

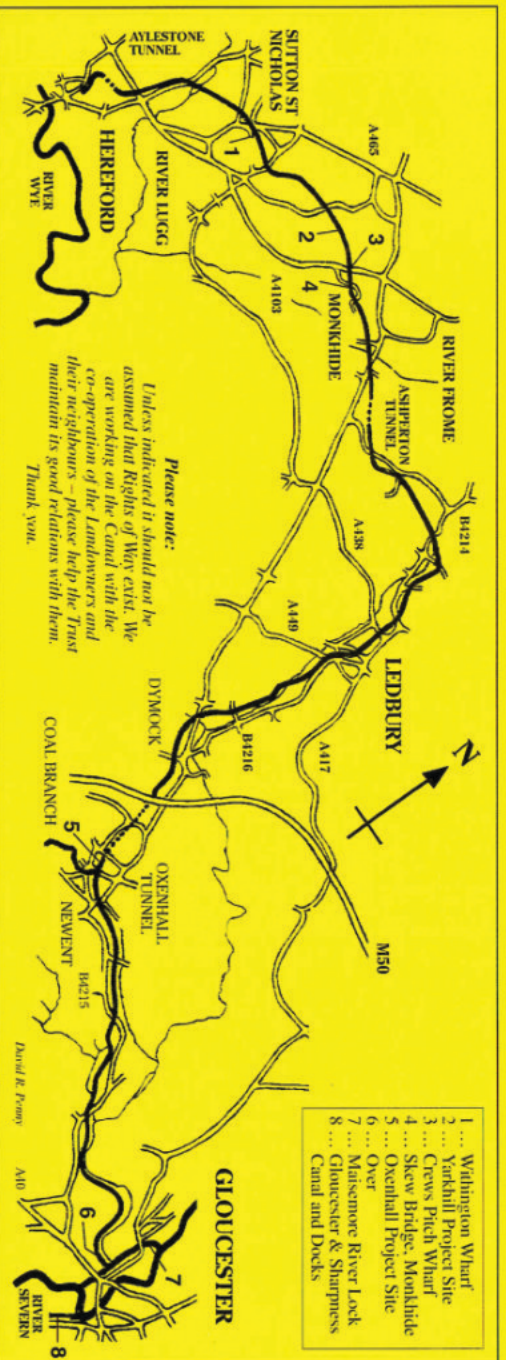
The Wharfinger

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



**Edition 63 • Autumn 1999
50p – free to members**

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.

Chairman's Review

Those of you who were at the AGM in May will recall that I went through the events of the year, keeping it as brief as possible, and at the end I touched on the use of volunteer labour and, in particular, on our new site at Over. As soon as we negotiated the agreement with the Developers it became obvious that it would be essential to reconsider our whole approach to voluntary labour. This project is unlike anything which we have tackled before and, indeed, is probably unique in the country; being a joint project between a Canal Trust and a Developer which sets targets for completion of work, for which the Developer is legally bound to pay a fixed price for.

At the moment the H&G are working on two projects, one at Over and the other at Oxenhall. Oxenhall is a continuation of the system in use for the past 15 years when we have relied on local volunteers, with increasing assistance from the Waterway Recovery Group, to proceed with restoration of the Canal at a fairly leisurely pace. Despite our large project at Over, the Oxenhall working group was specifically requested to remain and keep on with the lock restoration - and indeed has done so every Tuesday (as reported elsewhere) but it is still going to take at least 3 years to restore the lock at this rate! Our funding has come from Membership receipts, sales of goods, raffles and bottles and any profits made from trips and social events, not forgetting the odd hundreds (or thousands if we are lucky) from local authorities and utilities. The proceeds from the sale of Lock Cottage Oxenhall,

which although very welcome, was regarded as a one off and unlikely to be repeated. Progress has been made in restoration of the Canal but we must change our working procedures if we are to see significant gains in the lengths of the Canal in water and towpath open for public access.

The Over project has to be one way forward for serious canal restoration but it does raise a few challenges to overcome if we are to succeed in our long term ambitions. We are now at the point where canal restoration, tackled by volunteer labour, is reaching its limits and serious thought has to be given to the necessity of employing contractors to do some of the work.

This then raises the topic of fund-raising and it becomes obvious that major restoration can only be attempted if there is someone who is prepared to go out specifically to secure large sums of money to pay for the restoration - in effect, an experienced fund raiser. It may well be that there is such a person who is prepared to perform this essential task, *on a voluntary basis*, but realistically it will be a professional who will be called upon. Most of our volunteers have a job which pays the mortgage, and simply do not have the spare time necessary to perform the fund-raising job adequately. In my AGM report I singled out David Penny, in particular, as being a volunteer who is stretched to the limit on managing the Over project, and can no longer find the time to do many of the tasks he used to undertake. His contacts in the local authorities, and elsewhere, were essential when it came to fund-

Chairman's Review

raising; I am sure we have missed out on grants worth thousands of pounds because we now have nobody with the time and skill to negotiate (and fill in all the forms) and meet the deadlines.

David is not alone in having an excessive workload in his voluntary work for the Trust. I think it is true to say that every member of the Council of Management does more work for the Trust than they would choose. There is more work than ever to be tackled by this team and we now have less directors than we did 3 years ago. We have provision in our Constitution for 18 Council members, and we did have about 16 at one time, but this is now down to 10 and most are the old faithfuls who have been with us for many years. Every one of the 10 lives in Herefordshire, and although we have had a few from Gloucestershire (and other counties) they don't seem to stay the pace!

We have had more luck in recruiting volunteers to work at Over, many from Gloucestershire, and they are now working most weekends - and some days during the week - but even so there is a limit to what can be achieved, and (*thanks to the weather as well*) we are generally behind schedule on our work targets. This is despite valued assistance from WRG, New Deal, and even disabled volunteers on some jobs. There has been limited success in our appeals for volunteers, on radio and in the press, and I wonder what else can be done to attract people to work on canal restoration on large sites like Over? How about a few letters to the editor with some constructive ideas

- or even better, give one of us a call and get down to Over yourself!

Having said this I am confident that we shall complete the project at Over to the Developers satisfaction and be able to take on the responsibility for maintenance of the Canal and towpath and for getting the Lock Cottage up and running as a visitor centre etc. Everyone will be getting a good deal out of it and we will have a very worthwhile asset to show for all our voluntary efforts. From the Developers point of view they will acquire a water feature at a price way below that which could be achieved with contract labour. A report in the *Sunday Express* recently stated that waterside houses command a 10% to 20% price premium - so I am confident they will also be happy with the outcome.

When the work at Over is finished we will be able to sit back and congratulate ourselves on a job well done, but we can't then go back to the practices of the last 15 years. We have learnt much over the years and we are now setting new standards at Over; ***this momentum must be maintained.*** There is much going on in the background at the moment which will affect the working practices of the Trust in years to come. The feasibility study report will give us a basis for putting together bids for large sums of money and the site of the Farriery College in Hereford will provide another challenge for canal restoration in the near future. ***Wouldn't you like to be part of this exciting challenge as we move into the next millennium?***

Brian Fox

Chairman

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Editorial


Welcome to our bumper edition of **The Wharfinger**, to celebrate the presence of the annual **National Waterways Festival** on our 'doorstep' - to be held at **Worcester Racecourse for 4 days this August Bank Holiday**.

Regular readers will know that we have been planning our presence for months! In keeping with all of the other affiliated voluntary waterway restoration bodies the **IWA/BMIF** donate our space (*thank you*) but the marquee, electricity and other costs all have to be paid for. **Gloucester City and Herefordshire Council** Tourism Officers will be joining us this year and, together, (*thanks to their sponsorship*) we will be occupying our largest ever marquee - some 30'x20'.

Each year the 'National' features local restoration projects - *this year the H&G Canal Trust are one of only two canal restoration organisations to be part of the Festival's objectives*. We are determined to justify this national support by mounting our 'best ever' display. All of our photo display panels are being renewed and updated as is the large map of the Canal.

All being well the 'National' will see the 'launch' of our new Web Site [see p.5] and our all colour publicity/recruitment leaflet. A presence on the internet is now essential and everyone concerned has acknowledged that our previous leaflet about the Canal and the work of the Canal Trust was well below the standards that we now strive to maintain.

