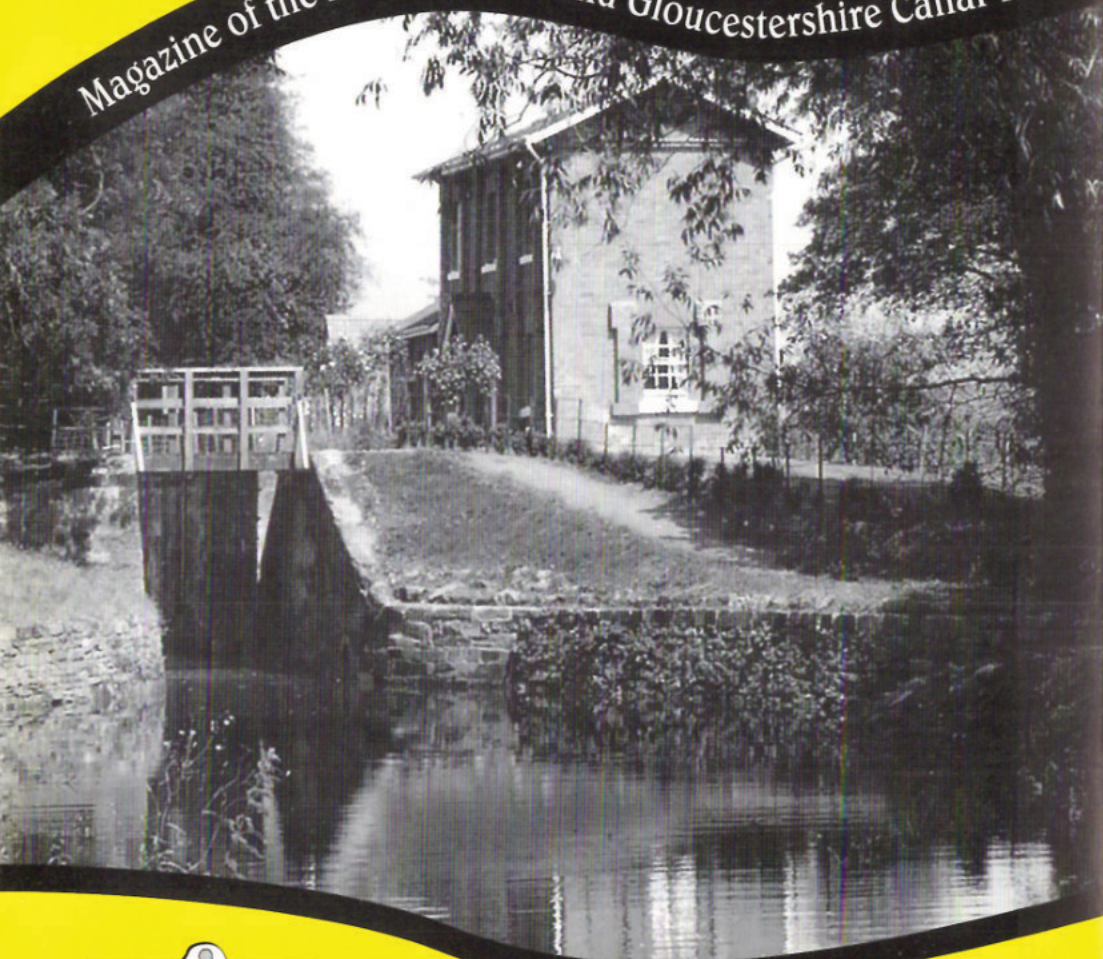


# *The* **Wharfinger**

Magazine of the Herefordshire and Gloucestershire Canal Trust



Autumn 2004

**50p**  
*free to members*



# WHO DOES WHAT?

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*FRONT COVER:* The newly restored Oxenhall Lock in water. *Photo:* Dick Skeet

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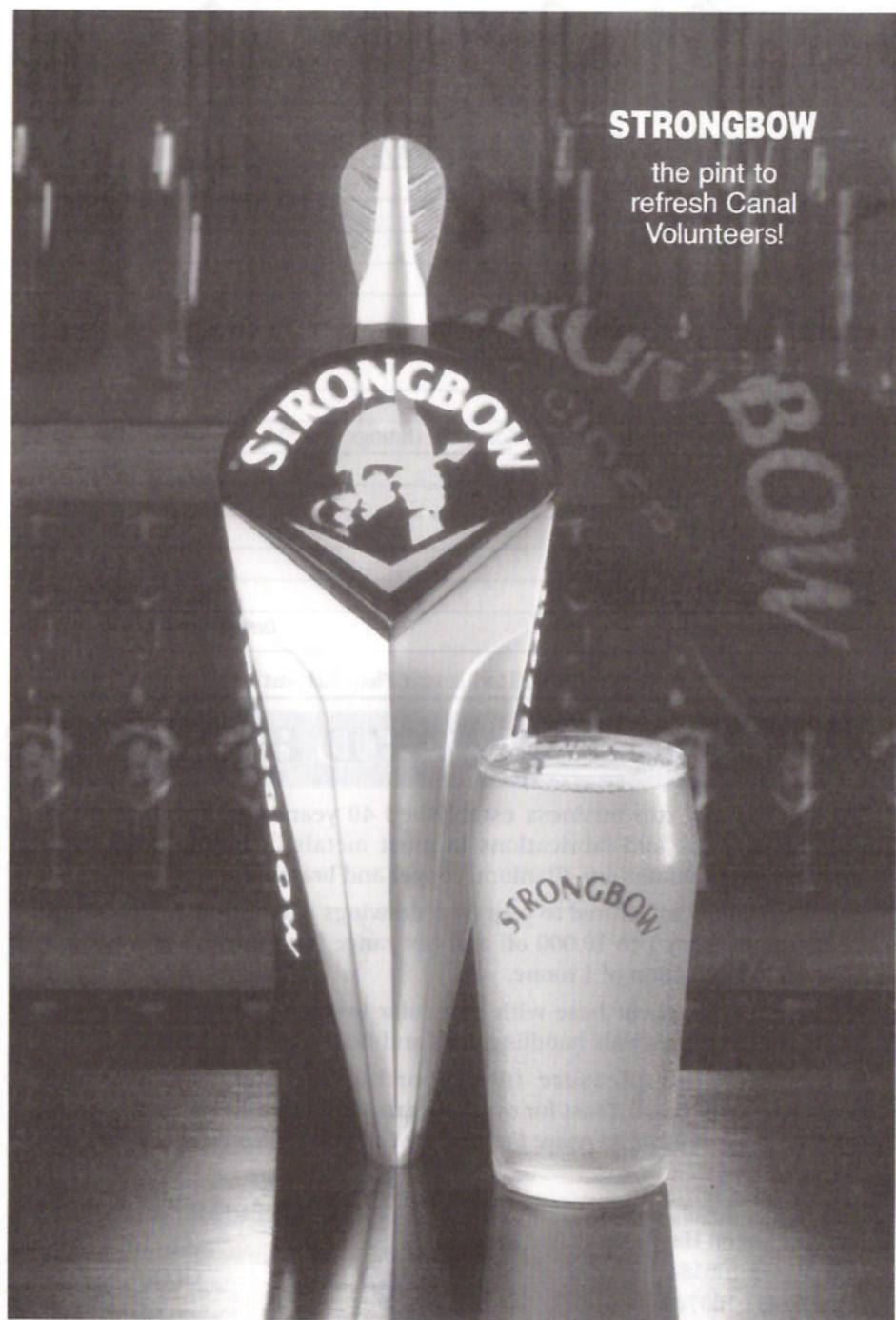
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## **STRONGBOW**

