

The Wharfinger

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



**Edition 53 • Spring 1997
50p – free to members**

WHO DOES WHAT . . .

VICE PRESIDENTS	<i>R. E. Barnes TD, Sir John Knill Bt.</i>
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VICE CHAIRMEN	Brian Fox, Tom Bennett
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	Liz Connors Brian Fox, Tom Bennett, David Penny, Nigel Jefferies
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	Herefordshire
	Plant & Training Manager
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LOCAL AUTHORITY LIAISON	Cliff Penny, David Penny
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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:-	Editor
	Postmasters:- Leader Team
	Cliff Penny <i>B & M Sanderson & family D & M Gray; I & F Roper;</i> Nigel Jefferies, Mike Potts
TALKS/WALKS	

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

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Liz Connors
Steve Hughes
Volunteer wanted!
Derek Gray

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

BOATS:- Chairman *Dick Skeet*

Committee *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

This year promises to be even busier than the last. A major focus will, of course, be the Oxenhall Project. There has already been much activity in the last few weeks. Risk Assessments have been drawn up to ensure that we comply with the relevant Health and Safety Regulations and time has been spent preparing for the first of a number of planned visits by the Waterway Recovery Group.

Twenty volunteers from BITM (bit in the middle) WRG set up camp in Dymock village hall in mid-January. They joined forces with several of our volunteers and together they made considerable progress clearing the chamber of House Lock and "scrub bashing" in the area just below the Lock. Our thanks go to everyone who helped.

Our next visiting volunteers are KESCRG (Kent and East Sussex Canal Restoration Group) who will be with us as the first official DIG DEEP initiative on the H&G Canal on the 1st and 2nd March. They will assist with the restoration of the byweir

chamber adjacent to the top of House Lock.

A varied and interesting social programme has been put together by Steve Delacourt-Smith - to be held at our regular venue; the Royal Oak Hotel, The Southend, Ledbury on the third Tuesday of every month. [see page 12.] Member Malcolm Braine, Boat Surveyor, started the 1997 programme with a talk about Black Country Narrow Boats and Boat Building. The February theme is not specifically about waterways, rather it is on "chocolate" but there is some connection ... somewhere. Tony Condor comes to see us in March as do the Environment Agency in April - *something for everyone!*

Undoubtedly our prestigious display and sales stand will be appearing at events around the country. Anyone wishing to assist, in any way, whether you are a potential dumper driver, salesperson, a cake baker or an administrator, you will be made to feel very welcome.

Linda Palmer, Chairperson

JUNE
SATURDAY
SUNDAY 7/8

*Canal Trust
Weekend Break*

NEW! By popular demand Mike & Joyce
Potts have organised our first ever

WEEKEND BREAK

*Includes dinner, B&B in Manchester and a
6 hour cruise on a Mersey Ferry along
the Manchester Ship Canal and a visit
to Albert Dock, Liverpool.*

EARLY BOOKING ESSENTIAL

Further details on page 13.

Objective achieved! Our October Canal Camp at Oxenhall hoped to reach the mouth of Oxenhall Tunnel; anyone who saw the work underway would not have underestimated the vast amount of exceedingly wet silt and mud that had to be removed - after all the depth at the Tunnel mouth exceeded the height of our (*full size!*) tracked excavator [*see photo - page 16 of the last edition*]. However, thanks to a great deal of hard work by those attending the Canal Camp, the Tunnel Portal was reached, just as darkness fell, on the last day! [*full report in Restoration Update, page 14.*]

Tucked away in **Committee Matters** [*on p.22 of the last edition*] it was reported that Cliff Penny was preparing evidence to present to a Hearing about proposed industrial development in Hereford. This re-development would have completely blocked the historic line of the Canal (and obstructed the only available diversion route) at a point within sight of the Canal Terminus. In mid-November we received a copy of the Planning Inspector's Report. Not only did he refuse to grant the developer's Appeal - primarily because of the adverse effects on the future restoration of the Canal - he also made it very clear that he rated the credibility of the Canal Trust to be very high. This is (*yet another*) very important official decision in favour of the Canal and the work of the Canal Trust. [*Further details on page 19.*]

Ever since we commenced work in the Gloucestershire area our site at Oxenhall has been the subject of repeated vandalism. Most of the time the attacks have been quite minor - materials and equipment thrown into the Canal and the more serious ongoing slow destruction of Oxenhall Lock Cottage. Towards the end of last year David Penny had a site meeting with representatives from Gloucester County Council and Forest of Dean District Council regarding the use of part of the Highways Depot as our base for the planned work on House Lock at Oxenhall. After the meeting he decided to take a walk along the line of the Canal - as he approached Oxenhall Lock Cottage he heard noises ... *full story on page 23.*

Following rapidly on the Canal Trust's acquisition of Oxenhall Lock Cottage etc. at Oxenhall, we are very pleased to report that we have just concluded the purchase of an adjacent short length from the British Rail Property Board. The costs (including legal fees), coupled with our ongoing (substantial) restoration costs, means that our finances are very severely depleted ... which takes us on nicely to the final point ...

As regular readers will know, spring sees the launch of what has now become our annual **Grand Holiday Draw**. Please do support this, our major fundraising initiative; without your support (buying and selling tickets) - and the generous

Editorial . . . continued

support of the three holiday prize donors - we cannot hope to continue to raise the funds that are essential to our progress.

We greatly appreciate the fact that two of our previous Holiday Draw prize donors have been willing to support us again this year; also that Hamdden Limited (part of the Hyder Group of

Companies - of which Dwr Cymru-Welsh Water is also a part) have generously donated a week at Sannan Court in the small West Wales village of Llanfynydd.

Please help us to turn these very attractive prizes into record breaking funds - further details are below.

The Grand HOLIDAY Draw!

Members and Supporters will receive 5 books of **Grand Holiday Draw** tickets with this edition of **The Wharfinger**. This is your annual opportunity, please, to assist the Canal Trust *and* have a really good chance of a holiday prize! We hope that you will be prepared to sell some to your friends,

neighbours and work colleagues as well; it really is our most important fund-raising initiative of the year and we cannot succeed without your help. We are determined to beat our record of nearly £2,500 - with a little bit of additional help from all of our Members this is within our grasp - *thank you*.

