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Magazine of the Herefordshire and Gloucestershire Canal Trust



Winter 2007/8

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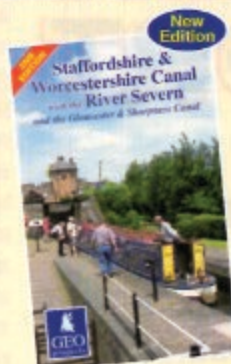
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FRONT COVER PHOTO:

Nearing the top of the Ell Brook Aqueduct
spandrel wall – by Brian Fox.

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◆ CHAIRMAN'S COLUMN ◆

I hope you have all had a good summer and found some dry weather and sunshine. I spent a few days in Wales and made a trip on the Tallyllyn Railway, which prompted me to re-read L T C Rolt's 'Railway Adventure'. Tom Rolt, when he became involved in the restoration of this railway, studied the Transport Act 1947 and found one omission – the Tallyllyn Railway Company. This he found very surprising as the bill was so comprehensive as to include "such ghostly concerns as the Hereford and Gloucester Canal Company, whose property is more difficult to trace today than Offa's Dyke". This was written in 1953 – how things have changed in 54 years!

Work is progressing in so many ways along the whole length of the Canal. Often the work is not 'visible' with many discussions in progress; others are highly 'visible' – such as the continued work on the Ell Brook Aqueduct, and at Yarkhill. The Oxenhall and Yarkhill Open Days, and (only!) the September Open Day at Over, were dry and sunny and attracted good crowds. I was pleased to be able to meet more of the Members and see them catch up with our physical progress.

We are very pleased to welcome another new Vice President – Mark Harper (Member of Parliament for the Forest of Dean) has agreed to join the other Vice Presidents – who include his parliamentary predecessor, Diana Organ plus Robert Barnes, Duff Hart-Davis and James Hervey-Bathurst.

The bequest mentioned in the last edition of **The Wharfinger** is still under discussion with the Executors of the Estate; we hope to be able to announce more details in the next issue.

We are sorry that we are going to lose one of our long-standing members of the Council of Management. Nigel Bailey, and his wife Liz, are escaping over the border into Wales (*I hope it is not for the free prescriptions!*). Their work in so many areas, ^{THE} WHARF HOUSE, the website, Restoration Fund, contributions to **The Wharfinger**, Over Open Days . . . to name but a few, has been invaluable to the H&G CT. We shall miss them and wish them well.

We look forward to 2008 when we celebrate the 25th anniversary of the founding of the Herefordshire and Gloucestershire Canal Society. *Seasons Greetings and a Happy New Year to all our Members and supporters.*

◆ Janet Moulton, Chairman



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It was not a bad year!

by Cliff Penny

With only a few weeks left of 2007 it is perhaps appropriate to review 'our' year. Yes, it was a very wet year and to cap it all Gloucestershire was the worst affected part of the country during the unprecedented July floods. So we could be forgiven for some pretty negative reporting on our activities during 2007. Whilst undoubtedly the appalling weather did impact on very many aspects of our voluntary work both in raising public awareness and fund raising, as well as in physical progress on the ground, 2007 was most certainly not a bad year!

Our cover photograph shows progress on the second face of the Ell Brook Aqueduct at Oxenhall towards the end of September – compare this to the photograph that we carried in our Autumn 2006 edition (*below*). Whilst our volunteers at Oxenhall had additional challenges due to the very bad weather

(*what a time to be working on top of a watercourse!*) they have made excellent progress. And it should be remembered that for years many people have suggested that the crumbling remains of the Ell Brook Aqueduct were beyond repair. Just look at what the Oxenhall team are achieving as a result of their voluntarily acquired masonry skills – together with a good measure of H&G CT style determination.

As the letter on page 7 reflects, our Yarkhill team did a lot more than survive the ravages of the weather over past year – holding a highly successful Open Day within a few weeks of the floods. Regular and first time visitors were able to see the progress made by our dedicated Yarkhill team since the Open Day last year.

Physical work in Hereford City also took a further step forward when Herefordshire Council let the specialist contract for the removal of the contaminated silt at Aylestone Park. Yes, the Contractors had to work in rather wetter conditions than they would have liked but this essential part of the work was satisfactorily completed so that our volunteers can now complete the restoration of the Canal and towpath at this location.

Over, of course, cannot be overlooked. Both within and outside ^{THE} WHARF HOUSE considerable work has been undertaken. Yes, the severe weather created additional work but those parts of the site that were badly affected were quickly restored and very considerable improvements have been achieved over the past year. *It is easy to underestimate the amount of voluntary work on the site – and*



Above: The second face of Ell Brook Aqueduct before the restoration began.

the diversity of what has been achieved. Another challenge that we had to contend with during 2007 was the unexpected reduction in the level of grant awarded by DEFRA (75% promised yet only 50% received) leaving us with a £80,000 hole in the budget to complete the fit-out on the upper floors. Undaunted our team has continued with the fit-out (albeit at a slower pace to reflect the funding available) and over the year considerable progress has been made. In addition, whilst at the height of the floods the visitor centre, tea rooms/restaurant was forced to close for 2 weeks, the staff worked hard to bounce back and were soon continuing in the pattern of the year - with much praise and yet more excellent reviews in the press.

Much else has been achieved in 2007. The whole objective of restoring the 34 miles of the H&G Canal in the two counties could have been thwarted in one foul

swoop by the construction of the largest gas transmission pipeline in the UK! Our route could have been irretrievably blocked or the presence of the pipeline might have led to massive additional costs when we came to restore the Canal in the vicinity. Early in 2007 we were able to report the considerable co-operation of National Grid which has ensured (*at considerable additional expense to their project*) that the 48" diameter pipeline will have no adverse impact on the Canal.

During an (exceedingly hectic) year of 'behind the scenes' negotiations much progress has also been made setting the scene for a number of developments which will be of significant benefit to the Canal - including a number of smaller sites in Hereford City - plus the major proposals for the redevelopment of the Holmer Trading Estate. In 2007 we have achieved what could prove to be the most significant single step in the overall project in the release of the public consultation document for the massive Edgar Street Grid redevelopment confirming both the new approach canal and the large new Hereford terminus Canal Basin as a major feature at the very heart of the redevelopment. *So don't let the weather get you down - 2007 most certainly was not a bad year for the H&G Canal!* ♦ CRP



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Dear Editor,

A brilliant Editorial in edition 93 ('*Canal is asset for flood relief*'). Thank you.

You put the case for sensible solutions to drainage, amenity and environment clearly and convincingly. Topical and surely convincing to any councillor looking to reassure flood wary voters.