Our largest ever edition of **The Wharfinger** has been made possible by all of our advertisers - *thank you*; we hope that some of the 'one off' new advertisers will visit our stand [B106] and decide that we are worthy of regular support! And it's not all advertisements - we've increased the editorial/photo pages as well.

The National Waterways Festival is at Worcester Racecourse from Friday 27th through to Bank Holiday Monday. If you are not already part of our team on site please do pay the event a visit - it's the largest inland waterways' event of its kind in the world and we are sure that you won't be disappointed - there really is something for everyone. *Don't forget to visit stand B106; you'll be made most welcome.* 

Viscount Portman

One of our Vice Presidents, Viscount Portman, sadly passed away in Antigua in May. The 9th Viscount Portman was born in Dorset in April 1934 and inherited one of the most valuable land holdings in Britain. However, he transferred the greater part of the estate to his eldest son shortly after inheriting the title, from his uncle, in 1967.

When Viscount Portman took his seat in the House of Lords his maiden speech was on the subject of road safety. He was a keen amateur motor racing driver and fisherman. One of his homes was at Clock Mill, in Herefordshire's Wye Valley. He took a keen interest in a number of local Charities and agreed to be one of our Vice Presidents in 1997.

The National Waterways Festival sees the 'launch' of our web site on the internet. Thanks to a great deal of hard work by Nigel Bailey, the H&G Canal Trust now has its own 'domain' on the world-wide web. Whilst registration and other costs are involved the CofM decided that it was essential to join the ever increasing number of voluntary

bodies who already have sites on the internet. Not only do we thank Nigel for all his work behind the scenes but also for generously meeting the costs involved in the first year. Below is a 'screen shot' which doesn't do full justice to the site which, it is intended, will be updated regularly. The address is:-
www.h-g-canal.org.uk.



Welcome to the official web site of the Herefordshire & Gloucestershire Canal Trust

Since 1983 the Trust has pursued its aim to fully restore the 34 miles of canal and 22 locks which will once again link Hereford with Ledbury, Dymock, Newent and the rest of the inland waterway system at Gloucester.

Our policy is to develop significant showpiece lengths of the canal in each county, working towards the full restoration.

Here you can...

visit pages by clicking on the appropriate links at the foot of each page

Or you can...

read through the whole web site, page by page through the menu, by clicking on



to go back,



to go forward

Or you can...

send us a message by Email from the Links page.



- The site is best viewed with a screen resolution of 800 x 600
- The pages containing maps and the restoration pages, which show our progress since the earliest days, contain a large number of pictures so they may take a while to download
- Most of the pictures are thumbnails so that they download quickly and you can choose which to view in more detail
- We shall be updating the site frequently, so bookmark this page and visit us again

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OverTime

Regular readers of The Wharfinger - and/or the national waterways press, can hardly have failed to read about our restoration site at Over, the point where the Hereford & Gloucester Canal enters the River Severn. David Penny, our volunteer Project Director, brings us all right up to date with progress...

We have always said that the Over project was a major challenge. We had not allowed for a constant stream of robberies to add to the challenge! We have a very determined breed of thief at Over who have, over many months, stripped the hospital buildings of copper - working during the night and carrying it in carrier bags 1/4 mile over the adjoining field! Unfortunately they have not confined their attentions to the old hospital and continue to plague the Trust, with one of the latest losses being 150m+ of pre-cut 2"x4" for the shuttering - much of it only 2 foot lengths all carried out of site over the fields to the rear. This is definitely the sort of added challenge we could do without - not only for the cost, but also the impact it has on carefully laid plans to keep us on programme.

We are now, however, moving into the phase of serious construction on site. The Wharf wall is slowly progressing, and should see many more pours of concrete over July and August, permitting us to make rapid progress with the brickwork during August and September. The end of July will see a major 10 day WRG Camp which will focus its attention on the construction of the slipway and short limb of The Wharf wall, with a further camp in September, which should focus on the overflow weir.

The slipway is loosely based on the IWA national design with various improvements. The most striking amendment is that this will be a

luxury slipway of a sort rarely seen (they're normally very functional)! We felt that opposite Swan Hill Homes prestigious housing development a slab of gleaming white concrete 3.5m x 10m might not be very welcome! We have therefore found a source of 4" cube granite sets, which cost a little more [*even at a keen trade price!*] but will be slightly more acceptable to our neighbours and Canal users alike!

This is a good example of how we seek to work together with Swan Hill Homes to create a prestigious housing development around a showpiece length of Canal - we both need our developments to respect, complement and enhance the other if we are both to succeed and maximise the potential of the site. **Canal Boat and Inland Waterways** magazine recognised, in their lead editorial in their July edition, the national importance of the way we are working *together* on the site - holding the Over site up as an example of the way forward in canal restoration through *partnership* - to everyone's advantage.

This partnership does not stop with Swan Hill Homes. We have been assisting in negotiations to ensure the safe movement of bats around site, a contentious issue during early July where we helped in acting as a frequent middle man between the demolition contractor and the Bat Group. Further along in the programme we will be constructing an artificial otter holt and we have already redesigned the site to create an off-line nature reserve (by

STRONGBOW

the pint to
refresh Canal
Volunteers!



restoring part of the former mill race and diverting the overflow water along it), and started its construction - though no-one has actually found anything on the Canal to put in it yet! There will be a nature reserve alongside the Canal, a new water meadow, and new lengths of hedge, and woodland belts as part of the overall canal setting - its not just about restoring a canal, it's about creating something attractive and of interest around it as well. The wider the diversity, the greater the interest and benefit there is to the community, and the greater base of support for the project.

As this edition goes to press we are working with Leominster Demolition's blessing to remove any items that are of use to us from the buildings prior to their demolition, that they don't plan to salvage and sell and so would otherwise be destroyed. This should leave us with sufficient windows, timber and other materials to see us through all currently planned phases of work at Over, and hopefully leave us with some left over for the future.

What may frequently be overlooked is what a model of recycling the Over site actually is. All the spoil from the Canal is being used to create a park and noise bund to screen the A40 from the houses (and vice-versa). All the bricks, timber, doors, windows, slate, tiles, and many other materials used in the restoration of the Canal and the canal side buildings are being recycled from the former hospital buildings. Even those buildings that are of no use for direct recycling are still being put to good use by being crushed and the resulting material being used for sub-foundations,

access roads, towpath sub-base, drainage layers, storage compounds, haul roads, car parking areas etc.

Without these materials we would not have a hope of restoring the Canal. If let to contract, the work we are undertaking in Phase 1 (the excavation, The Wharf wall etc, slipway, overflow weir and pumping station) would cost over £250,000 - we have a budget of only £40,000 - another one of those little challenges we are gaining a national reputation for successfully overcoming!

An absolutely critical part of what we are doing is, therefore, the volunteers without whom it wouldn't happen. We can't have enough and with this size of project, on this deadline and such a tight budget, we need all the extra help that we can get - even if that is only 1 day each month - it makes a difference. There is such a massive variety of work now available on site that we can always find a suitable task for new volunteers, or even train you to do something you never thought you would achieve!

The next few months will be busier than ever (and that really is saying something on this site!). There is continuing salvage working in partnership with Leominster Demolition, major concrete pours, vast amounts of brick laying, the start of the landscaping and towpath creation, the continued excavation, and countless other tasks large and small from keeping our site tidy to sprucing up all the kit with a lick of paint or two. We guarantee that we will find you a job that will make a difference if you just give us a small amount of your time - *why not come and be part of the team?*

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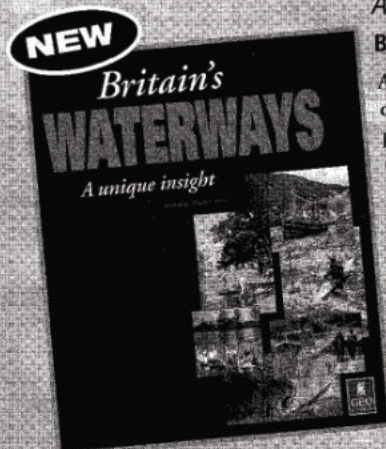
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OverTime

Our progress (at 15/7/99) is as follows:-

- Excavation of Canal - 75%
- Excavation of Mill Race - 10%
- Excavation of extraction channel and other works (access tracks etc) to start later in year.
- The Wharf wall foundation - 5 of 12 pours complete (two more due during July WRG Camp - awaiting haul road for access, which in turn awaits material from the demolition of the hospital!)
- The Wharf wall 2nd level pours - 2 of 12 pours complete (with a further 2 shuttered and awaiting that haul road!)
- The Wharf wall brickwork commenced on both 2nd level pours and expected to advance rapidly once the next two are complete.
- The Slipway - the main focus of the July WRG camp (needs that demolition material - again!).
- The Overflow Weir currently planned to be the main focus of the September WRG Camp.
- Gabion wall opposite The Wharf - awaiting materials from demolition and acquisition of gabion baskets.

