

# The Wharfinger

Newsletter of the  
Herefordshire and  
Gloucestershire  
Canal Trust



**Edition 52 • Winter 1996/7**  
**50p – free to members**

# WHO DOES WHAT . . .

VICE PRESIDENTS	<i>R. E. Barnes TD, Sir John Knill Bt.</i>
CHAIRPERSON	Linda Palmer
VICE CHAIRMEN	Brian Fox, Tom Bennett
FINANCE:-	Treasurer/Chairman Committee
	Liz Connors Brian Fox, Lesley Lowe, David Penny, Nigel Jefferies
RESTORATION:-	Gloucestershire Herefordshire Plant & Training Manager
	Steve Delacourt-Smith, <i>Simon Hayward, Ray Moses</i> Brian Fox, Mike Potts, Tom Bennett Tom Bennett
SPECIAL PROJECTS:-	Chair [Oxenhall Locks Site] Vice-Chair Committee
	Linda Palmer, David Penny <i>Roger Tutt, Peter Moore, Richard Hamblin,</i> Steve Delacourt-Smith, <i>Paul Johnson,</i> <i>Shawn Price, Bill Cronin (FoDDC),</i> <i>Steve Gittins, Alan Lines</i>
TRUST ADMINISTRATOR	Lesley Lowe
LOCAL AUTHORITY LIAISON	David Penny
PLANNING LIAISON	Cliff Penny, David Penny
LANDOWNER LIAISON	Brian Fox
PRESS/PUBLICITY:-	Officer Group Social/H&GCS Events
	<i>Marjorie &amp; Tom Bennett</i> <i>Volunteers required !</i> <i>Elizabeth Lloyd</i>
MEMBERSHIP:-	Secretary Covenants
	Nigel Jefferies Liz Connors
FUNDRAISING OFFICER	David Penny
SOCIAL:-	Events Outings
	Steve Delacourt-Smith Mike Potts, <i>Joyce Potts</i>
MINUTES SECRETARY	Tony Austin-Bailey
IWA NOMINATED MEMBER	Will Frecknall
THE WHARFINGER:-	Editors Postmasters:- Leader Team
	Cliff Penny, David Penny <i>B &amp; M Sanderson &amp; family</i> <i>D &amp; M Gray; I &amp; F Roper;</i>
TALKS/WALKS	Nigel Jefferies, Mike Potts

Those in italics are not Directors on the Council of Management, although they may be co-opted members

## THE TRADING COMPANY H & G CANAL [SALES]



## DONATING ALL PROFITS TO THE CANAL TRUST

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Steve Hughes  
Joyce Potts  
Derek Gray

LOGISTICS GROUP Steve Hughes, Chris & Mark Blunden, Steve Gittins

BOATS:- Chairman *Dick Skeet*  
Committee J. Potts, Ray & Barbara Moses, Pat Skeet, Derek Gray

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.



# *Straight from the Chair*

A great deal has happened since the last edition of **The Wharfinger**. The Canal Trust are now the proud owners of the stretch of Canal, Locks, Lock Cottage and Aqueduct at Oxenhall previously owned by Robin Stiles. Our thanks go to him for giving us the opportunity to acquire the land and structures and to all those who undertook the necessary work to make it happen.

Work has already begun on clearing the site. This was initiated by a group of local volunteers from a Hereford based project for people with learning difficulties, and was continued by a London Waterway Recovery Group of volunteers. Our own volunteers have been involved in exploring the culvert under the cottage and have excavated the spill weir. Major works will not take place until March of next year when the **Waterway Recovery Dig Deep Group** commence work as one of only four of their national projects for next year.

Work continues removing silt and spoil towards the entrance of Oxenhall Tunnel. A nine day Canal Camp has been organised by the Restoration Group in order to make significant headway. Ideally they would like to complete this section before commencing work on the Oxenhall Locks site.

A very successful Open Day was held at Oxenhall in late September; many people braved

the elements to take advantage of the guided walks along the Canal. Members of the public were able to view our display in Oxenhall Village Hall, purchase items from the sales stand, and enjoy the delights of the home made refreshments. Thanks go to all the volunteers who made the event such a success.

Whilst talking about events, Steve Gittins took responsibility for organising the **IWALK**, a sponsored walk to raise funds for both the Canal Trust and the **Inland Waterways Association**. Some £260 was raised with half coming to the Canal Trust. Thanks go, once again, to all those volunteers who helped.

I am aware that there is a lot of "behind the scenes activity" which a number of people are contributing to, however, it is too early to report on the work that they are doing. I feel that it is important to acknowledge their endeavours and to thank them for their time.

As you can see from the items illustrated here, the Canal Trust relies on its unpaid volunteers to achieve progress. The work involved is very varied and suits a range of different skills. If you feel that you would like to play an active role in our future please do make contact with one of the Council of Management members listed on the inside back cover and find out what you can do to help.

*Linda Palmer, Chairperson*

# Editorial

A number of our contributors in this edition of **The Wharfinger** refer to just how much is going on ... *and that is almost an understatement!* Hopefully we will be forgiven a small amount of repetition - after all it has to be regarded as a significant milestone when we acquire our very own length of the Canal - complete with Cottage, Locks and Aqueduct! We make no apologies either for it being referred to as a milestone - *metric measurements just don't seem to fit comfortably when talking about canals* - although Brian Fox manages a happy mixture of both in his reports!

Whilst the Oxenhall site rightly dominates this edition of **The Wharfinger** it would be wrong to forget our ongoing work elsewhere. As always (at least in recent years) some of this will have to await reports in future issues; not just through lack of space (and time!) but also due to the sensitivity of what is under discussion. Sufficient to say that for every yard [*here we go again!*] of progress physically apparent on the ground there is considerable effort going on "behind the scenes" to try and secure the future success of our wholly voluntary endeavours. Some of this is on the routine fund raising/promotional front (*an ever expanding and essential part of our activities*) and much refers to the crucial - never ceasing - negotiations with Local Authorities, the Environment Agency, other equally important bodies, Developers and their

professional Agents ... *the list is endless.*

Hopefully some of our regular readers will have noted the many changes to our inside front cover; just compare the list of posts and post holders with a few years ago. We are now struggling to fit everybody in; *this is not a complaint - long may it continue!* The good news is that we know that we have not been able to include everybody who is taking a regular and active role in the day to day work of the Canal Trust - *to everyone who is becoming involved - thank you.* If you want to get involved with our work then anyone on the **Contacts** page will be more than pleased to tell you how you can help - it seems to be a fact that as we take each stride forward [*is that metric?*] the amount of work (and the need for increased funds) increases disproportionately!

We always stress that Membership is our strength; from what we read elsewhere we know that we are fortunate in being one of only a small number of the voluntary organisations related to the inland waterways network with a steadily climbing Membership. Thank you for your continued support - it is not taken for granted. Just a reminder that we do have a **Gift Membership** facility [*details on page 7*] - an ideal present at Christmas (or any other time of the year); one of our long-standing Members gives a different friend a Gift



## Editorial . . . continued

Membership each Christmas, solving not only one of his present requirements but also introducing a potential new long-term Member to the Canal Trust as well.

