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Magazine of the Herefordshire and Gloucestershire Canal Trust



Winter 2002/3

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FRONT COVER: THE WHARF HOUSE AT OVER BASON - Mike Hart

CONTENTS

Chairman's Column	3
Editorial	5
Remembering Brian Moulton	7
Restoration Update – Oxenhall	8
Restoration Update – Over	10
Drand Holiday Draw – The Winners	13
In Praise of Ash	13
Guided tour of the H & G Canal	14
Great Tunnel Teasers – The Final Verdict	15
Social Evenings at The Verzons Inn	16
Over Open Days	17
The Wharf House: A dream ... into ... REALITY!	18
Tales from the Tool Store	22
Aylestone Park Canal Project	23
Alney Island Walk and BBQ	24
Trading Company Diary – part 3	26
Christmas Ideas from The Trading Company	29
Not Quite the Last Page – Lost and Found	31
Contact names	<i>inside back cover</i>

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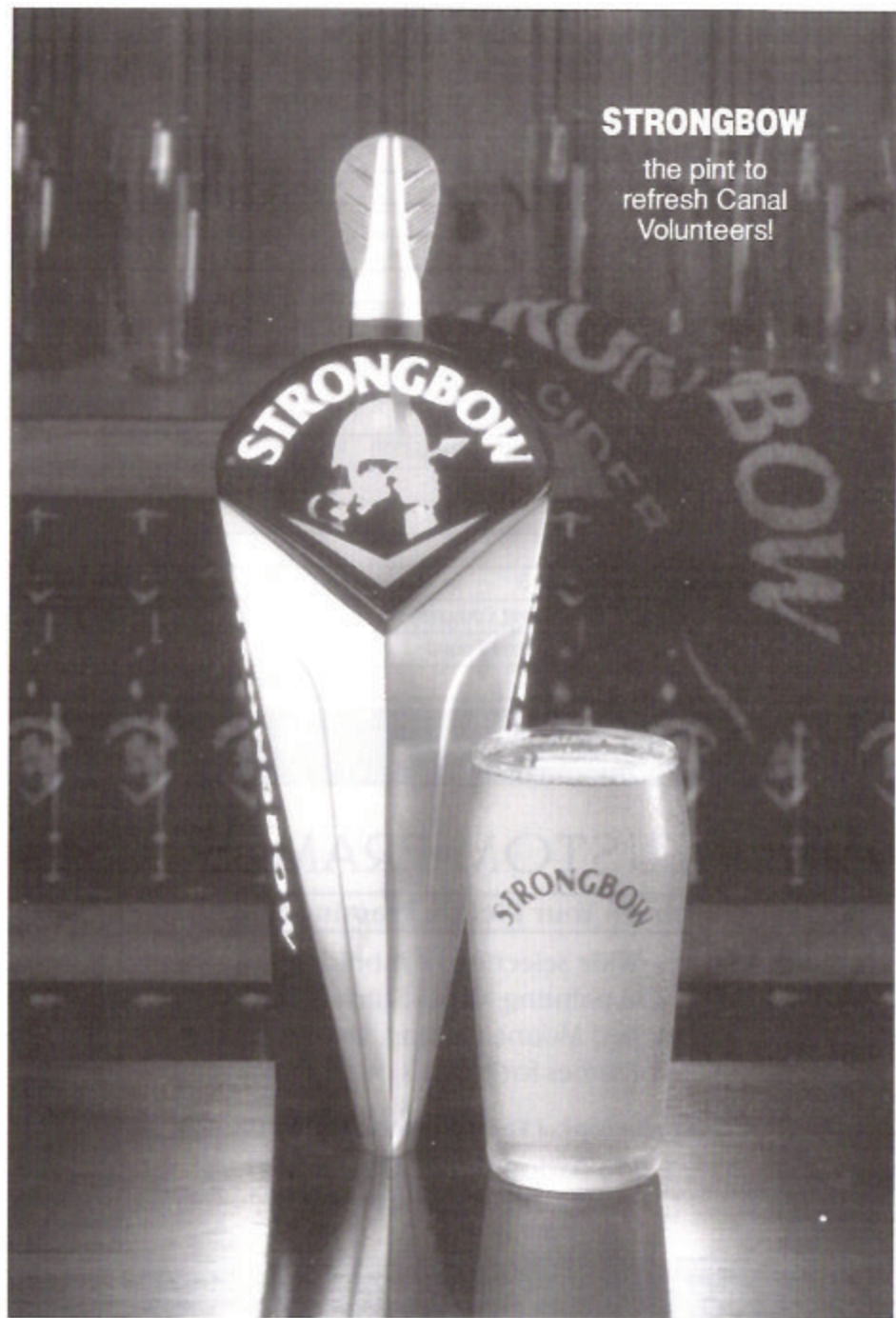
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STRONGBOW

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About 12 months ago I was asked by a colleague if I knew anything about the new road bridge which had appeared at the end of Edgar Street in Hereford. "Is it true that this is a canal bridge?" he enquired. Not missing an opportunity like this, I assured him that indeed it was, that the road bridge was accompanied by a new foot bridge and that this represented a very considerable financial investment, on the part of the developer, in the line of the canal.

Some people can see that digging out a canal in the middle of field is one thing, but imagine that doing it in the centre of a City is quite another.

All is made clear in the new Unitary Development Plan for Herefordshire which is currently on deposit for consultation. This is the Plan which determines the policy for all developments in the County from now until 2011 and is not a document I would recommend as a bit of light reading. Within its 305 pages are frequent references to the canal and its restoration. We had expected the Herefordshire Council to continue to protect the canal corridor from adverse development as it has done in the past, but this plan goes much further and there is a new emphasis. Restoration of the canal, particularly in Hereford City doesn't have to fit in with other schemes. In a very positive way, it becomes the real focus of the developments themselves. Under these proposals the new canal wharf and basin on land at Widemarsh Street would be built as the centrepiece of a mixed development of housing and complementary retail/leisure uses - Hereford's Brindley Place - which I hope will be called "Ballard Place" after the engineer who brought the canal to Hereford in 1845. Work is already in progress to urgently prepare a detailed Planning Brief for this part of the city. No one can doubt the Herefordshire Council's commitment to the canal's restoration.