the pint to  
refresh Canal  
Volunteers!







The previous edition of **The Wharfinger** focussed particularly on our activities in Gloucestershire, the one before on Hereford, while this one is a broader spread. Further back, our attention was focussed on the Over Basin and **THE WHARF HOUSE**, but in one respect at least, every edition of **The Wharfinger** is the same – it tells you what our volunteers are doing and how they are realising the vision of restoring the entire length of the Canal from Gloucester to Hereford.

At present, all the work done on and around the Canal is carried out by volunteers, many of them giving many hours of service to the Trust. During the Summer our two Trading Companies are in full swing, promoting the Canal and raising money towards restoration. Here again, all of this is achieved solely through the efforts of our volunteers.

One of my concerns, as Chairman, is that some of our volunteers spend more time working for the Trust than perhaps they should. In some cases I have no doubt that this is an incurable condition, but it goes without saying that the load would be lightened by few more pairs of hands. *Yours, perhaps?*

Of course it is much more worthwhile to drive a huge excavator or a nippy dumper truck on the canal bed than it is to deliver **The Wharfinger**, make cakes, or sell cuddly toys and revolting plastic lizards on our sales stand. Or is it?

There is a lovely story told of Sir Christopher Wren who, allegedly, liked to visit the works at St Paul's in disguise to talk to the workmen. One day he found a man with a yardstick and a long piece of string marking a line on the ground. Sir Christopher asked him what he was doing. "I'm a surveyor", he replied "and I'm marking out the course of a great wall." The next man Wren met was hammering away at a vast piece of stone. "I'm a Master Mason," the man said, "and I'm shaping this stone to complete that soaring arch over yonder". Then Sir Christopher came across an elderly woman, her back bent as she swept up the shavings left by the carpenters with her birch-twigg broom. "And what are you doing?" he asked. She straightened her back, looked up at him and replied, "Why Sir, I'm helping Mr. Wren to build his cathedral."

◆ Dick Skeet, Chairman

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HEREFORDSHIRE  
& GLOUCESTERSHIRE  
CANAL TRUST

## NEW!

**NEW** H&G  
COLOUR LEAFLET

Enclosed with this edition of **The Wharfinger** is a copy of our splendid new full colour information and recruitment leaflet. Our sincere thanks for the welcome and ongoing

support of **Left Bank Village** in Hereford, who sponsored the printing.

Further copies will be available at our regular 'third Tuesday' of the month Social Evenings, to be held at a *new* location in future – the Royal Oak, Much Marcle, (see page 14), from the Trading Company at any event, or from Janet Moulton (see *Contacts – inside back cover*).

**NEW** MEMBERS

Please don't throw the leaflet away! This is your opportunity to recruit a new H&G Canal Trust Member. Even if you cannot directly persuade anyone to join us, why not put it into your local doctor or dentist's waiting room (or some other appropriate spot) – you never know who might read it!

This is also an ideal opportunity to use the leaflet to persuade a business to become a Corporate Member; every one is really important to us and you



by Cliff Penny

could take the credit for the introduction. And there is another way of swelling our numbers – are you currently an 'individual' Member yet your partner/family read **The Wharfinger**? Why not use the Membership Form on the leaflet to transfer to 'joint' Membership. Or perhaps now is the time you would consider becoming a *new* 'Life Member' – if you are not one already!

**NEW** CANAL IN H&G OWNERSHIP

See page 6 for the long-awaited – *highly successful* – conclusion to the sale of land by the Highways Agency at The Willows in Newent; a *new* length of the Canal line in our ownership.

**NEW** COMMITTEE INITIATIVE

To flourish, any organisation must evolve, and to that end you will notice some major changes to the committee structure on the inside front cover. We have two new Committees, one for Herefordshire and another for Gloucestershire and a third dedicated to Health and Safety – reflecting the significant (and ever-increasing) activities and projects in both counties. There will be further details of the work of both committees over the coming months.

◆ CRP

# RESTORATION

## *at Oxenhall*



Work on the lock has now ceased. The pound is full of water and the Wrinklies have moved 200 yards nearer to Gloucester and started on the Ell Brook aqueduct. It seems an appropriate time to stand back and reflect on what we have achieved since the group started 6 years ago. The WRGies helped right at the beginning with the demolition of much of the upper lock and together with about 6 local volunteers rebuilt the spillweir and the upper level of the lock, mostly in brick, as far as the stop planks. Dave Young was the only one who had experience in the building trade and kept a close eye on the progress offering his advice as necessary and teaching us the basics of brick/stone laying. Unfortunately Dave had to leave due to ill health soon after but we now had some basic knowledge and developed our skills as the work progressed.

Others have joined over the months and years and basic training has been passed on. Experience has shown us the need to develop other skills particularly in transporting and lifting heavy stones, using cutting tools and erecting scaffolding. Mixing of mortar and concrete is not what you might call a skill but we do have our own lime

mortar/concrete specifications and it all has to be mixed by hand (or a machine if we have a lot to do). A very quick calculation indicates that we have mixed and laid around 60 tons of mortar and concrete. Around 1800 stones have been used and each one has been faced and individually cut before being set in place. Hundreds of rough stones have been used in the lower wing walls and several thousand bricks in various places. There are also 250 stainless steel ties (now invisible) which key the new front facing stones into the old rubble filling at the back of the walls.