▪ Area alongside Canal opposite The Wharf - currently being levelled, but awaiting material from demolition.

▪ The Pumping Station - this will be the last part of Phase 1.

Hopefully, the material from the demolition site will come just in time to permit us to build the slipway - if we crush it ourselves (Alan is very good at this)! The crusher run for the haul road looks less likely but we hope there will be sufficient rubble of suitable grade around just in time so as not to delay WRG's work.

With this little lot to finish it looks as though we will be working OverTime (sorry, I couldn't resist it)! Then there are the little challenges for next year (and beyond):- reconstruction, alongside the Canal, of the stone/half-timbered Barn that we salvaged from alongside the A40 in February [*a detailed article about the Barn will be in a future edition of The Wharfinger*]; fitting out the pumping station; getting the Interpretive Centre et al up and running; rebuilding the lock and swing bridge ... at least there is no chance of us getting bored - *why not join us and be able to say you were part of it?*

Saturday 4th September

GUIDED TOUR + BBQ
5.30pm see our work at Over.
BBQ at 6.30pm.
£5. ADVANCE TICKETS ONLY.
Tickets from Liz Bailey -
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Friday 10th-Sunday 19th September

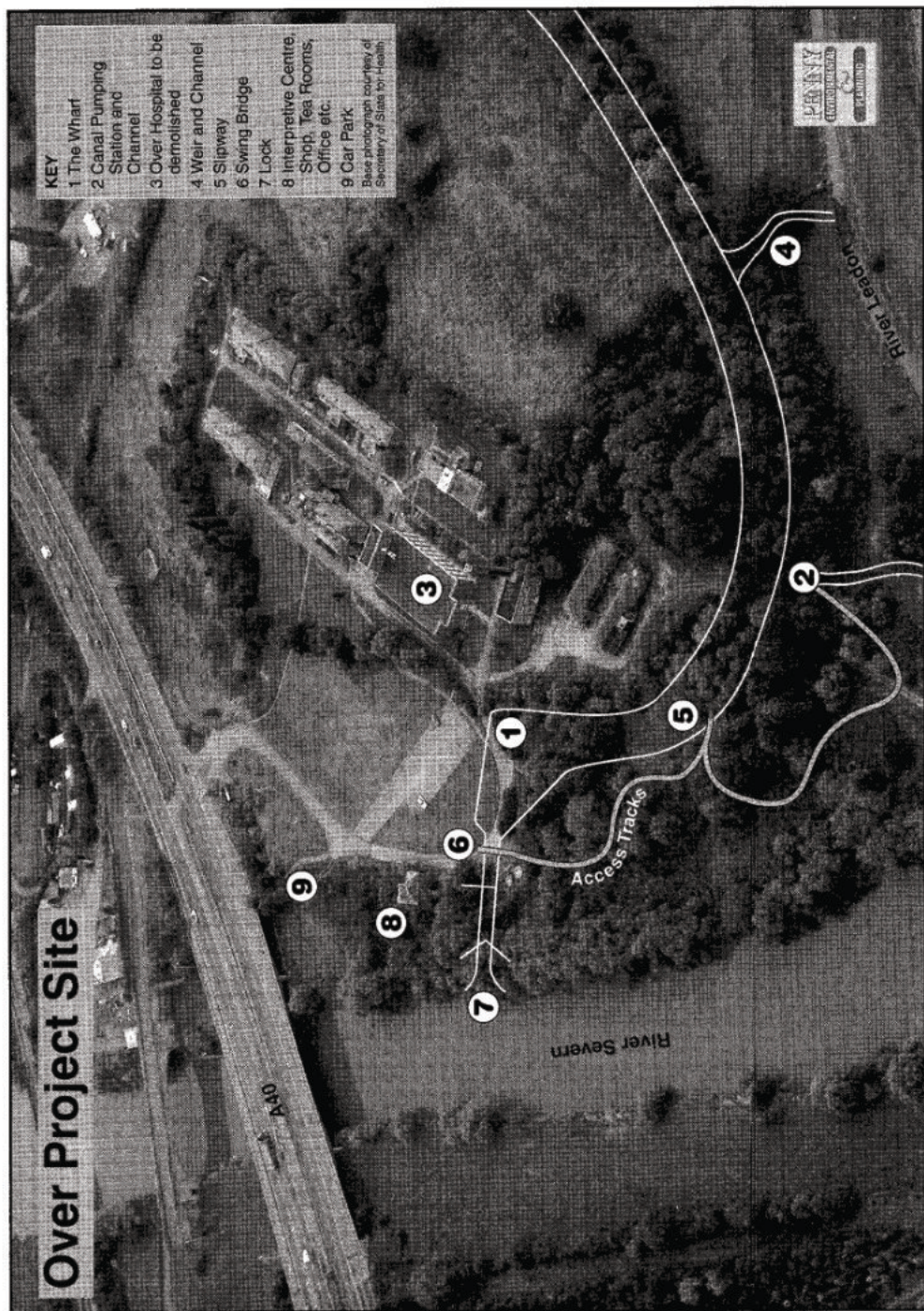
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Over Project Site

KEY

- 1 The Wharf
- 2 Canal Pumping Station and Channel
- 3 Over Hospital to be demolished
- 4 Weir and Channel
- 5 Slipway
- 6 Swing Bridge
- 7 Lock
- 8 Interpretive Centre, Shop, Tea Rooms, Office etc.
- 9 Car Park

Base photograph courtesy of Secretary of State for Health



Sunday, 26th September

Our annual Open Day at Oxenhall - 10.30am to 4.30pm

Come along and see the changes since last year with guided walks along the Canal. See the progress on the restoration of the Listed House Lock and, if you have not been here before, take the opportunity to see the unique by-weir, fully restored thanks to the efforts of WRG and our own volunteers.

Display, sales stand and home made refreshments in the (refurbished) village hall.

Canal Trust Craft Fairs

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Saturday, 20th November
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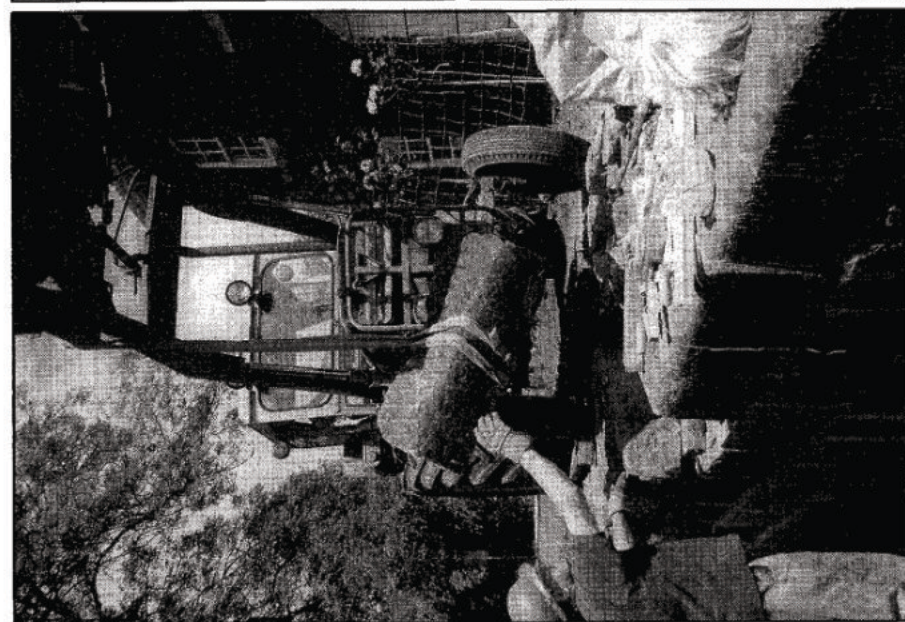
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ABOVE: David Penny guides Training Weekend VIP tour. (Photo: Regan Milnes.)
 LEFT: Coping stones being relaid at Oxenhall House Lock.
 BELOW: Tewkesbury Borough Council's Mayoress has a go on the dumper.