If you live within travelling distance of Ledbury (*chosen because it is roughly half-way along the length of the Canal*) then don't forget the third Tuesday of every month when we have our Social Evening at the Royal Oak Hotel; the range of speakers (and the interesting

topics) mean that there is something for everyone. If you live further afield then why not take a break with Lesley and Andy Lowe [see advertisement on p.23] - or at the Royal Oak or the Barn House in Ledbury; all very supportive of the Canal Trust - and explore the wonderful area through which the Canal runs? Time it right and you could attend one of the Social Evenings - or even our annual Christmas Dinner at the same time - you will be made very welcome; *full details below.*

## Christmas H&GCS Dinner '96



To be held on Friday 6th December,  
7.30pm. for 8pm. At  
The Barn House,  
New Street,  
Ledbury.

£16.95  
per person

Please contact David Penny for details of our guest after dinner speaker - it's certain to be an enjoyable evening!

YOUR 'PHONE NO. ....	CHEQUE/POSTAL ORDER (PAYABLE H&GCS) for TOTAL £.....
OR :- CREDIT CARD	CARD EXPIRY DATE <input type="text"/>
I ..... (name of cardholder) authorise you to debit my	
Access/Visa card: <small>(delete as appropriate)</small>	Card No. <input type="text"/>
SIGNED .....	SUM AUTHORISED £ .....

Please return to:- David Penny, Coppice, Burley Gate, Hereford, HR1 3QS  
to arrive by Friday 29th November - Please include your full address.  
Accommodation is available at the Barn House:- 'Phone (01531) 632825

## STEPHEN BALLARD

It is with deep regret and sadness that we report the death of Canal Trust Member Stephen Ballard, who died on the 30th September, aged 94.

His Grandfather, also Stephen Ballard, finished the building of the Hereford and Gloucester Canal in 1845.

He took great pride in his Grandfather's Canal and followed the evolvement and progress of the Canal's restoration with great interest.

In 1985 he unveiled a plaque for the former Society on Skew Bridge after it had been restored and Listed.

In 1994 he took great delight in Christening a narrow boat after his Grandmother "Maria Ballard" which, in fact, became the first narrow boat to return to the Hereford and Gloucester Canal for over 100 years at the 150th Anniversary last year at Crews Pitch.

Stephen Ballard was a kind and deep-thinking man with an incredible memory and knowledge for people, facts and dates and I, among so many, will miss him greatly.

Our thoughts and prayers go out to his wife Rosemary and the family at this sad time.

REB

## Special Funds

1996 has to be regarded as a major year of progress for the Canal Trust culminating in the acquisition of our first length of the Canal and our Restoration Team reaching the Gloucester Portal of Oxenhall Tunnel.

During our negotiations relating to Oxenhall it became clear that we had to be in a position to act quickly to grasp opportunities that may well present themselves in the future. Two special Funds are to be established.

Please give careful consideration to making a monthly payment to one (or both!) of these funds. A **Structures Fund** will be used to match grant aid funding for the restoration/construction of specific structures relating to the

Canal and a **Land Purchase Fund** will be similarly used solely to purchase sections of the Canal/essential diversion routes.

These two dedicated funds will enable contributors to identify specific progress that can be directly attributed to their financial support. A regular monthly payment, a lump sum (*using Gift Aid to be tax efficient!*) and/or a bequest will all be very welcome.

Full details in the next edition; if you want the Canal Trust to benefit from your New Year resolution then please contact Liz Connors for a Bankers Order/Continuous Credit Card Authority/Gift Aid details. *Thank you.*



# Committee Matters

*Three very busy Council of Management meetings (one running over two evenings!) are reviewed by our Editors in order that our Members and supporters are kept up to date...*

## JUNE COMMITTEE

• This being the first Council of Management since the AGM the following Officers were appointed:-

Chairperson - Linda Palmer;  
Joint Vice Chairmen - Tom Bennett and Brian Fox; Treasurer - Liz Connors agreed to continue in post as did Lesley Lowe (as Trust Administrator. *[These are the formal appointments required by our Constitution; other appointments were confirmed as listed on the inside front cover of The Wharfinger - Ed.]* In accepting the nomination Linda made it clear that she had only limited time available and her duties would have to be assigned accordingly.

• Thanks were expressed to Cliff Penny by the Council of Management for his six years as Chairman; Cliff confirmed that he was willing to remain as a Director of the Canal Trust with specific joint responsibilities for **The Wharfinger** and Town and Country Planning matters.

• The Council of Management received the final report of the Special Projects Group which recommended that the acquisition of Lock Cottage, the Locks and adjacent section of the Canal at Oxenhall should proceed. It was agreed that the Canal Trust utilise the professional services of our

Honorary Solicitors, Messrs Gabb and Company. The option to be pursued would involve the sale of Lock Cottage, subject to carefully worded Covenants to ensure that future owners did not frustrate the restoration or future operation of the Canal and Lock, in order to fund restoration costs on the Canal and associated structures, particularly relating to the adjacent (Listed) House Lock. *[photo on page 9.]*

• The Special Projects Group was re-appointed to oversee work at Oxenhall; one of the first tasks being to secure the building from further vandal attacks.

• The Chairperson agreed to approach one of our prominent Members regarding a Landowner Agreement relating to a section of the Canal.

• Constructive discussions were continuing with the Company who were proposing a housing development on the Over Hospital site (at the point where the Canal enters the River Severn). The outcome of the site investigations *[photo on p. 4 of edition 51 of The Wharfinger]* was reported; as was the prompt payment of £500 towards our costs by that Company.

• Member Mike Ayland had advised a Member of the Council

## Committee Matters . . . (ii)

of Management that funding was now in place for the first stage study that he was promoting with Gloucester Harbour Trustees, into the provision of a new weir on the River Severn (downstream of the Lower Parting). *[As such a proposal would greatly improve access to the restored Herefordshire and Gloucestershire Canal the Canal Trust Council of Management had previously agreed, subject to conditions, to contribute £250 towards these costs.]*

### JULY/AUGUST COMMITTEE

*(Due to the amount of business the July meeting was continued in August.)*

- Arrangements to transfer Oxenhall Lock Cottage etc. to the Canal Trust were proceeding and the urgency of the matter was stressed to all concerned. Member Mr Jim Chapman (a Solicitor) was willing to offer his voluntary services in respect of the complex areas relating to Covenants and with regard to negotiations with prospective purchasers; this was greatly appreciated and would reduce overall professional costs. In the meantime, with the full cooperation of the owner, Restoration Group were active clearing House Lock to enable an Archaeological student to undertake a detailed survey, prior to the submission of a formal Application for Listed Building Consent to reconstruct the Lock. Adjacent landowner Mr Nigel Freeman had agreed to

material from the lock being spread on his land and this was greatly appreciated. Member Michael Peach, a Chartered Architect, was submitting the Listed Building Consent Applications to the Forest of Dean District Council in respect of the potential restoration of Oxenhall Lock Cottage (in order that prospective purchasers could be aware of the approved drawings) and in respect of the essential (temporary) security shutters.