I was watching Fred Dibnah a few weeks ago as he visited castles built hundreds of years ago explaining the various building techniques and marvelling at the mortar used to hold all that stonework together. Only lime was available to make the mortar mix and there it was today, still as strong as the day it was constructed. It makes you wonder why they went over to using cement in mortar these days, but it would be nice to think that Oxenhall lock with its lime mortar might still be standing and taking boats in even 100 years time.



Local dignitaries, unveiled the plaque surrounded by some of the volunteers who had restored it.

*Right: Volunteers make a start on the restoration of the aqueduct.*

On June 22nd we celebrated with a ceremony to which local dignitaries and the press were invited. It was advertised as a completion ceremony rather than an opening ceremony in case anyone expected to see boats passing through gates and paddles in action – these will be added at a later date. The imminent rain didn't seem to put anyone off and after a few speeches and the unveiling of another of the Trust's trademark plaques (cast by Nigel Jefferies) everyone retired to the local hall for a barbecue as the rain came down.

It was great to see so many people and hear all those compliments paid. Many of the comments referred to the new pound below the lock which was only about half full for the ceremony, but quickly filled up with rain in the days afterwards. A temporary dam has been built just below the lock to impound the water and 2 x 6" pipes at the base of the dam were taking the water until the time came to fill the pound. Two bungs were inserted into the pipes and the idea is that you tighten a screw in the middle which forces the outer rubber ring to expand and seal the pipe. By Wednesday morning the water was seen to be within 6 inches of the top but the consequent pressure forced one of the bungs to eject and by the afternoon all the water had disappeared down the canal and into the Ell Brook. Nobody actually saw it but it must have been pretty spectacular! After several failed attempts to secure the bung, Dave Jones, who is our Oxenhall lengthsmen, devised a method to hold the bungs in place and the water finally reached the top and flowed through the overflow pipe and down the specially constructed spill channel on the Tuesday following.

Photo: Brian Fox



The aqueduct is now being attacked every Tuesday with a gang sometimes exceeding 12 people – it must be the warmer weather bringing them out! We are immediately being reminded of the strength of the old lime mortar as we attempt to demolish the spandrel walls which are badly cracked and require a total rebuild. We shall need to refine our skills even more as we reconstruct that part of the arch which has fallen and then rebuild the wall on the top. Sitting immediately adjacent to the aqueduct were the remains of three large sycamore trees, felled 3 years ago leaving the stumps. The smallest, which probably weighs about a ton, and the other two, each weighing about 2 tons, have now been removed after considerable effort with a little assistance from "blue" and our faithful tractor.

◆ BF



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**The Wharfinger.**



# The **Saga** of the **Willows Nursery** *at Newent*

**I**t was on June 27th 2000 that John Prescott, the then transport minister, stood up in Parliament to introduce a government booklet entitled *"Waterways For Tomorrow"* promoting a vision of canals in the future. During his introduction he announced to the House *"It's a scandal that canals are seen as a liability not an asset."* The document itself declares on the first page *"This is in effect a new charter for the waterways",* and goes on to state *"restoring disused waterways produces many benefits".*

Within a few days all these fine words were put to the test by the H & G and more particularly by Diana Organ, MP for the Forest of Dean, who has strongly supported our efforts at restoration for a number of years. She challenged the commitment of the Highways Agency (headed by Mr. Prescott) to the document as they were proposing to sell a piece of land known as The Willows at Newent, through which the Canal used to run. The auction sale was due to take place that evening at a hotel in Newent. The Trust's request to split the land and offer to buy the piece required for restoration had been turned down and the whole plot was due to be sold to the highest bidder which clearly was not an option for the Trust.

Diana knew the right people to speak to and, as a result of her pressure, the sale was called off that afternoon with 3 hours to spare. Anyone who cares to refer back to Wharfinger edition 67 will find all the details, but that was only the beginning of the saga, and I choose the word 'saga' very carefully. My dictionary describes it as a long, heroic story and there can be no doubt it was long and in a way heroic if it is considered in a David and Goliath sort of way. The **H & G Canal Trust** with their

champion in Diana Organ against the might of the Highways Agency and Parliament.

The final paragraph of that **The Wharfinger** article intimated that there were proposals to put the nursery back on the market that autumn minus the land required for the Canal restoration but it soon became obvious that time was not a consideration in any negotiations.

It didn't actually take very long for the Highways Agency to agree to separate the Canal land from the rest of the Nursery site and sell as 2 distinct lots and agreement was reached as to where the boundary needed to be drawn so that the Canal could be restored on the original alignment. That was the good news – the bad news was that they had already been offered £20,000 for the Canal land by an unknown bidder and we could only have the land if we matched it! That much money for a piece of derelict railway line measuring about 1¼ acres and accounting for 210 yards of Canal. There was no way that the Trust could pay such a sum for this short length of Canal, even if we had it, as this would set a precedent for any other purchases of land required for restoration.

It was pointed out to the Highways Agency that this piece of land, being on the line of the original Canal, was protected from any development or obstruction in the Forest of Dean Local Plan and no change of use would be permitted. This was immediately confirmed in a very unambiguous letter from FODDC and copied to the Highways Agency. Diana Organ was also in touch with her contacts



at the DETR to try and resolve the impasse and succeeded in getting some breathing space before the next move. The sale was postponed until Spring 2001.

Despite further letters and telephone calls and a new valuation by the Agency of the required plot an official letter was received in March offering the land to the Trust for £20,000. The DETR considered that by splitting the plot they were *".....facilitating sales of land which would contribute to restoration projects...."*, but the sting in the tail came in the following sentence which said that they were obliged to *"...sell at the best possible price...."*. This phrase is often used in government literature and is their way of emphasising the need to look after what is after all land belonging to you and me as members of the public and taxpayers. There was clearly a conflict of interests as far as the DETR was concerned – to get the best possible price or to act in the spirit of *Waterways For Tomorrow* and make concessions to a charitable Trust which could ultimately be of considerable benefit to the public. This was clearly very disappointing for the Trust as we had made virtually no progress and it was difficult to see where to go from here. A letter declining the offer was sent to the Highways Agency who quickly replied saying that the land would be put on the market later that summer.

