

The **Wharfinger**

Magazine of the Herefordshire and Gloucestershire Canal Trust



Winter 2004-5

50p

free to members



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FRONT COVER: The new towpath and cycleway leading to Aylestone Park. Photo: Ted Beagles

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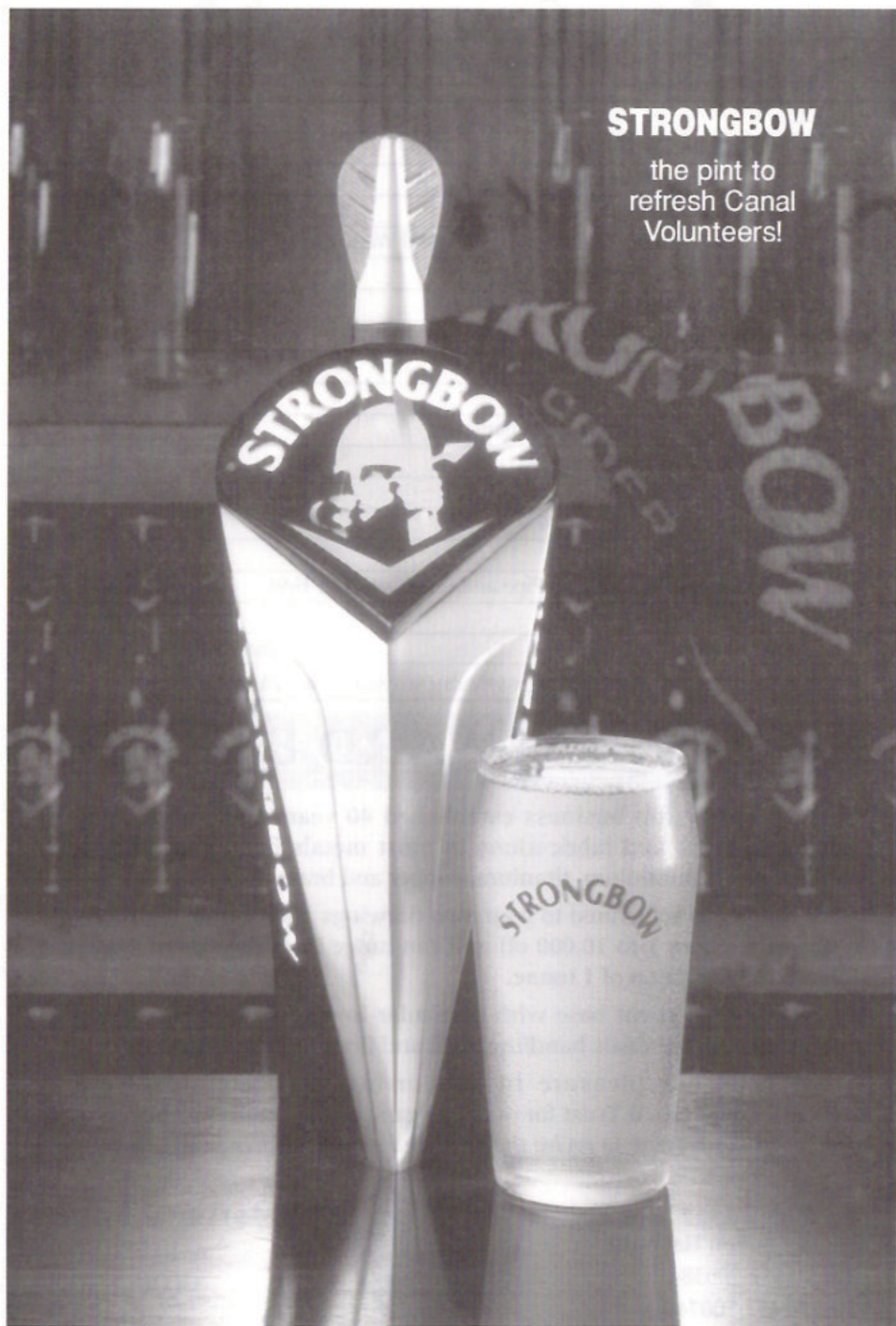
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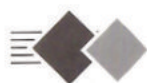


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STRONGBOW

the pint to
refresh Canal
Volunteers!





We often say that canals aren't just for boaters, which is just as well, because quite a few boaters this summer have had trouble getting around! Personally, we have been lucky, but we were held up on the Oxford Canal while the paddle gear at Slat Mill lock was repaired. This took the whole of a sunny morning, a rare treat this summer, by which time there was a fair queue of boats building up. No one seemed very worried though – there are always jobs to be done on a boat – several tins of *Brasso* appeared and the chap in front of us did an oil change. I confess I watched the Test Match.

On our return journey we just missed an emergency closure near Oxford, which lasted a fortnight. Not quite such a picnic – but neither could it have been much fun on the Staffs and Worcester Canal in May, to discover that Wolverley Lock was in imminent danger of collapse and would take at least a week to stabilise. But it wasn't only the boaters who were effected. At Kinver, a village five miles away, it was the local businesses which really suffered. Here, an estimated £10,000 is spent by canal visitors *each week* at the height of the summer, when up to 30 boats can be tied up for the night. Now before you do the arithmetic to calculate that on this basis each boat spends on average £47.62 per night, remember that a canal with boats passing up and down also brings visitors by car, bicycle and on foot and these visitors will also spend money in local shops and pubs as well. A canal with no activity may be pretty to look at, but it lacks the life and vibrancy of a working waterway, as the businesses in Kinver discovered this summer.