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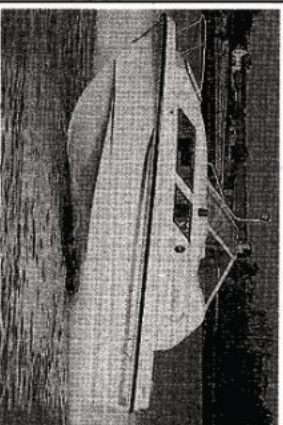
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Committee Matters

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

APRIL COMMITTEE

- Arrangements for the AGM were agreed as were those relating to the visit to the Over site by delegates to the Regional AGM of the Inland Waterways Association. The packed programme for the visit to the Canal by the Southern Canals Association was also agreed.

- Following the detailed review of the February Canal Camp at Over, at the previous meeting, the Chairman had written a detailed letter to the Chairman of Waterway Recovery Group setting out our findings.

- It was noted that the diesel for the generator at Over, which was running continuously as part of our essential security measures, was costing in excess of £200 per month.

- The Insurers had now reached agreement with the Canal Trust in respect of the first claim relating to the robberies at Over. After the deduction of the excess, this was some £800 below the claim, but was considered to represent a fair settlement. The second claim was still under negotiation.

- The Treasurer reported that the sale of **Grand Holiday Draw** tickets was slightly ahead of last year but with less promotional events to be attended there was no room for complacency!

- Stone that had been donated to the Canal Trust was being transported to a specialist sawmill

for cutting prior to use at Oxenhall House Lock. Some 10 tonnes had been cut so far. Thanks were expressed (*again!*) to Simon Hayward for the loan of his lorry to transport the stone. On occasions it had been necessary to hire a vehicle but this was still far cheaper than purchasing equivalent cut stone.

- The March H&G Canal Camp at Over had been highly successful, with very considerable quantities of material excavated from the basin, and a start made on the line of the Canal itself. Our volunteers worked from 6am to 9pm most days greatly assisted by having our own resident cook on site [see *"The Big Breakfast"* in the last edition - Ed.].

- CofM were still of the opinion that David Penny required more assistance on site and agreed that every effort should be made to recruit additional volunteers, with appropriate experience, to share the immense workload.

- The decision to cease the New Deal initiative was endorsed due primarily to the fact that the promised larger numbers had not materialised.

- Some fallen timber would be removed from the Yarkhill stretch of the Canal that was the subject of a Landowner Agreement in order that the mower could be used to cut the towpath grass.

- Ongoing maintenance of plant was reported, and pins on excavators that had caused previous

Committee Matters . . . (ii)

difficulties were now being fitted with better retaining bolts.

- Concern was expressed at the lack of a Canal Trust presence at the annual Daffodil Weekend at Oxenhall. It was agreed that we should request an invitation to attend in future years.

- It was agreed that the 26' steel trip boat "Ruby II" be purchased from the IWA following a visit to Somerset by representatives of the Boat Group. Transport needed to be arranged and the boat would initially be taken to our depot at Horsefair Wharf for repainting, and other maintenance, prior to eventual transfer to Over.

- The Chairman had written to all known landowners along the line of the Canal, who were not already in receipt of **The Wharfinger**, advising them that we would be sending them a complimentary copy in future to keep them informed of our progress.

MAY COMMITTEE

- Final arrangements for the AGM were agreed. The Treasurer reported that our Honorary Accountants were requesting a discounted fee in future years. Whilst this was regarded as inevitable in the light of the increasing complexity of our financial affairs it was agreed that, as this opened up the field of Accountants available, other practices should also be considered.

- Visits to the Canal by delegates to a recent Southern Canals meeting, and the IWA AGM, had been very successful and the

subject of letters of appreciation.

- Authority was given to the Treasurer to seek a temporary loan from the IWA to fund ongoing restoration costs, if necessary, pending the deliberately deferred receipt of monies from the Over development.

- CofM approved the Finance Committee's proposed amended budgets for the second quarter as was a proposal that the quorum for such meetings be 3.

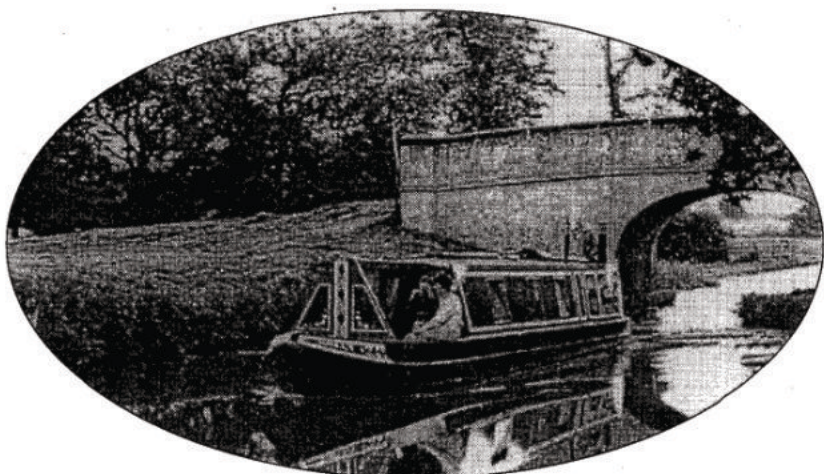
- David Penny had spent a number of days at Over with a tutor and students from GLOSCAT but appalling weather had severely disrupted the work. It was intended that they would return later in the year.

- There were detailed discussions regarding the planned WRG National Training Weekend at the end of May. Messrs Swan Hill Homes (the Developers of the Over site) had kindly agreed to sponsor the beer supplies for the evenings. A number of our own volunteers were planning to pay to attend *[nothing to do with the free beer - Ed!]*.

- The compound at the Yarkhill site was slowly being cleared so that Major Robert Barnes could use the land again. A local home would be sought for the site hut so that it was available when there was further work in the area.

- Brian Fox reported that a great deal of work on stone for Oxenhall House Lock had been undertaken by the Tuesday (Wrinklies) Group over the Easter Bank Holiday. ▷26◻

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By Barbara & Ray Moses

Meetings hosted by our "Master of Ceremonies" Lloyd Jones

Social evenings are held on the 3rd Tuesday of every month at
our NEW venue, The Verzons Country House Hotel,
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All meetings are 7.30 for 8pm.

A reminder - 17th August - "Noggin & Natter"; hear all about
our plans for the National Waterways Festival at Worcester.

Tuesday, 21st September

"The BCN"

Few people, unfortunately, fully appreciate the
amazing contrasts that exist on the Birmingham
Canals. Ron Cousens is our guide to the Navigation.

Tuesday, 19th October

"My Life on the River Severn"

Chris Witts worked on the Severn Tankers and,
more recently, skippered the grain barges to
and from Healings Mill, Tewkesbury.

Tuesday, 16th November

"Severn Traders"

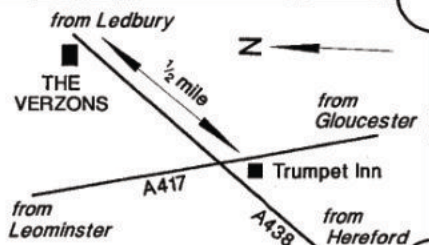
The history of tradesmen on the Rivers
Wye and Severn - the story of the boatbuilders
on these two important waterways - by Colin Green

Advance notice:

As the third Tuesday in December is close to Christmas (21st
December) we will have a video evening (with mince pies).