Good luck,

Peter Lawrence, Malvern

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DAVID PROUT: 1934-2007

As the last issue of The Wharfinger went to press we heard of the sad news of the sudden death of one of our Vice-Presidents, David Prout. David had been very supportive of the Canal Trust (his most recent involvement being the 'new' engine for our stone saw as reported in Ed 92.). He had a passion for anything mechanical and was well known as the Chairman of the Ross-on-Wye Steam Engine Society. Sadly their Welland Steam Rally in July was flooded out; it was subsequently held in September in his honour.

His funeral, in mid August, brought Dymock to a halt, over 600 people crowded into the church and churchyard and were greeted by music from his restored steam fairground organ *The Whistling Dixie*. His coffin was brought to the Church behind his beloved restored 1911 Burrell showman's engine *Nancy*.

He was a much respected member of the Dymock Parish Council and Dymock gave him a fond farewell. We extend our sympathy to his family.

♦♦ Janet Moults



Photo: Old Glory magazine/Ian Bartlett

Dear Editor,

A big thank you to Chris High and all of the volunteers for the Open Day at Yarkhill in August. I was visiting the area - I live in Hampshire - and was most impressed by the enthusiasm of everyone present and by the hard work that had clearly been done in preparation for the day itself - the towpath was neatly mown, bushes cut back and the lock excavated and marked out with stakes and tape. All in all a very impressive effort by all involved. And not forgetting the refreshments team - **the cakes were lovely!**

I wish you every success and look forward to the day when a stretch of the canal is open for navigation once again.

Best wishes, **Peter King**, Hampshire



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Photo: Derek Weaver



At the end of the last Trading Company diary I hoped for drier weather – well it was a long time coming! **Braunston Historic Boat Rally** was another wet weekend – Ray, Barbara, Steve and Des coped with muddy car parks and soggy marquees, but we received a very generous donation from Tim Coghlan (thank you, Tim). The weather then got even wetter and the **Saul Canal Festival** had to be cancelled; our sympathy to our colleague volunteers at the **Cotswold Canals Trust** who put so much effort into this each year.

Heather and I spent the afternoon at **Tibberton Fete** (would you have guessed - in the rain!); subsequently things began to improve – slowly. Then, at the end of August, we made our long journey to the **National Waterways Festival** at St Ives, Cambridgeshire where it did not rain – but we still got wet! (see Derek and Taryna Weaver's report on page 30).

Above: Tim Coghlan of Braunston Marina (right) with Sonya Rolt (centre) presents the H&G CT with a generous donation at the Braunston Historic Boat Rally.

In early September Penny, Tom and Derek had a dry but noisy day at **Newent Onion Fayre** and we thankfully had a dry and sunny day for our own **Oxenhall Open Day**; it was well supported by visitors who enjoyed tours of the site as well as our refreshments and displays – and also kindly patronised our sales stand.

At the time of writing we still have our visit to **Apple Day at Oxenhall** and our **H&G CT Craft Fair** in Ledbury. Thanks to the weather this year has been a difficult one but we have continued to make our presence known around the country despite this added challenge.

◀ JM

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Welcome to another new Vice-President

Mark Harper MP

Mark was born in 1970 and educated at the Headlands School, Swindon College and Brasenose College, University of Oxford. In 1995 Mark qualified as a Chartered Accountant with KPMG. Until 2002, Mark worked for Intel Corporation in a variety of roles including finance, business operations and marketing before establishing his own chartered accountancy practice in the Forest of Dean.

In 2001 he stood as the Conservative candidate for the Forest of Dean in the general election. Mark was re-selected as Conservative Parliamentary Candidate for the Forest of Dean in July 2002 and in May 2005 he was elected as Member of Parliament. In December 2005 Mark was appointed Shadow Minister for Defence. In April 2007 David Cameron announced his responsibility for the Forces Families Manifesto, to be produced for the next election, and his new title, Shadow Minister for Forces Families Welfare. In July 2007 Mark was appointed Shadow Minister for Disabled People.



GRAND HOLIDAY DRAW 2007



Thank you to everyone who bought tickets – yet again over £2,000 was raised thanks to the hard work of our volunteers and the many Members who regularly support this important fund-raising initiative. As always our sincere thanks to the three prize sponsors without whose support the draw would not exist. Our thanks also to Eastnor Castle who sponsored the ticket printing costs.

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RESTORATION

at Oxenhall *by Brian Fox*

The water levels in the Ell Brook remained at a high level for several weeks after the July floods (reported in the last edition). Eventually the murky water cleared and the level was low enough so that we were able to see the bed below the scaffolding. It revealed what power there can be in flood water. In one respect it did us a favour as it scoured out all the accumulated mud from under the arch which we had planned to shift manually at some time! All the original stonework, from the invert upwards, is now revealed in all its glory – it has not been seen for many years. From an initial examination it looks to be in very good order. Apart from the patches in the stonework of the arch which we knew about, and plan to repair, the structure looks quite sound.

The downside of the force of flood water is a deep hole in the stream bed immediately downstream of the arch where the water has washed out further debris accumulated over the years. Several large stones have been uncovered which have clearly fallen from the aqueduct in the past. All the smaller particles (from brick size downwards) have been washed out, creating this hole, and deposited about 10 yards further downstream to form a low dam across the brook. This raised the water level under the arch by about a foot and it was clearly not going to go down any further until the dam was removed. It has taken one gang working in the stream bed with shovels and wheelbarrow over several weeks to return the dam material back into the hole by the aqueduct from which it came! Many of the large stones have also been removed and hoisted up but the water is still too deep in places to get them all out. They may have to remain until they are covered again as the stream silts up naturally over the next few months.



MORE FLOOD DAMAGE

Further damage has been done to one of the stream banks next to the aqueduct where the water has undermined one of the wing walls although it is still standing. Plans are being made to construct a retaining wall of willow stakes driven into the bed and interlaced with other willow branches. This will quickly grow, much as the wigloo at Gloucester, and provide



Photo: Nigel Bailey

The leafy wigloo at Gloucester

a permanent defence against further erosion. The banks have now been largely cleared of flood debris and Dave M. had a wonderful time when he was finally given permission to have a bonfire and burn this and other vegetation accumulated over the summer!

Despite the weather, work has been continuing on the spandrel wall above the arch, and is now within a couple of feet of the top (*see front cover photo*) but it will stop for the time being while other jobs are tackled.

WATER DIVINING

We have been planning for some time now to drain the pound below the lock in order to make repairs to one of the wing walls and also to find the source of a small leak which is allowing water into our neighbour's field and making it boggy.