Herefordshire & Gloucestershire
Canal Trust - H & G C S

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GRAND HOLIDAY DRAW

★ 1st Prize - **NARROW BOAT HOLIDAY FOR 3/5 ★**
ONE WEEK (April/May 1998) Donated by STARLINE NARROWBOATS

2nd - **SANNAN COURT "FINEST IN W. WALES"**
One week self catering (in part of former Victorian Vicarage) for 2/3.
(3/1/98 to 23/5/98) Donated by HAMDDEN Ltd., a Hyder Company

3rd - **TWO NIGHTS B&B FOR TWO IN LEDBURY**
(Prior to 1/4/98) - donated by the award winning ROYAL OAK HOTEL

(All prizes exclude Bank Holidays and are subject to availability.)

Promoter: Mrs E Connors, 16 St Ethelbert's Close, Sutton St Nicholas, Hereford, HR1 3BF
Registered with Hereford City Council under Section 5 Lotteries & Amusements Act, 1976

To be drawn at National Waterways Festival, Henley, 25/8/97

- **TICKETS 25p EACH** -

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Thank you, *most sincerely*, to *Ian and Pauline Cundy of Starline Narrowboats; Jackie Boarer, the Managing Director of Hamdden; and Andy Riga of The Royal Oak Hotel, Ledbury* for their very substantial support in donating the holiday prizes.

Without their generous actions we would not be able to proceed with this, one of our major fund raising activities. Please do support their businesses in any way that you can.

Thank you, to all concerned; *your support is not taken for granted.*

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

Committee Matters

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

OCTOBER COMMITTEE

- The Special Projects Group reported the latest position relating to Oxenhall; due to the confined conditions within the byweir culvert it was agreed that £500 be committed for the essential re-pointing to be undertaken by contractor.

- The Chairperson, together with some members of the Restoration Group, had met with a representative of the Health and Safety Executive who had made an interesting and informative presentation regarding our responsibilities under the Construction (Design and Management) Regulations. Hereford City Council had agreed to a member of their staff being formally nominated as our voluntary Planning Supervisor under the Regulations; this was greatly appreciated.

- The recent Canal Camp had been highly successful reaching, as planned, the Oxenhall Tunnel Portal. The Trust Council of Management recorded their appreciation to all involved; not just on site but also in the planning of the work. It was agreed that measures should be taken to immediately secure the entrance to Oxenhall Tunnel, by the use of steel weld-mesh reinforcement, in order to deter unauthorised entry. It was stressed that it was a confined

space, without adequate ventilation, and that there should be no entry without full safety precautions being taken. *[Canal Camp report - see Restoration Update, page 14.]*

- The high cost of essential repairs to our dumpers was debated. Steps were to be taken to ensure that the very generous offer of assistance from a national company be utilised in respect of the refurbishment of certain parts, wherever possible, and for us to renew attempts to establish a larger team of mechanics to assist our Plant and Training Manager.

- Budgets to February 1997 were approved.

- It is a requirement of some of our grant aid bids that we keep the general public aware of our work. To mark the acquisition of the Oxenhall site it was agreed that the Winter 1996/7 issue of **The Wharfinger** should have a greatly increased print run (3,400 copies) to enable it to be delivered to every household in the Newent and Oxenhall areas.

- The success of our regular Social Evenings was recorded *[latest details on p.12]* as were thanks to the organisers.

- The donated box van *[page 21 of the last edition]* had

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Committee Matters . . . (ii)

developed serious engine problems during the first use and major repairs were in hand by volunteers - in the meantime the Trading Company had reverted to hiring a vehicle for each event.

• Our representations to the formal Hearing relating to proposed development at Hereford, on the former Pritchard's Metals site, were reported and endorsed. Had the work been undertaken by external professionals it would have cost the Canal Trust some £4,000; Cliff Penny was sincerely thanked for delaying his holiday and for his substantial voluntary efforts in respect of this matter on behalf

of the Canal Trust. [See article on page 19.]

• It was agreed that the Canal Trust be represented at the planned first IWA National Conference of Canal Societies and Trusts at Sandwell.

NOVEMBER COMMITTEE

• Prior to the commencement of formal business a developer's professional Agent addressed the Council of Management in respect of the proposed re-development of a site in Hereford. Hereford City Council had already been advised that the Canal Trust objected to the proposals as there

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The Key to the Lock

By Brian Fox

Alfred Watkins was a notable archaeologist and photographer born in Hereford in 1855. He invented the pin-hole camera and travelled the local countryside taking many photographs on glass plates, most of which are now housed in the Hereford Museum. One of these photos (which must have been taken about 1880) is familiar to most of you being the one featured on the front of David Bick's book, *The Hereford and Gloucester Canal*.

Unfortunately, many of the collection are not precisely identified and the caption on this particular photo' simply states:-

*"canal lock
near
Gloucester".*

David Bick has identified it with the lock and cottage at Oxenhall because it does look remarkably similar, but on close inspection there are a number of features which don't appear to fit.

Oxenhall lock and cottage are, as you know, now owned by the Canal Trust and many hours have been spent since the acquisition clearing potentially damaging trees, bushes and general undergrowth from around the area [having obtained the advice of the Gloucestershire Trust for Nature Conservation - Ed.] so

that it is now possible to see the lock and cottage as they haven't been seen for many years.

The points in doubt in the photograph are as follows:-

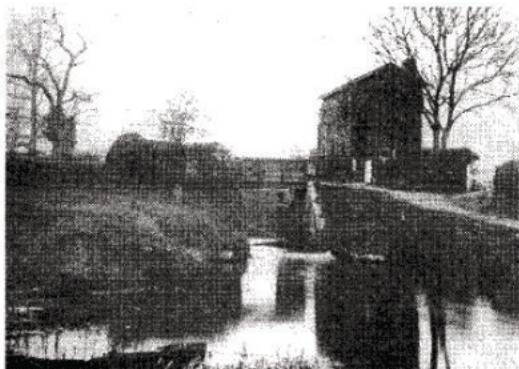
1. It clearly shows a door in the centre of the end wall topped by brick voussoirs and with a small sash window at the side the door. **Oxenhall has a small fixed window in the centre of the end wall surrounded by a frame of raised bricks. There**

is no other window or door.

2. The lock appears to be made entirely of bricks. **But Oxenhall is constructed of masonry (in large blocks).**

3. There is a substantial bridge across the tail of the lock. **No such bridge exists at Oxenhall and there is no evidence that there ever was. Why would one be needed anyway?**

4. The distance between the bottom lock gate pillar and the start of the sloping coping stones is at least three times the width of the lock gate itself - which makes it over 20 feet. **However, the distance at Oxenhall is only 8 feet.**



The Key . . . continued

5. The field to the left of the lock slopes right down to the water with the hedge finishing at the tail of the lock. At Oxenhall the hedge forms a continuous boundary between field and Canal for the whole length.

