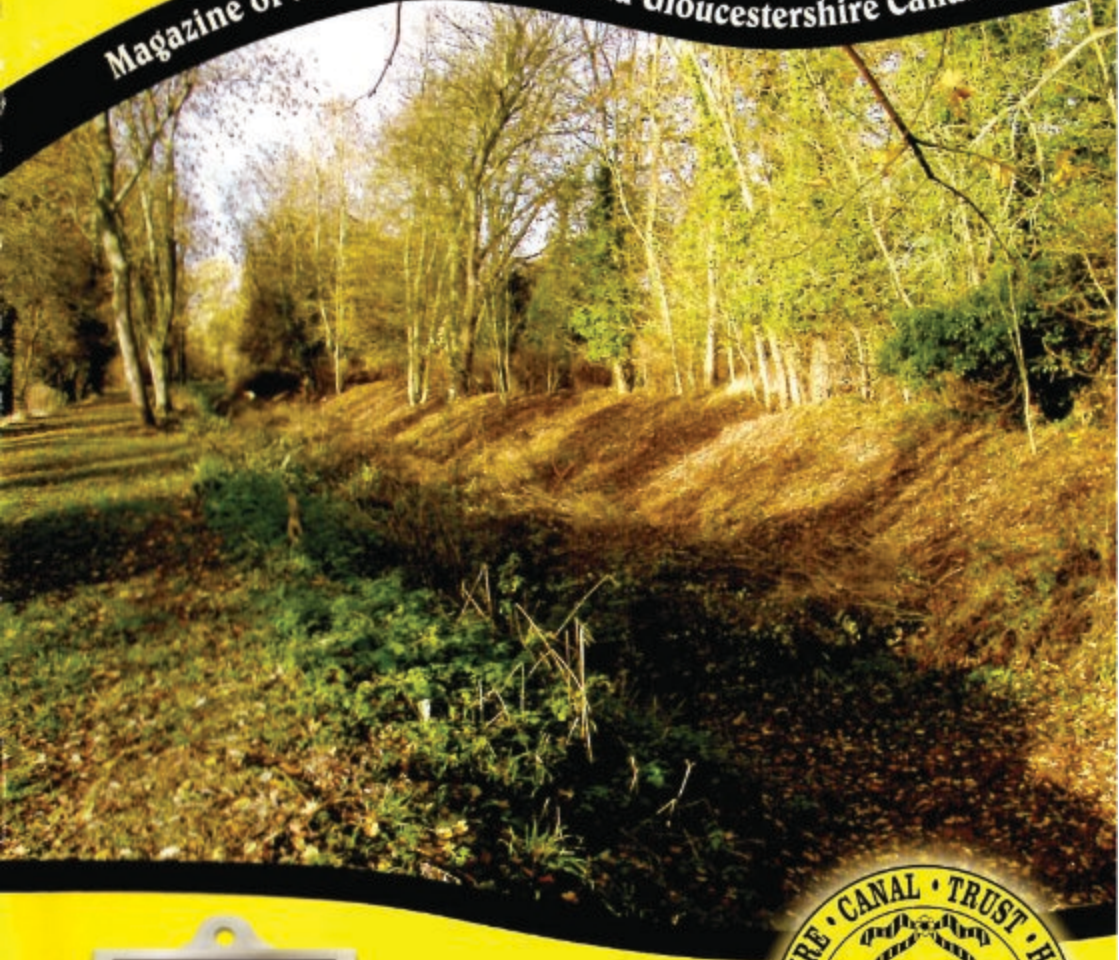


The **Wharfinger**

Magazine of the Herefordshire and Gloucestershire Canal Trust



Spring 2008

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FRONT COVER IMAGE: Yarkhill Spring 2007, by Chris High.

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CHAIRMAN'S COLUMN

Celebrating ... 25 Years along the Canal!



What were you doing 25 years ago?

What was I doing 25 years ago? I had not discovered canals; it was another 5 years before I became involved with the Kennet and Avon Canal (*which is where my late husband Brian and I got the 'canal bug' before we moved to Herefordshire*).

What was going on in the big wide world?