- It was agreed that all Members should be reminded of the need to observe the confidentiality of certain items and that this be stressed in **The Wharfinger** [*"Confidentiality and Common Sense" - p. 8 of the last edition*].

- Meetings between the Chairperson, and another Council of Management member, with a prominent landowner were reported.

- Proposals relating to a significant grant aid bid were discussed. It was agreed to proceed, partly utilising professional services, (most of which would be paid for by promised grants specifically for this purpose).

- A number of potential development sites within Hereford City were giving rise to opportunities and concerns.

- Yarkhill Parish Council were worried about





# Would YOU join the SPG ?

By Steve Gittins

Those of you who took part in any of the recent events at Oxenhall may have noticed a curious hole in the ground next to the Lock Cottage. Some of you may even have wondered what it was and why it was there.

In order to prevent flooding in the pound above a lock, particularly a short pound between locks, there would be a byweir. This would maintain a maximum level in the pound, any excess flowing over the weir to re-enter the canal below the lock. These byweirs are almost invariably on the non towpath side, as this is considerably easier to do. But not here. All that was known was that there was a culvert under the towpath above the lock and a culvert under the Cottage which emerged below the lock. But where was the byweir?

Some time ago I was asked by David Penny to try and find evidence of a pond and byweir. *After an afternoon digging a trench just about the right size to bury David in I had not found anything.* A quick poke around with the excavator did not reveal anything either. As time passed

by it became clear that the Trust needed to find the pond fairly quickly and a small deep hole was dug at the end of the culvert, but again nothing was found.

Alan Lines was recruited into the *Special Pond Group* and almost instantly found a brick wall. Further excavations with shovels and a new digging tool, which had been a bottom gate hinge in a previous life, revealed that our earlier excavations had



*Would YOU wear this badge with pride?*

missed this brickwork by about 3 inches. After a weekend of digging, piling up dirt, finding that the next part of the pond was under the pile of dirt and moving it all again, we had uncovered most of the boundary of what seemed to be a roundish pond with a wall across the middle. The part we had not uncovered was under the concrete wall of the old garage.

Enter Paul Johnson and his (*hired at a greatly reduced rate*) power tool. A morning of this and the concrete was all broken up and removed from site. The SPG had now increased to about half a dozen members who worked hard all weekend with shovels and barrows to remove



Please remember that we have a wide range of high quality items - see *centre pages* - that are ideal as a gift at any time of the year. Why not give a Gift Membership? We send a Certificate inside a Canal Greetings Card, plus a years Membership, all for the standard subscription rate. Send the message to go in the card, your name and address (and the recipients) plus the Subscription - we will do the rest. PLEASE let us have Christmas orders by the 11th December. *Thank you.*

all the silt, slates, assorted ironwork (including the five shoes of Dobbin the Circus Horse) and other rubbish.

The whole pond and controlling weir were now revealed [photo - p.9]. Quite a lot of bricks were found to be missing, which had added to the confusion earlier. We now have a much clearer picture of what was there and it will be a very attractive feature when it is restored. The question is are the other locks on the Canal the same?

I think all the members of the team enjoyed themselves on this interesting project despite the hard work. And if you feel like getting involved in restoration and delving into the past - but you don't want to drive the plant - there are plenty more jobs like this one to be done.

### *Membership Matters*

We are very pleased to welcome yet another Corporate Member;

**David Cornwallis**

This brings our Corporate Membership to 27 in total. Mr Cornwallis specialises in dumper repairs - see the advertisement on page 13.

Will Members PLEASE help the Canal Trust by checking when your Membership Subscription is due (see label code) and renew promptly. If you pay by Bankers (Standing) Order please check your Statement to ensure that payment has actually been made.



CORPORATE  
MEMBER

British  
Marine  
INDUSTRIES  
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*Corporate Members of the  
Herefordshire & Gloucestershire  
Canal Trust, and IWA*

## **INSURANCE**

What will the name on your  
renewal notice be this year?  
Why not find out what the only  
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**INSURANCE FOR THE INLAND WATERWAYS**  
for the last 19 years can offer you!

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- \* SEMI-PROTECTED NO  
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- \* UP TO 40% NO CLAIMS DISCOUNT
- \* COVER WITH A MAJOR BRITISH  
INSURANCE COMPANY
- \* RESIDENTIAL AND COMMERCIAL USE
- \* WIDE LEGAL PROTECTION COVER
- \* FITTING OUT RISKS
- \* NO SURVEY ON OLDER CRAFT  
IF C OF C IN FORCE

### **IWA MEMBERS DISCOUNT POLICY**

If you want to choose the cover  
you want for your boat then

*Perhaps we should be talking!*

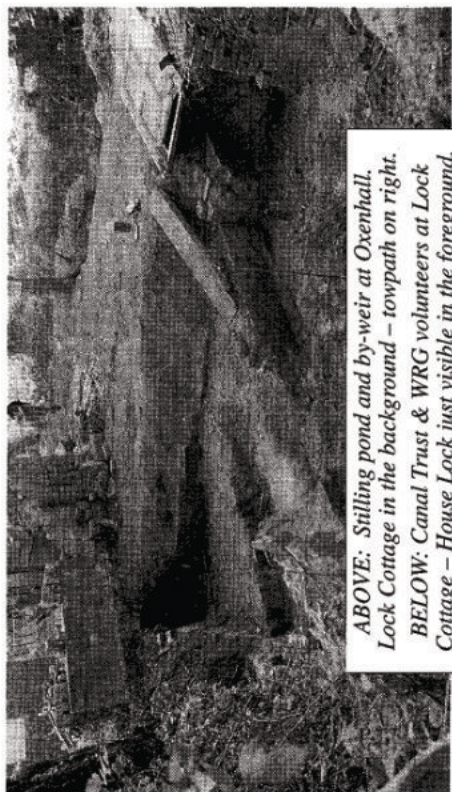
why not ring us now

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Rickmansworth, Herts.  
WD3 1QE**