Before the pound was drained everyone was given a test to see if they had the 'power' to divine water. 2 small rods were made out of a length of wire and held in each hand in the requisite manner as demonstrated by Martyn T. who had done it before. The test was to walk across the top of the dam and see who could detect the overflow water running through the pipe about 1 ft beneath the surface. This was not just a game and there was a motive because anyone found to 'have the power' would then be asked to walk along the side of the canal, in the

vicinity of the leak, to try and pinpoint a position to investigate by digging! There were 8 who took the test and 3 who got a twitch as they passed over the



John goes fishing before the pound is emptied

overflow, one of whom was Martyn. These three then walked the section with the leak and all got readings in a couple of places which will now be investigated. If we do indeed find leaks in the places indicated then I shall indeed be impressed. *[Whilst navigating the Shropshire Union Canal in September we spotted British Waterways doing exactly the same along one of the embankments – Ed.]*

Then the plugs were pulled out of the drain pipes by Martyn T, our latest recruit, who finished up well spattered by the deluge of dirty water such was the force. I think we can now say he has been initiated and hope he still comes back! John F. had been recalled, after several months' absence, in order to use his fishing expertise and nets to catch the fish which have found residence since we filled the pound 3 years ago. It only took about 3 hours to drain the section. We had to take a late lunch while we completed the catching of the



Photos: John Chappell



Above: Under the arch showing the join between old and new masonry.

Left: Martin and Michael regrading the eroded bed of the Ell Brook.

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fish in the nets and rounded up those left floundering in the muddy pools to transfer to the upper pound. What we found was quite unexpected. Apart from several roach and rudd as anticipated, there were about 20 wild carp and even some red koi weighing up to 12lb, not forgetting a couple of elvers in the mud and about 1,000 sticklebacks. We have also seen several bigger carp in the pound above the lock but it is a mystery where they come from. It all looks a bit of a mess now but some temporary scaffolding has already been erected over the mud to start work on the wing wall and the water will be back again soon.



John searches for the last fish in the pound

Every year a programme of work is prepared for the coming months and a budget agreed to pay for materials required. It has to be flexible but normally it consists of building work when the weather and brook levels are OK, and maintenance interspersed all the year – with extra emphasis being put on trees and larger vegetation in the winter. Unfortunately, for the last few months, our programme has been severely interrupted due to circumstances beyond our control!

ATTEMPTED MURDER!

Apart from the flood crisis we had to deal with two illegally parked caravans on land at the old railway station in Newent – and this proved to be a far more complex situation than first thought.

Before the H&G CT could take any action, late at night one of the caravans was set on



The wreckage of the burnt out caravans.

Photos: John Chappell and Brian Fox

fire – with a real risk that the flames could have spread to the other. All seven occupants escaped unhurt. Police acted swiftly and arrested an 18year old who subsequently pleaded guilty to charges of reckless arson and of possessing an imitation firearm. *But this is not the end of this story.*

As well as statements to the Police, as the H&G CT are responsible for the site, we have to remove the burnt out wreckage and dispose of it in an authorised manner – otherwise H&G CT will be prosecuted!



OXENHALL OPEN DAY



All these shenanigans didn't stop us from preparing for the Open Day in September and also a national Heritage weekend the week before. The site was looking pretty tidy by then thanks to hard work by our maintenance team and much use of the mowers recently donated to the H&G CT. *Thanks to everyone who visited us and a warm welcome to the new Members who enrolled on the day.*

◀ BF

Work at Yarkhill *by Chris High*



Photos: Chris High

Above: Most of the Yarkhill team.

Middle: Two sleepers were missing from the bridge after the floods had subsided.

Below: Chris shows the Open Day visitors the progress on the Barr's Lock investigatory excavation.

Soon after my last report the floods hit the county! At Yarkhill the whole canal corridor became full. As we have not got to a point where we will construct a permanent storm weir the canal overflowed its banks, towpath and the adjacent drainage ditches. Water flowed through the site hut – *and out again* – with no serious effect. Two of the three sleepers of our footbridge across the drainage ditch were lifted, floated and deposited twenty yards downstream. The Thursday work team made short work of the sleeper retrieval and reinstatement and also carried out considerable mowing, strimming and general tidying of the site prior to our August Open Day. The ongoing maintenance of the site is taking up more and more of the team's time; essential but detracting from our restoration work – a situation that can only be resolved by further mechanisation!

The Open Day was blessed with good weather. My thanks to Jim at the village hall for allowing us to set up the exhibition stand and exhibits on the Saturday evening and to the team who were up early on the Sunday changing road signs, erecting bunting and banners and pumping out the lock dig. We attracted over 100 visitors to the hall of whom in excess of 80 took the walk across the fields to the canal where our work and aspirations were explained. *Again my thanks to all who helped make the day a success. [See letters, page 7.]*

Progress continues at the lock dig albeit only making it longer and



Photo: Meggie Jones



Above: A ploughing match takes place in an adjoining field.

Right: Minor branches are cleared.

Right middle: A huge tree stump is cleared from the Canal bed.

Bottom: The cleared bed.

deeper but with no conclusions so far. The stone continues to slope, the 'wild' (off) side trench side is showing mortar deposits and a hard face in places, and the water is getting deeper! There will now be a break in our lock investigation work while we get ourselves fully equipped to extend our work safely at the greater depths.

As a result of the Open Day we gained three new volunteers. Stella, Penny and Ralph now join us regularly for our Thursday workdays. Our larger work team has invigorated us all with several tasks being tackled each week. Colin and Jerry have burnt the mountain of rubbish accumulated throughout the summer. Eileen, Stella, Penny and Steve have cleared the ivy that is stifling some of the trees and are now cutting brush from the ditch bank. Bernard strims regularly whilst Peter attends to overhanging branches. That just leaves Ralph and myself pulling stumps from the canal bed and banks.

On a recent sunny autumnal day, with a ploughing match taking place across the fields, the team reached double figures for the first time. The occasion was celebrated by the ten of us making short work of the chocolate cake that Penny provided. *Now what can I suggest we celebrate next!*

Interested in helping at Yarkhill? Then please contact **Chris High** on 01568 615 575.



Photos: Chris High



They poured it here they poured it there – that concrete was being laid everywhere!

Above: new foundation being laid for the back yard of THE WHARF HOUSE.

Below: The concrete is poured for the foundations of the 'cycle cave' and the adjoining walls.



Photos: Ted Beagles and Maggie Jones

Barrie Haysman takes over the Over quarterly update role from Nigel Bailey – here is his first report...

Over the last few months we have been working on a number of key areas; recovery from the floods, continuation of THE WHARF HOUSE fit-out, routine maintenance of plant and equipment and preparation for future project works.