6. There is a gate shown in the hedge on the right giving access from the towpath to the field. There is no evidence that such a gate ever existed at Oxenhall.

7. There is a grassy slope in front of the gate from the towpath down to the Canal. Oxenhall has a substantial retaining wall (stone) supporting the towpath.

8. The old tree on the left of the picture is part of a hedge which leaves the Canal just above the lock. However, there is no such feature at Oxenhall.

There are other minor discrepancies but the points above do raise considerable doubt as the identification of the photograph and one remembers the other photograph recently featured in *The Wharfinger* which turned out to be a lock on the Stratford Canal.

Fortunately the true identity of this photo does not appear to be so far out!

The original caption saying "canal lock near Gloucester" could describe the Oxenhall scene but there is another candidate which fits much better and tallies with the photo in some respects. I think it is safe to assume that the photo is definitely somewhere on the Hereford and Gloucester Canal as there are no other narrow canals "near Gloucester". The only lock where the configuration of lock and cottage fits the photo's details, other than Oxenhall, is **Rudford**;

only four miles from Gloucester. It was the first lock along the Canal after the very deep lock at Over, and although it was totally destroyed

when the railway was built, there is a map (surveyed at about the time the photograph was taken) which also confirms some of the features in the photograph.

The Ordnance Survey map at 1:2500 scale of 1882 shows:-

1. A bridge across the tail of the lock (3. above) with a track leading to it from the adjacent farm, giving access for the lock-keeper to the Gloucester Road and also access for the farmer to the fields on the other side of the Canal by way of the bridge and gate (6. above).



The Key . . . continued

2. The hedge on the left of the Canal is shown just as in the photograph - finishing at the tail of the lock with no boundary between the field and the canal below that (5. above).

3. There is a hedge leaving the Canal just above the lock (8. above).

Conclusions

David Bick has been consulted and admits that he may have jumped to some conclusions

when he first published his history of the Canal 18 years ago (carried through into the current edition) and it is easy to see how the mistake happened as the two locks are so similar. I believe that there is sufficient evidence available to prove that the photograph on the cover of the book does **not** show the lock and cottage at Oxenhall. Although there is limited proof it seems reasonable to take this as being a photograph of **Rudford** lock and cottage (taken in about 1880) just before the railway obliterated it.

BURIED HISTORY

Alan Lines has been delving into historic records and found that, during the building of the Canal in the area of Gasworks Lane, Ledbury, a mass grave was uncovered containing bodies from the Civil War. One of John Masefield's books records that the Canal was built on top.

A few years ago water was leaking from the middle of the Hereford Road at Ledbury. There were no water pipes in the area and it turned out there was

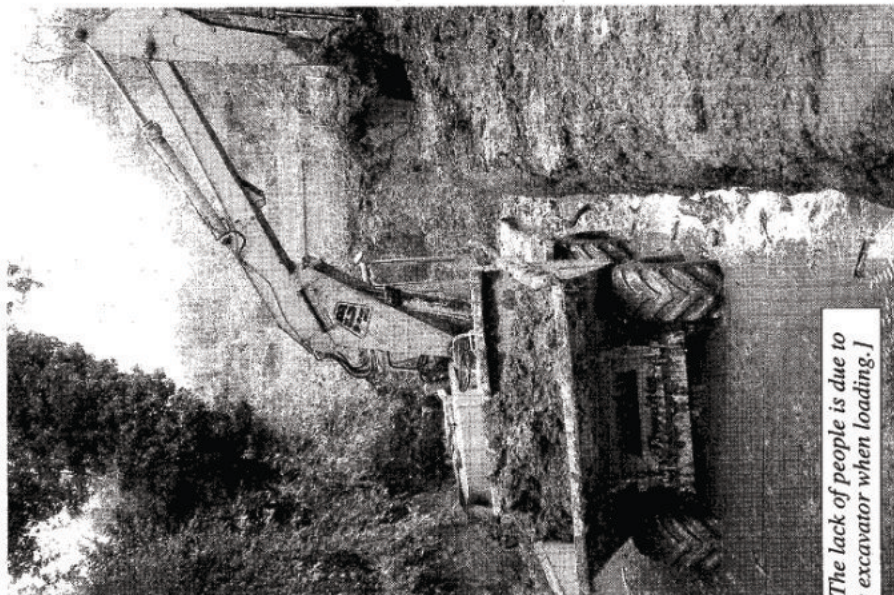
a drain to run off water from the railway tunnel that ran under the Hereford Road to the River Leadon. John Masefield wrote that, when he was a boy, he played in the stream running from the railway tunnel (at which time it would have run into the Canal).

Ultimately the Canal was filled in (a rubbish tip was found in that area when the owner of the Hereford Road Garage was building his bungalow) and the stream was culverted and extended to the river. AL

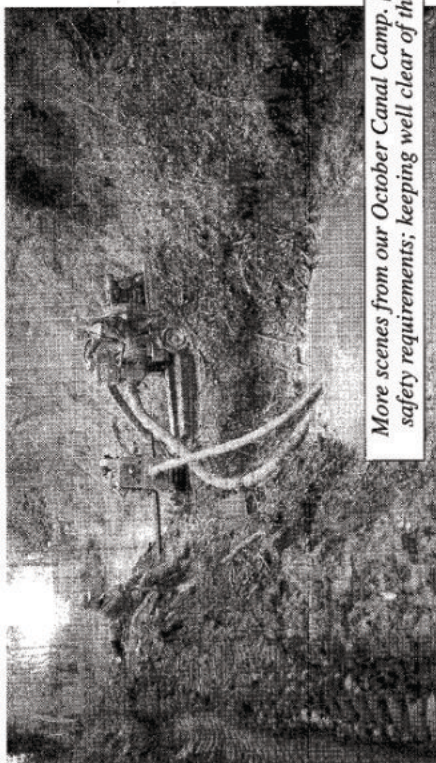
BETWIXT HEREFORD & ROSS-ON-WYE IN BEAUTIFUL H & G CANAL COUNTRY SELF CATERING ACCOMMODATION:-

Self-contained south facing apartment in large gardens in our rambling bungalow in the village of Little Birch. Bedroom sleeps 4 with double bed & bunks. Large sitting room with panoramic views into Wales. Small fitted kitchen + bathroom with bath & shower. Fully equipped, set well back from road with good parking. Sorry, no animals & non-smokers preferred. Easy access to all parts of Canal route. Lots to do and see in this undiscovered part of England. Ideal for holidays or your overflow visitors - do come!