Hereford, of course, is at the far end of the canal from its junction with the rest of the waterway network, so developments in the City will provide a new impetus for the rest of the canal to be restored. One day, maybe sooner than he thinks, my colleague will be able to see not just a new road bridge, but boats, joggers, cyclists and towpath walkers passing underneath it. That is the real prize.

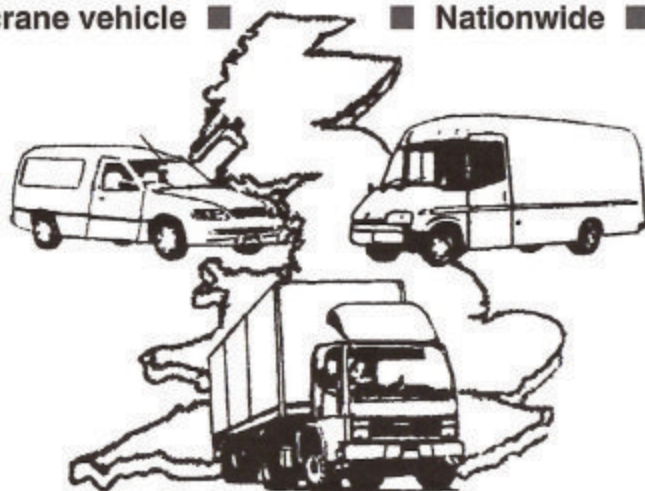
◆ *Dick Skeet, Chairman*

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FORWARD TOGETHER



by Cliff Penny

Photo: Mike Hunt



John Theakston, second from left, Chief Executive of Swan Hill Homes and Councillor Derek Davies cut the ribbon of ^{the} WHARF HOUSE.

This edition of **The Wharfinger** has been deliberately held back to enable us to include photographs of a very significant event – the formal transfer, at the end of November, of the brand new shell of ^{the} WHARF HOUSE at Over from Swan Hill Homes to the H&G Canal Trust. John Theakston, the Chief Executive of Swan Hill Homes, also handed over some 50% of the whole of the development site at the same ceremony. This includes the Over Basin and adjacent short section of the restored Canal that Prunella Scales and Timothy West declared open in September 2000 - as well as substantial areas of the land adjoining the Canal.

It was almost 10 years from the date of the first site meeting (on a bitterly cold December day, close to Christmas) that David and I first met with a representative of the Secretary of State for Health's Planning Consultants. Tewkesbury Borough Council had just resolved to 'protect' the route of the H&G Canal and stressed that, prior to submitting any Planning Application, the Consultants should meet with us. So the Consultant arrived to discuss "the

constraint" that the line of the Canal presented to the redevelopment of what was then the Over Hospital Site. What a surprise he got! There was nothing of the Canal to be seen except very dense (in places almost impenetrable) undergrowth. By the time he left he was much colder, very damp, and his pristine shoes and suit somewhat the worse for wear. Fortunately we must have convinced him with our stories of "it's about 10ft down below us here ... could be up to 15ft of muck to dig out here" etc. as the various options for the redevelopment started to indicate the line of the Canal.

It's very easy to forget that there was absolutely *nothing* to be seen at Over before restoration (perhaps 'reconstruction' would be a better word) commenced. It is also easy to forget the many hours spent negotiating what was eventually to be the formal legal 'Planning Obligation' that was to require whoever purchased the site to work with us and hopefully ensure a restored Canal. *But that was just the beginning.* This was subsequently re-negotiated, a separate Collaboration Agreement drawn up with Swan Hill Homes and even a Licence to occupy part of the site in order to build the shell of ^{the} Wharf House. And this was not straightforward, of course, for the original Agreement required the small old lock keeper's house - much extended as a porters lodge and in danger of imminent

collapse – to be underpinned and made weathertight before transfer to the Canal Trust. Instead it was agreed with Swan Hill that a brand new purpose built structure be constructed – subject to Tewkesbury Borough Council agreeing to the demolition of the old and granting Planning Permission for the new building – almost 5 times the floor area of the old!

Now who says we cannot rise to a challenge! However, *The Wharf House* (thank you to all concerned) is just the outer shell and stairway of a new building – we still have to fit out the interior... but just watch this space!

They say London buses come in threes. Well, so do our landmark celebrations. In the weeks leading up to the transfer of *The Wharf House* we had senior Councillors from **Forest of Dean District Council** join us for our annual **Open Day at Oxenhall** in October. Another cheque was presented from the Council towards

the ongoing restoration of the Listed House Lock – *thank you*. A week before the Over celebrations Councillor Terry James, Leader of **Herefordshire Council**, formally commenced the work on our new Aylestone restoration site on the edge of the City.

THANKS

Our thanks to Dr Ian Roper who, together with his Wife Frances, has led our distribution team for **The Wharfinger** for the past few years. Apart from the pressures on a busy GP, and of a young family, Ian has an active life with a number of other interests apart from the H&G Canal Trust. So it is with regret but understanding that we accept his wish to stand down from these important 'behind the scenes' duties. This also presents the opportunity to repeat our appreciation to the rest of the team whose quarterly efforts are not taken for granted. *Thank you.* ♦ **CRP**

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BRIAN MOULT

*Chairman, H&G (Canal) Sales
Director, H&G Canal Trust*

It is with the deepest regret that we have to record the sudden death, on the 24th November, of

our friend Brian Moulton, Chairman of H&G Canal (Sales), the Herefordshire and Gloucestershire Canal Trust's Trading Company, and a Director of the H&G Canal Trust itself.