The Thames Barrier was raised for its first emergency, we could now watch breakfast television, first class postage was raised to 16p and we were urged to 'Clunk-Click' by Jimmy Saville!

What was happening in the canal world?

Negotiations to link the River Avon with the Grand Union Canal at Warwick failed (*they are still trying*), one of the early waterside developments was taking place in Sheffield (*the economic value of a canal view was at last being realised*), navigation on the Upper Severn was being investigated and, following extensive lobbying, Blisworth Tunnel on the Grand Union Canal in Northamptonshire (*part of which had collapsed severing a vital north/south link for a number of years*) was being repaired.

And in Hereford...

A group of enthusiasts held a public meeting in April 1983 (at the Red Cross Hall in Blackfriars Street) and the **Herefordshire and Gloucestershire Canal Society** was formed; I am very pleased to say that some of the founding Members are still very active in the **Herefordshire and Gloucestershire Canal Trust**.

The first newsletter was 2 duplicated A4 sheets, working parties were held at Monkhide, and there were canal walks at Canon Frome and Oxenhall. A bottle of whisky was offered for a title for the newsletter – **The (Hereford) Wharfinger** was born (*does anyone know who won the whisky?*)

Details of our **25th Anniversary Events** are listed on page 7 (others are being planned for later in the year).

We are pleased to welcome Bill Wiggin, MP for Leominster, as a Vice President (*further details are on page 12*) and we hope he will be able to attend, with our other Vice Presidents, some of our special **25th Anniversary Events** during 2008.

Please do support us and come along wherever possible – we would welcome your help with 25th Anniversary Events (or with our Trading Company Outings – further details are on page 21); you would be most welcome.

♦ Janet Moulton, Chairman



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A Long Time?

by Cliff Penny

Throughout this edition are frequent references to the celebration of the 25th Anniversary of the formation of the **Herefordshire and Gloucestershire Canal Society**; it is perhaps inevitable that some may (*wrongly!*) say “it’s 25 years since they first decided to restore the canal”.

In fact the original objectives of the Canal Society did *not* include the restoration of the *whole* of the H&G Canal – far more modest objectives (nevertheless important in terms of the future) reflected both initial membership strength and the support that existed at that time for the preservation of our visible heritage. Any suggestion of complete restoration from the outskirts of Gloucester, right back into the heart of Hereford City, were discounted in those early days – it was far more important to try and preserve the remaining structures along the line of the Canal.

By slowly building awareness of the Canal, the Canal Society gradually gained increasing support and, as time progressed, the concept of ‘problems’ along the line was dismissed in favour of the more positive vision of only having ‘challenges’! The proposal to widen the scope to include the ultimate objective of a fully navigable canal from Gloucester to Hereford was first adopted when the Registered Charity, the **Herefordshire and Gloucestershire Canal Trust**, was formed nine years later.

Despite our advancing years we are one of the ‘younger’ canal restoration organisations in this country; a number were formed over 40 years ago. [Congratulations to our neighbours, **The Cotswold Canals Trust**, who celebrate their 35th anniversary this year.] Canal restoration simply does not happen swiftly!

By any measure ours is a massive project and in this modern day and age, whilst we have access to equipment and techniques that would not have even been dreamt of by the original canal builders, we now have far more than ‘just’ the civil engineering and land acquisition challenges that the canal builders so successfully overcame over 200 years ago. The modern day list of requirements before large scale restoration and reconstruction can commence is daunting; but as each year goes by the H&G CT is increasingly working its way through them towards a successful conclusion. It is a bit like assembling a huge jigsaw, we have the picture on the box, some of the key pieces have already been assembled, and it is just a question of *time and resources* (and a great deal of effort!) before they all link together.