*Ray & Barbara have gone to a lot of trouble to find a new venue and a
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Any queries, or ideas for speakers, to Ray & Barbara on 01989 780 325

About our NEW Social Evenings
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RESTORATION UPDATE

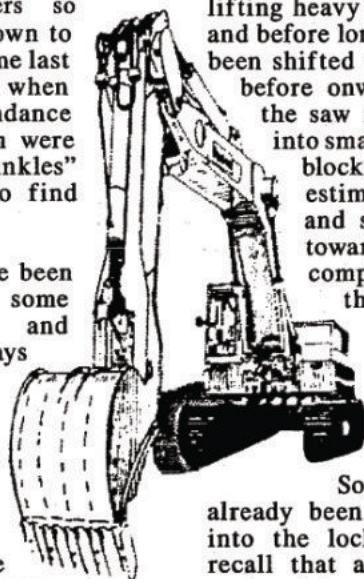
By Brian Fox & Nigel Bailey

Progress at Oxenhall has been steady in reasonable Spring weather although with reduced numbers of "Wrinklies reporting for duty. We have now lost Ray Allsopp, our most senior member, who felt he couldn't continue any longer. Unfortunately, when you have a workforce of senior citizens, it is inevitable that the turnover will be quicker than with our younger volunteers so consequently we are down to 4 keen regulars. This time last year there were weeks when we had 7 or 8 in attendance although some of them were admittedly more "Wrinkles" and have since left to find proper work!

Those that are left have been getting to grips with some fairly hefty stones and working out the best ways of moving them without straining unused muscles. Our supply of stone from the old railway abutment has now dried up and we have moved on to retrieve some large blocks which we acquired some time ago and have been languishing in a farmers field ever since. Jim Luther, a local farmer/saw mill operator was good enough to let us use his field and was no doubt pleased to see the back of them after all this time. There was a problem in moving them, however, because most of the blocks weighed over 1 cwt and some must have weighed in excess of 5 cwt.

This is where the services of the Trust's tractor proved invaluable. It must be almost 10 years since it was

purchased and has proved one of our best investments, giving trouble free service in all that time. With our tipper trailer on the back it has ferried materials, muck, timber etc around Herefordshire and Gloucestershire and now it has proved its worth once again. A couple of slings attached to the front bucket proved the ideal solution for lifting heavy stones onto the trailer and before long the pile of stone had been shifted to our own compound before onward transportation to the saw mill where it was cut into smaller, more manageable, blocks. The total weight was estimated at about 10 tons and should go a long way towards helping us to complete the restoration of the lock at Oxenhall. We now have a fork lift attachment on the back of the tractor so lifting should in future be a doddle.



Some of the stone has already been used as we progress into the lock chamber. You may recall that a large tree root was removed from the lock wall by the WRGies back in January and that left a gaping hole with blocks of stone scattered all around the top of the lock. Our priority had to be the rebuilding of this part of the lock and this has now been achieved, again with the help of our tractor to lift some of the huge coping stones back into place. All the stones were numbered as they were originally removed and it was very satisfying to see them all back in place again without any left over! The towpath has now been tidied and levelled and the fence pushed back a bit to give

RESTORATION UPDATE . . . continued

easier access for wheelchairs, pushchairs and even horses. *[Please don't start that debate again! Ed.]*

Much of this work was done as we perched on top of scaffolding which gave us a good view of the towpath and anyone who happened to be passing - it is always a pleasure to talk to passers by and listen to all the favourable comments passed. Now that we have finished the higher levels it has become necessary to dismantle the scaffold and descend into the shadowy depths of the lock where our muffled voices drift up to those above. A group from London WRG have just spent a weekend here and considerable progress was made on the next phase of the lock using some of the recovered stone to start rebuilding again at the bottom and it shouldn't be long before we are once again up on the scaffold with the sun on our backs.

Most of our efforts at Over during the last three months have concentrated on the salvaging of materials from the hospital, and moving our entire compound out of the way of the demolition contractors. With permission to demolish part of a ward block, we began cleaning and stacking some of the bricks which we needed for commencing the building of The Wharf wall during the end of May Training Weekend. We are to receive the bricks from two of the oldest ward blocks (about 100,000 bricks) which should provide us with what we need for The Wharf, lock, pumping station and the walls beside the new slipway. Fortunately, the wards were built using a lime mortar which is

crumbly and fairly easy to clean. It seems though, to contain a generous proportion of soot so cleaning is a pretty dirty business. *Now, if a competent volunteer can clean 500 bricks per day, how many days will it take to . . . no, I can't face it!*

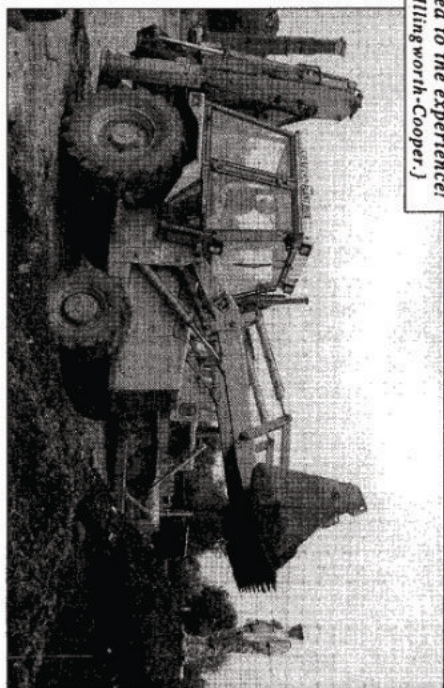
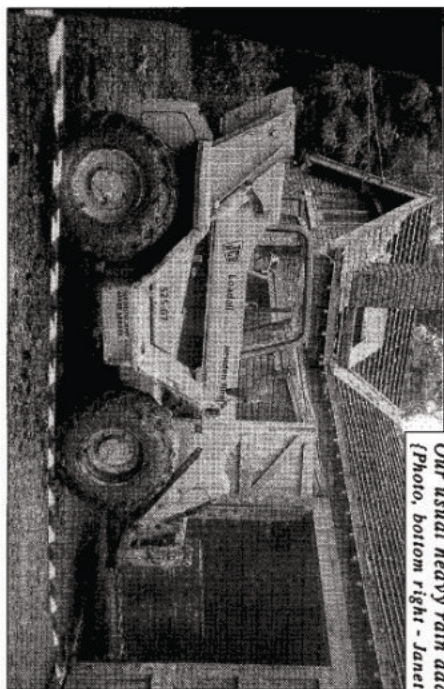
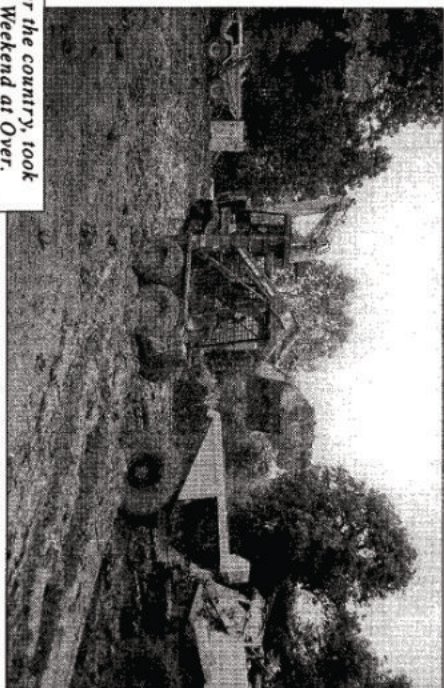
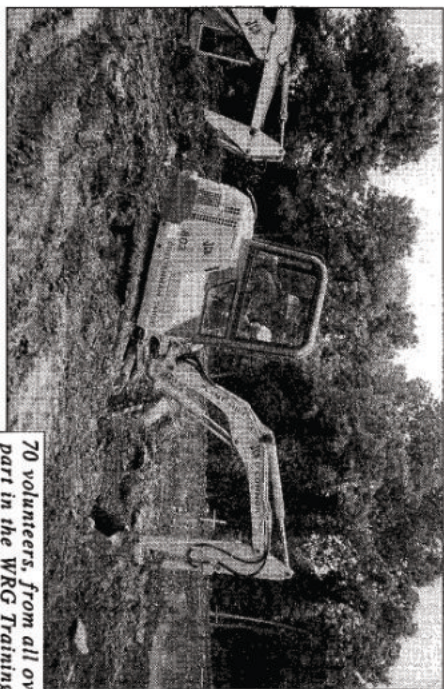
Our salvaging has gained us more tiles, slates, doors, windows and various kinds of timber, all of which we can re-use in the restoration of the Canal and the creation of new canalside buildings. We've come to feel more like rag-and-bone merchants than canal builders. Constantly looking out for useful salvage does give you a different perspective on the world! But with the support and co-operation of Swan Hill Homes, and Leominster Demolition, we should have a useful supply of building materials to cover most jobs on site by the end of the summer.