Further letters to the government from Diana Organ and the Trust proved of no avail so the Trust decided to approach the Waterways Trust, a national body only in existence for about a year but already making an impact on canal affairs throughout the country. They agreed to assist in whatever way they could and together with the continuing pressure from Diana the sale was again put back until the following year, 2002.

However, something totally unconnected to our canal business happened in

parliament in December 2001, but which had important implications to our case. Whilst researching another matter Penny Environmental & Planning came across reference to an MP who stood up in question time and asked the Secretary of State for Transport – *"Under what circumstances could a local authority sell assets at other than best value?"* The reply was quite unambiguous – Consent has been given by an existing Act of Parliament for Local Authorities to dispose *"in certain circumstances of the freehold or leasehold interests in property to be used for charitable, recreational and certain retail and commercial uses"*. The reply does specify Local Authorities but it hardly seems reasonable for the Secretary of State for Transport to permit such disposals by one public body and not by the Highway Agency, another public body. This enabled us to make a strong case that they did not, in these circumstances, have to secure the best price and that this could be outweighed by the public benefit.

A meeting was arranged in May, 2002 between the Canal Trust, The Waterways Trust, Diana Organ, the Highways Agency and chaired by David Jamieson (an under secretary at the DETR) in a committee room in the House of Commons. Dick Skeet and I represented the Trust and it was clear from the start that a decision had been made to do a deal providing the Trust could put together a business plan for the Canal, not only including the Willows but for a considerable length around Newent. Such a plan would open the way for the Agency to get around the *"best possible price"* stumbling block as permitted in the aforesaid Act. After about 1/2 hour of discussion (which I am informed is pretty good for an under secretary) we came away knowing what had to be done.

At this point Diana stepped down and let the Canal Trust, The Waterways Trust and the Highways Agency get on with the

job of formulating the business plan. After many months we still seemed to be stalled and no progress seemed to be in sight whatever we produced.

Penny Environmental & Planning was called in to hold a further meeting with the Highway Agency to try to move matters forward. This finally got to the bottom of their concerns and agreement was reached as to what was a suitable 'nominal sum' for the land and what additional paperwork was required to meet the Highway Agency's requirements. This was significantly supported by a letter from Fred Passant, Mayor of Newent setting out how important the Canal will be to the future tourism and

thus economy of Newent. This clinched it and at last we had a formal offer from the Agency on 12th August 2003 to sell the land to the Trust for £1,000, which was rapidly accepted!

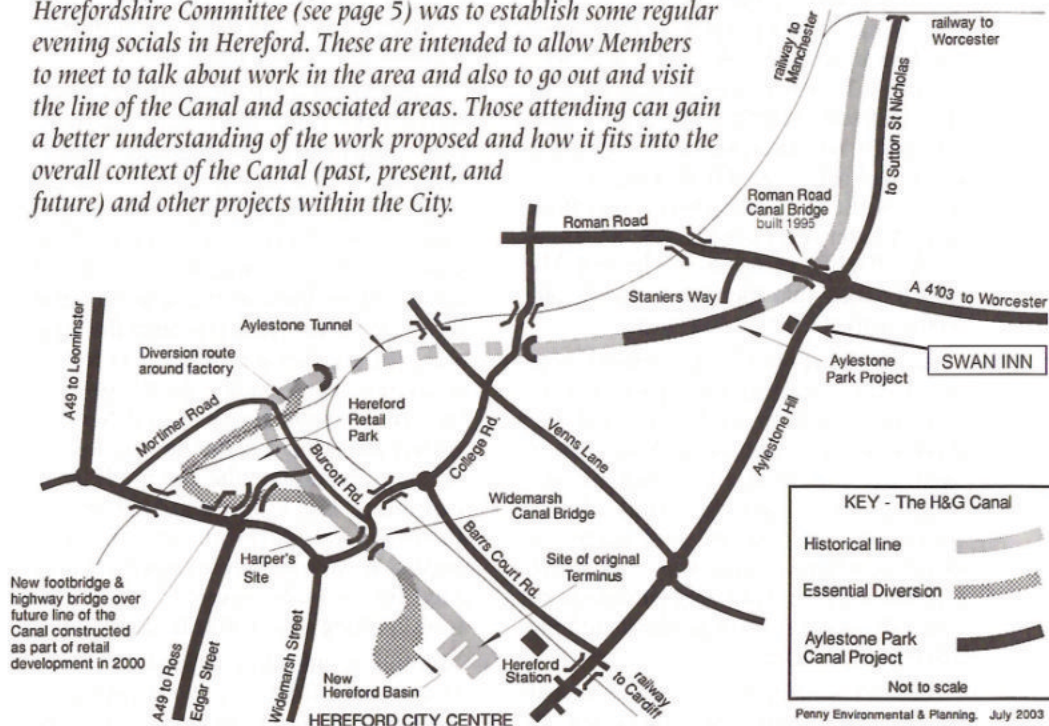
So you might think that shortly afterwards the Trust became the owner of the site? Well things always drag on and it was only on 22nd July 2004 that we finally completed the purchase.

Although long and drawn out this is a very important success for the Canal Trust in setting the principles for the transfer of public land, which is already being used elsewhere....

◆ BF


## Volunteers' Socials in Hereford

One of the first initiatives of Martin Danks as the Chairman of the new Herefordshire Committee (see page 5) was to establish some regular evening socials in Hereford. These are intended to allow Members to meet to talk about work in the area and also to go out and visit the line of the Canal and associated areas. Those attending can gain a better understanding of the work proposed and how it fits into the overall context of the Canal (past, present, and future) and other projects within the City.





# Newent Railway Map



In edition 80 of **The Wharfinger** the article "Not The Mappa Mundi" (page 22) told of our purchase of this important historical document. We are very pleased to report that further Members (NOT living in Bristol! – see page 31 of the last edition) have made donations towards its cost. This includes two (Gift Aided) £100 donations. The first made in memory of **Harry and Louise Taylor** and the second was from Trust member **Jim Chapman** from Newent. Our sincere thanks for all your donations, as it means that the total cost of the purchase of this map has now been reached.

Volunteers working at the Hereford end of the Canal and other local members have been meeting one evening a month for a drink, a chat and a walk along the Canal line. Meeting at 7.30 pm we have set off at 8 for a leisurely walk noting the local architecture and whether it preceded the Canal or was built in connection with the Canal. Copies of old maps were consulted to try and decide when the house adjacent to the Canal bridge on Newtown Road was built until some bright spark noticed a date plaque fixed to the wall beneath the eaves. Does anyone know what this building was used for?