What is common to all of the successful restorations (a number of the canals that have been restored and re-opened in the past decade were once considered ‘impossible’) is that the volunteers have persevered, over what at times seemed a never-ending timescale, with dedication and conviction to achieve the ultimate objective! Let there be no misunderstanding, in this 25th Anniversary year, with the increasing level of support and success that we enjoy (and all of the ‘foundation-laying’ hard work that has gone before) it is “*mainly a question of time (and resources)*” before the Herefordshire and Gloucestershire Canal is (once more) linking the two Cities – and the towns and villages in between. ***The more active volunteers that we have (in all aspects of our work) the quicker we will get there!***

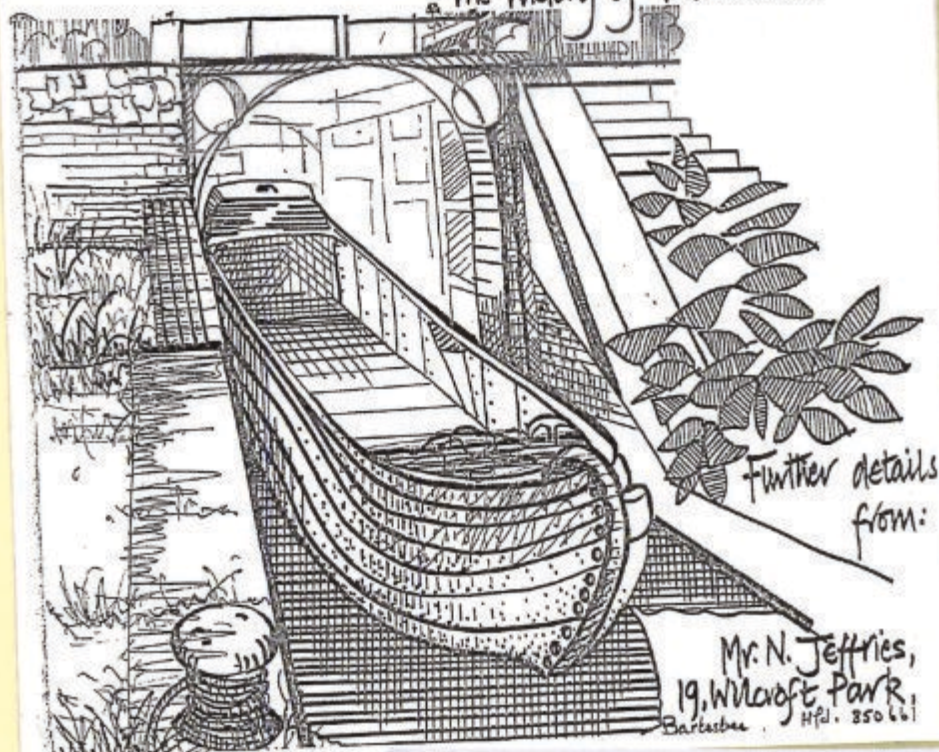
CRP

Did you know that there is a Hereford Canal
on which narrow boats once traded to Gloucester via Ledbury?

Want to know more?

Then come to the Inaugural Meeting of the
Herefordshire and Gloucestershire Canal Society
at the Red Cross Hall in Blackfriars St, Hereford
8.00pm on Wednesday, 13th April, 1983.

Mr. David Bick will be giving a talk with slides on
the history of the canal.



Further details
from:

Mr. N. Jeffries,
19, Wilcroft Park,
Bartleby Hfd. 850 661

It might be 25 years ago but we still have the original
poster giving details of the inaugural meeting!



Celebrating ...

25 Years!

Anniversary Events

In 1982 an 'informal steering group' got together on a number of occasions in Hereford to discuss the potential to form a proposed Herefordshire and Gloucestershire Canal Society. By early 1983 plans were well advanced for an inaugural public meeting, to be held on the 13th April 1983.

So 2008 is the 25th anniversary of the formation of the Herefordshire and Gloucestershire Canal Society. Whilst the aims and objectives were less ambitious than those adopted nine years later (when the Charitable Trust was formed) the enthusiasm and dedication of the Canal Society committee, and the small band of regular volunteers, undoubtedly laid the foundations of what was to come; and we are very pleased that a number of our founder Members are still actively involved in the H&G CT's voluntary work today. Our celebration of the anniversary acknowledges these important beginnings and is intended to help publicise, to an even wider audience, the H&G Canal and the current day work of the H&G CT.

Our second event to *celebrate in 2008* the formation of the H&G CS is a very special evening of archive film material at The Courtyard in Hereford – *within 4 days of the actual anniversary of the inaugural meeting!*

Sat/Sun, March 8th/9th Oxenhall Daffodil Weekend

12 noon–5pm H&G CT volunteer Brian Fox will lead canal walks – details will be posted at Oxenhall Village Hall.