“if a competent volunteer can clean 500 bricks per day, how many days will it take to . . .”

Lunchtime discussions in the site hut took on a new scientific theme when

David Penny found there were no clean mugs for his tea. Group A contended that so long as nothing can be seen moving in the dregs from the previous weekend, then the mug is safe to use. Group B, (*which was Alan Lines*), argued that, on the contrary, if something can be seen moving it proves that the contents are capable of supporting life. The “constantly dirty mugs problem” has now been solved by the arrival of a *tea mug fairy* who takes dirty mugs away during the night and brings them back clean!

The major event this quarter was the WRG annual Training Weekend which was held at Over at the end of



70 volunteers, from all over the country, took part in the WRG Training Weekend at Over. Our usual heavy rain added to the experience! (Photo, bottom right - Janet Illingworth-Cooper.)

RESTORATION UPDATE... continued

May - an opportunity for WRG members from around the country to learn new skills. Oxstalls School in Gloucester proved a convenient temporary home for the largest group of visitors we have ever had to house and the free beer each evening, provided by Swan Hill Homes, was a big hit. Refreshments on site *[strictly non-alcoholic - Ed.]* were enjoyed in a building in the mortuary block, especially cleaned up and fitted out to executive dining room standards by Sally McManus and the *tea mug fairy*.

During the 3-day weekend, more than 70 people were trained. The most popular courses were for driving excavators and there was the chance to try 360°, 180° and minis. Tom and Alan were kept busy all weekend training others to drive our large 18 & 25 ton dumpers which are not available on most restoration sites. Also on offer were bricklaying, surveying and three different techniques for breaking up concrete.

The trainees made some progress in demolishing part of the large concrete structure that some thoughtless hospital designer plonked right on the line of the Canal. First aid training was provided off site at Oxstalls but the course proved rather expensive for your correspondent. During the morning my car was broken into and my camera was stolen along with the pictures I'd taken of all the training in progress during the Saturday, the busiest day of all.

Despite having so many people on the site, the restoration work did not advance very much during the

weekend - that was never intended. Naturally enough, when you start to learn to operate an excavator you dig a hole and then you fill it in again! We did, though, manage to make a start to building two sections of The Wharf wall. Feeling pleased with our first few courses of bricks, a thought suddenly struck me: once the basin is filled, this lower level of brickwork is going to be completely hidden under water. On second thoughts, this does give us the chance to practice and attain even higher standards before we reach the waterline!

At Over we now have a policy that all materials are neatly stacked on pallets (*we're not moving 100,000 bricks, or any of the other dozens of*

“although a great policy, it had the slight flaw in that we don't own a fork lift truck...”

pallets of materials, more than once by hand!). Although a great policy, it had the slight flaw in that we don't own a fork lift truck - *oops!* It was only at the end of the Training Weekend that we noticed that WRG's skid steer had a pallet fork attachment - but no-

one from H&G had been trained on it. An experienced driver was found the following week and persuaded to give some intensive training to David Penny in how to safely operate it, and he's been happily skidding about the site shifting pallets ever since. We've now negotiated to keep the skid steer for the foreseeable future (*thank you, WRG*), and the Oxenhall gang must have got jealous, as they have now acquired their own forks attachment for the back of the Trust's tractor! Thanks to Joseph Rice Logistics and Downton Storage, both of Gloucester, for the donation of pallets - more 'thanks' in this department next time!

UPDATE... continued

As I write, Leominster Demolition have started removing the hospital! The mortuary buildings were first to go, along with our executive dining facilities. They will soon have demolished one of the wards from which we can have the bricks. If any of you can lend us a hand cleaning them we would be very grateful - and if anyone knows where we can scrounge wooden pallets for stacking them on, please give me [Nigel Bailey] a ring (01452 533 835). Thank you. *If we can stack 200 bricks on each pallet... oh, work it out for yourself - its an awful lot of pallets!*

We're now working both days of virtually every weekend and have started working regular Wednesday evenings throughout the summer. If you're able to spare 2 or 3 hours, please come and join us (*please phone one of the numbers below to let us know you're coming - the gates are always locked!*).

We URGENTLY require anyone with site supervisory skills and volunteers who are regularly available to help with our restoration programme during the week, evenings and weekends.

please call:-

Oxenhall:- Brian Fox (01432) 358 628

Over:- Paul Brown (01386) 443 826

Nigel Bailey (01452) 533 835

* Brian Moulton (01432) 264 366

* *NEW!* Wednesday evening group

Plant & Equipment:-

Tom Bennett (01981) 500 258

HEALTH & SAFETY: All of our restoration sites are subject to detailed safety policies. ALL persons working on these sites are required to comply with these policies at all times - for their own safety and for the safety of others. Safety footwear and safety helmets are mandatory. Motorised plant and equipment may only be operated by holders of current H&G CT or WRG permits relating to the plant/equipment in question.



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Our plant hire costs at Over have been escalating due to the lack of a dozer within our 'fleet'. Clearly, a large D6 dozer was beyond our means but then Dennis Hitchins (our heavy plant hire specialist) literally

found this D4 dozer lying unused in a shed. Its proud owner had restored it for show purposes but had sadly died. So, £3,525 of our hard won funds have been invested in our Plant Team's latest pride and joy.

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Committee Matters . . . (iii)

K16 • The second of the insurance claims had been settled at an acceptable level thanks to hard work by all concerned.

• The Herefordshire Council had sought the views of the Canal Trust on aspects of their Unitary Development Plan and there was ongoing liaison with Gloucestershire CC regarding their review of the Structure Plan. A formal objection had been raised to Gloucestershire's proposal to insert the words "*where compatible with other Policies*" at the end of the 'Canal Policy' as it was considered that this was no different to any other Policy in this regard.

• Mike Potts reported that the tour of the H&G Canal had been a great success raising almost £300. He thanked the other mini bus

drivers and Liz Connors and her team for the much appreciated 3 course lunch which had been very well received by everybody on the tour. The CofM thanked Mike and Joyce for their efforts in arranging such a successful tour.

• Nigel Jefferies reported that Membership stood at 735 in all; this was considered to be a good position in the light of current national trends. There were a small but regular number of conversions to Life Membership.

• Difficulty with manning some of the Trading Company promotional events was reported by Liz Connors; Braunston Boat Show was particularly difficult as it was the same time as the National Training Weekend at Over. This year

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Committee Matters . . . (iv)

we would occupy a space in the IWA marquee and were grateful for their co-operation. We would not attend the Taunton Water Festival as it was the weekend before the National Waterways Festival at Worcester and too great a strain on our voluntary resources.

- Cliff Penny reported that he had persuaded the Tourism Officers for Herefordshire Council, and Gloucester City Council, to sponsor our marquee at the National Waterways Festival and to mount two small displays within it. Thanks to their support we would be taking a 9m by 6m marquee, our largest ever, and would be totally renewing all of the photo panels, the map of the Canal and the external signage. Regular meetings were being held with a small team to try and ensure that we lived up to our commitment to mount our 'best ever' display. Thanks to a great deal of hard work by Nigel Bailey it was proposed to launch the H&G Canal Trust web site at the 'National'. [See p.5.]

JUNE COMMITTEE

- Following the well attended (and well received AGM) it was agreed that all Officers of the Canal Trust and Trading Company would continue in post for a further year. A suggestion that the AGM be moved to the third Tuesday of the month social evening slot would be carefully considered. However, 'audit' and print deadlines would have to be reviewed.

- The CofM considered that expenditure at Over was temporarily impacting on other commitments and it was agreed that plant hire costs, in particular, needed to be

closely monitored. It was confirmed that adequate materials were available at Oxenhall for work on House Lock to continue.

- Concern was again expressed at the lack of grant aid; it would be considered at a future meeting.