We have to take a long term view when it comes to canal restoration and we have to invest now. It may be a while before we see 30 boats tied up for the night at Ledbury Wharf, but be sure, when they do, they will be warmly welcomed by all the local entrepreneurs.

Boaters of one kind or another have been spending money in Kinver for 200 years and will continue to do so for the foreseeable future. Even allowing for inflation and maintenance, that's a pretty good return for one village on a canal 46 miles long, which cost just £100,000 to build.

◆ *Dick Skeet, Chairman*

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WORKING TOGETHER

by Cliff Penny



Among our visitors to Over this Summer were six horses. It was a Sunday, but not an Open Day, and at 8am as the sun was burning off the mist, it was definitely too early for a ride on Mister Maysey! Alarmed residents were concerned; the grass would soon be churned up and young trees we had planted were at risk. They 'phoned to alert us - and then helped to deliver the horses safely to their own field. Our volunteers swiftly repaired the fence through which the horses had come (utilising materials from our on-site compound). *Our grateful thanks for the prompt warning of the problem, for the assistance in returning the unwanted visitors to their field - and for the photo!*

Also during the Summer, the Staunton's Hill residents Management Company at Over requested that all residents should automatically become Members of the H&G CT. The Canal Trust Council of Management have carefully considered the position of all property owners who are obliged to make an annual maintenance and management payment to the Canal Trust - at Staunton's Hill and elsewhere. The payment is intended to assist the day to day maintenance and management of the Canal etc in each area, and contribute to less frequent major expenditure such as dredging. We recognised that the decision must apply equally to current and future properties

Four heavy horses and their two foals enjoy an early morning roam down the towpath past Mister Maysey.

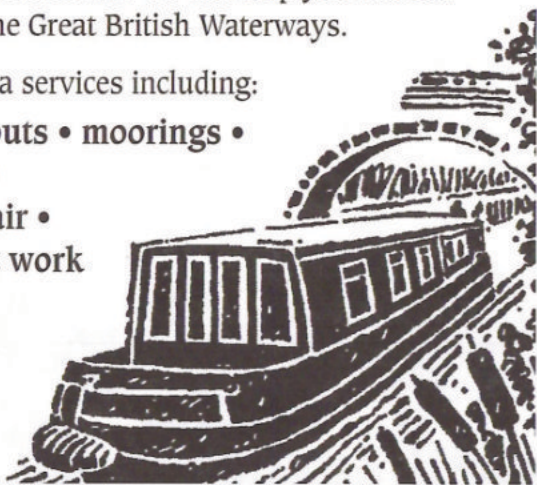


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At the end of September the Canal Trust held its annual barbecue at Over for the Residents and Over volunteers; our thanks to all who assisted to make the evening a success.

We are concerned that there should be a misunderstanding with any resident as to what we are generally about at Over. As a voluntary

restoration site work will extend over a much longer period than a commercial contract. ^{THE} WHARF HOUSE is a major asset to the H&G CT both in terms of raising awareness of the H&G Canal, and the work of the Canal Trust; also, in generating funds for the Charity. We intend to operate at a high standard; for example the letting bedrooms have been designed to hopefully gain a very high Tourist Board rating.

making such payments; also that a number of residents have already joined the Canal Trust (some as Life Members). We therefore decided that each *property* making annual payments would automatically be entitled to a special class of Membership thus receiving a copy of each issue of **The Wharfinger** to keep residents abreast of our plans and progress. Residents who were Members received a letter from Dick Skeet explaining the proposals so that they were first to know.

We will do our best to keep the residents aware of our plans (at Over and elsewhere) and to operate in harmony - and intend to make every reasonable effort to do so in future. It is clear to us that many of the residents at Over are happy with the work of the Canal Trust (and actively assist our voluntary efforts); an opinion that is supported by earlier items in this editorial. By working *together* we will do our best to increase the number of our supporters - *but not at the expense of acceding to demands that unreasonably constrain the legitimate work of the H&G CT.*

For some time arrangements have been in place for a Director of the Canal Trust to attend regular Meetings of the Staunton's Hill Residents Management Company so that any issues of concern could be made known and hopefully addressed. Regrettably, following some changes a number of meetings have taken place without an invitation to the Canal Trust - and potentially serious issues and misunderstandings have arisen. We are pleased that the Canal Trust has been invited to send a representative to the December Committee. Not so pleasing are the solicitors and other letters about the use of our site, plus objections to the approved use of ^{THE} WHARF HOUSE. As a result, we have engaged a Barrister for advice. We remain hopeful that we will work *together* with the Residents Management Company to address valid issues on a reasonable timescale.

There is just room to wish all of our Members and supporters a Happy Christmas and a prosperous New Year. In particular our best wishes to every single person who has assisted, in any way, the H&G CT over the past 12 months. *We hope that we can look forward to your support and encouragement throughout 2005.*

◆ CRP

AYLESTONE PARK CANAL PROJECT

Early October brought our friends from **Waterway Recovery Group** once again to Hereford to help us start building a path alongside the Canal for the 330m leading up to the Aylestone Tunnel portal. The multi-use path has been designed to be used by those on foot or with bicycle, wheelchair, pushchair, etc. and will have a durable surface.