Thursday April 17th, 7.45pm at The Courtyard, Hereford

An evening of rare historic archive film of Canals and Railways, with an emphasis on the Western Region and GWR. *See details on page 8*

Advance notice of just some of the other 25th Anniversary Events in 2008 (*further details of these events – and others – will be included in the next edition of The Wharfinger*):-

Saturday, June 21st Hereford Walking Festival

Canal Walk - Kyrmin to Monkhide and return. Watch for Festival Publicity for details and booking arrangements. H&G CT volunteer Chris High will lead this walk.

Wednesday, July 9th 25th Anniversary Dinner at THE WHARF HOUSE

Sunday, August 10th Yarkhill Open Day

Sunday, August 31st Mini-Bus Tours of the Canal Over Open Day

Sunday, September 14th Oxenhall Open Day

25th Anniversary Events



17th April, 7.45pm at

The Courtyard, Hereford.

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TICKETS £1 each



Again this year, due to popular request, we have sent you two books of tickets to sell to family and friends. More books can be sent to you if required (please contact Janet Moulton – see inside back cover).

We are very pleased to report that the printing of the tickets this year is once again sponsored by Eastnor Castle – thank you.

Prizes to be drawn late afternoon at the National Waterways Festival, at Wolverhampton, on 25 August, 2008.

Our grateful thanks to **Black Prince Holidays**, Mrs J Thomas and **The Wharf House** for donating the Holiday prizes – so every pound raised is a pound towards restoration of the Canal.

We appreciate that some recipients are not prepared to buy or sell draw tickets – we apologise but we do not have the resources to be selective in who receives tickets. There is no obligation to return unsold tickets. In order to save costs we have not included tickets in copies of **The Wharfinger** sent to Councillors, Local Authorities etc. If you wish to support us please contact Janet Moulton on 01432 264 366 and she will be delighted to send you some tickets. Thank you.

FORMAL NOTICE OF 2008 AGM

TO BE HELD ON **TUESDAY 15TH JULY**,
AT THE **ROYAL OAK, MUCH MARCLE, AT 7.30PM.**

This is the formal notice of the 2008 AGM in order to give Members the opportunity to make a note in their diary; this year the AGM will be held on Tuesday 15th July. The Agenda and Annual Report will be in the next edition of **The Wharfinger**.

In accordance with the H&G CT's Articles and Memorandum of Association those Members of the Council of Management who are retiring on rotation but offering themselves for re-election do not require to be formally nominated to serve an additional term. However, new nominations to serve on the Council of Management are welcomed and have to be made in writing, in a

prescribed form.

Nomination forms are available from Liz Connors [see Contacts on inside back cover] to whom they should be returned to arrive not less than 7 days nor more than 28 days prior to the AGM.

Every Member who is entitled to vote at an AGM may appoint a proxy to vote in his/her stead. A proxy must be someone entitled to vote at the Meeting.

Proxy forms are also available from Liz Connors and must be completed, signed and returned to her at least 48 hours prior to the commencement of the AGM.

Thank you.

RESTORATION

at Oxenhall by Brian Fox

This year we had a break for Christmas Day, but left New Year's Day open for those who felt they might need a bit of exercise and fresh air – but nobody volunteered; I had thought there might be a few wives who were fed up with having their men folk around any longer! However, we had a full team the following week but the weather then imposed another break in work so that could have been the end of my report for this edition – but the Editor might not be well pleased?

During one of those days of enforced inactivity I got to reading a small book given me for a present

containing "quips and quotes for the young at heart", which passed an hour and got me thinking, which I suppose isn't a bad thing!

One of the quotes was "life is too short to learn German" – which may be true but it got me thinking about what else might not be achieved in one's lifetime? Funnily enough the first thing to spring to mind was the restoration of any canal, including the Herefordshire and Gloucestershire Canal. It takes long enough to type it, and you can always shorten it to H&G, but you can't shorten canal restoration!