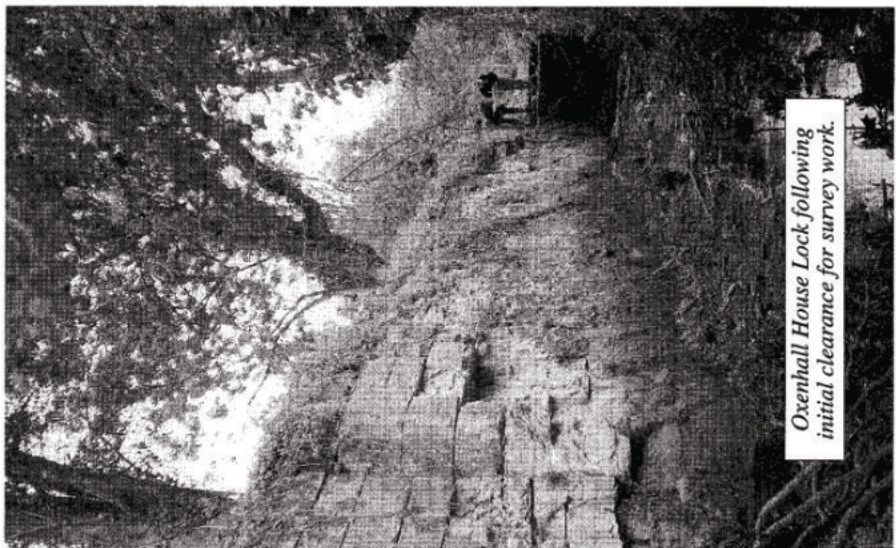
**Tel: (01923) 770425 & 770255**

**FAX: 721559**





ABOVE: Stilling pond and by-weir at Oxenhall Lock Cottage in the background – towpath on right.  
BELOW: Canal Trust & WRG volunteers at Lock Cottage – House Lock just visible in the foreground.



Oxenhall House Lock following initial clearance for survey work.



# Why Skew?

*By Nigel Jefferies*

Skew Bridge, Monkhide, is a unique feature; *it is the most askew canal bridge on the entire national canal network.* In his book, **The Hereford and Gloucester Canal** David Bick suggests that it was built by Ballard simply to prove his technical expertise and this was surely the case.

Later in the same book, David Bick points out that before Ballard started building the second section of the Canal, between Ledbury and Hereford, he was given £25. in 1829, for a fact finding visit to the Liverpool and Manchester Railway, which was at that time, under construction. It is recorded that he walked 10 miles along the railway, accompanied by Mr. Stephenson, the Engineer.

Interestingly, I read recently in Derrick Beckett's book, **Stephenson's Britain**, that there were three skew bridges on the Liverpool and Manchester Railway. One of these skew bridges was the Rainhill Bridge, which had been completed by the end of 1828.

When a conventional stone bridge is constructed, once the abutments or foundations for the base of the arch have been laid, wooden frames or centring are constructed springing from these abutments. The stones or voussoirs which form the soffit or arch of the bridge are then laid on this supporting framework. The wing walls and

spandrels are then constructed; burden is laid on top of the arch of the bridge and after this has consolidated, the centring is removed.

Stone was the first durable construction material used by man and as Hopkins points out in his book **A Span of Bridges** providing it is used where the stone blocks are pressing against each other, or where they are subject to compressive forces, it is very strong, even relatively soft stone. However, if stone is subject to tension, it has little strength and this imposed limitations on early civilisations, who only used post and lintel or trabeated constructional technique; Stonehenge being a good example.

The origin of the construction of the arch is open to doubt; Robert Furneaux-Jordan states that it was known to the Greeks, but not exploited by them, perhaps because they were not engineers. It was of course the Romans who were the first to fully exploit arcuated construction and in particular the semi-circular arch which is the simplest and safest arch to construct. The disadvantage with the semi-circular arch is its height or rise in relation to its span. Consequently engineers sought to construct flatter arches or even elliptical spans. A good example of the latter is Telford's 1829 Bridge at Over, near Gloucester, which carried the A40 across the River Severn



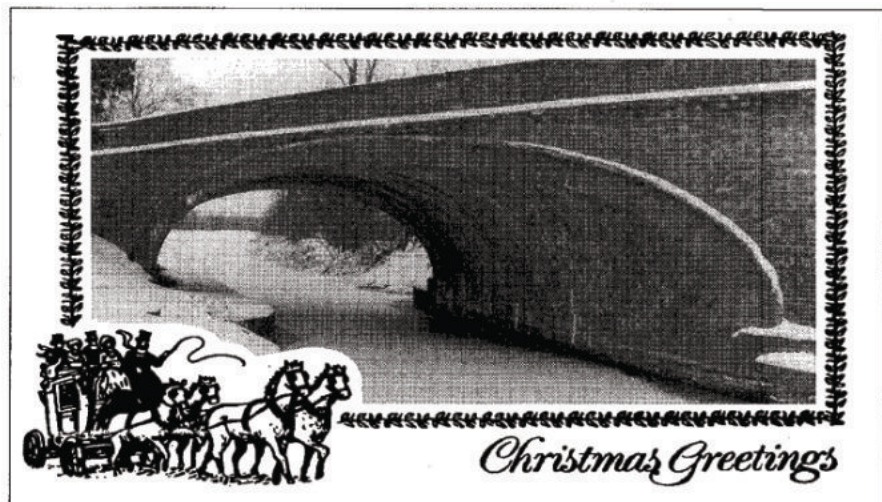
## Why Skew? . . . continued

until quite recent times. However, the flatter the arch, the greater the risk of the Bridge collapsing, since unlike the semi-circular arch the thrust is not evenly distributed. Here again Over Bridge is a good example for although it has not collapsed, it is recorded that when the centring was struck the Arch dropped 10 inches, much to Telford's consternation. This can still be seen today in the flatness of the parapet of the Bridge.

When building a skew bridge similar problems of instability arise since the line of thrust is no longer at right angles to the abutments. The most common solution to this problem is to lay the stones or bricks of the arch in a spiral form, a technique devised by William Chapman and explained in Ree's Cyclopaedia of 1813. However,

before building the Rainhill Bridge, Stephenson was so unsure that Beckett relates that he commissioned his masons to construct a full size timber model. The second skew bridge was Haggerleases Bridge built toward the end of the Haggerleases branch line which was opened in 1830 and another wooden model was made before the construction of this bridge. Apparently Haggerleases bridge has since been demolished.

Bearing in mind the date of Ballard's visit to the Liverpool and Manchester Railway I would suggest that he probably saw Stephenson grappling with the construction of the Haggerleases Bridge and returned home looking for an opportunity to emulate his feat, hence the construction of Skew Bridge, Monkhide.



*NEW! Christmas cards - Skew Bridge in colour in the snow - two photo's available. 85p each or four of each view for £6.50 + 10% p&p. Please see Sales '97 for details.*

# *Dates For Your Diary*

*By Steve Delacourt-Smith*

Social evenings are held on the 3rd Tuesday of every month at the Acorn Suite of the Royal Oak Hotel, The Southend, Ledbury.

*All meetings are 7.30 for 8pm.*

## **Tuesday, 19th November** *"The Rideau Canal"*

Our Member Graham Ettles, will give us an illustrated talk on this Canadian waterway.  
Our first talk on an overseas canal!

## **Tuesday, 17th December** *"Gloucester Barrage & The Stroudwater Navigation Co."*

By Member Mike Ayland - a Director of the The Stroudwater Navigation Company.  
Apart from talking about "his" canal  
Mike will also give details of his exciting proposals for a new control weir on the River Severn.