Method statements and risk assessments were drawn up, volunteers briefed, hazards highlighted and traffic routes across the park decided. The material used is road planings; the bits that are scraped off a road before laying a new surface, so we are (once again) recycling waste – *how green is my canal ...?*

By the end of the weekend 200m of path had been laid and tracked in by the excavator. The following weekend local volunteers laid the last 130 m using the plant still on site. We were a mixture of newly trained drivers, established ones and very experienced ones. The opportunities of initial training on plant last Spring, then more training on site by WRG instructors, and at their training weekend, have really paid off. There were cheers for a novice driver beautifully tipping 2 tons of material on a slope, going backwards, just in the right spot. Those working on rakes will soon tell you when you leave too large a pile in one spot as that needs more use of those muscles than some of us didn't know would ache so much!

The tidying up of the inevitable ruts and a little landscaping of the edges is planned for the end of the month together with the hire of a vibrating roller to finish the path. We also used up the end of a sack of grass seed which has every chance of germinating over the Autumn.

Photos: Maggie Jones

Vegetation on the bank leading to the wildlife/environmental area of the Park was also cleared and burnt, and one WRG volunteer, being a Civil Engineer, left designs for a switchback path that will enable the three metre vertical climb to be achieved by wheel chair users.

YARKHILL

During the same weekend another group of WRG volunteers also carried out preparatory work on the repair of a leaking culvert that passes under the canal near to Barrs Court lock at Yarkhill. Major tree roots were causing the damage – there was time to count the tree rings!

◆ MD

Below: WRG and local volunteers drink a well-earned cuppa by WRG's smart new minibus



▲ *Above: Regular Community Service workers are making good progress on the fence which stretches across the middle of the Park.*

Hereford Volunteer Socials

The Autumn programme suggested walks at 7.30pm, but we were not blessed with starlit nights (or even moonshine). The September walk did get as far as College Road along the line of the Canal from the Swan Inn. It was along the yet to be improved path and we found ourselves stumbling amongst the brambles! However, coming back across Aylestone Park, in near darkness, the footpath we constructed at Easter provided a

tussle free way (leaving only the roadworks at Aylestone Hill to negotiate).

Until the Spring we will revert to the **Heart of Oak** in Edgar Street for a **Social Gathering** on the following dates - meeting at 7.30pm:-

Wednesday, 1st December

Wednesday, 12th January

Wednesday, 9th February

All local volunteers will be made most welcome.

◆ MD

RESTORATION

at Oxenhall

It's not often that the **Wrinklies** team I don't turn up on a Tuesday but very occasionally the weather intervenes and a decision has to be made at about 8 o'clock to call it off. There was such a day recently but as I rang round to cancel I got the distinct impression from more than one wife that their days alone were something they look forward to.

Having hubby under their feet was not welcome! Expressions such as "*wimp*", "*fair weather worker*" or even "*it's not raining here*" were heard and I was left feeling slightly guilty! As it happened the forecast was wildly adrift and the sun was shining before lunch so not only did I have these guilty feelings but I was somewhat annoyed too. It is no secret that the 'boys' enjoy playing in the mud and water etc on a Tuesday but it seems that their partners are also pleased at the arrangement even if they do appear to protest at times. Perhaps there are other partners out there (male or female!) who would relish the thought of a day alone - you know where we are on a Tuesday and my number is on the back cover should you want assurance that they will be looked after and returned in one piece.

As far as the work goes we have completed demolition of the cracked spandrel wall on one side of the aqueduct and shored up the remainder in an attempt to prevent further deterioration. Rebuilding will not be commencing just yet as there are other jobs to do first. A list has been compiled which will take us well into next year. Firstly a start has been made on localised dredging the silt from the brook which is raising the water level higher than it should be and will



cause problems when the winter rains come and levels rise up to 8 feet. It is hard to imagine but the water can rise as far as the top of the arch and there is, of course, no way we can work in the Brook if the water level is anywhere above normal summer level. There are still large amounts of stone that have fallen in over the last 50 years which will be retrieved from the bed and used in the rebuild; but they will still be there in the Spring when the levels go down.

Now that the Canal Trust are the owners of canal land at The Willows, a start has been made on tidying the ground - mainly the disposal of



thousands of old plant pots but also rotten pallets, empty gas cylinders, 2 old railway wagons and hundreds of saplings which have grown since the nursery was abandoned over 6 years ago. Fencing is also being erected to keep the area reasonably secure. Some survey work has been undertaken, with the assistance of Catherine who was a student on her summer break, to establish what quantities will be required to restore the Canal through here.

For the first time in years the yard at Oxenhall is free from dumpers. We sold the last two to a chap in France, thanks to all the hard work of Tony Boonham, and are now looking to clear a few old cement mixers and other miscellaneous junk; but it is only to make way for surplus materials from Over.

I said at the beginning that we all enjoy our day out on Tuesdays as we attempt to create an environment which we hope the public will appreciate for years to come. Well, our efforts were officially recognised last month when several Canal Trust members were

invited to a civic reception by the Chairman of the Forest of Dean District Council. We all had to dig out our best bib and tucker – no hard hats or safety boots! An excellent meal was provided and a chance to chat with people sporting gold chains around

their necks – at least one member took the opportunity to discuss business and hopefully secure further financial and Policy support for the restoration of the H&G Canal.

Despite our love of getting wet and dirty every Tuesday we did vote ourselves a day off in September when our annual 'away day' occurred. It had been decided to take a day boat on the Montgomery Canal from Maesbury and Margaret, as usual, organised it all. Some of our wives were able to join us and everyone mucked in when it came to opening locks and steering the boat – although some proved more adept at this than others! It turned out to be one of the last days of summer with cloudless blue skies all day and wonderful scenery to cruise through. Something to ponder as we restore our canal for cruising.