The floods came to the Over site. The River Leaddon, a newly formed lake as far as the eye could see, topped out over the Canal Basin and flowed straight across our site to join up with the river Severn. These floods left in their wake much damage to be repaired and, wildlife-wise, we lost all three of our large (ten kilo plus) fish; but the otter has been sighted still here on site. Since the flood our gardeners (Mike, Malcolm and Tim) have worked tirelessly to start to bring back the site to its former glory. An excavator and dumper truck were on site for over a week working on the damage caused by the flood and on some future projects (sorry gardeners for tramping over your flower beds with big caterpillar tracks). I was fortunate that Chris Tothill (who has the appropriate training certificates from WRG) arrived and, to my surprise and delight – *boys and their toys!* – I was trained on the dumper truck and the excavator. I was previously not aware just how difficult it was, and how spatial awareness was needed, to use the excavator but after a couple of weeks working I started to get more competent and confident.

THE GREAT CONCRETE POUR

The preparation for some future projects also got under way. With the advent of heavy equipment coming to site, a call went out to volunteers from our other restoration groups for a week of maximum effort, and we got a good response – *thank you all for your efforts.* The foundations for THE WHARF HOUSE 'cycle cave' and bank retaining wall, driveway garden wall foundations and a new concrete stand outside

the kitchen extension were all completed. It was good to have the planning and sequence of events 'on the button' with the ready mix concrete lorry arriving at 11.00am just as we completed the final shuttering for the foundations. This was an invitation for Wilf and Ted to wade into the middle of the holes and have concrete poured around them, but I have to report they finally escaped their concrete overshoes to take charge of the other works on site!

THE WHARF HOUSE FIT-OUT

THE WHARF HOUSE fit-out project has progressed to a point where we are showing the effects of all our efforts. All around the building you can see second colour topcoats, varnish being applied to the woodwork as well as mahogany thresholds being made and fitted for all the doorways. *Our particular thanks for the efforts of the volunteers working on the decoration of THE WHARF HOUSE.*

MECHANICAL SUCCESS

Our maintenance crew (Tony and John) have also had some major successes with the 5inch pump being repaired after it had been submerged when the floods hit. The weed boat has finally had all of its required repairs completed, and been put back together, and we are looking for a volunteer to skipper her on her maiden voyage giving us back the ability to get the weed in the Basin under control. The cement mixer, mowers and other equipment are all working effectively – I believe some of this equipment is older than some of us, so our maintenance team are doing well!

◆ BH



Top: One of the bedrooms walls of THE WHARF HOUSE get a second coat.

Below: The 'boys with their toys' prepare the foundations to the 'cycle cave'.

Bottom: More concrete is poured to protect the pipework alongside the basin.



OVER OPEN DAYS

With three very wet or cancelled Open Days under our belt we kept our fingers crossed that at least the last Open Day of the year would be fine. Our prayers were answered and the sunshine brought a good turnout of visitors. Many of them as a result of the Heritage Weekend event which gave publicity to Over Basin as one of the suggested attractions to visit.

◆ MJ

Social Evenings at The Royal Oak

Everyone is welcome to our monthly meetings held on the third Tuesday of every month, 7.30pm for an 8pm start.

Please note that due to an increase in the cost of our hiring the room there will be a £1 per person admission charge – we hope that you will agree this is a small price to pay for what are invariably interesting evenings.

NOTE: No meeting in December

JANUARY 15TH

The first (or last) miles of the H & G

David Holton

A personal view of the remains of the canal in Hereford with 200+ images.

FEBRUARY 19TH

Members' evening

Slides and digital images from our intrepid members; USA, Europe and UK. Now we can offer digital and slide projectors – let Janet Moulton know if you would like to bring along your canal related pictures

MARCH 18TH

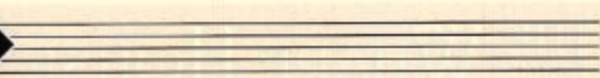
Gloucestershire and Warwickshire Railway

Tony Bowles

Our trains evening is another restoration project in one of our counties.

Come and join us you will be made very welcome!





We wish a
Merry Christmas
and a
Happy New Year
to all our Readers!



IWA The Inland
Waterways
Association

Gloucestershire & Herefordshire IWA Branch

18 January 2008

Informal Dinner at The Wharf House

Booking, menu and other details
from Alan Watts on 07976 617 983

Meetings at Gloucester
Yacht Club at 7.30pm

7 February 2008 Boat Building

Tim Davis from Big Fish
Narrowboats

6 March 2007 - AGM

+ a 'state of the nation' talk

Ian Jarvis (BW Manager, South-West)

For further details of any of the above:

Martin Turner 01291 650605

An Invitation to **all** our Volunteers

SKITTLES



SOCIAL

Join us in this popular event at
**The Rising Sun,
Hartpury**

Saturday, January 12th at 7.30 pm

Whether working on the restoration of
the Canal, fitting out ^{THE} WHARF HOUSE,
working on our Sales Stand or helping
with the administration of the Trust,
you are all invited to join in.

£7 per head - Food included.

Please book in advance by contacting
Tony Boonham 01452 700476

The key concern for businesses after the floods was to get things up and running once more, and for ^{THE} WHARF HOUSE this was very much the case. Unlike some businesses close by, the building itself had escaped being flooded, but its close location to the river meant that potential customers may have thought it was not yet open.

With maximum publicity in the local press, and a large banner on the main road declaring ^{THE} WHARF HOUSE to be open, people were left in no doubt that it was back to normal. The Three Choirs Festival, held in Gloucester this year, brought in some of the first customers and as the autumn loomed diners were back enjoying lunch and dinner once more.

From time to time restaurant reviewers

book in to sample the food. As a result **thebestofgloucester Website** reports: –

“The Wharf House chefs are among the finest in Gloucester. They put a new spin on old English favourites, making The Wharf House the best place for classic English cuisine, not just in Gloucester, but in the whole of the South West.”

... and an independent reviewer, Nigel Saunders, from Gloucester, writing into the **So Gloucester website** said: –

“The Wharf House is arguably Gloucester's best restaurant – I've been at least five times and it's never failed to impress. The Herefordshire lamb is excellent and there's a decent wine list too.”

With the Christmas season looming on the horizon it was time for the new Christmas menus to be launched. Chef,



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Greetings

Gift Idea!

Andy Chapman, and David Penny have put together a mouth watering seasonal selection of dishes – and yes, once again turkey is *not* an option. "We have found that our WHARF HOUSE customers would prefer an alternative to the traditional turkey", says David.

Among the Christmas customers is the local branch of the Inland Waterways Association who have booked for early in the new year. *[why not join them – further details are within the IWA panel on page 21]* To them, and to all THE WHARF HOUSE customers, we wish you **Season's Greetings and a very Happy New Year!**



Treat your friends and family to a lunch, dinner or afternoon tea at **THE WHARF HOUSE.**

Vouchers from £5, presented in an Over Basin card by Garth Allen.

For details contact **THE WHARF HOUSE** on 01452 33 2 900.

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Remember!

All profits from THE WHARF HOUSE will be used for the promotion and restoration of the Hereford & Gloucester Canal.