## **Tuesday, 21st January** *"Black Country Narrowboats & Boat-Building"*

By Member Malcolm Braine, formerly  
a widely acclaimed boat-builder  
and now a leading boat Surveyor.

## **Tuesday, 18th February** *"Chocolate ..."*

Colin Bates will not only give an illustrated talk (on a topic that has strong links with inland waterways) - but samples are also promised!

## **THE SALES STAND WILL BE AT THE EVENTS MARKED**

Members and non-members welcome. There will be a raffle, and plenty of time for a chat. These Social Events also provide a time and place for the dissemination of the latest news from the Trust. Please contact Steve if you have any queries, or ideas for Social Events [01452 501372]. Items from *SALES' 97* [see centre pages of this issue of *The Wharfinger*,] can be brought to ANY of the Social Events (and you will be under no obligation to buy) if you give 2 days notice of your interests to David Penny [01432 820420].

## **Friday, 6th December - Christmas Dinner '96**

*At the Barn House, New Street, Ledbury - full details on page 3.*



THE TRADING COMPANY  
H & G CANAL [SALES]

H & G

DONATING ALL PROFITS  
TO THE CANAL TRUST

## SALES '97

The Trading Company remains a key source of income for the Trust's activities. Although we go all over the country with the display and sales stand a critical part of our income is from our Members and supporters - *thank you*. Please purchase your gifts (or treat yourself!) from this list; all profits go towards the restoration of the Canal. *Purchase more than £20 of goods and receive a colourful resin duck Fridge Magnet (worth £1.25) free if you tick the box on the order form.* *David R. Penny*

### Soft, Cuddly, Toys

High quality, value for money (*CE marked*), and very cute, cuddly toys.  
Not just for children! Many sales have been to adults, for adults!

- Otter - (12") @ £3.95
- Badger - (9") @ £3.95
- Fox - sitting up (8") @ £9.50
- Fox - curled up (8") @ £9.50
- Squirrel - large (10") @ £8.95
- Squirrel (5") @ £3.95
- Snowy Owl - large (12") @ £14.50
- Snowy Owl (7") @ £7.50
- Owl, Mini - (4") @ £2.50
- Rabbit - Very Large (17") @ £9.95
- Rabbit - sitting up (8") @ £4.25
- Baby Bunny (in white, fawn, or brown) - (6") @ £2.25
- Duck (green/brown) - (6") @ £3.45
- Hedgehog - very large (13") @ £9.95
- Hedgehog - laying down (5") @ £1.95
- Hedgehog - sitting up (5") @ £1.95
- Hedgehog - sitting up (4") @ £1.50
- Hedgehog - laying down (4") @ £1.50
- Swan - (9") @ £12.45



**Christmas Cards** Skew Bridge, in the snow, in colour.  
2 photo's available; 85p each or 8 (4 of each view) for £6.50

### Notelets

8 Quality Salmon "Ambassador" notelets,  
2 each of 4 canal scenes by Allan Firth.

£1.75  
EACH

3 FOR  
£4.95



All the items below are printed locally and are of the very highest quality. They are all printed "Help Restore the Hereford and Gloucester Canal", in circular text, or bear the Crest. All available S., M., L., XL.

## Sweatshirts

- "Original Style":- Black with large yellow text:- £14.95  
 "Angela's Design":- Yellow with small black crest:- £15.95  
 "Nigel's Design":- Black with small yellow crest:- £15.95

## T-Shirts

- "Original Style":- Black with large yellow text:- £8.00  
 "Angela's Design":- Yellow with small black crest:- £9.00  
 "Nigel's Design":- Black with small yellow crest:- £9.00

## Baseball Caps

Black with small yellow text - fully adjustable sizing:- £3.95



## Brass Plaque

This 3½" x 2½" solid brass plaque has a very distinctive black background with the Skew Bridge and lettering standing proud in raised polished brass. £5.95 each



## The Book Shelf

The Hereford & Gloucester Canal, by David Bick .....	£6.95
Gloucester Docks - an illustrated history, by Hugh Conway-Jones .....	£6.95
Gloucester Docks - a living history. The official guide .....	£2
The History of Gloucester Docks, by Member Michael Stimpson .....	£1.20
Herefordshire in Old Postcards, by Member Tim Ward - Vol 1 or 2 .....	£4.50
Towpaths of England, by Brian Bearshaw .....	£5.95
A History of Inland Transport & Communication (hardback) .....	£10
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## Almost First Class ?

As Oxenhall Lock Cottage is very much in the news in this issue of **The Wharfinger** it seems to be a good time to recount a visit to the cottage last year. Reports had been received of (*yet more*) damage by vandals so Cliff Penny decided to take a look.

As those who have visited the site will know (*the towpath is a public Right of Way*) the only access from public roads is over a quarter of a mile along the towpath. When he arrived the Cottage door was half open (*as usual!*) and Cliff cautiously entered - half tripping over a carefully placed brick on the floor in the centre of the door opening. Under the brick was an

envelope addressed to "The Occupier, Lock Cottage, Oxenhall, Newent, Glos, GL18 1RL". [*No glass in the windows; holes in the walls; water supply disconnected; no electricity - but it's got a postcode! -Ed.*]

Inside the envelope was a form - "*Assessing our performance*" from **Royal Mail!** Amongst the questions were "*does your postman/woman handle your post with care*" (the brick had been placed very carefully!); "*do we show respect for your property*" (**Royal Mail** might - but others don't!); "*do we have access direct to your door*" (for as long as it doesn't fall off!). A definite ten out of ten for effort **Royal Mail!**

■ **CRP**

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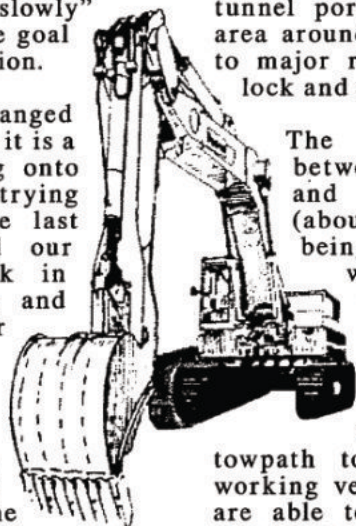
# RESTORATION UPDATE **HEREFORDSHIRE & GLOUCESTERSHIRE**

*By Brian Fox*

There have been times since I started writing these reports when it has been difficult to find something different to say and, in fact, there was so little to write about that there were many editions that contained no report of any real progress in Gloucestershire. Indeed, only two editions ago I talked about "moving painfully slowly" towards our ultimate goal of complete restoration.