We are often being asked if a date has been set for completion of the restoration of the whole canal from Gloucester to Hereford; the answer is "no" and I generally add – "not in my lifetime". We are all volunteers (at the moment the only paid employees are those staff working for ^{THE} WHARF HOUSE COMPANY) and there is only so much time and effort each one of us in the H&G CT is able, or maybe willing, to give to canal work. There is also the small matter of money, and where it all comes from, to pay for any significant restoration. *There is no doubt*



Michael works on the lock wall on the towpath side.

that the canal (or any other of the successfully completed canal restoration schemes elsewhere in the country) **would never be fully restored if it was left solely to unpaid volunteers.** There will always be a place for small dedicated bands of workers, as we have at Oxenhall (and at Yarkhill and Over) who are happy to work one or 2 days a week; but the role of the H&G CT is more and more being channelled into taking advantage of opportunities as they arise and setting up partnerships with interested parties who wish to develop canal land and can be persuaded to incorporate the canal and pay for the restoration as part of their plans.

The work at Over was a prime example! Since then we have had the Harper Housing and Aylestone Park sites in Hereford and the latest proposals in the City are based on the Holmer Trading Estate (as seen in previous editions of **The Wharfinger**) and, of course, the Edgar Street Grid which will include a new Canal Basin and approach canal as a centrepiece. The H&G CT spend many hours, weeks and months [and even



*"age wrinkles
the body, quitting
wrinkles the soul"*

years! – Ed.] in progressing these plans in partnership with the relevant Council and the developers; at the end we should have further lengths of the Canal open to the public. The physical restoration may not be undertaken by Members of the H&G CT as at Monkhide or Yarkhill *but this is the way forward*. Another quote to finish with – *"age wrinkles the body, quitting wrinkles the soul"*. We may have been called 'wrinklies' in the past (although that title has now been dropped by popular request) but we certainly aren't quitting yet! We are still lads at heart who enjoy getting involved in something worthwhile and going home dirty and tired at the end of the day knowing that even short lengths of restored H&G Canal are important pieces of the jigsaw that one day will be pieced together to complete the whole project.

WORK ON THE LOCK

Despite the seasonal activities, and the weather, we have continued to make progress in the last quarter on our Tuesday work day. Work on the aqueduct has been suspended whilst we undertake repairs and strengthening to the wing walls below House Lock. The non towpath wall has been built precisely with mortared stone and this is now being made a bit higher, and extended as far as the



Above: Keith and Geoff work on the non-towpath wing wall.

boundary hedge, using the same construction methods. The other wall (adjacent to the towpath) is also being extended using some of the large stones, weighing up to 200lbs, which are unsuitable for the aqueduct. Our tractor is being put to good use in ferrying them up the 200yds from the compound to the work area so by the time we are finished the once large stockpile of stone will be looking very small.

STATION SITE

The two illegal caravans that I reported on last time have now been broken down into smaller pieces by our volunteers and are awaiting removal to the scrap yard. The old station area has now been tidied to its previous state and large blocks of stone put across the entrance to hopefully prevent any further unauthorised access. Our proposals for the further restoration of the Canal through this area are still being researched and planned; as always there is a huge amount to do before we can proceed with a specific project on the ground.

◆ BF

Welcome to another new Vice-President

Bill Wigggin MP

Bill was first elected to Parliament in 2001 to represent the Leominster constituency and was subsequently re-elected, with an increased majority, in 2005. His first appointment was the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Select Committee, then promotion to the Conservative frontbench (as Shadow Environment Minister) in 2003. Shadow Secretary of State for Wales followed and in December 2005, he was given his current Agriculture and Fisheries portfolio.

Bill is married with three young children; he spreads his time between Westminster and his constituency home in Ledbury, where he has a small-holding. In his spare time Bill breeds chickens, sheep and cattle and his Parliament herd of Herefords won a number of prizes at shows in 2006.

Bill has always been a strong advocate of British agriculture representing one of the most rural English constituencies. He has strongly criticised the government over its crippling budget cuts to British Waterways.