Having sorted out the Kennet and Avon Canal, Brian retired to Hereford and immediately threw himself into the work of the H&G Canal Trust, not only as a "hands on navy" but also bringing his professional experience and expertise in marketing to the Trading Company.

"Retired" is hardly an appropriate word to describe Brian. For some eight months of the year, almost every weekend saw Brian and Janet travelling the country with the H&G Sales stand and display, raising money, promoting the Canal Trust and gently recruiting new members. For the rest of the year he was seeking out new venues and products, making fresh displays and generally planning for the months ahead.

He took his role as a Director of both the Canal Trust and H&G Sales extremely seriously - I cannot recall him ever missing a meeting of Council of Management or the H&G Sales Committee. He always came to meetings well prepared, was ready to put his case and not afraid to put his colleagues on the spot if the need arose.

Brian was not just a "white collar" member. He never lost his love of work at the sharp end. The day before he died

saw the beginning of the restoration of the canal in Hereford City. Brian was there, in the rain, before 8.30am and only left when gathering darkness called a halt to the proceedings. I last saw him with a hard hat on his head and a particularly vicious-looking saw in his hand. I think that is how he would want to be remembered.

We shall, of course, greatly miss Brian's enormous contribution to the H&G Canal Trust, but we shall also miss him for what he was. We shall miss his wicked sense of humour, his determination to do a good job and his kindness and consideration to those who worked with him. He was, in short, a real gent.

We extend to Janet and Becca our deepest sympathy at this time and thank them for sharing Brian with us. We are all the richer for having known him

◆ *Dick Skeet*





RESTORATION

Update!

Photo: Forest of Dean Council



Leader of Forest of Dean Council, hands David Penny a cheque towards the ongoing restoration at Oxenhall.

PROGRESS AT OXENHALL

In the last edition the towpath wall had just been finished and we spent a few weeks tidying up in preparation for the annual **Open Day**. What a pity that the weather wasn't more kind on the day so that more people could have turned out to see this lovely stretch of canal.

As far as I can remember there has traditionally been rain at the Oxenhall Open day but this year it really excelled itself and continued non-stop for the whole of the day. There were, however, still a considerable number of brave souls who turned up armed with their umbrellas to be given a conducted tour, including a party from the Somersetshire Coal Canal who spent the day looking around - and even managed to make it

as far as the Tunnel. The teas and cakes served in the hall were more than welcome, and a brisk trade was also done on the sales stand.

Our visitors were able to view the considerable progress made on the other wall of the Lock in the last couple of months. This has been speeded up by the use of the stone cut last summer and now stored in our yard at Horsefair Wharf on pallets waiting for transport to the Lock as required. We set a new record when we laid 16 stones in one day - but then it rained the following week and spoilt our chances of a record two weeks running! This side should be completed much quicker as we haven't any old stone left to incorporate. All that is required is to establish the correct profile for the Lock using scaffolding poles and just get on and lay the stone, being sure to key it all into the back wall with our purpose-made stainless steel ties as we go. It could be completed by the end of next year if there is enough stone.

Other jobs to be completed included a spot of maintenance on the footbridge over the Lock and the cleaning of our site caravan which used to be at Over and is now required at Hereford. David and Elizabeth Williams (who first painted the trip boat) volunteered for the job and when they had finished that they bravely offered to paint our 'Bailey' bridge over the Ell Brook. The vegetation around it has been cleared and a start made on the rubbing down and painting with the assistance of Julia who has just joined us. A total of 10 volunteers turned up one Tuesday which is another record for us, *but please still feel free to join us as there*



Photo: Meggie Jones

The Mayor of Newent, (third from left) inspects the newly restored lock wall on a particularly wet Open Day.

are always plenty of jobs to be done.

For a change of scenery the whole gang took a day trip to **Yarkhill** in September to do some maintenance work on that section of the Canal which was restored a few years ago but had become overgrown. It was not possible to access this earlier due to the foot and mouth epidemic last year and a start was made on restoring it to full water and making the towpath walkable once again. Several large willow saplings had sprouted in the bed of the Canal and many of these were winched out without too much trouble – there are still some left for another day. A large tree had fallen across the path blocking it completely and this was cleared sufficiently with bowsaws to enable access with a mower to get the grass and weeds cut. Chris Talbot came across from Kidderminster with his own little machine and spent the day going up and down about 1,000 yards of path - your efforts are much appreciated, Chris (*and can we book you for next year so that we can keep it all under control in the future*)?! We may have another day down there before long to pull out the remaining trees and possibly get some heavier plant in to do some outstanding repairs – if the weather is kind.

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PROGRESS AT OVER

Work on the pump shaft project has progressed steadily through the summer. The brickwork on the silt trap is now almost up to full height. This has been the most intricate bricklaying we have attempted. Linking the sloping sides of the exit channel with the trap itself involved laying bricks in a shallow curve. The complication was that the bricks in the channel are laid at an angle of about 30° to the horizontal; those in the trap are laid vertical. So, in the course of about a metre, the two had to be smoothly linked together. We are certainly continuing work on the H&G in the spirit of the builders of Skew Bridge!

Meanwhile, between the pump shaft and the River Leadon, a lot more soil has been excavated. This serves two purposes: it prepares the way for bringing the river water to the base of the pump shaft and it creates additional flood storage capacity which is a requirement of the Environment Agency. As the silt trap has grown in height we've also been able to landscape the area around it.

We normally gauge the level of water in the Basin in terms of bricks: the Basin is full when there are just four courses of red bricks showing above the waterline on the Wharf Wall. By mid summer there were nine courses showing which is not surprising. We had deliberately not pumped in any water for more than a year in order to keep levels low for work on the water supply outfall. Neil Jones of **Sterling Fluid Systems** once again lent us a pump and, within less than a day's pumping, the Basin was more than full. This impressive pump is actually unique. It has Sterling's chassis but not the standard engine. This particular one is powered by a Lister engine so, interestingly, the whole thing



Photos: Mike Hunt

Above top: Water ripples in a pleasing pattern through the carefully designed pump channel. Bottom: From the channel it gushes into the basin through two brick arches

is 'made in Gloucestershire'.