For further details 'phone H&G Canal Trust Members,
Lesley & Andrew Lowe, 01981 540366



More scenes from our October Canal Camp. [The lack of people is due to safety requirements; keeping well clear of the excavator when loading.]



Bits 'n Pieces

A GOOD DAY OUT !

A day out helping with the Canal Trust promotional and sales display really is just that - as existing volunteers (*some who were not so sure about it first time!*) will confirm.

We hope to attend a wide range of events, local and national, and there really is the opportunity to help in many different ways. Our aim is to get sufficient volunteers to have two shifts each day and, as you normally have the use of our entry passes, *you have half the day to see the event free!*

Liz Connors continues to be our very hard-pressed organiser of "manning" (*amongst many other things*) and will be contacting our previous ~~victims~~ volunteers. However, we do need a few more so, *please*, pick up the 'phone and volunteer - *today!*

■ CRP

PRESS AND PUBLICITY

Having volunteered to be responsible for sending notices of forthcoming events to the media, I soon found myself thrown in at the deep end with events coming in thick and fast. Since then I have, I hope, learnt quite a bit! I hope that the increasing numbers at our monthly meetings are the result of my efforts.

Your help in arranging for the display of event posters in local libraries, shops etc. would be appreciated. Please contact me:- Elizabeth Lloyd, Barton Court, Colwall, Malvern, Worcs, WR13 6HN My 'phone number is 01684 540232 but we do not have an answerphone (joint family decision) and if you don't get me just leave your name and number - *not a message*, please.

■ EL

PROMOTIONAL/SALES EVENTS

We hope to attend the following:-
[Some are subject to confirmation.]

March 28/29th:
Maylord Orchards Shopping Centre,
Hereford.

May 4th:
North Herefordshire Country Fair,
Stoke Prior, Leominster.

May 24/25/26th:
Braunston Boat Show,
Northamptonshire.

July 5/6th:
Bromyard Gala.

July 12th:
Evesham River Festival.

August 3rd:
Herefordshire Country Fair.

August 22/23/24/25th:
National Waterways Festival,
Henley on Thames.

September 7th:
Oxenhall Open Day
Teas, and guided walks

November/December:
Our own Craft Fairs,
at Ledbury and Hereford.
Further details later . . .

Please give me a call if you are able to join us at any of the above.

Liz Connors



MICHAEL STIMPSON and ASSOCIATES

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Newent Talks

Former Canal Trust Chairman
Cliff Penny is to give an
illustrated talk about the Canal,
and the work of the Canal Trust,
in Newent Library on Wednesday
26th February, commencing at
8pm. If the date is inconvenient,
there will be a repeat (same
place and time) on Thursday
20th March. There will be a
nominal admission charge of £1.

Following the widespread
distribution of the last edition of
The Wharfinger in the area
there is a great deal of interest
in the Canal, and our voluntary
work, and the two talks are part
of our public awareness
campaign.

Canal Booked

As a result of our recent
increased activities in
Gloucestershire we have seen a
welcome increase in local
Members too - to you (and other
new Members) - welcome! You
may not be aware that our
Member David Bick, the well
known local historian who lives
in Newent, has published the
second edition of his book about
the Canal - containing two new
chapters and much interesting
material about the Canal. A
fascinating book that no
supporter should be without.

104 pages, A5 format, with over
30 photographs, plus numerous
maps and other documents. A
cheque for £7.95 (inc. P&P),
payable to H&GCS, "Coppice",
Burley Gate, Hereford, HR1 3QS
secures your personal copy.

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, 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!

Tuesday, 18th March

☞ *"Waterways - looking ahead - the next 10 years"* ☞

Tony Condor, the Curator of the National Waterways Museum
at Gloucester, will get out his crystal ball . . .

Tuesday, 22nd April

"The Environment Agency & Canoeing"

Alex Minshull and Ruth Maddocks, from the Environment Agency,
Midlands Region, will be our speakers.

Tuesday, 20th May

"Gloucester & Cheltenham Tramroad"

Member David Bick (author of the book about the H&G Canal)
will talk about another of Stephen Ballard's achievements.

☞ **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 *Winter edition 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].

☞ **Wednesday, 26th February;** ☞

☞ **Thursday, 20th March** ☞

"The Hereford & Gloucester Canal - and the Canal Trust"

Former Chairman Cliff Penny gives an illustrated talk - at
Newent Library - both talks commence at 8pm - admission £1

Thursday, 22nd May - AGM

At the Burgage Hall, Church Street, Ledbury - details in next edition.

Mike & Joyce's Outings

By Mike & Joyce Potts

We had a good response to the questionnaire that was enclosed with the last edition of **The Wharfinger**. There were many suggestions, some of which were printable and some were impossible! The two winners of the book were Ron and Sally Willbie of Painswick and Mr and Mrs Hodson of Hereford. *We thank everyone for their replies and hope that there is a similar response to the trips as the questionnaire.*

The results of the survey were:-

Day trips to:- Nat. Tramways Museum 9; Ellesmere Port/Chester 17; Severn Valley Railway 12; Mon/Brecon Canal 35; Wigan Pier 15; Llangollen Canal/Rail 25.

Weekend to:- Llangollen 20; Manchester - Ship Canal Option 26; Albert Dock 15; Granada Studios 0; City 7; Ship Canal 4.

From the list we have chosen three outings for this year and three for 1998 - others will follow in years to come:-

Weekend Tour - 7/8th June

**ALBERT DOCK VISIT AND
MANCHESTER SHIP CANAL CRUISE**

Dinner, Bed & Breakfast in the
Novatel, Salford, Manchester. 6 hour cruise aboard
a Mersey Ferry on the Manchester Ship Canal to Liverpool.

£75 twin/double; £72 triple; £87 single room.

Per person - all en suite.

£10 non-refundable deposit - balance to be paid by 20th April.

Sunday, 20th July

TEDDY BEARS PICNIC CRUISE

For all ages! Bring your own Teddy or Cuddly.

Cruise on the Monmouth & Brecon Canal,
Picnic (bring your own), time to explore Brecon.