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It has been our pleasure in supporting the Herefordshire and Gloucestershire Canal Trust for over 15 years, and we will continue to *work together in the present, to revive the past, and secure a better future.*

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For further details please
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AYLESTONE PARK CANAL PROJECT

Stabilised silts
within the road
construction.

*Following the news report in the **Hereford Times**, and the article on page 12 of the last edition of **The Wharfinger**, CELTIC Technologies Limited were in touch to point out that they were responsible for the specialist treatment of the contaminated silt that has been safely removed from the canal at Aylestone Park. They explain their role:-*

CELTIC Technologies Limited was commissioned by Herefordshire Council to construct an access road at the Aylestone Park as part of its development into a new public park and playing fields. The Aylestone Park northern boundary is delineated by the Hereford and Gloucester canal which over the years became infilled with approximately 1,800m³ of sediments impacted with hydrocarbons and metal contamination. The road construction design offered the sustainable solution of stabilising the sediments and reusing them as fill within the road as proposed by Owen Williams (representing Hereford Council).

The scope of the silt remediation works included ongoing consultation with the Environment Agency and the Council's Environmental Health Officers to agree the clean-up targets for the sediment, the transfer of CELTIC's Mobile Treatment Licence to the site, recovery and treatment of the sediments with Evocem stabilising powders (CELTIC's proprietary product) and placement of treated material under the road during construction.

To achieve the scope of works, prior

to excavating the sediments, the water influx into the canal was temporarily diverted to the ditch downstream of the canal. Following confirmation that no nesting birds resided in the canal vegetation the marginal plants were removed and left to regrow on the canal bank. A total of 1,805 m³ of sediments was excavated from the canal until the original puddle clay was exposed. The sediments were treated within a purpose built and licensed treatment area and Evocem was applied to the sediments utilising specialist mixing and blending plant to reach the design parameters. Following stabilisation the new material was placed and compacted in layers up to 800 mm thick within the road, car park area and banking under a cover layer.

Environmental monitoring undertaken during the works included groundwater sampling from three boreholes, and live monitoring of vapour, noise and dust to confirm that these works have been entirely beneficial to the environment. In conclusion, the canal remediation works were highly successful by removing contamination from this sensitive environment and ensuring sustainability through recycling the sediments as a useful material and enabling the H&G CT to now go on to complete their voluntary work in restoring this section of the canal.

◆ CT Ltd.

[We understand that our advertisers Castle Cement provided the cement used in the stabilisation process – Ed.]

Photo: Celtic Technologies Limited

Peter Bell's



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THE TUG ALDER

by Caroline Jones

Following Caroline's introduction to the H&G CT's 'new' boat (page 30 of the last edition), the time came for Alder to be moved from Devizes to Over Basin; unfortunately, this was not possible by water...

Having received the lease for the boat Alder from British Waterways, I then had to organise getting ten tons of boat from the Kennet & Avon Canal to the Hereford & Gloucester Canal. Discussion with BW managers revealed that a 'contract lift' was needed, as we would be lifting from BW land. A contract lift is rather more complicated than usual as there is rather more paperwork required! BW warned us that this would be expensive but was absolutely necessary, so a contract lift it would have to be.

Below: Alder, loaded on to the lorry at Devizes Wharf on the Kennet and Avon Canal.

I got a quote from Ellis Crane Hire, Gloucester, for the lifts required at both canals and phoned a couple of companies advertising in the waterway magazines for comparison. Bill Ellis gave us a competitive price so they were appointed as was Ellis Transport who were able to supply a suitable lorry. Bill Ellis visited both sites to ascertain how the job would be carried out, sorted out the paperwork and supplied a 'crane plan' to BW for their approval.

British Waterways M&E Engineer for South West Waterways, Neil Smith, kept in touch throughout and organised the moving of the boat from Crofton (where I'd initially seen it in May 2006) to somewhere suitable to lift it out. He also ensured that paperwork was in order and got approved. The place decided upon for the lift was Devizes Wharf - which brought with it the requirement to get permission from Kennet District Council to get their coach park closed for the crane. I contacted the Council to be told that permission would be no problem, they would close off the coach park, and that a fee of £70.50 was payable!

Bill Ellis suggested a move date, I agreed as long as BW and Kennet District Council were happy. A few phone calls later, they both were (and I was £70.50 poorer!) and the date was set. With the crane and lorry booked on October 15th for 8.00am at Devizes Wharf, at 5.30am my husband Neil and I set off for Devizes. We passed

the crane on the motorway and arrived just before 8.00am at Devizes, the coach park was deserted and there were no cones; however, within minutes a Council 'parking person' arrived, she set out seven cones and



Photo: Caroline Jones



then left – I make that £10.07 per cone, a bargain!

The crane arrived shortly after 8.00am; the crew (James the driver plus able assistants Tom and Reg) stabilised the crane ready to go - but we didn't yet have a lorry so they did a trial lift and out of the water came Alder. The crane crew were happy so back in she went – to await the lorry. Coffee was poured but, before I'd drunk mine, the lorry arrived! The lift was carried out with ease, James pronounced that the boat weighed 11tons but as the front was full of rainwater we decided that it probably actually weighs 10tons (just about what I'd worked out, from the archive paperwork for each vessel the tug is made from!).

Alder was loaded by 11.00am and the crane set off back to Gloucester, followed 20 minutes later by the lorry followed by Neil and myself. A local BW employee, Steve Richings, appeared to see the boat off, he told us that it had started well the previous Friday when he'd steered it to Devizes; this was a great surprise

Above: Alder, is craned off of the transport lorry at Over.

Left: Alder, ready for hull inspection and blacking.



as we'd previously thought the engine didn't run. Steve told us that Alder is a very fast little tug and that with a decent depth of water would travel at some pace, also that it would cope very well with the River Severn – *just as well really bearing in mind our eventual means of access to the main waterway system!*

Phone calls to David at ^{THE} WHARF HOUSE on the way back ensured he knew when to expect us, and to Wilf Jones so his grandson got to see the big crane! We arrived back at Over just before the crane; lorry driver Mike skilfully reversed across the narrow bridge at the entrance to the Basin to get as close as possible. Unfortunately it didn't all quite fit so out went the lorry, the crew repositioned the crane and Mike reversed in again! This time, once we had moved a pallet of bricks, it all fitted. By 2.00pm Alder was sitting on the baulks of wood set on the ground alongside the Basin at Over. After a welcome cup of tea, courtesy of ^{THE} WHARF HOUSE, the crane and lorry departed, James having first eyed up the lift needed to get the boat into the Basin in the future.

We now need to clean off the hull ready for painting as it has a fair amount of resident wildlife. This is hardly surprising as we found out that morning that the last time the boat had been taken out of the water and blacked was in 1991!