Having the pump on site enabled us to try out part of the water extraction channel. We by-passed the pump shaft and fed the water straight into the silt trap. From here it flowed along the brick water-course and through the two arches into the Basin. Visitors at September's Open Day were treated to a pleasing waterfall effect as the water exited the headwall and plunged into the canal.

As I write, Neil has just returned to site to remove the pump which is going on to its next job: working on the world's second biggest sewage pumping station, in France on the River Seine!

The Wednesday Crew have been industrious, constructing various useful items from the scrap timber we have on site. Their first creation was a pair of compost bins, sited near the nursery bed, and built from scrap pallets. They then built a simple saw-horse which will come in useful when we are cutting timber for The Wharf House. Then somebody had the idea that, if it was provided with a surface, it could double up as a work bench. Soon it was equipped for both purposes and, within a couple of weeks, two more 'work horses' were added - so now we have a whole stable full of them waiting to go into action!

The car park, too, has progressed. We've continued laying out the bays with concrete railway sleepers and surfacing each one with road planings. Many of the bays are backed by a vertical cut into the soil bank so we have needed to build retaining walls to stabilise them. Five of these are dry-stone walls built from (mostly Cotswold) stone picked out from the soil that formed the car park. The rest will be constructed as palisades formed with half-length wooden railway sleepers. *Once again we have managed to do all this construction with re-cycled materials - the planings, the sleepers and the stone.*

The Wednesday Crew kept up the un-enviable task of watering the large trees right through the summer. On one occasion when



Photo: Nigel Bailey



Photo: Maggie Jones



Photo: Maggie Jones

- ▲ Above top: The car park bays at Over are laid with recycled concrete sleepers and road planings.
- Middle: Wooden sleepers retain some of the car park banks.
- Bottom: Nigel Bailey works on the dry-stone walls around some of the parking bays.

Tony Boonham arrived on site with his dog, Fudge, our resident cat, was quick to take refuge right at the top of one of the tallest trees! The entrance to the car park has also been tidied and planted with shrubs, including laurels (which gives us something to rest on)...

As always, plenty more time has been spent picking and palleting bricks and tidying the floodplain. For the last time (I think) I can report that more ducting has been laid, this time running from the slipway to the pumping station.

Again we have a small group of youngsters working with us once a fortnight to complete their Duke of Edinburgh Awards. They will probably focus on gardening jobs and plant out some of the young trees donated last Autumn, that have been growing in our nursery bed. That will make a space for more young native trees so if any reader has any of them to spare, please get in touch.

♦♦ NB

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COMMITTEE matters

Business discussed
At this quarter's
Council of Management is
largely covered by other items within
this edition of **The Wharfinger**. To
avoid being repetative, we are therefore
not including them as an item this time.



GRAND HOLIDAY DRAW

The Winners!



Our thanks to everyone who sold and
bought our annual Grand Holiday
Draw tickets this year, raising over
£1,600 for Canal Trust Funds. As usual
all three prizes were donated; our grateful
thanks to Black Prince Holidays; British
Marine Federation and T&M Plant Hire
(for the 'timbered farmhouse near the Welsh
Border'— there is no truth in the rumour
that the third prize was a weekend B&B
on an excavator!). The winning tickets,
drawn at the National Waterways
Festival at Huddersfield by Roger
Hanbury, Chief Executive of The
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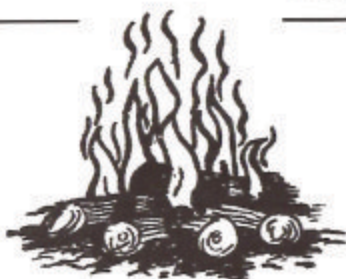
Beech-wood fires burn bright and clear
If the logs are kept a year,
Store your beech for Christmastide
With new cut holly laid beside.
Chestnut's only good they say,
If for years 'tis stored away,
Birch and fir-wood burn too fast,
Blaze too bright and do not last.
Flames from larch will shoot up high,
Dangerously the sparks will fly.

But ash-wood green and ash-wood brown
Are fit for a queen with a golden crown.

Oaken logs, if dry and old,
Keep away the winter's cold.
Poplar gives a bitter smoke,
Fills your eyes and makes you choke.
Elm-wood burns like churchyard mould,
E'en the very flames are cold.
Hawthorn bakes the sweetest bread
So it is in Ireland said.
Apple-wood will scent the room,
Pear-wood smells like flowers in bloom.

But ash-wood wet and ash-wood dry
A king may warm his slippers by.

Anon



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GREAT TUNNEL TEASERS COMpetition THE FINAL VERDICT

"What a fiendishly, infuriatingly, horrible quiz you swine!" said R P of Aldridge, "You are a BAD MAN !!" added A M of Farnsfield, and "Diabolical! - but great fun" chipped in C & S S of Bromsgrove, but "We have really enjoyed the tunnel teasers and hope there will be something similar again soon" countered R & S B of Maidstone, backed up by S & P H of Polesworth who said "We enjoyed your competition!"

"Good Luck with your Restoration", no, "This quiz was fiendish !!" retaliated C & T J of Almondsbury, meekly supported by P S of Hereford who thought it "Good fun - but very difficult".

These were some of the comments accompanying entries received in our **Tunnel Teasers Competition**, which just goes to show that you can please all of the people all of the time.

So firstly, many, many thanks to all who entered (and hopefully enjoyed) our little brain boggler, the response in both the number of entries and monies raised for the **Restoration Fund** far exceeded the optimistic end of my expectations.