In May and June six or seven of us set out from the Heart of Oak PH on Edgar Street and followed the line of the Canal back to Canal Road. In June we had the pleasure of the company of archaeologist Ron Shoemsmith so we also did a detour into the Blackfriars Monastery gardens and learnt a little of its history.

In July the evening was stormy but the intrepid gathering tramped along Edgar

Street making for Mortimer Road, Burcott Road and then back to the pub. We noted a gentle rise in Mortimer Road where there used to be a bridge over the Canal and David described his sight of a little bit of it when utilities companies were excavating trenches.

August's walk was from the Swan Inn on Aylestone Hill just near the roundabout on the road to Worcester. We had time to walk back to the tunnel entrance on College Road and peer down (from the pavement) through the trees to the tunnel portal. There was plenty to see, and we talked about the work going on at Aylestone Park. Why not join us – you will be made very welcome. ♦ **MD**

**Wednesday 15th September** Swan Inn, Aylestone Hill 7.30 pm for an 8pm walk.

**Wednesday 6th October** Swan Inn, Aylestone Hill 7.30 for an 8 pm walk.

**Wednesday 10th November** Swan Inn, Aylestone Hill 7.30.

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Photo: Nigel Bailey

## Local **WI** members **Tour** our **Canal**

by Ann Wood

*At the end of July the Canal Trust hosted the Herefordshire Federation of Women's Institutes members for a day, one of the many activities of the Trust to raise its profile in the community and funds towards restoration ...*

**S**ixty members of Herefordshire Federation of W.I.s were picked up on the outskirts of Hereford by enthusiastic members of the Herefordshire and Gloucestershire Canal Trust and taken on an extensive tour of stretches and remains of the Canal, which finally arrived in Hereford in 1845. At the beginning of the tour they were each given various items of literature about the Canal Trust including a copy of **The Wharfinger** and, most usefully, an excellent guide explaining the places they were going to visit.

To their surprise the minibuses plunged into the middle of Hereford, when they were shown short stretches of Canal line which they must have seen many times without realising what it was, and heard of the plans to bring a Canal Basin and boats into the centre of the city. A grand idea for local citizens and tourists alike!

Via the Skew Bridge at Monkhide, and Canal in water, and little lanes and drives we arrived at Dymock for an excellent lunch (well up to W.I. standards!) with a choice of four hot main courses and a luscious selection of sweets provided by the ladies of the Canal Trust.

After lunch we visited the Oxenhall Lock, which our guides and drivers had helped to restore with picks and shovels and the odd help of modern machinery where possible.

We heard stories of the making of tunnels and cuttings all by hand and could imagine the dangerous and exhausting work of the navvies at the end of the eighteenth century.

The final stage of the tour was a highly organised visit to the "new" Canal Basin at Over. We were divided into four groups – one drank tea with superb cake, another toured the site, a third inspected the splendid new visitors centre and restaurant in construction – while the fourth had a short boat trip on *Mister Maysey*.

Altogether a very full day and an inspiring introduction to the work and ambitions of the energetic members of the Canal Trust.

# SOCIAL EVENINGS

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

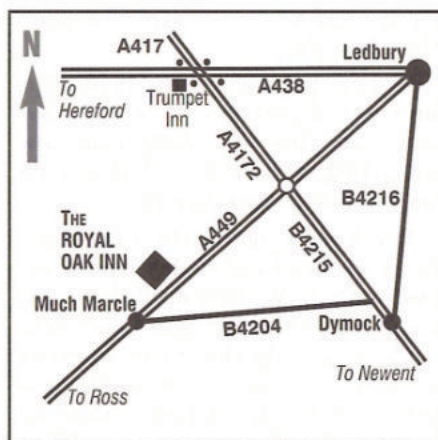
## *Change of venue for our Social Evenings*

After a number of years of holding our Social Evenings at the Verzon, Trumpet we are moving to a new venue. The changes implemented by the new owners mean that the function room is now one of their eating areas.

We are moving a couple of miles away to the Royal Oak, Much Marcle. This is on the A449 between Ledbury and Ross, has a large car park and excellent food available from 6.30 p.m. for those who would like to eat first.

Our first meeting there will be on September 21st. I hope you will continue to support us and come along to the talks.

♦ Janet Moulton



All meetings listed below are at –

## THE ROYAL OAK INN, MUCH MARCLE

SEPTEMBER 21<sup>ST</sup>

### Shrewsbury and Newport Canal

A trustee will give a talk on the history and future of another canal in the Marches.

OCTOBER 19<sup>TH</sup>

### Restoration of the Severn Princess

Tim Ryan – The last ferry across the Severn at Chepstow.

NOVEMBER 16<sup>TH</sup>

### A Cameraman on the Cut

Robin Smithett – on being a waterways photographer and how to improve those shots.

*Why not join the 50–60 strong attendance at our highly successful socials for an enjoyable evening at our new venue!*



# OVER OPEN DAYS



Gloucester Model Boat Club sail and display their craft.



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This is where to find us



*Autumn Dates:*

**SUNDAY, 26<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER, 10 AM - 5 PM**

**SUNDAY, 31<sup>ST</sup> OCTOBER, 10 AM - 4 PM**

**REFRESHMENTS • SALES STAND • EXHIBITION**

We have had a steady progression of visitors once again this year, and with the Autumn approaching there are just two more days when Over Basin and **THE WHARF HOUSE** will be open for visitors to meet the volunteers and view the progress made over the last few months. The last opportunity to see inside **THE WHARF HOUSE** before it opens for business in the Spring!

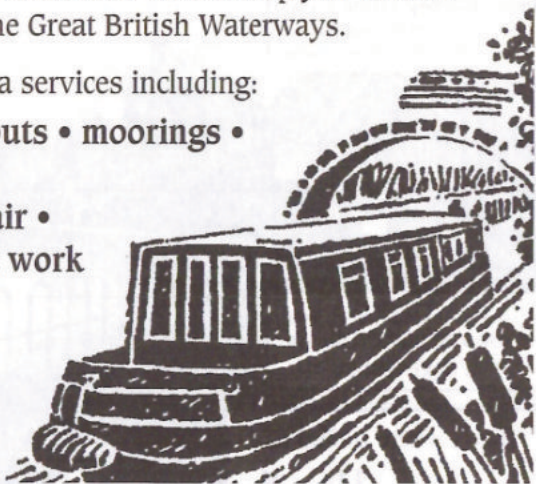


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# OVER BOARD

The last few months on site have been largely taken up with maintenance, cutting the grass, strimming the various slopes and keeping the weeds at bay. Work in the woodland was halted for a day while Tony Boonham dealt with a couple of wasp nests. We always like to think we have most skills we need within the Trust, but the nearby residents were most impressed when they learnt we had a former bee keeper with full kit who could deal with the nests!