Now things have changed so dramatically that it is a question of holding onto your hard hat and trying to keep up. In the last edition I outlined our proposals for work in both Herefordshire and Gloucestershire for the rest of the year - but within a few days of writing it had all changed. You will now be aware that the Canal Trust are the proud owners of Oxenhall Lock Cottage and the half mile stretch of canal adjacent, which includes two locks and an aqueduct. Consequently it is now necessary to redeploy some of our manpower (despite what our Editor says there is not yet such a word as "personpower" in the dictionary) to undertake urgent work on this site so that we can proceed with major restoration plans for this section. We have had to abandon proposals for any more work in Herefordshire this year and also our plans

for the tunnel portal area in Gloucestershire. There is a limit to what a small group of volunteers can do entirely in their own spare time and also a limit to the funds available for operating and maintaining the equipment. All of our efforts are now being channelled into removing the silt below the tunnel portal and clearing the area around Lock Cottage prior to major reconstruction of the lock and associated features.



The section of Canal between Coldharbour Lane and the tunnel portal (about 300 metres) is now being worked on every weekend while it is dry and all the work is proceeding according to plan.

The ramp which we cut down through solid rock from the towpath to the canal bed is working very well and dumpers are able to drive in about 12 inches of water right up to the excavator to load and transport the spoil to its new resting place in the next field. At the time of writing there is about 70 metres to go to the tunnel portal and we are finding the canal is becoming wider and the towpath narrower. The decision to drive the dumpers along the canal bed has now been fully justified as there simply wouldn't be enough room on the towpath. Our fleet of four dumpers have been working very hard and consequently there have been



breakdowns, one of which relating to the braking system cost £2,500 to put right, but it still works out a lot cheaper than hiring in plant to do the job. The budget is very depleted but we have calculated that we will have enough left to fund a nine day canal camp in the middle of October, when it is hoped (weather permitting) we will achieve our target of clearance up to the tunnel portal.

The acquisition of the Lock Cottage has given everybody a challenge and plenty to think about. The planning started some months ago when we unexpectedly heard of the offer from the previous owner, Mr. Robin Stiles *[who has just joined the Canal Trust as a Life Member - Ed.]*. A Special Projects Group was set up, as reported in previous editions, with a brief (amongst other things) to look at the work which would be involved should the Canal Trust acquire the site. The benefits of this forward planning were obvious even before the completion of the transfer of Title when work was able to commence on the clearance of scrub and spindly trees on the towpath and in the garden of the cottage. We were ably assisted in this matter by two other volunteer groups - one from Hereford called Workmatch and another from the Waterway Recovery Group who have helped us in the past. Both parties roughed it by eating and sleeping in the adjacent village hall, which shows considerable dedication to the task and for

which we are extremely grateful. It is now possible to see the Lock and the Cottage as they haven't been seen for some years *[photo - p.9]*. The towpath between the Lock and the road is now considerably wider, thanks to a couple of hours work with the excavator. One of our next jobs will be to make an access down to the Cottage so that small vehicles will be able to use it.

Since this initial clearance of vegetation our volunteers have really got stuck in, and the Lock has been cleared so that a complete survey could be done to establish what remedial work is required to restore it *[and in order to obtain the essential formal Listed Building Consent - Ed.]*. We were fortunate enough to get the services of Chris Hales, an archeological student, who was looking for a project during his summer holiday. Chris has provided a plan and cross section of the Lock measuring individual stones, so that we can calculate how much stone is needed to replace those which have fallen away. As a Listed Structure it will have to be restored as near as possible to its condition when it was last used.

We have already approached the Waterway Recovery Group who have agreed to adopt our Lock under their national "Dig Deep" initiative, and work will be commencing next March led by a Group who will be dedicating many weekends over the next two years to completing the basic restoration of the Lock.





**ABOVE:**  
The excavator cab top is below spoil level on the approach to Oxenhall Tunnel at our October Camp.

**LEFT:**  
Leggers Cave showing initial clearance level and excavation processing downwards to the towpath level.



Tim Coghlan of Braunston Marina, and Simon Ainley for British Waterways, present the Canal Trust with a £300 cheque from Braunston Boat Show at the National Waterways Festival.



The Canal Trust of course will have to provide all the materials and no doubt we will also get involved in the actual restoration but it is best if we leave the main work to the experts who have done many jobs like this all over the country. We are very fortunate indeed to be able to call on fellow volunteers who are prepared to give their time and expertise to our project. Many of us have become experts at jungle bashing and muck shifting but when it comes to rebuilding a lock or an aqueduct then that is a different ball game and we are very pleased to have this additional assistance.

You will read elsewhere in this edition an article by Steve Gittins on what he calls the SPG. Steve is one of our newer recruits and has found himself getting more involved than he perhaps originally intended (don't we all!). Graduating from bonfires, to work camp chef through dumper driver, to organising sponsored walks, to the dizzy heights of organising his own special group and even writing articles for **The Wharfinger**. He is too modest and fails to report in his article the bit about carefully crawling through the byweir culvert, which passes under Oxenhall Lock Cottage, before coming out below the Lock. This culvert is about 2ft. in diameter, 100 ft. long and filled with sediment to a depth of about 9 inches for much of its length. It was considered to be essential to make a full inspection of the

culvert, particularly where it passes under the Cottage, so that any remedial work could be undertaken before the Cottage was sold. Clearing this silt had been expected to be a job for a "Wergie" (WRG worker) as they are sometimes affectionately known, but our intrepid team ignored the claustrophobia and dug the silt out themselves - using a specially adapted toboggan. It is clear that the culvert, built over 200 years ago, will require some repointing and a few bricks need replacing in the garden area where they have fallen in, but otherwise it is in good order. Steve's byweir pond has now been cleared and we are considering diverting surplus water through the culvert so that workers on the lock site will have dry feet and also allow them to see the bottom of the lock - which is under a foot of water and a small amount of silt at the moment.

Finally, I have to report the departure of a good friend. Four years ago we were joined by a Massey Ferguson tracked excavator, purchased for the princely sum of £1,000, to help us on the restoration of Mrs. Oram's section of the Canal at Yarkhill. After completion of the main excavation on this length (which included the recutting of about 1000 yards of adjacent ditches) there were signs of old age creeping in, when it developed a tendency to go around in circles. It was estimated that it would cost well over £2,000 to replace just one of the tracking motors if we

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## **RESTORATION UPDATE & HEREFORDSHIRE & GLOUCESTERSHIRE** . . . continued

kept it much longer. During the four years we have purchased three new replacement hydraulic hoses and a fuel pump so it has been a pretty cheap partnership! An advertisement in the local paper produced a deluge of calls so that we were able to sell it for the original £1,000 and the purchaser paid for the transport to its new home. Not a bad little investment?

A recent press article suggested that there would be boat trips on the restored Oxenhall section next year and if all goes well that is perfectly possible. Our trip boat Mallard has been sitting idly at Monkhide waiting for such an opportunity and it

would be a popular ride right up to the mouth of Oxenhall Tunnel. We should have a good idea of how feasible this would be by the end of our Canal Camp in October, but we could still do with a few new volunteers particularly from the Newent/Ledbury areas to increase our progress towards complete restoration of the Canal.