I have to finish on a sad note as I report the death of Dave Young last month. I spoke of him in the last edition of **The Wharfinger** as being the only trained bricklayer amongst us at the start. He was very proud of his work and virtually completed the second phase of the tunnel portal at Oxenhall on his own while the rest of us fetched and carried for him. He helped at the start of the lock reconstruction and we did persuade him to let the rest of us have a go at bricklaying while he looked on and gave welcome advice. Dave was one of those chaps who seemed to have an endless supply of jokes to liven up the proceedings and life was never dull when he was around. One of his last outings was to inspect the finished lock last June and Doreen, his partner, tells me he was always talking about his time spent on the lock, especially after his last visit.

◆ BF



Photo: Keith Gibson



Left: The Canal in Winter at Oxenhall above House Lock walking towards the tunnel.

The Flag Flew High

at the National Waterways Festival at Burton-on-Trent as Caroline's flag and pole were raised over the H&G Canal Trust marquee. Our banner also adorned the arena railings so our presence could not be missed!

Heavy rain earlier in the week had prevented the land-based boats being craned onto site but there were plenty on the water. Our usual crew of Derek and Taryna, Simon, Kelly and Matthew, Des and Lesley, Ray and Barbara and Janet and Becca made their way to Burton and covered the 3-day event. On Sunday the heavens opened and the site became a quagmire, but we were dry in our marquee and gave shelter to the crowds - and Des sold Grand Holiday Draw tickets at a fantastic rate.



It was arranged that Timothy West and Prunella Scales would make the draw on the Monday and as we were dry and there was space - the H&G stand became the media centre. Radio Derby did an interview with the stars (not us!) and Waterworld filmed; so we hope that part does not end up on the cutting room floor!

A very enjoyable weekend and very good PR for the H&G

◆ JM



The Grand Holiday Draw

winners were:-

**1st
PRIZE**

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Ticket 5062

Mr MA Grant

**Little Billingham,
Leighton Buzzard**

**2nd
PRIZE**

Two VIP Tickets to the London Boat Show 2005 + Overnight stay at Top Hotel, donated by **British Marine Federation:**

Ticket 8003

Mrs D Riley

Brandon, Suffolk

**3rd
PRIZE**

One night B&B for two people at Three Choirs Vineyard and Restaurant donated by **Three Choirs Vineyard and Restaurant:**

Ticket 3934

Mr P Owen

**Hanley Castle,
Worcestershire**

As always our sincere thanks to the prize donors whose generosity is greatly appreciated – also to all who bought (and sold) tickets; raising over £1,500 towards restoration of the H&G Canal.

Timothy West and Prunella Scales draw the winning tickets out of the bag held by Des Pick, whilst Janet Moulton looks on.

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Christmas Cards



A choice of two full colour views, especially painted for us by well known waterways artist **Garth Allan**.

"Oxenhall Lock, past, present and future" was very appropriately titled as it was painted two years before the restoration/reconstruction of the lock masonry was completed – and in anticipation of the yet to be fitted gates and paddle gear.

"A new dawn – Over" shows the lock approach, the River Severn and the distant tower of Gloucester Cathedral.

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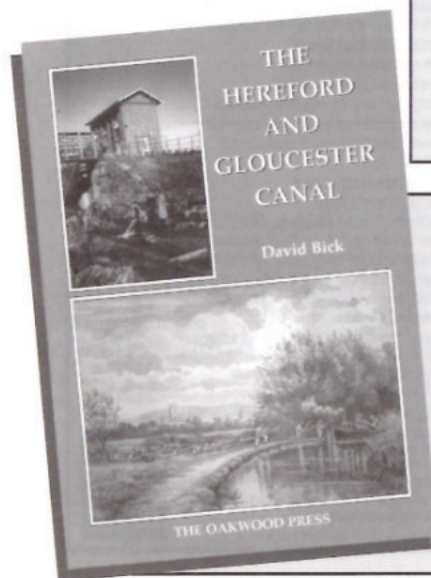
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THE HEREFORD AND GLOUCESTER CANAL

The latest edition of David Bick's detailed history of our Canal, *'The Hereford and Gloucester Canal'* plots the route of the canal and the rise and fall of the navigation. It includes updated sections on the restoration that is taking place and the work of the Trust at Over and Oxenhall.

£8.95



Gift Ideas

Other Gifts

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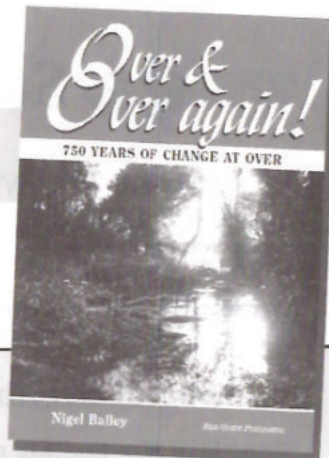
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Over & Over again!

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Just send the appropriate Membership Subscription, together with details of yourself and the full name and address of who is to receive your gift to our Mail Order Sales contact, Heather Worth, (see

left). Heather will then send one of our Christmas cards (together with a note of your gift) to the recipient and pass on the details to our Membership Secretary who will enrol them for twelve months membership of the H&G CT. If you wish to write a note, then that can be enclosed in the card, but please ensure that your instructions are clear – especially if you are making more than one gift! Please include your own telephone number in case there are any queries.