We again had the loan of a pump for a few days from **Andrews Sykes** and were able to top up the water level.

We have made some progress with the silt trap and its top course of custom-made blue bricks is now in place. It has been designed to be at a height suitable for doubling up as a seat. Hopefully I will be able to report next time that the bricklaying part of the project is complete.

Once again we have welcomed several parties to the site and provided them with



Spaceman at Over? No, it's Tony Boonham tackling the wasp nests.

Photo: Nigel Bailey

guided tours, boat trips and refreshments. First group this year were members of the

Stroud Vintage Transport

Club who arrived in the bus pictured below, which, like me, began life in Dorset in the early 1950s.

More recently, 60 members of Herefordshire Federation of Women's Institutes came to Over as the final stage of a day's mini-bus tour of the Canal [see page 13].

The **Gloucester and District Model Boat Club** are regular users of the Basin and we greatly appreciate their support at Open Days. They are also starting to renovate the weed-cutter boat so that they can play an active role in keeping the weed at bay.

You may recall that a couple of years ago we had a plan in place to construct an otter holt – an artificial home for otters. A team from **npower's** Personnel Department came to site for two days to construct it but were unable to do so because the River Leadon rose alarmingly overnight and flooded the site of the holt.

Now we are once again all set to build it. This time the team is from Cheltenham-based **Marlborough Stirling** who are sending a party of a dozen people for a day in early August. We'll report on how the day goes in the next issue.

◆ NB



Photo: Nigel Bailey

The Vintage Transport Club arrived in style in their 1950's bus.





Photos: Ted Baugher



The custom-made blue bricks are laid on the silt trap to the extraction channel.

## Canal Trust Craft Fair

Please support our very own Craft Fair.  
An ideal opportunity to purchase  
that special gift!

**Saturday, November 13th,  
10am – 4pm  
St Katherine's Hall,  
Ledbury**

Apart from a wide selection of crafts on  
sale there will be our own sales stand  
and display of restoration photographs.

**Home made cakes, filled rolls  
and other refreshments.**

*Offers of help, or to request a craft stand,  
please contact Janet Moulton – 01432 264 366*



## THE WHARF HOUSE

With our target opening date for the ground floor set for next spring, work in THE WHARF HOUSE must continue at a pace. Wilf Jones, our fit-out manager, is pulling all the stops out to achieve this goal and views each task as a challenge, as it rears its head!

As many Members will know, I have the task of phoning up volunteers to see if they are available for our work-ins. Most of them have numerous commitments besides helping the Trust. Those working often work weekends too and those who have retired, barely have time to fit in sleeping with all the other things they are committed to. From this experience I have learnt that when I retire from full time employment my life is likely to get busier than it is now. *Best not retire for a long time then, thinks I!*

Seriously though, we do have a great team of volunteers who turn up whenever they are able, and are usually game to take on most tasks that Wilf has lined up for that weekend. As volunteers, they all reserve the right to say, "no, that job is not for me", and Wilf always has another dozen possibilities up his sleeve – *bless him*.

As David reported last edition, the first contract has been let to the electricians, who have been in wiring up parts of the ground floor. The lighting has been planned to change the 'mood' of the building from a day-time 'tea room' to an 'evening restaurant'.



The plasterers will hopefully have completed their work on the ground floor by the time you read this. We have been working hard to have the ground floor cleared of as much unnecessary clutter as possible. Volunteers have done a variety of jobs from building door frames and window sills to plasterboarding the toilet ceilings. Model Boat Club member, Rob Strong, came in to advise us on the layout of the disabled toilet; this helped us to finally decide on the position of the wall between that and the storeroom. A debate which had been going on for some months, but within an hour of his advice, the wall had been started.

Outside, the grass and summer bedding, which was planted as a temporary splash of colour has flourished and the grass is likely to remain for the foreseeable future.

As well as working on the building, work has begun on placing advertisements for *The WHARF HOUSE*, in appropriate tourist brochures etc. Marketing the project correctly is obviously crucial to its success. We have been seeking advice from Members and supporters who have experience in this field.

There is no end to the variety of jobs for which we need volunteers in *The WHARF HOUSE*, so if you are interested and need more information please call .

◆ MJ



## The Wharf House Weekend Work-ins

Dates for the next four-day Work-ins are: -

**September: Friday 24<sup>th</sup> - Monday 27<sup>th</sup>**

**October: Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> - Monday 25<sup>th</sup>**

...and a whole week work-in: -

**November: Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> - Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup>**

*Lunches will be provided when possible.*

The tasks are varied and experience is either gained or shared between volunteers. If you are able to join us in these work-ins, or on our regular Saturday and Wednesday teams, please contact us (*details below*).

*Over Volunteers please contact ...*

*The WHARF HOUSE* - Wilf Jones (01452 413 888)

**Wednesdays** - Ted Beagles (01452 522 648)

**Weekends/work-ins** - Maggie Jones (01452 618 010)



Photos: Nigel Bailey

*Teamwork at a Work-in ... whilst David fills gaps ... Pat measures the doorframe and Tony saws wood ..... and Roy saws wood too, while Maggie holds the wood! ... Nigel saws the wall ! ?*



Our distribution team for **The Wharfinger** thought the days of sticking stamps on envelopes were over – for some time now we have been using Royal Mail to frank the envelopes and save a lot of voluntary efforts. A spate of problems at the sorting office, with a few envelopes missing their franking machine each quarter (and recipients being surcharged for Royal Mail's error), was overcome by our note on the labels "*franked by Royal Mail – deficient postage is their responsibility*" – we thought the challenge was solved!