The total cost of getting the boat to

Gloucester has come to £1,821.25, any donations to offset this will be very gratefully received by the H&G CT, as will any towards the paint and materials needed to refurbish the boat in the future. A small fleet of vessels will be needed to restore the canal and, importantly, maintain the re-watered sections. All

canals need dredging and Alder will be a useful tug to help with this work.

Our grateful thanks go to Bill Ellis and his team, James, Tom and Reg, Paul Ellis and his driver Mike. Also to Neil Smith and Steve Richings at BW and our BW project partner, David Bass.

◆ CJ

Do you remember the tug **ALDER** in Gloucester?

A request for information and photographs from Caroline Jones.



My research shows that the first tug ALDER was a 22 ft push tug made from the stern of an FMC motorboat of the same name. This push tug was brought to Gloucester Repair Yard in 1968/69 for a complete overhaul, including the addition of a set of bows taken from an old dayboat on the Gloucester & Sharpness Canal.

Do you remember this tug being overhauled? It must have been a big job, as the day boat would have been cut up at the same time. Do you remember it being trialled on the Gloucester & Sharpness Canal in

its new form? Do you have in your photographic collections at home, any images of the tug either as a push tug arriving at Gloucester or as a standard tug leaving Gloucester? Or even of the dayboat before it was cut up? Do you have any images of Gloucester Repair Yard at work in the late 1960s?

Our archivist Caroline Jones will very gratefully receive any memories, stories or pictures of the tug in either form and of the work done on it. She can be contacted on 01594 861286 or at her day job at The Waterways Archive on 01452 318224.

◆ CJ



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A trip to St Ives ...

Our display at St Ives, with the muddy pathway in front of our marquee

For many years Derek and Taryna Weaver have been active supporters of the H&G CT and have also attended many events both locally and nationally to help with the promotional display and sales stand. As new (and welcome!) contributors to **The Wharfinger** here is their personal account of the H&G CT(Sales) visit to the National Waterways Festival at St Ives ...

At a Trading Company meeting on a cold and wet February evening, Janet said the 'National' was to be held in St Ives. Me, Derek (thinking "Cornwall, a nice sunny weekend by the sea") was asked would I drive the van containing our display, stock etc. "Yes" I swiftly replied – then was told it was St Ives in landlocked Cambridgeshire!

It is now the week of August Bank Holiday. We have hired a van from Enterprise of Hereford. Loaded with stock, panels, and camping equipment, we set off early Friday morning, arriving at St Ives about 8.30.

Entrance to the festival site very wet and muddy. Our first job is to put up our tent on the campsite and *make a cup of tea*. Regular 'eventers' Des and Lesley arrived from Leicester. Formal greetings over, we help them with their tent *and have another*



cup of tea.

Time to go down to the festival site. We joined a queue of vans waiting for about 1 hour. "Follow that van and park in the arena." Our marquee was 50 yards away - through mud and water. After 45 minutes, helped by Des, carry the contents of the vans to our marquee. Janet and Becca arrived, wellies and walking boots at hand; the front of our marquee resembled a paddy field! We decided to set up our stand and hope for the best, as we were told they had lowered the river so the ground would drain ...

Saturday morning was an early start to put the finishing touches to our stand and then wait for the general public. The ground conditions were no better. Pat and Dick Skeet arrived to help on the stand, Des our Grand Holiday Draw 'ace' ticket seller had his best day on Saturday, assisted by Pat, directing people through our tent as it was dry! Feeling sorry for us, most people bought a draw ticket.

Sunday morning brought sunshine but it was still wet and muddy under foot which did not help us to attract the general public. As at other events, *helpers*





do a regular tea and coffee run. This year, we discovered a fellow canal restoration group selling mugs for £3, but you could go back as many times as you wanted for free refills. We had our money's worth!

Monday morning and whilst ground conditions had improved slightly visitor numbers to our area did not. At 3.30pm, our **Grand Holiday Draw** was made by John Fletcher, Chairman of the IWA. With the festival closed it's time to dismantle and pack everything back into the van. *Only 10 yards to carry everything this time!*

Summing up, it was not as successful as most National Waterways Festivals despite a lot of hard work by all of the volunteers. But, in 12 months time, we will be doing it all again, this time closer to home – in Wolverhampton *[you're still not getting anywhere near the sea, Derek – Ed.]* Anyone interested in helping at this, or any other event, please do speak to Janet Moulton or any volunteer at other events or at the monthly Social Evenings.



Above: Mike Palmer (Chairman of Waterway Recovery Group) personally and valiantly trying to improve the area immediately at the entrance to our marquee (thank you Mike!).



We hope the weather will be better in 2008 – in any case, the tea is great! ♦ D & TW

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Talks and Walks ...

For many years illustrated talks about the Herefordshire and Gloucestershire Canal, to audiences both locally and further afield, have played an important part in spreading awareness of the Canal – and of the nature and extent of our voluntary work. As Janet Moulton mentions (*Chairman's Column*, page 3) Nigel Bailey, one of our regular speakers (and also the organiser/leader of popular walks in the Over area), is moving away from the area.



Above: Nigel Bailey on the appropriately named 'Bailey' bridge at Over Basin, giving a recent conducted tour to the Forst of Dean Local History Society.

Over the years many different volunteers have travelled near and far giving talks about the H&G Canal. We are grateful to Nigel for being one of them. His role in 'spreading the word' will be taken over by Ted Beagles. Ted therefore joins Nigel Jefferies on our inside front cover under the 'Talks and Walks' listing. Currently Brian Fox also gives occasional illustrated talks about the H&G Canal. In addition to the time travelling to and from the venues, plus the actual presentation itself, it takes considerable time and effort to organise the presentations. *We are grateful*

to all. From the 'feed back' received we know that this is an important role that is assisting in building the credibility of our work to an ever increasing number of people. Many of the organisations to whom the talks are given also make a donation to our funds – Nigel Jefferies reports that his recent talks to Leominster & District University of the Third Age resulted in an donation of £30 and his talk to the Ross on Wye Probus Club (about mining in Cornwall and West Devon) received £25 – *thank you*.

Cliff Penny has recently 'retired' from this part of his voluntary work; he tended to concentrate on talks to organisations at more distant locations which, apart from the more obvious places such as Birmingham have included Lichfield, Southampton, Aylesbury and Chelmsford. Back in 1998, the Chelmsford Branch of the Inland Waterways Association had agreed to make a £50 donation when the talk was arranged; however, seeing Cliff's photographs of own 'Bailey' Bridge (then having just been purchased with £1,000 raised by the Gloucestershire and Herefordshire IWA Branch), and hearing that we were now seeking to purchase the 'launch nose' for the bridge at a further cost of £250, the Chelmsford Branch increased their donation to £250 – making this the largest 'talk donation' received by the H&G CT so far!