The standard of entry was very high, and although no-one scored the perfect 75, our winning and joint runners-up score of 74 was tremendous, there really are some very waterways-knowledgeable folk out there who can also unravel the workings of a deranged mind!

The one 'weasel' clue that foxed all of the top scorers was number 63, "the reason for the road's verge", the correct answer being "Causewayside", a little known tunnel on the long defunct Glasgow, Paisley & Johnstone canal.

Therefore a special 'mention in despatches' must go to Mrs C A Synan of Whitchurch, Cardiff, Mrs Joyce Hall of Bradford and Mr C Hall of Tring, who all correctly deciphered the riddle and 'popped the stoat' so to speak, as I was

beginning to wonder if myself and Jean Lindsay (author of *The Canals of Scotland*) were the only people on the planet who knew of this particular little hole in the ground.

But enough of the waffle and on to the result, of the entries received, 6 scored 74 points, they were from:-

Jill (& Tim) Burgin of Aldridge,
West Midlands,

J E Dunn of Hereford,

D Houghton of Bolton, Lancashire,

Joyce Hudgell of Upton-upon-Severn,
Worcestershire.

David Marshall of Abbots Langley,
Hertfordshire,

Stella Wentworth of Kidlington, Oxfordshire.

So as stated on the entry form, "in the event of a tie, all of the entries with that score will be put into the hat and a winner drawn out". That 'sorting-hat' event took place at the October Social Evening where our guest speaker for the evening, David Saady, pulled out the name of D Houghton of Bolton, Lancashire as the winner of the competition. The prize being a copy of *Canal Tunnels of England & Wales* - pretty imaginative eh?

In addition, all runners-up received small consolation prizes. And at the same meeting it was announced that the competition raised £176 for the **Restoration Fund** - the total of entry fees and donations received from all of you generous people.

Once again, thanks to you all, and I leave the final words to entrant C P of Cullompton who asked "if there would be another competition next year, maybe on aqueducts or bridges?"

mmmmmm, now there's a thought...

◆ **SB** "The Tunnel Master"

When filing this Report for **The Wharfinger** Member Steve Bence (who suggested and researched the competition, as well as organised the quiz forms and delivered 700 copies from his home in Leamington Spa to Hereford - and 'marked' the entries and organised the elimination draw as well as donating the prizes ...) said "no personal credit is required". Sorry Steve, but by any measure a personal credit is in order - many thanks for all of the time and effort that you took to 'mastermind' this competition -

◆ **CP**

SOCIAL EVENINGS

Monthly Gatherings at The Verzons

by Janet Moul

EVERYONE IS WELCOME to our monthly meetings held on the 3rd Tuesday of every month, 7.30pm for 8pm start.

DECEMBER 17TH

Christmas Social and update on Over

JANUARY 21ST

H₂O in Hereford –

Hereford's Waterworks Museum – Noel Meeke

How Hereford got its water supply, the Museum got its magnificent engines and the county a superb museum.

FEBRUARY 18TH

Working on Inland Waterways in the 1950's – Tom Foxon

Tales of the cut half a century ago by the author of "Anderton for Orders".

MARCH 18TH

Dudley Canal Trust – Vic Smallshire

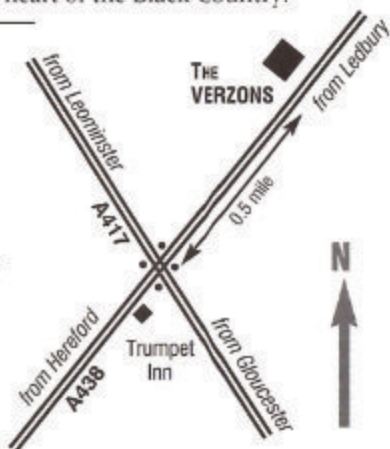
A long tunnel and a living museum in the heart of the Black Country.

Meetings are held at **The Verzons Inn**, Trumpet, nr. Ledbury situated on the A438 Hereford to Ledbury road, half a mile on the Ledbury side of Trumpet crossroads (junction of the A438 with the A417).

PARKING AT THE VERZONS

Please park in the overflow car park - inside the entrance on the right - for all meetings.

Why not join the 50-60 strong attendance at our highly successful socials for an enjoyable evening!



OVER OPEN DAYS

Welcome
to
**OVER
BASIN
and
WHARF**

Our last Over Open Day of 2002 was held on Sunday October 27th. We have welcomed many individual and family visitors during the season as well as larger groups, including 'Friends of Working Boats' and members of the 'Somersetshire Coal Canal Society'.

In addition to the Alney Island Walk and BBQ, we held a BBQ for Restoration Fund Members and Residents of Staunton's Hill in May. This was well supported with 44 people attending. Many thanks to Maggie Beagles, Nigel and Mike Bowden for their help on the day.

In July, we repeated the Over Walk and picnic and 20 people joined Nigel for his guided tour. The only complaint was that the weather was too hot! We were very grateful to John Hoddell of Drews Farm for the loan of his barn which provided welcome shade for the picnic en route. Many thanks to the Gloucester and District Model Boat Club for their continued support each month and to all the volunteers who have, in diverse ways, contributed to the success of our fund raising efforts this season.

◆ EB

Don't miss our
Special Open Day
on Saturday 18th January,
2pm-4pm,
when we will be giving
tours of ^{The} Wharf House and
our plans for work to complete it.
See next page for more details.

Model boats, home-made cakes,
walks, BBQs and Fudge all help to
make Over Open Days special.



◆ A sunny summer open day at Over
with the Gloucester Model Boat Club
and "Mister Maysey" boat trips.