Fare (cuddly & owner) £10.00

Sunday, 14th September

ELLESMERE PORT BOAT MUSEUM, CHESHIRE

Coach tour - including admission.

Fare £13.50

Tickets and further information from:-

M&J Potts, 8 The Dovecote, Mansell Lacy, Hereford, HR4 7HQ, or
Hereford Camera Centre, The Atrium, Maylord Orchards, Hereford.

Cheques payable to H&G Canal Trust, please.

RESTORATION UPDATE **HEREFORDSHIRE** & GLOUCESTERSHIRE

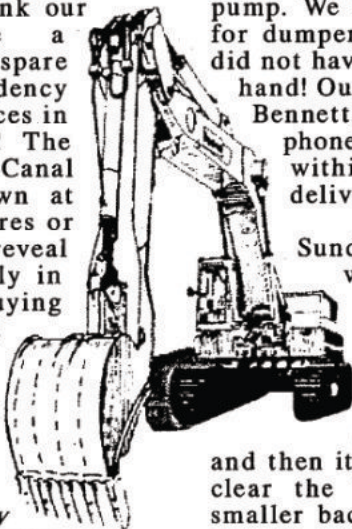
By Brian Fox

First of all I should like to correct an error which appeared in the last edition and again about a year ago when it crept through unnoticed. You will all be aware that we now own a length of the Canal at Oxenhall, indicated as being half a mile long in my article, but that was not what was stated in my original draft! I think our Editor must be a fisherman in his spare time as he has a tendency to exaggerate distances in the final narrative! The actual length of Canal which the Trust own at Oxenhall is 390 metres or 426 yards and I can reveal that we are currently in the process of buying another adjacent short section from British Rail - which will give us a total length owned of just over a quarter of a mile. *[Sorry, Brian. Fishy stories maybe - catching them - no way! Ed.]*

The last edition of **The Wharfinger** carried photographs of our October canal camp but unfortunately there was no time or space to include the report - so here it is.

Preparations for the camp included the hire of two 6 ton dumpers and a six inch pump to keep the water in the Canal as low as possible. A small temporary dam had already been

constructed below the working area, to pump the water over, and by 10.00 am. on the Saturday we were ready to go. The weather was being most kind and our disposal site, and access to it, were dry for once - and the prospects looked good. Within 2 hours of starting the excavator packed in with a broken fuel pump. We had made allowances for dumpers breaking down but did not have a spare excavator to hand! Our Plant Manager, Tom Bennett, used his mobile phone to ring around and within 2 hours a pump was delivered and fitted.



Sunday remained dry and work continued apace. The water pump coped well with the water but had a problem passing sticks and general debris so every now and then it had to be stopped to clear the blockage. We had a smaller back up pump loaned to us by **Waterway Recovery Group** which coped for short periods but it was a full time job for one person looking after both pumps.

Monday was another good day and, apart from a broken hydraulic pipe for which we had anticipated a replacement, all went well. That night it rained heavily and the Canal was so full that it took all Tuesday morning to pump the water out to a level so that the dumpers could get into the bed of the Canal.

On Wednesday the pumps were still having difficulty coping with the volume of water coming from the Tunnel and progress was slow.

Every morning the first job was to grease and fuel the plant and on Thursday it was discovered that one of the dumpers had a cracked steering ram. All efforts to remove the faulty piece failed but we were fortunate in that Mr. Goulding, who owns that section of the Canal, happened along and volunteered to undertake a temporary repair with his welding kit if we got the dumper to his farm. Fortunately it was still drivable and the repair was soon completed - *thanks again to Mr. Goulding for his continued*

support and for getting us out of a spot. By then we had reached the leggers rest which is about 20 yards short of the Tunnel.

Rain fell again on the Thursday night but we were more familiar with the pumps, the accumulated water was soon dispersed, and we got off to an early start - but then real disaster strikes! We thought we had taken care of every eventuality in our planning but then our chef of the day discovered there was no gas left in the cylinder (and we did not have a spare) - *the prospect of no bacon butties for breakfast was overwhelming and mutinous whispers were heard!* A quick whip round among those present revealed that we had just enough money between us so all

"PUT THE CLOCK BACK"

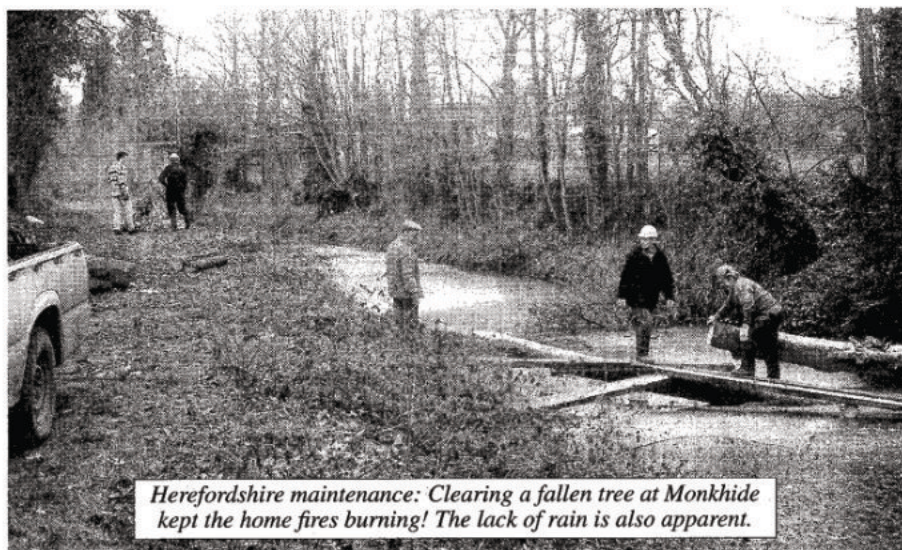
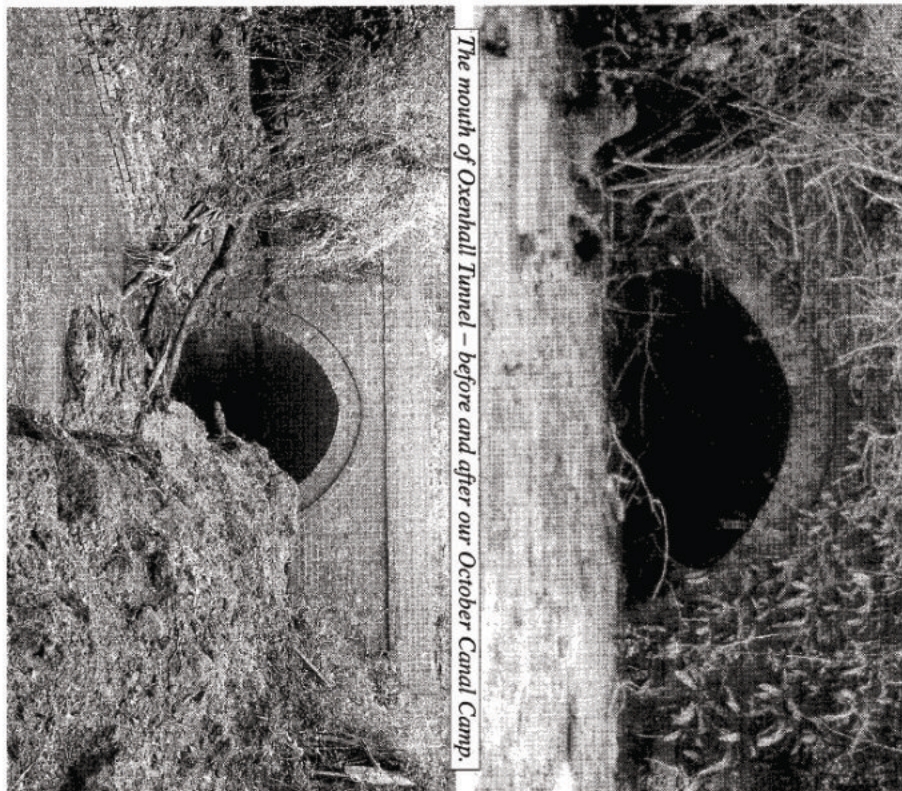
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was redeemed and we ate about 2 hours late.