- Slow but steady progress was reported with the restoration of House Lock, Oxenhall. The use of large (and heavy!) masonry was slowing progress. At Over the persistent bad weather earlier in the year had put the concrete pours behind schedule but additional Canal Camps were planned to overcome this. The planned breaking of old concrete structures on the line of the Canal during the Training Weekend had been only partially successful due to the brand new breaker - on loan to WRG - falling apart after a few hours of use! Once it has been re-built it was hoped that it would return to finish the job.

- The WRG National Training Weekend had been a considerable PR success with some 70 volunteers, from all over the country, descending on Over for the weekend. [See Restoration Update, p.20].

- A rebuild of one of our excavator engines was in hand.

- The Trading Company reported a healthy interest in the Canal at the Tibberton Agricultural Show and excellent sales at Gloucester Boat Jumble. The Canal Trust had been represented at the annual Worcester and Birmingham boat gathering and would be attending the Braunston Boat Show, Much Marcle Steam Fair, Tewkesbury Water Festival and

Committee Matters . . . (v)

Herefordshire Country Fair during the period leading up to our major presence at the National Waterways Festival at the end of August.

- The regular meetings planning our presence at the 'National' were continuing. A great deal of work behind the scenes was involved. Joan Penny had volunteered to go to Court to obtain the licence necessary for the bottle draw and Member Janet Moulton had agreed to seek donations of bottles.

- Future promotional events included the Newent Onion Fair and our annual guided walks at Oxenhall

in September. Plans were also in hand for our two Craft Fairs, in Hereford and Ledbury, in October and November.

- It was agreed that a new, colour, recruitment leaflet would be produced and available for distribution at the National Waterways Festival. Dick Skeet was producing the artwork and this was greatly appreciated. The final layout would be approved in late July. *[There should be a copy enclosed with this edition of The Wharfinger - please use it to recruit a new Member - Ed.]*

■ CRP

The second edition of the book about the Herefordshire & Gloucestershire Canal, by Member David Bick, is about to go out of print. We have secured copies from the publishers for sale at the National Waterways Festival. Or send £7.95 (inc. P+P) to Penny Shetliffe (see inside back cover).

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Yet Another Winner!

Peter Eyres was the lucky winner of the first prize in last year's Grand Holiday Draw. This was a narrowboat holiday for four, courtesy of Black Prince Holidays; Peter decided to share his good fortune with a friend - who tells his own story...

Ask a Dutchman from Amsterdam if he would like to go on the canals, and nine times out of ten his answer would be: "Thank you, but no, I've been. A canal trip would be something for kids or tourists, but certainly no holiday destination for him. An Amsterdam canal trip is made in a wide boat with a glass top and a hostess who explains the sights and asks for your applause when the captain has successfully completed an intricate manoeuvre involving a narrow bridge! You do a trip like that thrice in a lifetime: when a (grand)parent takes you, when you take a foreign friend, and when you take your grandchild.

This Dutchman said "Yes, please" when his good friend, Pete, put that question to him. And he was in for an unexpected treat. To begin with, my wife and I did not know that your narrowboats had so much luxury to offer. The boat was 60' long and well equipped: pillows, duvets, double beds, central heating, toilet, shower, a dining area, easy chairs, radio (colour) TV and a very complete kitchen; four rings, a grill, an oven and every kitchen utensil you could wish for. We did not have to bring a towel, just a few personal things. The groceries could be ordered, the weather was lovely and nothing stood in the way of our departure - we were going to complete the Stourport Ring in the first week of May, beginning at Stoke Prior and going anti clockwise.



Pearson is right, Tardebigge represents a boater's *Rite of Passage*. When we moored that very first evening in sight of the Tardebigge Tunnel I felt muscles in my back I didn't even know I had. Thirty-eight locks in four hours and a half - the three of us were mighty proud of ourselves - and very tired. Six nights long we slept like locks (or even logs!); pun intended, I'm afraid. The weather held, we wore shorts and got a deep sun tan. [Please join one of our Canal Camps and bring us some of this good weather! -Ed]. The friendliness of the people was proverbial, and even the many fishermen (sometimes) raised a hand in greeting.

After two days we had encountered many co-boaters, some going up, others going down. We helped each other with the more difficult paddles and the heavier lock gates, we exchanged notes on quiet moorings and pretty sections of the canals. We mastered river locks and concluded that the boat was like a baby, albeit a big'un. The bangs got few and far between! We spent a night in the heart of Birmingham (Gas Street) and never heard the noise of the big city - we spent nights in the rural heart of the Midlands, waking up to the morning chorus of birds or a fight for supremacy between young male ducks. We never once watched the TV, busy as we were planning ahead for the next day, and reading up on all that we had seen, with the help of the canal guides.

Yet Another Winner!

The rain on the last days could not spoil this wonderful experience. We only wondered what it would be like in July and August; we hardly ever had to wait for a lock, and we found all the moorings we wanted. We sometimes had the feeling that we were the only people in the area, that there was no one else but us navigating the Stourport Ring.

I thought I might easily get bored, travelling at a speed of 4 mph. The opposite is true, every bend brings something new, no stretch of any

canal is ever the same, and the sights and scenery are all you could wish for. We went home in a very relaxed state of mind and body - believe it or not, after Tardebigge, six locks in a row are peanuts - and after the 3,172 yards of the Netherton Tunnel, every dark hole in the mountainside is a Micky Mouse tunnel!

And when I take my grandchild on a canal tour in Amsterdam in a few years time, I shall not applaud the captains intricate manoeuvre - *ours were much more tricky!*

Our thanks to everyone at Black Prince Holidays for making our 1998 star prize, yet again, such a success. We are grateful to all of our Grand Holiday Draw prize sponsors who help us each year to raise much needed funds and everyone who sells (and buys!) the tickets.

*The winners of the 1999 Grand Holiday Draw will be drawn at the National Waterways Festival at 5pm on Bank Holiday Monday - so why not visit the H&G Canal Trust display and buy some last minute tickets - your chance to be a **ANOTHER WINNER** and support our voluntary work at the same time.*

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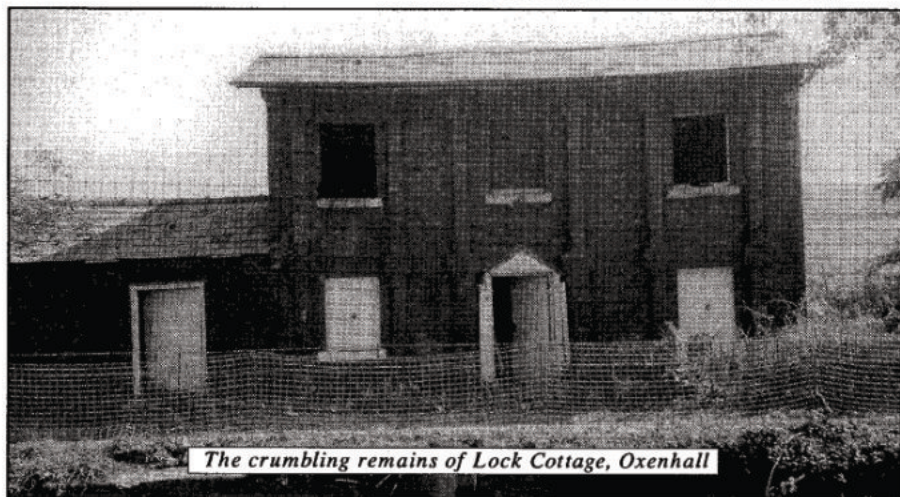
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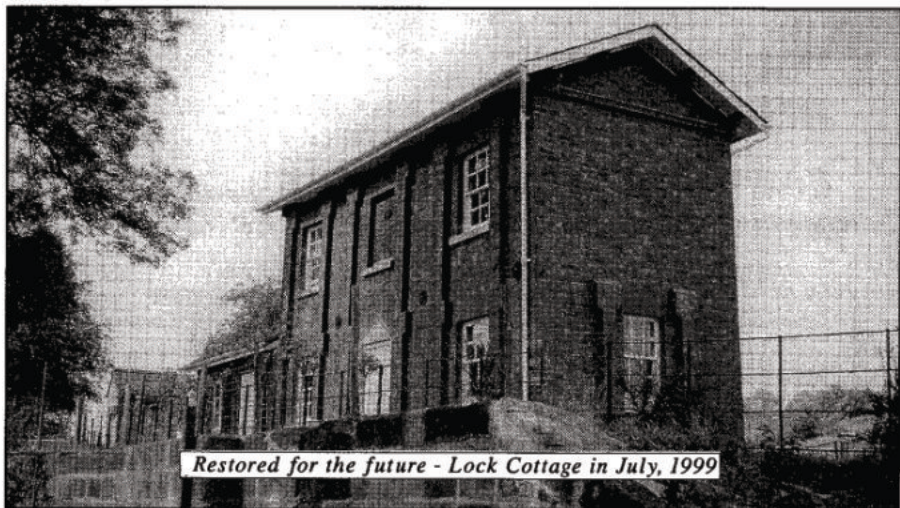
Saved for the Future

It is so easy to forget that, less than 5 years ago, we were battling to save Lock Cottage, Oxenhall, from dereliction. The H&G Canal Trust, with the help of the Parish Council, eventually persuaded Forest of Dean District Council that urgent action was required to prevent the loss of this Listed building; one of few surviving examples of H&G architecture.