SOCIAL EVENINGS

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

DECEMBER 14TH 2004

(Please note; NOT the 3rd Tuesday)

Social Evening
and
'Travels of the Trading Company'

FEB 15TH 2005

Dean Forest Railway

David Ponter – a move away from canals to our neighbouring restored railway.

JAN 18TH 2005

Garonne Lateral Canal

Don Gaunt – from the mouth of the Gironde estuary to Toulouse. A sunny climate for a January evening!

MAR 15TH 2005

Coalbrookdale and the Ironbridge Gorge

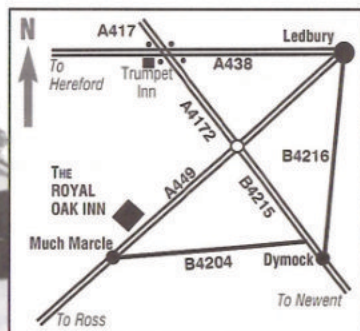
Brian Draper – The birthplace of the Industrial Revolution.

All meetings listed above are at –

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MUCH MARCLE**

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

Come and join us, you'll be made very welcome.



OVER OPEN DAYS

We greatly appreciate all the voluntary time and effort spent by Liz Bailey and her band of volunteers to ensure another eight successful Over Open Days during 2004. Here is Liz's report on the year:-

Our Open Days this year were held, as in the previous year, on the last Sunday of the month from March until October. All were well supported and visitors enjoyed looking at the displays, having a boat trip in Mr Maysey, buying gifts, watching the model boats and generally relaxing with a cup of

tea and home-made

refreshments. Many

returned this year

to see our

progress at ^{THE}

WHARF HOUSE.

Only one visit

was possible at

12.30pm. on each

Sunday, which

caused a little dis-

appointment, but this was

inevitable for health and safety reasons during the ongoing work by our volunteers.

During the season, we played hosts to Stroud Vintage Transport Club, The Friends of the Three Choirs Festival (who enjoyed their picnic by the canal prior to their concert at the Cathedral), and the WI who ended their tour of the H&G canal with a visit to Over.



The annual BBQ for the residents of Staunton's Hill and volunteers took place in September. About 40 people attended and a good time was had by all. My thanks to residents, Pat and Wendy, for their contributions, and to the volunteers who have helped to make all our BBQs such a success.

It is with mixed feelings that I write this report as October saw the last Open day in its present form as next season will see the opening of the Visitors' Centre at ^{THE} WHARF HOUSE.

I would like to thank all the people who have contributed to the success of our Open Days during the last three years - the Model Boat Club who have turned up every month without fail, all the cake makers, sales people, guides, and boat operators. *It's been hard work - but very worthwhile and a lot of fun.*



◆ LB



THE WHARF HOUSE

Plastering is well under way and the transformation from a building site to a tea room, restaurant, visitor centre and shop, with quality B&B accommodation is really happening. The main rooms of the ground floor were plastered in early September. The manager's flat and most of the top floor following in November.

Before all that could happen all the electrical boxes were planned and fitted. This was a challenge in itself; predetermining every light and electrical socket that just might be required when all is up and running. Qualified electricians then came in to do the first fix of wiring.

Door frames are being individually created to fit the irregular sizes of the reclaimed doors and the detail of the fit out and displays are being worked on for the Visitor Centre and Shop.

Left: Plastered walls meet the brick arches constructed from the bricks of the original Lock Cottage.

Below: Insulation and resilient bars are used in the creation the upstairs walls to eliminate noise.



Photos: Ted Daughies

Upstairs, the manager's flat is a priority. It is crucial it is ready for when the Trust employs the person responsible for the daily running of the building.

Outside, the front has been planted up with shrubs. Our sincere thanks to **Hazelfield Nurseries** at Newent for their help with the layout and supply of plants (*at half price*). Also, we greatly appreciate the assistance of Bob Haste, of **Newent Fencing** who kindly delivered everything to Over without charge.

Also outside, some of the Wednesday gang have continued the drainage around the walls of the building.

Rather surprisingly, we have already had people phoning up to make bookings for the facilities. They were quite disappointed to find we were unable to accommodate them just yet!

And yes, the usual invitation to readers of **The Wharfinger** to come join us in our work. Skills are shared and new ones learnt; the team of volunteers are pulling together brilliantly to give the Trust a way of promoting and sustaining our work on future Canal restoration.

◆ MJ



Above: Colourful bedding and grassed areas welcome visitors as they walk from the car park.

Below: New shrubs from Hazelfield Nurseries have been planted on the roadside of the building.



Photos: Ted Beagles



The Wharf House Weekend Work-ins

Date for the next three-day work-in is: -

December: Friday 3rd - Sunday 5th

...and whole week work-ins: -

January: Wednesday 5th - Wednesday 12th

February: Wednesday 2nd - Wednesday 9th

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)

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Tower Pass Office

Wharfinger Cottage

There has been a cottage on this site for at least 200 years. Originally, it was the home of the Controller of the Tower Wharf, known as the Wharfinger.

Until the late 19th century, the Wharf was a busy dockside. weapons, gunpowder and other military supplies were shipped to and from the Tower, where they were stored and secured under the wharfinger's supervision.



Private - No entry

Photo: Dave Hurran

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The Wharfinger

Dave Hurran is a regular volunteer on the Over 'Wednesday Team'; a recent trip to London resulted in him unexpectedly thinking of our magazine **The Wharfinger**...