Bill Wigggin MP

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The Restoration Fund

It is now over six years since we launched our **Restoration Fund**, designed to raise 'ring fenced' funding for specific projects along the 34 mile length of the H&G Canal in both counties. *Our volunteers invariably turn the money into work that is worth many times the amount of the funds raised!*

HOW IT WORKS

We invite Members and supporters to contribute a small regular payment each month which will be used to help finance specific projects (*and take this opportunity to again thank those who already contribute*).

- Contributors pay a *minimum* of £3 per month by Standing Order. Gift Aid can enhance this sum at no cost to the contributor.
- Annually **The Wharfinger** will report how the money has been spent.
- Annually we invite contributors to an exclusive social event at an H&G CT restoration venue that has progressed during the previous year for a talk and/or tour – and a buffet or BBQ.

Please support the **Restoration Fund** – *this source of funding really is greatly appreciated by both the H&G CT and our volunteers! Thank you for your support.*

Above: Some of the Restoration Fund subscribers viewing the restoration work, completed with their support, at Oxenhall last year.



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Liz Connors, 18 St Ethelbert Close,
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Signed: _____ Date: _____

My account no: _____

Sort Code: _____

Work at Yarkhill *by Chris High*

Until the end of October we continued our work at the lock end of the canal. Considerable progress was made in the clearing of brush, saplings and roots from the canal bed and banks.

In November the Over work team visited (*during a day out having a 'guided tour' of the Canal in Herefordshire!*) and I was able to give them a tour of the Yarkhill site before they moved on to Hereford. Further tidying work was carried out on both towpath and 'wild' sides, adjacent to our access from the field, before returning to the task of coppicing the 'wild' side ditch bank that we started last winter.

The recently acclaimed Thursday work party of ten has now been superseded with thirteen on site one day! A further two new volunteers, Patricia Tierney and John Robinson, helped achieve this and are proving to be valuable members of the team.

The Waterway Recovery Group from London paid a working visit in November. I gave them the challenge of removing the last four 'bigish' roots from the canal bed as part of their work for the weekend. Those not engaged on the roots carried out brush clearance and coppicing of the 'wild' side ditch bank. The coppicing team slowly grew throughout Saturday as the required 'personpower' extracting the roots diminished. Uprooting was completed by the end of play – sorry! – work on the Saturday, which meant the whole team were able to apply themselves to brush clearance, burning and coppicing on Sunday. The burning was a very necessary task as by now it was not only cold it was wet as well! *Many thanks to London WRG for their efforts.*



Photos: Ralph Ward, Alison High and Chris High

*Top: Coppicing and brush clearance.
Inset: Chris coppicing in the ditch.
Middle: Site hut end is tidy once more.
Bottom: Barr's Lock end is tidy too!*

CELEBRATORY WALK

December the 13th. saw us celebrate two years of regular work parties at Yarkhill. The occasion was marked with a walk down the towpath from Barrs Lock to Kymin with the kind permission of the landowner, Peter Clewes. I say walk, but it was more of an assault course with the added interest of having to transport Stella's chocolate cake housed in a large plastic container as well! The team made Kymin for lunch, which George Hicks kindly allowed us to take (along with Eileen's mince pies) sitting on the banks of the canal in his garden at Canal House.

A return visit by WRG - Southwest in January notched up the 300th work party at Yarkhill in just over two years. You guessed it – brush clearance, burning and coppicing were the tasks set and accomplished! We were exceptionally fortunate with the daytime weather over the weekend and *our thanks to the Southwest WRG team for struggling through rain, wind, snow and floods to get there – and for the significant work they achieved.*

Interested in joining our regular Thursday work party at Yarkhill? Then please contact Chris High on 01568 615 575

◆ CH



Top and middle: Teamwork gets the walkers through the undergrowth.

Bottom: Ralph takes an unexpected 'rest'.

Below: The walkers rest at Canal House and sample Stella's chocolate cake and Eileen's mince pies!



Photos: Collin Dymott

Photo: Ralph Ward



During the quarter lots of placing of wood chips, and transplanting plants into the newly formed gardens, has been undertaken and we have also restored some of the earlier disturbance in the flower beds caused by service trenches and the digging of foundations. Around the site there has been clearance of vegetation from the flood plain and a path has been made through to the 'Bailey' bridge for easier access. Some willow trees, bordering on both sides of the lower Canal, have been cut down and the hedgerows have been trimmed ready for spring.