We are often asked if we find anything of interest in the Canal and most of the time the answer is no. This particular stretch up to the Tunnel was no exception and I am afraid that we don't even bother to look any more as one skip full of sticky mud looks much the same as the next one. On the Saturday I happened to be on pump duty as the dumpers, laden with mud from the leggers rest, trundled past every now and then. One dumper with a particularly heavy load dropped a large lump of black mud right in front of me (which was not unusual) but I noticed a speck of blue sticking out of it and went over to investigate. After clearing the mud off it turned out to be a blue glazed earthenware pot, in mint condition, with a stamp on the base saying "RONUK". Our older members may recognise the name but to me it was a mystery, so it was given to the Hereford Museum to identify. They recognised it as a jar that was used for keeping shoe polish in and I immediately conjured up a mental picture of the leggers sitting in their shelter and polishing their boots while they waited for the next boat to come along. Unfortunately the Museum also dated the pot to around 1920/30 so the dream was shattered - but the pot still looks nice on my mantelpiece!

On the last day of the camp the Tunnel mouth was reached but we had a problem. The silt at

this point was about 9 feet deep [as can be seen from the photo on page 16 of the last edition] and this was holding back a comparable depth of water in the Tunnel - so it was best not to get too close in case this dam of earth burst. Unfortunately, the excavator driver miscalculated and before he could say "time for tea" the water had found a way through and it was necessary to beat a hasty retreat to the safety of the ramp to the towpath 200 yards away. There was just time to retrieve the two pumps from the top of the temporary dam before the rising water washed it away as well - together with the various sleepers on which the pumps had been sitting.

We had, however, achieved our objective of reaching the Tunnel mouth and once the water level had settled down again it could be seen that we had exposed some of the brick work on the approach to the Tunnel Portal.

On the whole it was a very successful canal camp and we did achieve our objective despite the scepticism of some. [A tribute to all involved - Ed.] The rain kept off during the day so at least the dumper drivers stayed dry. There was a price to pay, however, in large repair bills to our own dumpers (which got water and sand in the bearings and brakes) but overall it was still cheaper than hiring all the plant. We will be ready to have a final bash at total clearance later this year when we have a bit more money in the

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

kitty and the ground is drier. Boats may even run later this year - if it is possible there will be an announcement in a future edition of *The Wharfinger*.

Work has since continued on clearance of the spill weir and of House Lock itself where the bottom mitre cill beams have been uncovered, still in good condition. There was a lull over Christmas whilst preparations were made for a weekend visit from WRG in January when we hope to complete clearance of the Lock, and much of the vegetation on our stretch of the Canal, and make the access to Lock Cottage drivable. *More on this in my next report.*

Maintenance in Herefordshire has continued with partial removal of a large ash tree which was blown across the Canal some months ago. Those who attended went away with enough logs to keep the winter fires burning for a quite a few weeks! The job will be completed when the ice on the Canal has finally melted.

— WANT TO GET INVOLVED? —

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

Steve Delacourt-Smith (01452) 50372

Brian Fox (01432) 358628

Simon Hayward (01452) 534232

Tom Bennett (01981) 500258

Another Planning Success

The Canal Trust has persuaded each of the five Local Authorities (and the two County Councils) along the line of the Canal that the historic line of the Canal (and agreed essential diversion routes) should be protected from any further development that might hinder the restoration/reconstruction of the Canal in the future. In view of these "protective" Policies we look to the Local Authorities to refuse Planning Permission for any proposals that interfere with the historic line/the diversion routes. However, we hope that it does not come to an outright objection as we would far prefer to negotiate with potential developers to find a mutually acceptable solution - after all the presence of canals (and other areas of water) has been shown, throughout the country, to substantially enhance property values (provided the development is designed to benefit from the presence of the water).

Within Hereford City the Canal Trust have already been very successful in persuading two industrial developers to adjust their planned layouts to respect the proposed line of the Canal. Unfortunately the proposals for the former Pritchard's Metals site were submitted for Planning Permission without such discussions having taken place

and paying little attention to the future plans for the Canal to be brought right back into the heart of Hereford City. The site is adjacent to the Widemarsh Canal Bridge which remains intact (and even has a Canal Trust plaque on it! - Ed.).

As submitted the proposed development completely blocked the historic line of the Canal and would have also significantly obstructed the only available diversion route at this point - within sight of the proposed

*“ the proposed
development
completely
blocked the
historic line
of the Canal ”*

Canal Terminus (within a few metres of the original Canal Basins which lie beneath what is now Jewson's Builders Merchants in Canal Road). In view of the clear conflict with the existing Local Plan (and the proposed revised Local Plan) Hereford City Council refused

to approve the Planning Application.