THE WHARF HOUSE

... a dream

*turns ...
into ..*





Friday 29th November marked another momentous day at Over. 11.45am saw John Theakston (Chief Executive of **Swan Hill Homes**), local Highnam ward Councillor Derek Davies, Dick Skeet and myself making speeches to mark the formal transfer of the shell of **The Wharf House**, and half of Swan Hill's Over site, to the Canal Trust. There was praise from Derek Davies for our determination and professionalism and the benefit for the community that the partnership between **Tewkesbury Borough Council**, the Canal Trust and

Swan Hill Homes would bring. John Theakston expressed his pleasure at now being able to donate the land and **The Wharf House** to the Trust after such a successful partnership.

I stressed that not only were we very grateful to Swan Hill for their support, but this was a model of public, private, voluntary partnership. **The Wharf House** is crucial to the future of the Trust, not only as a PR tool but also to provide critical revenue streams which will permit several miles of canal to be sustainable in the long term. Above all I stressed that this site, and the partnership with Swan Hill, and Tewkesbury Borough Council now set the benchmark for other sites along the Canal. The gain to the Trust and the restoration went far beyond what could be seen at Over, and many other development sites along the line of the



Photos: Mike Hunt

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Canal would now act as a major stimulus for restoration thanks to the precedents set at Over. *Swan Hill had set the standard, and this was now the basis for negotiation elsewhere.*

This ceremony was almost precisely 10 years from when I first stood in front of the old lock cottage to commence negotiations for the Canal through the site. That had all come about thanks to the support of Tewkesbury Borough Council in making clear that the Canal must be part of the design of any development scheme on site. From that stance and support, grew the Over Project and ultimately thanks to the support of Swan Hill, and the vision of the Members and Officers of TBC, ^{THE} WHARF HOUSE.

Some 45 guests joined us in nibbles and wine inside, with displays around the walls charting the restoration work at Over. In the centre of the room was the model that Swan Hill had commis-

sioned for the sales centre and have now donated to the Trust. Giving a birds eye view of site as a whole it will form the centrepiece of the Visitor Centre.

Around Christmas Swan Hill should have completed the final few items on the building and we will start work inside.

We always like a challenge and fitting out 400m² of bare shell over the next year or so will certainly be that. We already have a fantastic array of offers of assistance, from trades, to discounted or free materials, including Swan Hill kindly leaving on site all of their left over materials from the construction of the houses. If you can help us in any way in completing this magnificent asset for the Trust please contact Wilf Jones.

This is the dawning of a new age for the Trust, the benefits of which will stretch far beyond the Over site.

◆ **DRP**

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by Tony Boonham

Since my arrival in Feb 2001 as a Wednesday volunteer I, like most of the other volunteers at Over, have spent a fair amount of my time picking and cleaning bricks. I suffered a stroke some years ago and so my work on the Canal has been partly therapeutic and it has been a great success. But, there comes a point while cleaning bricks when one thinks *"there's got to be a quicker and easier way of cleaning these bricks than this"*. Well of course there is; plans for a brick cleaner were published in Nавvies, the Waterway Recovery Group's bi-monthly

magazine, and it looks to be pretty efficient. I obtained a copy of the plans, thanks to Maggie, and thought that I would build a cleaner, but, I am having some difficulty obtaining the parts; so can I please make this appeal:--

1. I require an old electrically powered cylinder lawn mower with a serviceable 800-1,000watt motor; I can strip this down and modify it, and provide you with a little more space in the garden shed into the bargain! This will provide us with the brick cleaner; the motor drives a shaft with a drill chuck mounted on the end, into which is clamped a cup wire brush, which ensures the bricks are well finished.

2. But what about all that hard mortar, it's not going to clean that off is it? Well no, for that I need a SDS hammer drill with a 'rotation stop' feature. A 30mm chisel fitted in this will quickly and easily remove those lumps of cement/mortar from the bricks. So if you have one of these drills and you don't know what to do with it, please do consider giving it to the Canal Trust. These two tools will allow us to clean bricks quickly and easily and, I hope, will reduce the number of bricks being broken by the over enthusiastic use of the hammer and chisel.

Finally I am in charge of the tool store. I hope those of you who have seen it like the way its shaping up but it has a long way to go before I am satisfied with it; nevertheless it is an improvement. Finally a message to all of our volunteers at Over. If you should happen to damage or break a tool, don't throw it into the canal or otherwise dispose of it - instead leave it on the bench along with your name, address, and bank account number so that I can debit your account when I buy a replacement (*joke*). Seriously though, do let me know so that I can replace it because I do have a small budget. *"Oh dear I shouldn't have said that should I?"*

Offers of components for our first brick cleaner, or for the hammer drill, would be gratefully received; please contact Tony on 01452 700 476. *Thank you.*

◆ TB

L

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Photo: Meggie Jones

The Mayor of Newent, (third from left) inspects the newly restored lock wall on a particularly wet Open Day.

are always plenty of jobs to be done.

For a change of scenery the whole gang took a day trip to **Yarkhill** in September to do some maintenance work on that section of the Canal which was restored a few years ago but had become overgrown. It was not possible to access this earlier due to the foot and mouth epidemic last year and a start was made on restoring it to full water and making the towpath walkable once again. Several large willow saplings had sprouted in the bed of the Canal and many of these were winched out without too much trouble – there are still some left for another day. A large tree had fallen across the path blocking it completely and this was cleared sufficiently with bowsaws to enable access with a mower to get the grass and weeds cut. Chris Talbot came across from Kidderminster with his own little machine and spent the day going up and down about 1,000 yards of path – your efforts are much appreciated, Chris (*and can we book you for next year so that we can keep it all under control in the future*)?! We may have another day down there before long to pull out the remaining trees and possibly get some heavier plant in to do some outstanding repairs – if the weather is kind.

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Alney Island Walk & BBQ

by Nigel Bailey



Walkers and others enjoy the BBQ at Over after the tour of Alney Island.

Photo: Nigel Bailey

In September a small group of us set out on 'the Alney Island Walk'. Starting from the Over site, we followed for a couple of hundred yards the new cycle-way that links Highnam with Gloucester - and passes right beside our car park. The day happened to be that of the official opening of the route by Jonathon Porritt.