The then owner, Robin Stiles, generously transferred the Cottage (and adjacent Canal) to our ownership, subject only to 10% of any proceeds being paid if the Cottage was sold. As regular readers will know, this was the case. Nigel Freeman, who was the successful bidder, has completed a very high standard of restoration of the Cottage and recently moved in.



The crumbling remains of Lock Cottage, Oxenhall



Restored for the future - Lock Cottage in July, 1999

Members Come Home

Many people, when they retire, say they have never been busier! Members Brian and Janet Moulton are no exception. Seven years ago they joined the Canal Trust and now, having recently retired, they have moved to H&G country...

Reading a contribution from Nigel Bailey in a recent issue of *The Wharfinger* has prompted us to follow suit to explain our presence in the area. We joined the H&G Canal Trust around Christmas 1992, whilst living in Berkshire and involving ourselves in the Kennet and Avon Canal Trust.

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The shop is run by enthusiasts for enthusiasts and a friendly welcome and a cuppa can be relied on but be warned – you will need a good half an hour at least even to begin to take in the amount of stock we have! For the general enthusiast, Dean Sidings model shop is 50 yards from us, the Dean Forest Railway just down the road and various other attractions such as Hopewell Colliery, Clearwell Caverns, the Dean Heritage Centre and Lydney Harbour are all within easy reach. We carry information on them all, plus the best places to stay.

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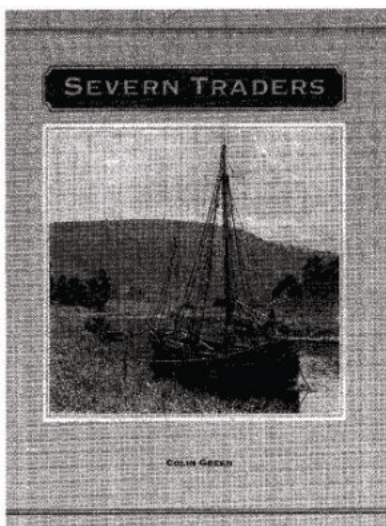
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[not quite] The Last Page

Many people help the Canal Trust in different ways; we do our best to thank them at the time and, where appropriate, within **The Wharfinger**. Our particular thanks are due to Simon Hayward who has loaned us his 'new' lorry with increasing frequency to take stone to and from Oxenhall for cutting in the Forest of Dean. Simon has also made it available for various transportation purposes associated with our work at Over. Tony Condor, the Curator of the National Waterways Museum has also loaned us the Museum's lorry on a number of occasions - often at very short notice; to both our sincere thanks.

This is also an opportunity for us to thank, collectively, everyone who has worked so hard behind the scenes over the past year to ensure that our display at the **National Waterways Festival** will be our 'best ever'. Our special thanks to Sarah Grout, Tourism Officer of Herefordshire Council, and to Maureen McAllister, Gloucester City Tourism Officer, for their very welcome support at Worcester this year [see p.4].

With this mailing of **The Wharfinger** should be a copy of our brand new full colour information/recruitment leaflet. Eagle eyed readers will note that we have a new address on the leaflet - the Lock Cottage at Over. *No, this hasn't been miraculously re-built overnight!*

The challenge we have is the cost of colour printing means large quantities need to be printed in one run. For this reason the Membership rates, and other information that could change in the next few years, is on a separate insert. However, we have to include our address on the main leaflet itself which will be in use for the next four or five years at least - and then 'old' copies may well be retained by people well after that.

The Cottage will become our office within a shorter period of time so we have a redirection in place until that occurs. Jim and Eileen Dunn (*whose letter box at 6, Castle Street, Hereford has served us so well*) are not evicting us - so the Castle Street address is the one to continue to use, please!



Subscription rates :-

Subscription rates :-		INDIVIDUAL	£ 7.50	JOINT/FAMILY	£ 10
SENIOR CITIZEN	£ 5	JOINT SEN'R CIT'N	£ 7	CORPORATE	£ 20

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Please Covenant your Subscription - as a Registered Charity we can increase the value to the Canal Trust by 33% without any cost to you. Payment by Standing Order or by Credit Card mandate greatly assists us and payment remains under your control. All payments to 6, CASTLE STREET, HEREFORD, HR1 2NL *please*.

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Members Come Home

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Paul Brown,

Tel:- (01386) 443 826

Brian Moul,

Tel:- (01432) 264 366

Nigel Bailey,

Tel:- (01452) 533 835

WANT TO HELP ?

The Canal Trust is always in need of new volunteers as our activities continue to expand. We can normally find a use for any skill from chefs to first aiders, brickies to those willing to help with shovel or pen.

**CONTACT ANYONE ABOVE
T O D A Y !**

VISIT OUR WEB SITE:- www.h-g-canal.org.uk (from 27-8-99)

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Membership records are computerised. In accordance with the Data Protection Act 1984 [Licence No. A3099046], your entry is available for inspection if you send a SAE to the Membership Secretary.

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

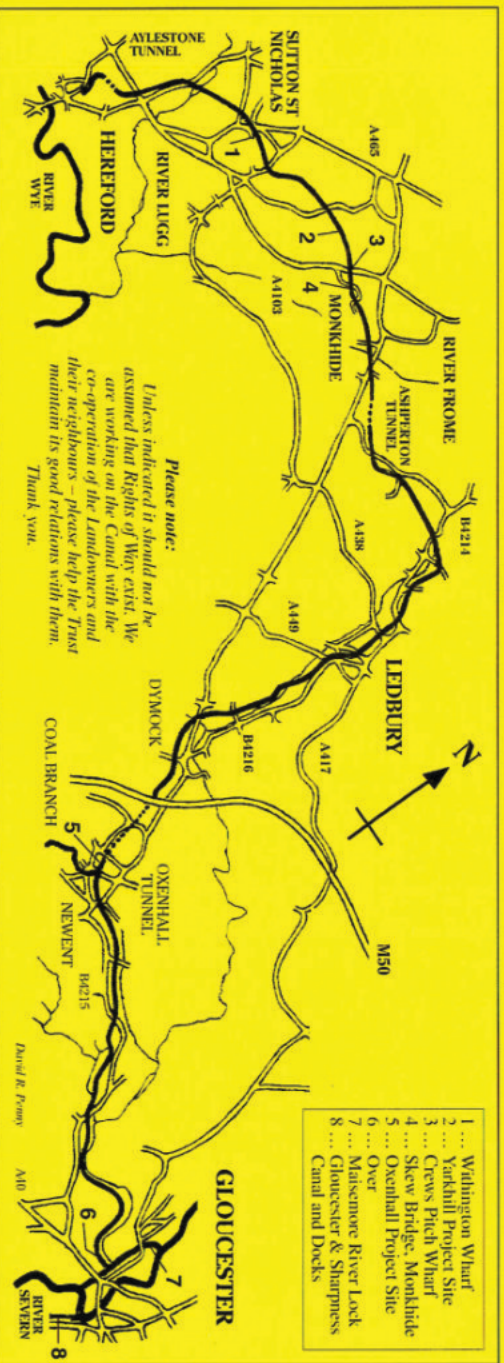
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The Canal Society was formed in 1983 and replaced in 1992 by the Herefordshire and Gloucestershire Canal Trust, a registered charity. The Trust has an ordinary and corporate membership exceeding 700 from all over the country – and abroad! Our objective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