There were, in fact, three grounds for the refusal of the Planning Application. Two related to highways and parking matters - the third to the obstruction of the line of the Canal. The Developers (family firm Messrs Underwoods Builders Merchants of Worcester) decided to formally Appeal against the refusal of Planning Permission and a Planning Hearing was arranged for October. Cliff Penny

Planning Success . . . continued

prepared written evidence, on behalf of the Canal Trust, and delayed a planned holiday to attend the Hearing. Amongst our evidence were plans to show how the proposed development of the site could proceed without frustrating the plans for the Canal - it being stressed that the Canal Trust were not opposed to the re-development of the site as such, just to the impact on the Canal.

At the Hearing the Developers were represented by their professional Agent who introduced a number of challenges to the evidence submitted by the Canal Trust. One of these related to the lack of potential for the Canal to be used as a Right of Way/Cycleway and the fact that many people would not wish to use the towpath through Aylestone Tunnel. We were able to show just how important the new route would be, joining up with the existing Great Western Way and other established paths in the City, and how existing/previous Rights of Way could be readily used to pass over Aylestone Tunnel!

In mid-November the Planning Inspectorate published the Inspector's Report. As far as highway and parking matters were concerned the Inspector accepted that they were capable

of resolution. However, the Applicant's claim that it was very questionable that the Canal would ever be restored to the heart of the City was firmly rejected by the Inspector (Mr D O Sweeting, FRTPI). Following consideration of the evidence he said *"At this stage, I am also satisfied as to the logic of ensuring that the restored Canal as it reaches the terminus basins should take into account reasonable navigational requirements and facilities perceived as being necessary for the success of the [canal restoration] project."*

"The Trust's credibility is apparent... I am in no doubt as to [their] standing..."

In his Report the Inspector continued *"The Canal Trust's credibility is apparent from the role it has played in successfully influencing planning policy frameworks and decisions, both within Hereford City and along the entire length of the Canal. As such, I am in no doubt as to the standing and substance of its considered position prior to and at the Hearing, and in posthearing correspondence."*

Following publication of the Inspector's formal decision there was a great deal of media interest - including the specialist national Planning and Waterways press. Cliff Penny was interviewed on local radio and stressed that we appreciated the importance of industrial development to the local economy - we did not

Planning Success . . . continued

oppose the use of the vast majority of the site for industrial purposes - just the small area that would frustrate the Canal ever reaching the heart of Hereford City. Cliff pointed out that the Canal itself had a significant role to play in the local economy and cited the British Waterways report which showed that over £4.3million per year of additional income would be drawn into the two counties by the restored Canal. The one quote that was carried extensively was "We are delighted with this very positive

decision; our only regret is that we had to expend so much time and voluntary effort in order to achieve it. Hopefully the developers of this and other sites will now accept that the restored Canal will be a valuable asset to their proposals and work with us to find mutually acceptable solutions."

The Canal Trust are now in detailed discussions with another major developer whose original proposals for a key site within Hereford City blocked the line of the Canal . . .

■ CRP

Wanted . . .

GLOUCESTER BOAT & WATERSPORTS JUMBLE

SUNDAY 6TH APRIL, 1997

Once again Barbara and I will be running a stall at the above event to raise funds for the Boats Group, to help cover the cost of maintaining and running the Canal Trust's boats, particularly "Mallard" our trip boat.

We need your boat and watersports related surplus items to sell to raise as much money as possible. Please search your attic,

sheds, boat stores or whatever for any item that may be saleable. I can collect at the social meetings or can be contacted on 01989 780325 at any time to arrange collection.

Last year we raised over £100 with a relatively small amount of donated items. With your help we should be able to improve on that this year.

Ray Moses

50 EDITIONS ON . . .

Due to pressure on space (*once again - a good position to be in!*) this series, reviewing the first 50 editions of **The Wharfinger**, has had to be carried over. A few complete sets of back issues remain for sale [see page 11 of edition 51 for details].

THANK YOU

Thank you to Dwr Cymru-Welsh Water for the donation of a surplus "386" computer. If anyone else has (*or knows of*) any surplus computers and, in particular, printers - we can put them to very good use! *Cliff Penny is the contact.* Thank you.

Committee Matters . . . (iii)



was not adequate provision for the restoration of the Canal through the site. It was agreed that the Canal Trust would prepare a revised design for the site to clearly demonstrate that the Canal could be accommodated within a revised layout - with very considerable benefits for the development.

- The very favourable decision, by the DoE Inspector in respect of the former Pritchard's Metals site, was received; Council of Management recorded that *"the Trust has scored another success and further enhanced its reputation."* [Article on p. 19.]

- Proposals for all of the necessary work at the Oxenhall Locks Project Site were discussed.

- A copy of the Preliminary Report into the Proposed New Weir on the River Severn had been received; regrettably it contained a factually incorrect statement in respect of the objectives of the Canal Trust in that it said that we proposed a connection to the River Wye. A correction would be requested.

- Forest of Dean District Council had awarded the Canal Trust a £2,000 grant towards the work at Oxenhall; this was noted with great pleasure.

- Detailed drawings and reports on the restoration of House Lock would be required for Listed Building Consent,

grant aid bids and to ensure that it was restored in a competent manner - a discounted external bid of £1,800 was accepted for this essential professional work.

- British Rail Property Board had agreed to sell the Canal Trust a small area of land at Oxenhall and the terms were accepted.

- Negotiations were well advanced to obtain a secure storage area close to the Oxenhall Project Site - as were proposals to gain the necessary vehicular access.

- Our Craft Fair at Ledbury had been rated as a success; serving to promote our work and raise funds. Regrettably the Newent Craft Fair was not well supported and a new location would be researched for 1997.

- Liaison was taking place with the Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust in order that they were aware of our intentions at Oxenhall. It was stressed that we would not be undertaking "scrub-bashing" during the nesting season.

- Member Dr Robin Andrews was willing to assist our Restoration Group with continuing first aid training - this was welcomed.

- Plans were well advanced for the planned mid-January visit from Waterway Recover Group BITM ("Bit in the middle").

999 - Vandals !

The meeting with the Councils had gone well. It was a pleasant day and David Penny decided to walk the towpath past Oxenhall Lock Cottage. Approaching the Cottage he heard noises - and a teenage girl ran from view; rapidly followed by two youths. The steel shutters and door to the Cottage were intact but a pile of bricks lay by one corner; the vandals were making a hole in the wall to gain entry!