WANTED PLEASE ...

Nigel Jefferies is looking for a **portable projection screen** for his illustrated talks. If anyone help with this request please contact Nigel Jefferies (*details inside back cover*).

The LOCK HOUSE at Oxenhall

by Brian Fox

Further to the second part of my article on Lock House on page 34 of the last edition, Mike Potts has been in touch to say that he wrote an article in **The Wharfinger**, in 1990, which contains the first apparent reference to a Cottage. Unfortunately he cannot remember where the reference came from.

Mike has provided a couple of pictures, taken in the early 1960s, showing Oxenhall Lock House just before it was condemned as unfit for habitation. The plaque on the front is interesting as it depicts 'Oxenhall Pool Lock 1796' which is about the correct date for the lock (but not the Cottage as that was built many years later). On closer inspection the plaque was found to be made of cardboard so is clearly a fake put up at a later date.

◆ BF

Mike has been known to play a practical joke on colleagues – far from me to suggest anyone looks closely at the handwriting to see if they recognize it – I don't think we are going to rename the Lock as a result of this 'evidence'! – Ed.



Above: The restored Lock House as it is today.



Left: Lock House in the early 1960's – unfit for human habitation.

Above: The window panel above the door reads 'OXENHALL POOL LOCK 1796'



Photos: Mike Potts



▶▶ HSBC visit Over Basin ◀◀

On page 25 of the last edition Ho'G CT volunteer Barry Haysman reported on a very successful 'team building' day spent at Over by staff from HSBC Bank. Received too late for inclusion was an article, and photographs, from HSBC organiser Wendy Allen reporting on the day . . .

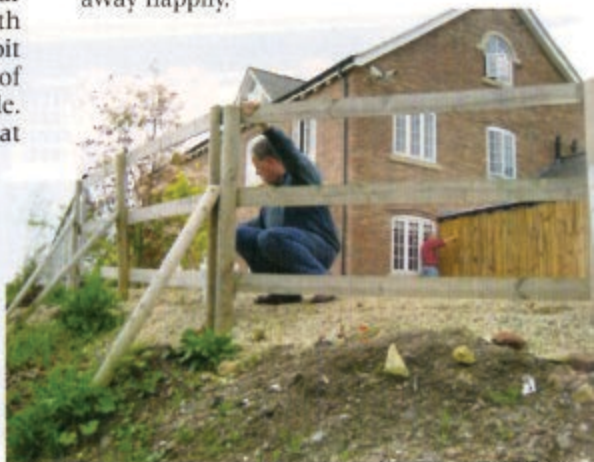
On a somewhat grey day ^{THE} WHARF HOUSE was visited by a group of volunteers from HSBC Invoice Finance. The intrepid team were made up of 18 people who had travelled from various parts of the country including Worthing, Taunton & Birmingham to lend a helping hand.

I had spoken to Nigel Bailey before our visit about the tasks we could help with and had been advised that we could spit into groups as there would a mixture of outdoor & indoor events for us to tackle. The weather didn't look promising that day but we were all looking forward to getting stuck in! On arrival we were given a tour of the building & an overview of what had been done so far. It truly is a picturesque location the project is stunning to behold and well worth a visit. *After the tour we were raring to go!*

The teams undertook various tasks such as painting the exterior fences, weeding & general gardening,

varnishing cupboards and even some earth moving. There was something for everyone to get their teeth into. To ensure that we could all get involved with every part of the work we had a change of task halfway through the day. This was especially useful for those doing the varnishing who appreciated some fresh air! When we had a break for lunch, which was kindly provided for us, most people chose to sit outside. This gave us an opportunity to enjoy the location and appreciate the project even more.

The weather had stayed on our side for most of the day and even though there were a few drops of rain everyone worked away happily.



When all was completed, at about 4pm, the team were weary but happy. *A fantastic day had been had by all.*

I would like to thank all of the volunteers at ^{THE} WHARF HOUSE for making us feel welcome and commend them on a fantastic achievement. The UK has a fantastic inland waterways network and I hope that HSBC helped to contribute in a

small way to maintaining and promoting the enjoyment of the H&G Canal at Over.

◀ WA

We greatly appreciate visits to the H&G Canal by businesses such as HSBC and are always willing to arrange similar days at Over (and elsewhere on the Canal). – Ed.

Top left: The HSBC team arrive in the car park.

Below left: The wooden fencing on the terrace and the new extension got a good coat of preservative.

Right: Many hands make light work of moving a heap of topsoil.



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A NATURAL EXPLANATION?

John Chappell continues his very interesting and informative series about what is growing all around our volunteers at Oxenhall – last time cooking up rose hip syrup, this time identifying a plant that forms a key ingredient within many a thirst-quenching brew . .

Hops, *Humulus lupulus*, seen here growing wild at Oxenhall, should be familiar to all of us. The plant's tiny white flowers in early summer are barely noticeable but later in the year conspicuous, papery, pale green cones of 'fruit' hang from the vines and it is at this stage it becomes useful. It is cultivated for use as a commercial crop, however, for those with a garden fence to cover there is a fetching yellow leaved variety, *Humulus lupulus* 'Aurea'.

The main use for the cultivated forms is as an ingredient to flavour beer and thus improve its drinkability.

Hops were introduced to British beers in the early 15th century whilst in Germany hop cultivation can be traced back to the 8th century. At one time the main variety used was 'Fuggles' which was developed in the late 19th century and is still preferred by some for its juicy, woody character but now there are as many varietal names of hops as there are beers!

Dwarf growing varieties have been developed to make harvesting easier but Herefordshire folk will long remember the 20-25ft frames that marched across the countryside and were used to carry the vines. Modern day harvesting is undertaken by machines but before mechanisation the need for massed labour at harvest time meant hop-growing had a big social impact. Many of the hop pickers in Herefordshire were from the Midlands for whom the annual migration meant not just money in the family pocket but a welcome break from the grime and smoke. Whole families would arrive and live locally for most of September, even the smallest children helping in the fields.

As with grapes the land where hops are grown affects the 'fruits' characteristics and the soils of Herefordshire, Kent and Sussex are well suited to producing flavoursome hops. Special oast houses were built with three or four storeys of perforated floors on which to spread and kiln-dry the

*Left: Hops, *Humulus lupulus**



Photo: John Chappell



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'fruit' after it had been stripped from the vines. The buildings, with their conical cowls that turned in the wind helping to disperse the smoke, are instantly recognisable but now that most hops are dried industrially many of the old oast houses have been converted into dwelling houses.