### **— WANT TO GET INVOLVED ? —**

Volunteers to assist in our restoration (and maintenance) work are always welcome. Please telephone:-

Steve Delacourt-Smith (01452) 501372

Brian Fox (01432) 358628

Simon Hayward (01452) 534232

Tom Bennett (01981) 500258



# 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,*

Please will you delete my name from the mailing list for **The Wharfinger** as I am shortly to leave the Council to take up another post.

I have been very impressed with the professionalism of the Canal Trust, and with the work that has been carried out. I was very pleased to have been invited to last year's Open Day, and had a thoroughly enjoyable day.

Unfortunately, my employment, both with this Council and in the post that I am about to take up, prevents me from being involved more closely. I shall have to wait for early retirement!

I wish the Trust every success in its efforts and I look forward to being able to sail from Hereford to the Severn.

*A Senior Local Authority Officer*

*Dear Editor,*

I enjoy **The Wharfinger**, finding it generally well balanced between information and entertainment, but I can't help noticing that there are an awful lot of quotation marks, or "sixty-sixes" and "ninety-nines". Do we get a special deal on these characters from the printers, or are we trying to reduce another Euro-mountain?

Surely Linda is in charge [Page 2 - Edition 51], not "in charge". After all, we are told that now is not the time for a "figure-head" Chairman. And if we want to know who puts them all in, we only need to look at the Editors address!

Yours with tongue "firmly in cheek",

*Steve Gittins*

*"Feed-back" is always very welcome; and we are pleased to see that you are "only joking" - "Ed".*

## The BIG prize DRAW!

Thanks to a great deal of hard work in the rain at the 1996 Black Country National Waterways Festival; and to the large number of our Members who support the Grand Holiday Draw each year, we are pleased to report a final total of very close to £2,000. Not a record, but a magnificent achievement - and we have plans in hand to ensure that we do break our record in 1997! To all concerned - thank you.

Herefordshire & Gloucestershire Canal Trust - H & G C S	00000
<b>GRAND HOLIDAY DRAW</b>	
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First Prize,

Mr Michael  
Braddell,  
Sandbach,  
Cheshire

Second Prize,

Mr Chris Tickner, Guildford,  
Surrey

Third Prize,

Mr A J Peffers, Cheltenham, Glos.

## Committee Matters . . . (iii)

6 < III ■ an unfenced section of the Canal; as the Canal Trust had not been involved with the length in question the letter had been referred to the land owner.

• The Honorary Treasurer reported that income from Life Memberships now exceeded £5,000. The income from the **Grand Holiday Draw** was substantially below the same time last year and giving rise for concern. *[Thanks to valiant efforts by all concerned at the National Waterways Festival - and a good response from Members to the notice in the last edition of The Wharfinger - the final total was just under £2,000; not a record but a very creditable outcome. Ed.]*

• Restoration Group reported that **Waterway Recovery Group** and **Hereford Workmatch** (disabled persons and their carers) had made excellent progress with preliminary undergrowth clearance in the vicinity of House Lock, and along the towpath access to Oxenhall Lock Cottage.

• A ramp had been completed to allow safe access for the dumpers into the bed of the Canal on the approach to Oxenhall Tunnel.

• Our old Massey Furguson excavator (purchased for £1,000 a number of years ago) was likely to need very major work to the tracking motors (at about

---

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## Committee Matters . . . (iv)

£2,500) - Restoration Group were authorised to sell it and look for a replacement in due course. *[Subsequently Tom Bennett has found a willing purchaser, who doesn't require to move the machine over great distances, and our budget has gained £1,000 - well done Tom! - Ed.]*

- Brian Fox reported excellent progress with his data base of landowners; he is also compiling (conflicting!) views on future towpath use.

- Member David Williams had given a Luton Van to the Canal Trust subject to a small payment for fittings; it was part full of display panels which David also donated - this was greatly appreciated.

- It was agreed that the Canal Trust would contribute £100 towards the IWA's costs of preparing a national "Restoration Handbook" which would be of benefit to all restoration schemes (including our own).

- Matters relating to Health and Safety were discussed and it was agreed to review first aid training. Safety check lists would be introduced for items of heavy plant.

- The potential for an Open Weekend in 1997 was discussed and would be reviewed in the light of restoration progress.

- The complex paperwork relating to the sale of Oxenhall

Lock Cottage was approved after careful consideration. Particular attention was to be paid to procedures in order that, as a Charitable Trust, there was no opportunity for any suggestions of improper action. All of the proceedings would be through the Solicitors acting for the Canal Trust. The Council of Management expressed their thanks to those involved in the drafting of the papers.

### SEPTEMBER COMMITTEE

- It was confirmed that on the 20th August the Canal Trust had become the legal owners of Oxenhall Lock Cottage, the Lock, the adjacent length of the Canal and the Aqueduct. Forest of Dean District Council were to consider a grant of £2,000 towards the restoration of the Lock at a meeting the following week *[since confirmed - Ed.]*.

- The Chairperson expressed her thanks to all involved, including Robin Stiles (the original landowner); Member Jim Chapman (a Solicitor) who had greatly assisted with the legal aspects of the transfer and the future sale of the Cottage; Our Honorary Solicitor, Susan Newbould, for undertaking the work at low cost; to David Penny for seeing the negotiations through from start to finish and to all the members of the Special Project Group who had undertaken the research into the viability of the project and were continuing to oversee our work at this location.

## Committee Matters . . . (v)

- It was reported that the byweir adjacent to Oxenhall Lock Cottage had been 70% cleared; this had revealed an interesting semi-circular brick spill chamber and a brick control weir discharging into the previously exposed culvert under the Cottage. *[photo - p.9]*

- Proposed signage for the Oxenhall Site was agreed.

- The Restoration Group were arranging for the Health and Safety Executive to give them a talk in the near future.

- Cliff Penny was preparing formal evidence to present to a Town and Country Planning Hearing, to be held in October, into proposed development within Hereford City on the former Pritchard's Metals site. As proposed the new development would completely block the historic line of the Canal, and cause severe difficulties to a proposed diversion route, at a point within sight of the Canal Terminus. Hereford City Council had refused Planning permission for the development; one of the reasons being the adverse effect on the Canal.

- Linda Palmer expressed her appreciation for all of those who had contributed to our successful display at the National Waterways Festival over the (very wet) August Bank Holiday. In spite of the poor attendance by the general public, and the high costs of attending, it had to

be regarded as a very worthwhile weekend brought about by the hard work of all involved - both in front and behind the scenes.

- During the National Waterways Festival Mr Tim Coghlan, the Proprietor of Braunston Marina, together with Mr Simon Ainley, the Area Manager of British Waterways, presented our Fundraising Officer with a cheque for £300 from the proceeds of this years Braunston Boat Show. This support, from the heart of the inland waterways network, was greatly appreciated.

- Following our new safety checks one of our large dumpers at Oxenhall had been taken out of service for major repairs. Another required a replacement clutch. Costs were likely to be significant.