Stories were heard, earlier in the year, that there would be a 20% surcharge on all such Royal Mail bulk-franked mail; however two enquiries with the local sorting office revealed no such proposals – until Janet Moulton took the last edition for franking and was told there was a



new 20% surcharge for passing the envelopes through Royal Mail franking machines ... *so that is why your envelope has a stamp on it.*

If you know of a business located in or near Hereford (where our distribution team is based) who would be prepared for us to use their franking machine four times a year (and the Canal Trust reimburse the face value of the postage), then please let Janet Moulton know (*see Contacts – inside back cover*). ♦ **CRP**

## THE TRADING COMPANY **H & G Canal Sales**

### Trading Company Outings in 2004

Some of the events we plan to attend in the last part of the year are: –

**Sep 11<sup>th</sup>** Newent Onion Fair  
**Sep 18<sup>th</sup>** Hereford City & County  
Archaeological Trust AGM  
(display only)

**Nov 7<sup>th</sup>** Hereford Model Show

**Nov 13<sup>th</sup>** Our own Ledbury Craft Fair

If anyone would like to help in any way they will be most welcome – please contact Janet Moulton.

♦ **JM**

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Barry Coles  
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# THE TRADING COMPANY **H & G Canal Sales**

## 2004 DIARY PART TWO

**MAY BANK HOLIDAY** weekend means Worcester and **Birmingham Boat Gathering** at Tardebigge and stalwarts Ray and Barbara, Derek and Taryna in attendance.

This was a very successful weekend. Unfortunately our next outing to **Moir Canal Festival** was not so good. Derek's car decided it did not want to make the trip to the wilds of Leicestershire, but after a frantic morning he and Taryna arrived and were joined by our "Midlands" crew – Des, Lesley and Steve. Their hard work resulted in modest returns as the show was not as good as usual.

**SPRING BANK HOLIDAY** saw us at **Crick Boat Show** where the organisation is superb and the atmosphere is very enjoyable – as 30,000+ visitors soaked up the sun and spent their money. Pat and Dick Skeet's boat provided a peaceful haven for lunch breaks and was welcomed by Ray and Barbara, Janet and Becca, Des and Lesley, Steve and newcomers to the Trading Company circuit, Geoff and Sallie Hopper. Des excelled himself with the Grand Holiday Draw tickets – *it must be the hat!*

**JUNE 5TH** was Hartpury College Open Day where Janet and Becca were joined by Pat Skelton and Nigel Bailey. This event always brings out tales of the Canal and what a good playground it was (before the days of Health and Safety); and interest in the restoration progress.

**JUNE 26TH–27TH** a very busy weekend with **Over Open Day, Oxenhall Open**

**Day and Braunston Working Boats Festival.** Oxenhall, held following the completion of the lock, did not bring out the public in the same way as our autumn event but Pat and her crew rose to the challenge in taking over the refreshments from Liz Connors, and Penny looked after the Sales stand.

Meanwhile, further north, Ray and Barbara, Steve and Des braved wet feet on the Saturday as the heavens opened and the water rose up through the marquee floor. Steve and Des continued the good work in drier conditions on Sunday and Des was on top form with the Draw tickets.

Finally for this part of the report we come to **JULY 3RD– 4TH** and **Saul Canal Festival.** Ray and Barbara, Dick and Pat managed to tie the gazebo to anything on hand and it survived the high winds but they were covered with dust. Sunday saw Heather, Janet, Tom and Caroline contending with torrential rain (*which laid the dust!*) followed by hot sun – so we dried off and did not succumb to pneumonia.

A very busy and mainly successful first half of the year – plenty more events to come – and we still need more helpers!

♦ **JM**

### WANTED

**I would like someone to organise the Grand Holiday draw for 2005.**

It is not too onerous as the two main prizes are usually in place from year to year.

All that is required is a third prize and sponsorship for the printing and liaison with printers. After that the Trading Company takes over the sales and distribution of tickets.

*For more information – please contact Janet Moulton.*

# A Marque of Success

*Canal Society Founder Member, Canal Trust Director and Membership Secretary, might be enough for anyone – but utilising the skills of his 'day job', Nigel Jefferies is also the man behind our cast aluminium plaques ...*

## Canal plaque is 'milestone'

IT was unveiling day for the Herefordshire and Gloucestershire Canal Society when members saw the fruits of their labours permanently marked with a plaque on the Widemarsh canal bridge, Hereford.

Canal buffs had devoted one of their regular activity Sundays to clearing a section alongside the canal. Society member Mike Potts said: "The plaque is to make sure that everyone knows that this is the old Hereford canal."

Hereford Mayor Councillor Sim Proctor unveiled the plaque made by Aylestone Hill High School students.



▲ The newspaper report of the unveiling of the first plaque.

Following the unveiling of a plaque beside the first lock to be restored by the Trust, I thought members may be interested to learn the provenance of the elliptical plaque.

One of the first publicity events organised by the Canal Society following its formation in 1983, was to place a plaque on Widemarsh Bridge, Hereford. At the time the membership of the Society was only about 50, financial resources were limited and the purchase of a suitable plaque was prohibitively expensive. However, the Technology Department of Aylestone School, Hereford, came to the rescue and made a plaque. The plaque was unveiled by the then Mayor of Hereford, in the summer

of 1984. The original plaque spawned several more.

When a plaque was required for House Lock, near Newent, Gloucestershire, it seemed appropriate to use a similar plaque to the one placed on the adjacent Lock House commemorating its restoration in 1993. The plaques are sand cast in aluminium alloy using a pattern made from plywood and plastic letters.

When the canal was completed in 1845 cast iron plaques mounted in an ashlar block were placed at every mile, and half mile, along the line of the Canal; this was a requirement of the 1793 act of parliament which authorised the construction of the canal. Unfortunately,





The plaque shortly after casting.

most of these no longer exists, but it could be said the Canal Trust is following in a similar mould.

In the early years of the then Society a person living in Leomister had "rescued" at least three of the original mileage plaques, however, I have lost contact with the person concerned. If any member is aware of the person, or the whereabouts of the original plaques he had in his possession, (or of any other artifacts) we would be interested to know.

◆ NJ

The latest plaque in situ.



Photos: Nigel Jeffries

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# Picture Library

*By Lucien Perring*

We have always been aware that every year since 1983 when the Society, (the forerunner of the Trust), came into being that Members and their friends have taken many photographs of the Canal and its structures; also at working parties and the large number of other events that have surrounded its restoration.

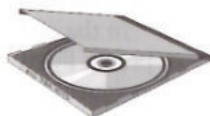
Understandably we rarely get to see the majority of them. Neither do we have a central depository of such photographs which we can call upon when illustrations are required.