Hops have several medicinal properties; they will produce sleep when nothing else will and a pillow stuffed with hops is the country remedy for inducing a good night's sleep. An infusion of the flowers is said to rectify indigestion and improve the appetite. However, available from herbalists is a tincture which is alleged to curb excessive sexual desire in men (really, I am not making this up!). With this in mind we must decide whether to remove the plants at Oxenhall or keep them and start our own brewery!

◆ JC

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Celebrate ... 25 Years!

As reported on page 7 of the last edition of **The Wharfinger**, 2008 is the 25th anniversary of the formation of the Herefordshire and Gloucestershire Canal Society. The H&G CT CofM wants to celebrate the anniversary to acknowledge these important beginnings and to help publicise, to an even wider audience, the H&G Canal and the current day work of the Herefordshire and Gloucestershire Canal Trust.

Do **YOU** have any ideas for a 'one off' event to be a part of these celebrations? If so **Janet Moulton** would welcome a call to discuss how your idea could help us to *celebrate in 2008!*

IT's A *leafy* WIGLOO!



Remember the Wigloo Featured in edition 92? It was built by volunteers at a Gloucester school earlier this year. We thought you would like to know what became of the woven sticks in the summer. As you can see it flourished and gained a wonderful leafy summer coat!

THANK YOU

Our sincere thanks to the following:-

Tim Boddington, H&GCT Member from Macclesfield, who kindly donated a generator to assist in our restoration work.

Alistair at **A&D Marine** who loaned the H&G CT an outboard motor to enable Mr Maysey to participate in the September Open Day.

WANTED PLEASE ...

Ray and Barbara Moses will, once more, be raising funds for the H&G CT at the annual Boat and Watersports Jumble in 2008; however, they are looking for a **volunteer (or a couple)** to take over this role from 2009 onwards. This is a very rewarding day out; why not assist Ray and Barbara in 2008 and 'learn the ropes' - you will be made most welcome. *Further details from Ray and Barbara on 01989 780 325.*

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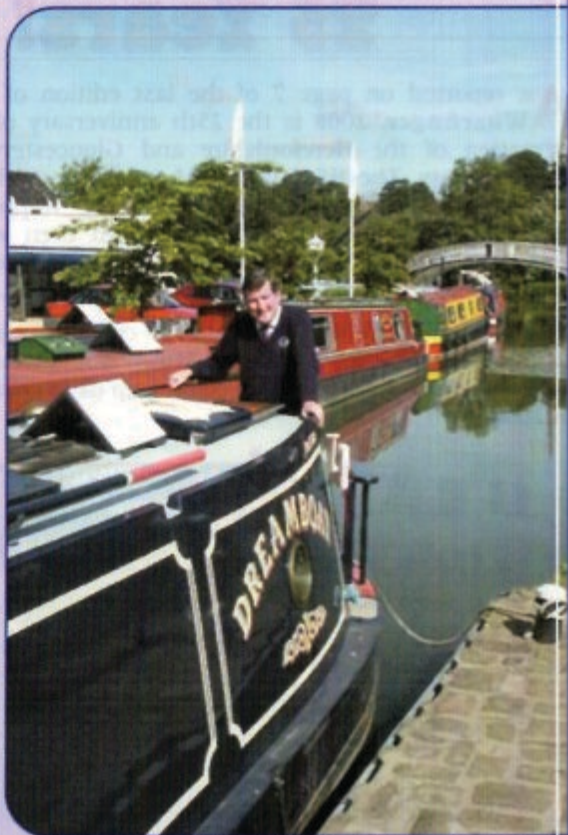
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CONTACTS

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 gardeners to first aiders, brickies to those willing to help with a shovel or pen.

Contact any of these names TODAY!

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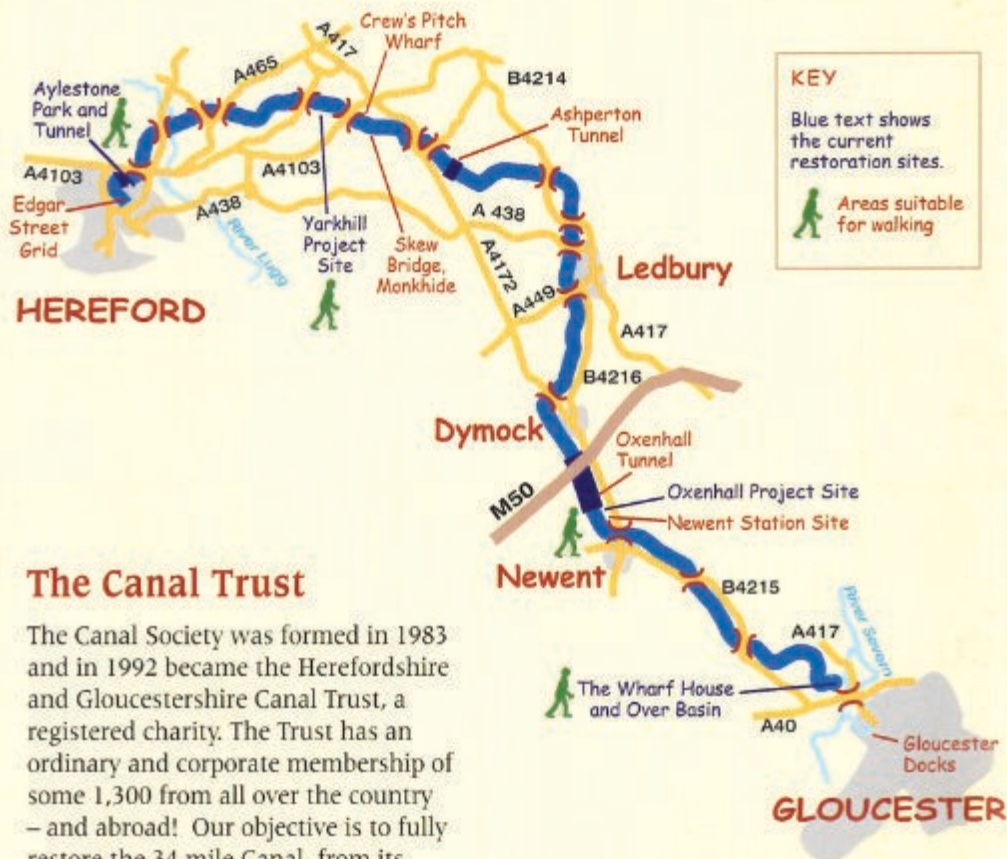
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The Wharfinger

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 Trust

The Canal Society was formed in 1983 and in 1992 became the Herefordshire and Gloucestershire Canal Trust, a registered charity. The Trust has an ordinary and corporate membership of some 1,300 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. We have major restoration sites in each county, which together extend to some 4 miles.

Please note: Unless indicated it should not be assumed that Rights of Way exist. We are working on the Canal with the co-operation of the land owners and their neighbours – please help the Trust to maintain its good relations with them. Thank you.