Member Ron Shackwell, from Govilon near Abergavenny, has donated 17 well made wooden bird boxes (*thank you*) which we have tailored for various bird types. Mike Bowden has secured them in well chosen trees and hedgerows round the site. It is our intention that at one of

Top inset: One of the bird boxes secured around the Over site.

Large photo: Scrub and flood debris has been cleared from the flood plain.

Middle: Neat edging blocks encircle the yew tree in front of the Visitor Centre.

Right: The side walls of the 'cycle cave' are started.





the forthcoming Open Days we have a competition for children called 'find the bird box' or 'spot the bird species' – all done to have no impact on the birds themselves, of course.

We have dug trenches connecting previous ducts from ^{THE} WHARF HOUSE down to the containers to allow us to install electricity, and laid the water pipes and tap (with its own cabinet) ready for connection. This activity has already improved our productivity and reduced our reliance on battery powered tools and alarm systems (and given us somewhere to go and warm up in our work clothes in the very cold and wet weather).

The weed boat has now been finally launched and the huge task of getting the weed removed from the Basin has started. Wilf and volunteers from the **Gloucester and District Model Boat Club**, with some of us thrown in for good measure, have started removing large quantities of weed from the Basin and moving it to the base of the hedgerows to break down into compost. This is ongoing virtually every Wednesday until March to get the weed under control and allow the Basin to be used by model boats again and, who knows, even a regatta at one of our Open Days in the summer!



Top left: The ground is graded around 'Skew Gardens'.

Top right: Top soil is prepared for ^{THE} WHARF HOUSE herb garden.

Middle: The banks of 'Skew Gardens' have been planted with shrubs.

Below: A wavy retaining wall has been started in 'Skew Gardens'.



Above: Walls painted and the 'under the eaves' cupboards completed.

Right: Some of the first floor doors near completion.



THE WHARF HOUSE FIT-OUT

THE WHARF HOUSE project has progressed to a point where, on the top floor, we have finished the painting of the ceilings and walls and all the doors, architraves, cupboards, wardrobes have had their final coats of varnish. Over the Christmas and New Year period a great deal of effort has gone into repairs of the teak flooring in the tea rooms/restaurant and the visitor centre of THE WHARF HOUSE. After 8 days of intensive work filling and sanding the floor was given 4 coats of commercial grade resin. Whilst the ground floor was clear of obstacles we took the opportunity to rub down the skirting, window sills, tables, both counters and cabinets and finish them with their respective coats of varnish, linseed oil and hard wax oil as well. The walls were also painted and brought back to their former finish and whilst all this was coming to a conclusion a major kitchen 'spring clean' occurred just for good measure!

We would like to say thank you to everyone who gave up some of their hard earned holiday to make this happen.

◆ BH

Middle: Barrie has panelled the fitted wardrobes in the eaves.

Left: He has also made some bath panels ready for mosaic tiling.



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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.

MARCH 18TH

Gloucestershire and Warwickshire Railway

Tony Bowles

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

MAY 20TH

The River Nene

Dick Skeet

A visit to the other side of the country – one of East Anglia's major river navigations

APRIL 15TH

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

(Re-scheduled from a flooded January)

David Holton

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

JUNE 17TH

The Forest of Dean

A speaker from the Dean Heritage Centre will give a talk on the Forest on our doorstep

JULY 15TH

Annual General Meeting

7.30 start

An apology to anyone who turned up at the Royal Oak for the January Social Evening. It had to be cancelled at short notice due to the weather conditions with severe flooding, particularly in the Hereford area; Janet Moulit 'phoned as many of the regulars as possible. This is the first time we have had to cancel, torrential rain in the past has started during the meeting, but this time we made the decision in the light of the authorities' warnings against travelling unless essential to do so. Our speaker is now re-scheduled for April 15th.

If the weather conditions are doubtful, please do not hesitate to 'phone Janet Moulit (in her capacity as Social Evenings organiser) before travelling.



