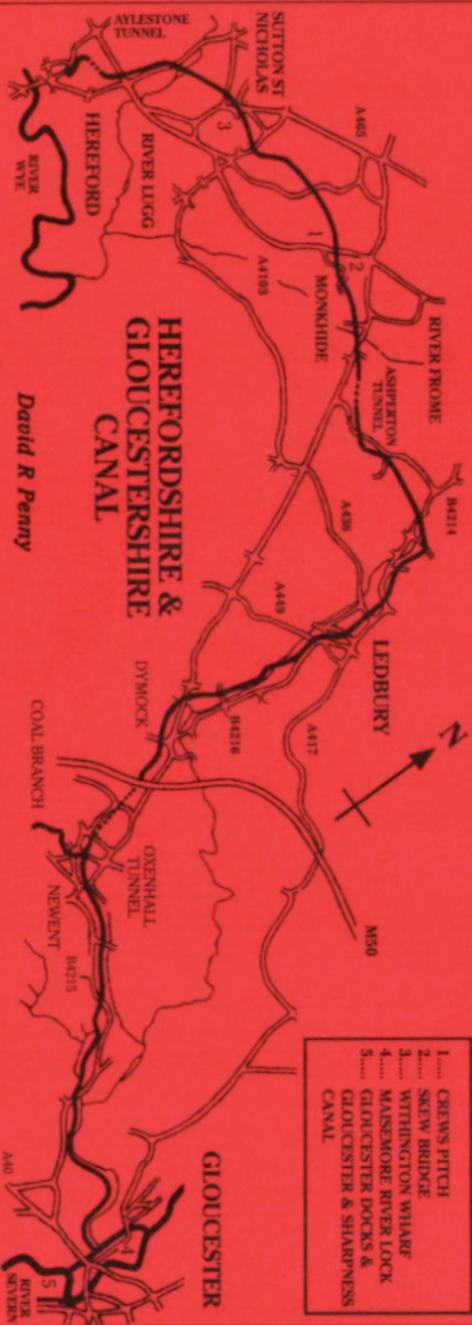
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Membership records are computerised. In accordance with the Data Protection Act 1984, your entry is available for inspection if you send a SAE to the Membership Secretary.

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NOT A MEMBER ?	<i>Details from The H&G Canal Trust,</i>
OR	8, Bloomfield Road, Gloucester, GL1 5BL <i>(sae please)</i>
	6, Castle Street, Hereford, HR1 2NL

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HEREFORDSHIRE & GLoucestershire CANAL

David R Penny

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.