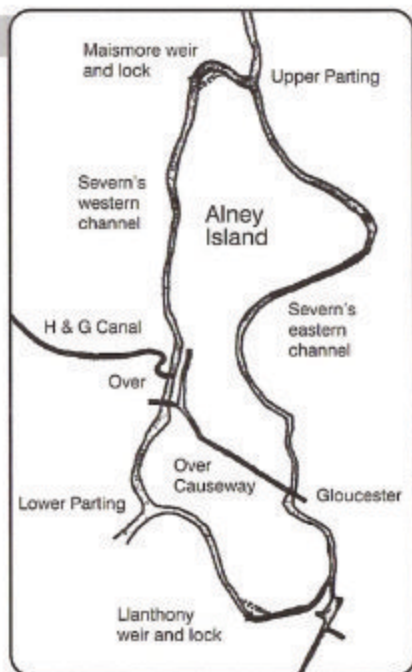
We then crossed the island by way of Richard's Wood, a large new area of woodland planted in the 1980s to mark the granting of the city's charter by Richard III in 1483. Ironically, part of it will be felled soon to make way for the new western bypass. Our route took us past Over Ponds, a Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust nature reserve of ponds and osier beds, which lies on the line of the "Alney Cut". The ponds probably originated as flood relief channels, which carried water under the causeway connecting Over with Gloucester.

We reached the eastern arm of the Severn at almost exactly the point where

the "cut" linked the canal with the City in the 1790s. Following the river, we passed the footbridge leading to Gloucester lock and continued downstream to Llanthony Weir, which we could hear rather than see. The official footpath round the island at this point passes right through the very silted Llanthony Lock, built at the same time as Maisemore Lock in the early 1870s. Leaving the Lock, the walking party was delayed by an incident involving a) a swarm of wasps and b) a semi-naked lady. This did, at least, give some of us a chance to enjoy a view back to the weir!

The most notable feature at Lower Parting, where the two branches of the river re-join, is a signpost which tells you to turn sharp right although it is hard to imagine any possible alternative.

Just before we got back to the bridges over the river, we spotted on the far bank the point where the River Leadon, diverted for 500 years through Over corn mill, used to exit into the Severn. The



spot is a small ravine, now filled with concrete, where there used to be a wharf, presumably used for transporting corn to the mill and for carrying flour away. When Sir Hubert Parry's father bought Highnam Court in 1838, the sale particulars included the mill and wharf - *"A capital Water Grist Mill and Wharf, on the River Severn"*. Within minutes we passed several more historic features - the branch railway line that used to run from Over Junction to the docks and Telford's Bridge.

Back at Over the party, joined by all those who came for the BBQ only, enjoyed an excellent outdoor meal rustled up by Liz Bailey and cooked by Mike Bowden, featuring Sharon's splendid puds!

◆ NB

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THE TRADING COMPANY H & G Canal Sales

2002 DIARY PART THREE

Photos: Janet and Brian Moulton



A view of our stand at Huddersfield.

The weekend of JULY 22/23. Over the two days of the **Marcle Steam Fair** we had the usual British weather, a bit of this and a bit of that, but mostly reasonable, which enabled the enthusiasts to enjoy themselves. Reasonable takings were achieved along with the recruitment of new Canal Trust Members, to go with the interest from Dymock residents, wanting to be kept up to date on our restoration achievements as well as *"when are you going to restore our bit?"*.

Thanks to Ray & Barbara, Derek Weaver, (who organised our attendance) and Nigel & Judy Street, not to forget Max and Margot their English Setters, who draw in the dog lover fraternity!

SATURDAY 3RD AUGUST. Canal Trust members will be aware that Janet Moulton raised a goodly sum last year selling second hand books. This year, having received a lot of donated books on all subjects (*thank you*), she decided we should hire the side chapel at **All Saints Church, Hereford** (the famous one with the café) and have a Book Sale, combining it with our Information Display and Sales Stand.

What a good idea it turned out to be! We achieved almost a full information display and sales stand and as a result achieved good bottom line figures (*and sold a lot of books*). There is no doubt that Herefordians are anxious to have 'their' canal back in water, with all its attendant advantages. According to some older residents, the canal, in its dormant condition, supported a considerable amount of very varied activity!! This is a venue to be repeated as long as we continue to receive good condition books donated by members and friends (*thank you to all who did contribute to our stocks of excellent books*).

A big thank you to those who gave their time; Cliff Penny, Brian Fox and Dick Skeet who provided the detailed and technical knowledge about the canal itself; Derek Weaver, Heather Worth, Pat Skeet, Derek and Margaret Gray for their sterling efforts in staffing the Sales and Book Stands.

SATURDAY 17TH AUGUST – Tibberton Flower Show and Fete. This was the first venue at which the outline plans for **THE WHARF HOUSE** were on show, hopefully to generate offers of help



Left: Roger Hanbury (middle) Chief Executive, The Waterways Trust, picking the winning Draw tickets.

Below: The National Sales Team ready for action.



towards fitting it out, along with updated but still temporary displays detailing progress of restoration. Penny Shetliffe, Janet and Brian, were joined by Liz Bailey (who runs our very successful Trading Outpost at Over). **Mike Bowden** had again sponsored our stand cost, for which we are very grateful. *The Trading Company is always very happy to accept cost reducing help of this kind which increases the funds available for restoration.*

The residents of the area turned out in force as usual, enabling us to produce a reasonable Sales total.

21st/26th AUGUST - The National Waterways Festival, Huddersfield.

The site for the festival itself was very good, flat and spacious and Trust had been allocated a prime position beside the arena. Arriving in gorgeous weather to set up, the marquee was soon as we wanted it, inside and out.