David drove to Winters Farm where owner Mr John Teire immediately offered the use of his 'phone to dial 999. Within minutes two Officers from Newent met David at the Canal; as the vandals were last seen

heading towards the sawmill the Police drove around the lanes in that direction. Meanwhile David continued his walk in the opposite direction - towards Oxenhall Tunnel - only to see the same girl in the distance. Another 999 call (from Newent Golf Course) and the Police were directed by radio to meet David by Coldharbour Lane Bridge.

Within a few minutes the Police had gained rather muddy feet - plus no less than 6 local teenagers who admitted responsibility for the vandalism. They have all been formally cautioned and we hope this is the end of our problems in the area.

CRP

Committee Matters . . . (iv)

- Plant and Training Manager Tom Bennett was seeking a suitable tracked excavator to return our strength to two (following the highly successful sale of our "cheap and cheerful" excavator for exactly the same as we paid for it nearly 3 years previously).

- A special purpose pressure brickwork pointing machine had been developed by Member Paul Johnson and would be used in the contract to repair the byweir culvert under Oxenhall Lock Cottage.

- Council of Management appreciated the offer by Nigel Jefferies to make one of his cast aluminium plaques for Oxenhall Lock Cottage.

- Historically correct lime mortar had been utilised by a Canal Trust volunteer to repair the brickwork that vandals had removed when attempting to gain access to Oxenhall Lock Cottage. [Report on page 23.]

- Will Frecknall presented a £250 cheque from the Gloucester and Hereford Branch of the IWA and the Treasurer reported that another £250 was imminent from the IWA National Stamp Bank - both were part of the funding package being assembled for the Oxenhall Project Site by the Fundraising Officer. Both of these donations were greatly appreciated, in what currently is a period of unprecedented levels of expenditure.

CRP

The Last Page

BALANCING THE BOOKS

A few weeks ago money was going out of the Canal Trust account at such a rate as to be rather worrying. The large amount of restoration activity has given rise to far greater than normal costs in maintaining our plant and equipment - and has also meant that the more usual fuel costs are also greatly increased as well! Add to this the need to contract out certain work for safety reasons, and the use of (heavily discounted) professional, legal and other services; the purchase of land and materials, and you have a recipe for an unhealthy bank balance!

Thanks to a great deal of hard work by our Treasurer, and by our Fund Raising Officer, we have (just!) remained solvent. Our repeated thanks, therefore, to those of our Members who make a donation at the time of renewing Membership. Also to the IWA Gloucester and Hereford Branch for a donation of £250; the IWA National Stamp Bank for £250 and to the increasing number of people who make their services available to us at greatly subsidised cost. Those not previously mentioned include Niel Richie of Contract Sign Services, Churchdown, (signs at Oxenhall); Simon Hayward of E B Hayward Sheet Metal Works,

Ashleworth (who manufactured the substantial security shutter system for Oxenhall Lock Cottage); Alan Newman of Hereford Tool Hire (who loaned us a small pump) and Mr D Mallin, John Hodson Builders at Coleford for the donation of some vitally needed land drainage pipework (and for delivering it to site!).

There is always the danger that we miss someone in our thanks, and there are those who specifically request no publicity! But let us record, once more, the fact that we try hard not to take for granted the support of everyone who assists in *any* way. One thing that would help immensely is if anyone could arrange for our fuel and oil to be sponsored - any contacts, please?

SPECIAL DELIVERY

As mentioned in our **Committee Matters** pages, the last edition of **The Wharfinger** was also delivered to virtually every home in Newent and Oxenhall. Thanks to Peter and Marion Moore, and Gwen and Roger Tutt for organising this and to David Bick, Derek Glover, Peter Pain, Jack Mills, Len Millar, David Mordant, Keith, Sue and Godfrey Urch, Joan Curtiss, Mrs Murphy, Mrs Yeandle, and Nigel Hayes for delivery! Also thanks to Dymock and Gorsley Post Offices for their help.

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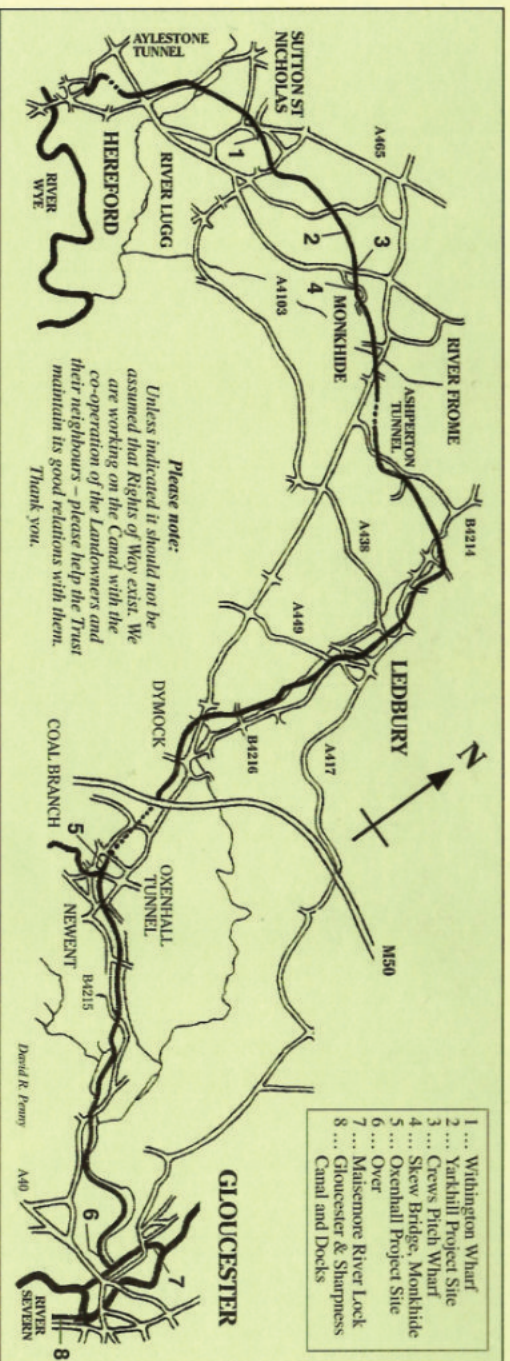
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The Canal Society was formed in 1983 and replaced in 1992 by the Herefordshire and Gloucestershire Canal Trust, a registered charity. The Trust has an ordinary and corporate membership exceeding 700 from all over the country – and abroad! Our objective 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.