- Member Mrs Elizabeth Lloyd had agreed to take responsibility for publicising Social and H&GCS Events. This was warmly welcomed.

- Mike Potts reported that coach trips had not been as well supported as previous years - just breaking even; he was going to introduce some new ideas for 1997. Mike (and Joyce) were thanked for their hard work in making all these arrangements.

- Restoration Group were planning a nine-day "muck-shift" on the approach to Oxenhall Tunnel in October. *[photo - p.16]*

 CRP



# Bits 'n Pieces

## TUNING IN

BBC Radio Gloucestershire carried an interview with three of our volunteers in September. In October, BBC Hereford and Worcester featured the Canal for a week in the Mike George programme.

## MECHANICS REQUIRED

Brian Fox, in his *Restoration Update* report, tells us that high costs have been incurred in keeping our fleet of large dumpers in a safe condition. In order not to delay our major muck shifting work at Oxenhall the work was undertaken commercially. Unfortunately, the spares required were not manufactured by the national firm that have offered to assist the Canal Trust with refurbished items. The total costs involved (over £4,000) have caused a very considerable drain on our funds.

The Council of Management have expressed great appreciation to the Restoration Group for all of their efforts over the October

Canal Camp [more photographs and a report in the next issue of *The Wharfinger*]. However, the October meeting stressed that we do have to restrict our expenditure wherever we can. So the plea is for mechanics with heavy plant experience, who live within reasonable travelling distance of Oxenhall, to assist with our routine maintenance and repairs to our large dumpers and tracked excavator. Our voluntary Plant Manager, Tom Bennett, would be very pleased to talk to potential volunteers. *Thank you.*

## ALL BOTTLED UP

Our thanks to **Bulmers** and **Davies Brook**, and Mrs Elizabeth Lloyd, for donating bottles for our Bottle Draw. We sold out at the National Waterways Festival - making a handsome profit.

## 50 EDITIONS ON ...

Due to pressure on space this series will continue in the next edition of *The Wharfinger*.

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# The Last Page

## THANK YOU

Our sincere thanks to the following for their support; *it is greatly appreciated and not taken for granted:-*

**Braunston Boat Show** for £300; **Forest of Dean District Council** for £2,000 towards the restoration of House Lock at Oxenhall; **South Herefordshire District Council** for £1,000; **Newent Chamber of Trade** for £200 towards our work at Oxenhall and **The Shambles Museum**, at Newent, who generously donated £500. Our sincere appreciation also to a Member (who wishes to remain anonymous) for a donation of £500. *Thank you, also, to the many Members who also made donations over the past year.*

Our thanks to Member **Tom Armitstead** who has donated 4Mb of RAM for the Canal Trust computer, helping us to keep up with advances in technology! Talking of computers, there are now at least six being used regularly for work relating to the Canal Trust. A couple are really ancient; as are the printers - if you know a company that is upgrading we can put their used PC's and printers to good voluntary use; *Cliff Penny is the initial contact, please.*

**Jane and Jonathan Mosse** [see page 20 of the last edition] have added the **Nicholson's Ordnance Survey Guide to the Thames** to the books for auction - as we did not receive a satisfactory bid the closing date is extended - *please see below.*

## NICHOLSON'S ORDNANCE SURVEY GUIDE TO THE WATERWAYS

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*The Canal Trust (& Trading Company) wish all Members - and supporters*

**A VERY MERRY CHRISTMAS**

*However, if you are reading this in 1997*

**A HAPPY NEW YEAR !**

**COPY DEADLINE FOR THE NEXT EDITION IS SATURDAY, 4th JANUARY**

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**WANT TO HELP ?**

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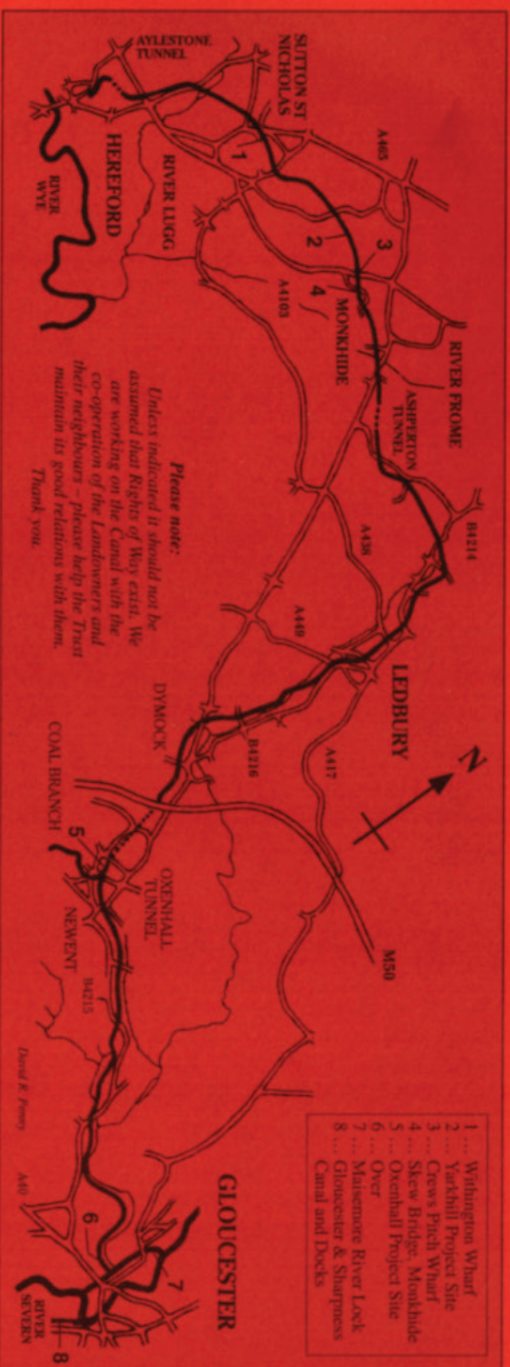
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# THE HEREFORDSHIRE AND GLOUCESTERSHIRE CANAL



Work started in 1792 but was not completed until 1845, making this the last major route built in Britain, but for the navigations of Birmingham and the Manchester Ship Canal. The Canal stretched for 34 miles from the River Severn at Gloucester, via Newent, Dymock and Ledbury to the City of Hereford utilising some 22 locks and 3 tunnels. The Canal was formally closed in 1881 to allow construction of the Ledbury to Gloucester railway and this in its turn was closed by Dr Beeching in 1964.

The Canal Society was formed in 1983 and replaced in 1992 by the Herefordshire and Gloucestershire Canal Trust, a registered charity. The Trust has an ordinary and corporate membership exceeding 700 from all over the country – and abroad! Our objective is to fully restore the 34 mile Canal, from its connection with the 2,500 mile inland waterways network at Gloucester to the centre of Hereford. A Steering Committee of the Local Authorities, Environment Agency, etc. has been formed by the Trust to assist in progressing this objective. We have a major restoration site in each county, which together extend to some 3 miles.