On a trip to London I was walking along the Thames footpath, past the Tower of London, when I spotted a notice newly attached to a wall. This took my attention as its title was 'Wharfinger Cottage'.

Up to now, in my ignorance, I thought **The Wharfinger** was some bizarre made up name for the cover of our magazine. When I got home I looked up the word in my Collins dictionary to find indeed its meaning is "wharf owner". All is now clear - but am I alone in my enlightenment?

◆ DH

No, we didn't make it up, Dave! In the very early days the former Canal Society newsletter was called *The Hereford Wharfinger*. As soon as work commenced in Gloucestershire the title was shortened to **The Wharfinger**.

The inspiration for the name came from the old cottages once occupied by the wharfinger at Withington, (point 1. on the map on the rear cover) where the faded word 'Wharfinger' can still just be seen written on the gable end.

Apart from "wharf owner" it was also used to describe the person who was responsible for organising the carriage of goods on the waterway - Ed.

OVER BOARD



Photos: Ted Baugles

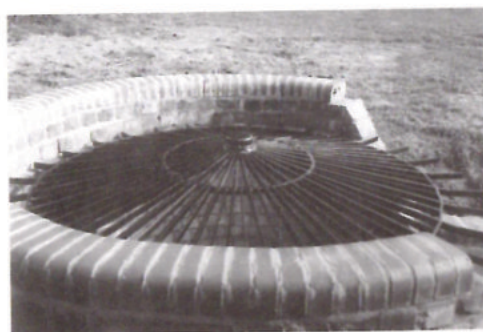


Photo: Maggie Jones

Top: The silt trap and channel from the pump shaft allows water into the basin.
Above: The grille for the silt trap is lifted into position.
The grille in place and nearly complete.

Again we've had a busy Summer at Over with Open Days each month, regular work-ins at ^{THE} WHARF HOUSE, and plenty of activity all around the site.

An excellent start was made on building the otter holt, mentioned in the last issue. David Hastings' account of the day appears on page 28.

The long-running saga of the silt trap has reached a conclusion! The trap contains some six feet of water so it is important to make sure there is no danger of falling in. The brickwork was designed so that a ledge running around the inside, just a few bricks below the top, could support a metal grille.

The grille itself was fabricated by Henry Clarke. The design is essentially a wheel with closely placed spokes. It took four of us, with help from a fifth, to lift it off the trailer and place it on top of the trap. Henry had left each spoke a little longer than necessary so that he could

trim then to achieve an exact fit - and in case our brickwork was not exactly circular!

Once in place the grille was given a couple of coats of black paint and now looks very smart. The last of the blue bull-nose bricks, the trickiest ones on the steep front edges of the trap, are also now in place. With a little landscaping and sowing of grass seed, this part of the project will be complete, providing a very attractive feature which doubles up as a seat.

The regular maintenance jobs have continued - mowing, strimming, weeding and tidying the site, along with others which crop up more occasionally - like replacing the pulley at the top of the flag pole and servicing Mister Maysey's engine.

We are now actually down to our last pile of bricks for brick picking and half a dozen volunteers have continued palleting the best of them. A couple of years ago this seemed such a mammoth task that it is hard to believe that the end is in sight.

◆ NB

*Over volunteers please
contact ...*

Wednesdays

- Ted Beagles (01452 522 648)

Saturdays (and some Sundays)

- Maggie Jones (01452 618 010)

- Nigel Bailey (01452 533835)

THE WHARF HOUSE

- Wilf Jones (01452 413 888)

Duke of Edinburgh volunteers

- Nigel Bailey (01452 533 835)

Invitation to all our Volunteers -

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Please contact Maggie Jones 01452-618 010

Mister Maysey needs you ...

Next year the Over trip boat will sail every weekend. We are currently looking for a team of volunteers to train to be trip boat operators and maintenance crew. Are you interested in joining that team? Please contact:

Ted Beagles on 01452 522 648.

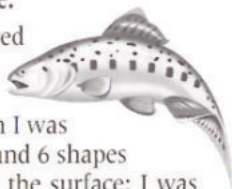


A Lengthsman's Report

By Over Lengthsman, Tony Boonham

Well, I have to report that so far this job has been a very pleasant one. Usually I visit the Over site once or twice a week on non-volunteer working days and Rupert certainly enjoys it. It has been very pleasant weather on most occasions and as it's usually very peaceful and quiet it gives me an opportunity to stand and stare something that, in today's busy world, we cannot indulge in as often as perhaps we would like.

The first time I noticed that we had some rudd in the canal occurred one day when I was gazing into the water and 6 shapes slowly rose up near to the surface; I was very surprised because they were between 5" and 6" in length. This fishy theme continued on a very hot day in late June when Rupert and I were about to get into the car when, to my surprise, I saw what I first thought were a number of carrots on the surface of the water in the canal alongside the long wharf wall. At first I was annoyed at this careless act but then my annoyance turned into astonishment when I realised they were goldfish nibbling away at that algae that floats on the surface, I counted at least twenty



large fish (many about 7" long) and dozens of smaller ones. Who's going to believe this, I thought, and since I have only Rupert as a witness, I'll have to get more proof.