As might be expected, the local populace were mostly interested in their own canals, which have had such a lot of money spent on them, justifiably so. Taking this as a downright challenge, we smiled and persevered, achieving by the close of the show, a respectable income total. Once again Des 'Ace' Pick was in the forefront selling our Holiday Draw tickets.

As usual, stalwarts of the Show Team (Derek and Taryna Weaver, who drove the stand material to and from site, Simon, Kelly and Matthew Dyer, Lesley Steans and Des Pick) working in concert, presented the

Canal Trust stand to our visitors.

Very grateful thanks to 'Tunnel Master' Steve Bence, who spent three days with us, Susan Fitton, a member from Manchester, who joined us on two separate days and Tony Austin-Bailey (a Canal Trust Director), who got up at an impossible hour to spend some time with us. Caroline Jones (another H&G Canal Trust Director) escaped from IWA marquee duty whenever possible, to help on the stand.

Our grateful thanks also to Roger Hanbury, the Chief Executive of *The Waterways Trust*, who found time in his busy schedule to draw the winning numbers for our Grand Holiday Draw.

14th SEPTEMBER - Newent Onion Fair. For our readers who have never attended this venue, let me explain. The town being closed to vehicular traffic, its main streets and open spaces are quite literally "stuffed" with traders and assorted organisations (like ours), plus a lot of fairground attractions, not to forget the entertainment stage. The other ingredient is - yes that's right - **ONIONS!**

The weather improved from a chilly

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start to quite a hot day and this brought out the visitors, to such a point that Canal Trust Members, off duty, reported pedestrian gridlock on the main street! Fortunately the Canal Trust gazebo (thank you Chris Blunden) had been allocated a site in Budgen's Car Park, which, apart from the noise from the adjacent fairground rides, proved to be a very good place to be.

The Canal Trust volunteers eventually left site hot, tired and hoarse, having sold out of several product lines. Grateful thanks to Chris and Mark Blunden, Penny Shetliffe, Tom Bennett and Derek Weaver, for giving their time, and thank you also to Newent residents for their keen interest in the future of both their part of the Canal and the future navigation in general.

22ND SEPTEMBER – Hereford Society of Model Engineers – Broomy Hill, Hereford. A cool start to set up our

gazebo for this HSME 25th Anniversary Open Day with our friends from the Society who always warmly welcome us. An interesting day with most local visitors keen to learn about future plans for Hereford in general and our involvement at Aylestone Park.

5TH OCTOBER – H&G Canal Trust Folk Evening. This event had been widely publicised and tickets sold before the event, but, as you might expect, there was a lot of work to do before the music started! Derek Weaver and Brian Mould were on site bright and early in the evening to set out tables and chairs etc and await the group 'Meet on the Ledge'. Everything started on time and all attendees agreed that the evening was well spent. A raffle increased the bottom line and new Canal Trust Members were enrolled.

The remaining Events to complete our Trading Year will be reported in the next issue of **The Wharfinger**. ♦ **BM**

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H & G Canal Sales

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FRAMED PRINTS OF OVER BASIN

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◆ Not Quite ... THE LAST PAGE ◆

LOST & FOUND

At a recent Over Open Day a visitor handed me a 'coin' he had just found beside the Canal. It was covered with dirt, about the size of an old halfpenny, but rather thinner. I popped it in my pocket.

Later in the day I took it out to have a look and carefully cleaned it sufficiently to find that it was not a coin. I think it is a medallion, struck to mark some special event. One side has several rows of wording; the other shows the profiles of three men with some more wording around the rim. A small hole is punched through the top.

With a little help from the Internet I pieced together the inscribed words which are partly worn away:-

THE GREAT REFORM BILL



**BULWARK OF FREEDOM
VOTED INTO A LAW
JUNE 7 1832.**

The three figures on the other side turn out to be Grey, Russell and Brougham, the senior ministers who championed the Bill.

They are described around the rim as:-

THE FRIENDS OF THE PEOPLE.

So someone using the Canal, probably in the 1830s, wore this medallion around his or her neck and, as chance would have it, lost it. I've no idea if medallions of this kind were common so if any reader knows more about them I'd be pleased to learn more.

◆ NB

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CONTACTS

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dick@skeetr.fsnet.co.uk

Liz Connors

18, St Ethelbert Close,
SUTTON ST. NICHOLAS
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Tel/Fax: (01432) 880 155
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Brian Fox

1, Holmer Hall Cottages, Roman Road,
HEREFORD, HR4 9QU
Tel: (01432) 358 628

Janet Moul

18, Coningsby Court,
Coningsby Street,
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Tel: (01432) 264 366
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Tel: (01432) 850 661

Nigel and Liz Bailey

Tel: (01452) 533 835
email: nigel.bailey@blueyonder.co.uk

Maggie Jones

Tel: (01452) 618 010
maggiehome@btinternet.com

Wilf Jones

Tel: (01452) 413 888
wilf.jones2000@btinternet.com

Penny Shetliffe

MAIL ORDER SALES, Little Lugg,
Cross Keys, HEREFORD, HR1 3NP
Tel: (01432) 820 623
penny@shetliffe.freemove.co.uk

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Printed by Print Plus, Widemarsh Street,
Hereford, HR4 9HN (01432) 272 025

Visit our Website ...

www.h-g-canal.org.uk

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 a shovel or pen.

◀ **Contact any of these names TODAY!**

UK SUBSCRIPTION RATES

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP

Individual	£7.50	Joint/Family	£10
Senior Citizen	£5	Joint Senior Citizen	£7
Corporate	£20		

LIFE MEMBERSHIP

Individual	£150	Joint/Family	£200
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thank you.

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The Wharfinger

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 which in its turn was closed by Dr Beeching in 1964.

The Canal Society was formed in 1983 and replaced in 1992 by Herefordshire and Gloucestershire Canal Trust, a registered charity. The Trust has an ordinary and corporate membership exceeding 1,000 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 waterway network at Gloucester to the centre of Hereford. A steering Committee of 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.