To remedy this a recent meeting of the CoM agreed we should create a central registry of Members, and others, who possess collections, both large and small, of photographs of the Canal taken since 1983

and who would consent to their use by the Trust. Further we would like to select a small number of pictures for copying. These would then be held in a central library to form both part of the historical record of our activities as well as a resource centre for the benefit of the Trust in matters such as publicity, grant applications, souvenirs etc. It is hoped that Members agreeing to this would be prepared to grant the Trust a non-exclusive, perpetual, royalty free license in respect of any copyright to their photographs.

I would therefore like to hear from Members holding such collections. Initially all that is required is a summary of the medium, (slide, print, digital), the general subject matter of the pictures held and the period they cover. I can be contacted on [perringatokell@ukonline.co.uk](mailto:perringatokell@ukonline.co.uk), or 01989 768441. For those who prefer 'snail mail' my address is

4 Okell Drive,  
Ross-on-Wye, HR9 5QQ



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# **More** than just ... "one man went to mow"!



Well summer is here with its warm sunshine and fast growing grass and weeds, the mowers have been out in force and it's a real job to keep things under control (the grass that is). Fortunately the work that we have done on the mowers has paid off so far and they have all been performing well with no breakdowns. Thank you to whoever it was that left us a mower by the gate, it looks a nice machine and with just a little more work, it will join the others mowing grass.

Talking about gifts my usual thanks to those people who have donated equipment since the last issue, so to Ted Beagle for his shelving, Mike Payne for a professional drawing board, John Forest and David Gillman who donated tools and equipment from the estate of the late Bernhard Castree, and finally to Mr Gray for a gas welding kit. Thanks a million for helping to kit out the workshop to what is now a very high standard.

Using the shelving that Ted donated and that Keith, Andrew and I assembled, we now have room for all the tools that John and David brought down from Hereford and we can see the surface of the work bench once again. We are now busy building a paraffin bath utilising a stainless steel sink and drainer with the stand made from the remains of Wilf's aluminium greenhouse!

My thanks too, to Mr Lee Knapper, the manager at **Andrew Sykes Pumps**, and Nick the engineer for their

help repairing the 3" water pump which now runs well and hopefully will pump water for many years to come.

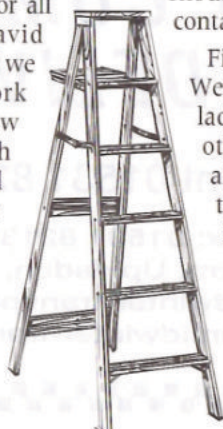
The bench grinder that was donated some time ago has proved a bit of a headache. I have obtained all the spare parts for it except for a 19mm left hand threaded, metric coarse nut; believe you me they are pretty rare and the best forecast is for three months time, so now you can understand why some very small jobs can take a lot longer than expected.

The weedcutter boat has been handed over for use by the Glos Model Boat Club and as they seem keen to get it going we should soon see it in the Canal.

Incidentally, if you are at all interested in crewing the boats you will require a Certificate of Competency ...

I have been put in charge of disposing of a quantity of building materials, I hope it's all been sold by the time you read this but in case it hasn't and you have a requirement for assorted lintels, Insulation blocks, tiles etc please contact me.

Finally, just one appeal this time. We can always use more good step ladders in **THE WHARF HOUSE**. No other appeals this time, you have all been so generous I am still trying to find a home for all that has been brought in so far. That should mean that we will now have the tools we need to maintain site, and the Canal, and continue with **THE WHARF HOUSE** - *thank you.* ♦ **TB**

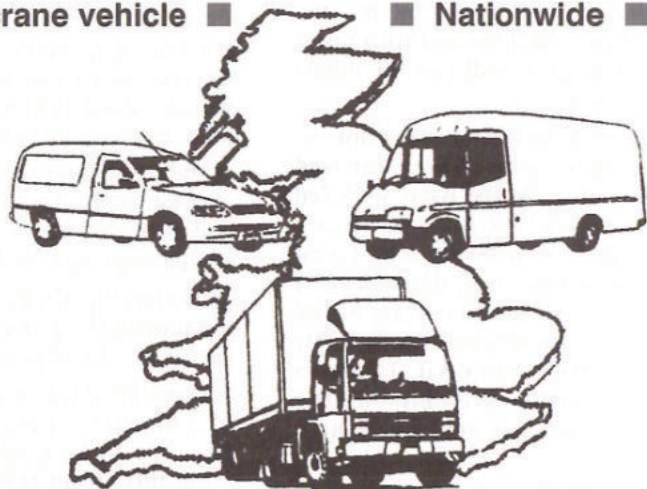


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# ◆ Not Quite ... THE LAST PAGE ◆

## Some notable quotes from volunteers:



Some weeks after the clocks changed, a volunteer wanted to make the point that the evenings were drawing out and announced to us: *"It stays earlier later."*



### POSITIVE THINKING

Just about to start a particularly tricky job, a volunteer admitted: *"There are so many different ways to do this job wrong".*



This one completely stopped the conversation:

FIRST VOLUNTEER: *What is it you are studying at College?*

SECOND VOLUNTEER: *Equine dentistry.*

FIRST VOLUNTEER: *I didn't realise that fish have teeth.*

Lastly, when asked for some half-blocks to complete a wall in <sup>THE</sup> WHARF HOUSE, a well-known volunteer was heard to answer *"You'll find some of these half-blocks are bigger than others!"*



*You may hear other little gems uttered while volunteering on the canal or sales stands. Contributions please!*

◆ NB and MJ

Support for the Trust's work comes in many guises – sometimes it's as a thank you to the volunteers who are helping us. 'Mr Chips', otherwise known as Cllr. Alan Williams (one of the Councillors for Aylestone), kindly provided Fish and Chips to the WRG volunteers during their last work on site at Aylestone earlier in the summer. A supportive gesture which was greatly appreciated by the team and got a mention in their national magazine 'Navvies'. It is all positive PR and shows any national volunteers that have not been down to us before that they get a friendly welcome on the H&G.

*Thanks Mr Chips and congratulations on your recent inclusion in the Guinness Book of Records for frying the world's biggest bag of chips!*

◆ DRP

### Thank you! ...

Some thank-yous for promises of tree saplings in the autumn:

- from June Gericke of Hartpury, and Joe Green,
- also Harry Baker of Minsterworth for an offer of willow.

*Thanks also*

- Dave Hurran for some saplings and shrubs brought to Over recently.

◆ MB

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FOR THE NEXT  
ISSUE IS:

**24<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER, 2004**



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*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!**

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

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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 1,100 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, 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 3.5 miles.