It came on a Saturday in August when the canal opposite Tony Peter's house was red on the surface with at least 200 large goldfish and hundreds of smaller ones (and there is a photo to prove it). Meanwhile, local resident, Mrs Peters had noticed, when feeding the moorhens and ducks, that the bread was disappearing before the birds could reach it; her neighbour identified the fish as carp and later caught a nine-pounder! Fishy stories my friends but true. There must be plenty of food in there for fish to grow to that size in such a short time. *I would just point out that it is the Trust's policy that fishing is not allowed in the canal at Over.*

As usual, during the summer, we have been clearing, strimming, mowing and sowing and thanks to the efforts of Nigel, Roy and lately a newer volunteer Martin, the stilling chamber is nearing completion especially with the fitting of the safety grille which Henry and Russell have made. We have also said 'Goodbye'

to our dumper 'Dream', sold at last, and which is now on its way to France (with a couple more from Oxenhall).

Sadly, I never did get round to making any birdboxes and the poor mother bluetit raised yet another brood in the door of the tool shed, but I shall make a greater effort this winter to start a production line. On the subject of birds, the moorhens raised two broods successfully, the kingfisher has been seen regularly and the heron is getting more used to the presence of humans and will let you approach much nearer before flying off.

Visitors may have wondered at the dense blue flowered plants that Mike planted around the car park end of

THE WHARF HOUSE;

they are called Phacelia and are not seen a great deal in this country although they are used a lot in Eastern Europe. They can be ploughed back in as a green manure, they form such a dense barrier that they keep rabbits from getting through and they are marvellous for insects, especially butterflies, bumble bees and honey bees. Oh yes, they are also grown as a weed suppressant! Hopefully they will self seed for next year.

Well that's all from the Lengthsman and his dog for this time but we hope to bring you a few more tales from the canal bank in the future.

◆ TB



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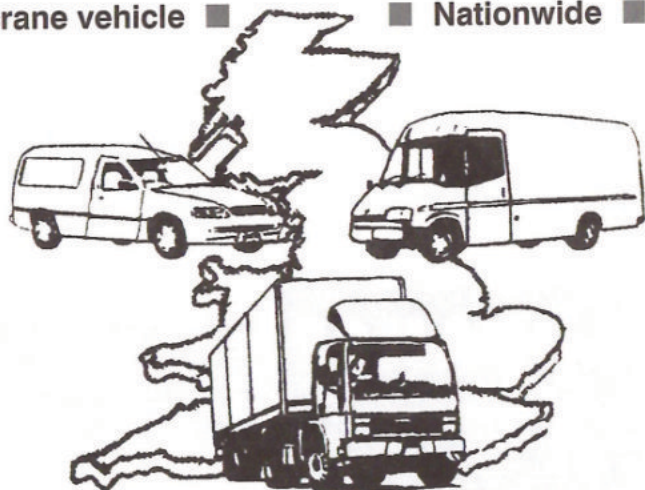
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THE TRADING COMPANY H & G Canal Sales

2004 DIARY PART THREE

After a wet weekend at Saul (*see part 2 in the last edition!*) the weather continued to dampen our helpers, but not our spirits. **JULY 17-18** took us to **Marcle Steam Fair**; luckily Ray and Barbara provided their caravan as a base behind the stall, and they, Derek, Taryna and Janet spent two days in a wet field promoting the H&G Canal.

JULY 31st we were indoors at **All Saints, Hereford**. Our sales stand and book sales were very successful and members of Council of Management answered the many questions that

interest in the Canal raised. The people of Hereford are beginning to realise they have a canal – and what an important asset to the area it will be.

AUGUST BANK HOLIDAY weekend was **National Waterways Festival** time at Burton-on-Trent (*see The Flag Flew High on page 12*).

SEP 18TH, Janet took a small display to the Bishop's Palace for the AGM of the Hereford **City Archaeological Society** – again plenty of interest.

The rest of the year is quiet as the Model Show in Hereford was cancelled and our own Craft Fair had to move both date and place owing to renovations being carried out at St Katherine's Hall. *I hope you found us at the Ledbury Community Hall!*

◆ JM



Picture Library

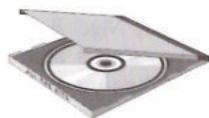
By Lucien Perring

For those of you who read my article on page 24 of the last edition of **The Wharfinger**, concerning the creation of a picture library, and have not yet found the time to search out all your old H&G Canal photos, then the Christmas break could be the ideal occasion to set about it? After all that seasonal over-indulgence what could be better, on a cold wet day, than to sit looking at old photos of work on the H&G Canal and reminisce – “remember him?”, “I told them it would never work if they did it that way!”.

Come on, don't be shy. Let the Canal Trust have the benefits of your artistic endeavours and help in the creation of a permanent visual record of our progress

to date. At this stage all I need to know is the medium (*slide, print, digital*), the general subject matter and the period they cover. You will find my address and details in the previous magazine but please do not hesitate to phone me, Lucien Perring, on 01989 768441. ◆ LP

Lucien Perring also now maintains the ‘press cuttings scrapbook’ on behalf of the Canal Trust. If you see our work mentioned in print in any publication (apart from **The Wharfinger** that is!) Lucien would greatly appreciate a copy of the item/article. Please include the whole page so that we have the date and name of the publication. He would rather receive more than one copy of an item rather than miss it; so please don't assume that someone else will send it in – thank you – Ed.



THE CHALLENGE

Build a two pipe and chamber Otter Holt

The Canal Trust greatly appreciates ongoing support from businesses large and small, local and national. Frequently this is in the form of donated (or greatly discounted) materials and/or plant and equipment. We also welcome finding interesting work for volunteers released by their company for a day as a team building challenge. However, the weather almost dampened the spirits for staff from Cheltenham based Marlborough Stirling as their David Hastings explains . . .

As team leader of a Marlborough Stirling challenge team, you have many tasks to carry out prior to the event. One of these is to check the forecast for the day to ensure that the volunteers are well and truly prepared for the vagaries of the British weather. An outdoor challenge in early August would mean shorts, T-shirts, sun hats and loads of that all essential protective sunscreen... ? This dream was shattered at 06.00 when most of Gloucestershire was awoken with a huge thunderstorm and torrential rain – not the most auspicious start to a day of digging in the open.

By 09.00 the worst had passed and after checking with our Health & Safety Officer, a gallant team of 9 volunteers, more used to spending their working day in an office, set off for Over. We were well prepared with wellington boots, gloves, waterproofs, loads of water and great enthusiasm for the task in hand. We were welcomed by Nigel Bailey and Mike Bowden from the H&G CT - and a row of wheelbarrows laden with various digging implements. Nigel gave a very interesting and informative introduction to the Canal Trust and



^ Above: No there are no pythons at Over! It's the land drain being carried to the site of the holt.

◀ **Top:** The Marlborough 'Stirling' team take a well-earned break.

Below: The holt starts to take shape.

the history of the canal. A notable point for our benefit was that before any work started on the canal in 1791 the first thing the builders did was to make and assemble 250 wheel-barrow, one for each for the workmen hired to build all 34 miles of canal. *Ours would be a very simple task in comparison to theirs!*

Mike gave us a briefing on what he would like us to do. Excavation work had started on the pipes and chamber for the artificial otter holt a while ago, but considerably more was required to finish the task. So off we went to the banks of the River Leadon, which on that particular day with the mist, dampness and humidity was more like the banks of a river in the heart of a tropical jungle! We needed to dig out much more earth for the chamber and the two pipes – the depth and width of each had to be constructed to very precise measurements defined by the Nature Trust and environmental specialists from the Environment Agency. With a Civil Engineer in charge we had little choice but to regularly request his approval of our work! We worked in small teams each doing different tasks – in the case of digging the trench for the pipes one person would fork and loosen the earth whilst the other rested and then the rested person used a spade to remove the earth whilst the forker rested. With limited space this seemed to be the best solution and also got the best out of us. The sight of some of the volunteers manhandling a very long 10.5 inch diameter bendy pipe down to the site will long remain a hilarious impression.

Before we knew it lunchtime came and 9 rather unappealing looking volunteers repaired for a much deserved lunch. Well

rested and fed we returned to the site for the next phase. This was when a spirit level and measure were much in evidence as we needed to get as near as we could to the exact measurements required by Mike (and, we assume, the otters themselves!). The lining fabric was laid in the dug out pipe trench and with much heaving, and manhandling the bendy pipe was laid and surrounded with shale. All the earth that had been dug up was then rather ceremoniously returned from whence it came, tamped down on top of the lining fabric, pipe and shale.

Whilst this was going on, the digging of the chamber continued apace and the additional digging of the trenches (again to very exact measurements) for the breeze blocks on which the final structure of the chamber would rest. With the first pipe virtually finished the first breeze blocks were laid in the chamber so we had a good idea of what the finished interior would look like.

Time though was up and the volunteers had a chance to inspect their work – *great progress had been made, several pounds lost and quite a few aching muscles gained.* We left the site tired (and not very nice to be near!) but with a sense of achievement - and a hope that we had made a good contribution to an excellent wildlife conservation cause.

Once in the bus – guess what – the heavens opened and another cracking thunderstorm!

◆ **DH**

Our sincere thanks to Marlborough Stirling, and especially to the challenge team, for making such good progress on the otter holt – a further day should finish it. They are currently trying to persuade another team to join us (but we cannot promise sun!). We are also very grateful to Alfred McAlpine for donating and delivering the land drain that was needed for the holt. – Ed.

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Not Quite ... THE LAST PAGE

ADVERTISING IN The Wharfinger

We are very pleased to welcome Colin Dymott to **The Wharfinger** Team as our new volunteer advertising co-ordinator. Not only will Colin be the point of contact for our existing advertisers but he will be seeking new businesses to support us – and the fruits of his voluntary labours are already bearing fruit with a new advertisement from **Tarmac Western Ltd** in this issue.

If you run a business (national or local) and would like further details of advertising then Colin can be contacted on 01981 540 488 – these details are on the inside back page (under the Membership Subscription rates) in each issue.

◆ CRP

A Bootiful Idea !

Kelly Weaver is raising funds for the H&G CT by selling unwanted items at car boot sales; all money raised being donated to the Canal Trust.

If you have anything that might be sold at a car boot sale and want to assist the Canal Trust and do not have the time to do so yourself, then Kelly will be happy to collect (in the Hereford area). Please contact Kelly on 07779 161 237

Thank you.



Copies of our new Membership Leaflet?

Do you have friends neighbours, contacts, to whom you would like to give the new membership leaflet? Are there pubs, clubs, community halls, workplaces in your locality where a few leaflets would be of interest?

If you would like some more leaflets please contact Janet Moulton (see inside back cover for details).



Thank you! ...

We greatly appreciated the donation of a case of Gloucestershire apple juice from Richard Elgie at Hiltier Fruit Farm which was enjoyed by all of those attending the official opening of House Lock, Oxenhall.

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.

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For more information – please contact Janet Moulton.

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Want to help? ...

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Membership records are computerised. Your entry is available for inspection if you send a SAE to the Membership Secretary.

Whilst we try to ensure dates are correct please verify them with a relevant Organiser.
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The 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 1,200 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.