Events



Please see page 7
for information about
**25th Anniversary
Celebration
Events.**



Gloucestershire & Herefordshire IWA Branch

Meetings at Gloucester
Yacht Club at 7.30pm

6th March 2007 – AGM

*plus a talk by Ian Jarvis
(British Waterways Manager, South-West)*

The Gloucester Quays Developments

3rd April 2008

Something Knotty Ben Self


Ben is one of the most well known rope
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For further details of any of the above:
Martin Turner 01291 650605

THE TRADING COMPANY H & G Canal Sales

Possible outings 2008

The H&G CT would like to attend all the shows below
and others to which we are invited.

Please contact Janet Moulton if you may be able to
attend any of these events. It is a good day out, you
will be made very welcome and we always try to leave
some time for you to look around.  **JM**

April 6 Gloucester Boat Jumble

May 24 –26 Crick Boat Show

May 25–26 Trail Boat Rally, Tiverton

June 7–8 Moira Canal Festival

June 28–29 Braunston Boat Show

July 5–6 Saul Boat Show

August 23–25 Tibberton Fete

September 6 Newent Onion Fair

October 19 Oxenhall Apple Day

November 8 Ledbury Craft Fair

Over pen Days 2008

Visitors are always welcome at Over
but on **Open Sundays** throughout
the summer we are offering even
more, including:

guided tours • boat rides
photographic exhibitions • handycrafts
model boat demonstrations

Sunday, July 27th

Sunday, August 31st

25th Anniversary Celebration

Sunday, September 28th

THE WHARF HOUSE

THE WHARF HOUSE finished last year hosting several weeks of Christmas parties and seemed to gain many more happy customers if the latest independent review on **So Glos** is an indicator.

Geoff Wickham, of Gloucester, gave the restaurant nine out of ten and wrote recently:

I've visited The Wharf House a few times and will heartily recommend it to anyone who lives in or is visiting Gloucester. I admit I am quite a fussy eater, and I have tried most of the city's restaurants, but the food at The Wharf House is fabulous - flavoursome, freshly prepared, and always looks so good it seems a shame to wolf it down! Plus taking a stroll along the canal is also a great way to let dinner go down when the weather permits.

Thank you for your kind words.

In the short quiet period between Christmas and the New Year **THE WHARF HOUSE** closed for refurbishment. It was soon open again for business four days into January.

IWA ANNUAL DINNER

The Gloucestershire and Herefordshire IWA Annual Dinner, mentioned in the last edition, was held in January. Organised by Branch Chairman Martin Turner, it almost filled the restaurant to capacity. The guests included Liz Payne, Chairman of the Cotswold Canals Trust, Ian Jarvis from British Waterways and our own Chairman, Janet Mould.

As you can see from the photos opposite a great time was had by all and it was agreed to make it an Annual Event.

◀ MJ



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Some of the guests at the local IWA Dinner



Graham and Barbara Ettles



Sue Bayliss



Maggie Jones and
Jan Thomas



Clive Field



Derek Osbourne
and Liz Connors

Derek and Sue
Starkey



Julia Hones and Janet Mout



Peter and Liz Payne



David Penny



Sue and Martin Turner
and Ian Jarvis



Peter Kelly



Alan Watts



Advance Notice!

The H&GCT will be holding a 25th Anniversary Dinner on July 9th (see page 7)

THE TUG ALDER

by Caroline Jones

In the last edition of *The Wharfinger* Caroline described the logistical challenges that she and husband Neil successfully overcame in arranging and supervising the moving of Alder from Devizes to Over Basin. Together with daughter Bethan, and son Sam, the family are now to the stage where the restoration begins...

Now that the tug Alder is safely alongside the basin at Over, work can begin on getting it restored to a working tug – something where there is a task for all the family!

The first job is the preparation of the hull for painting; apparently it was last taken out of the water for painting in 1991 - so this job is rather overdue! The hull needs to be scraped to remove 16 years of silt and (presumably now dead) molluscs; it will then be attacked with a needle gun to remove areas of loose rust. Before this



The bow has good lines that will look even better when cleaned off and re-painted.

can begin, the compressor we hope to use needs some work, this way we can save money on hiring one for the job. Scraping has begun and revealed one small hole in the bows (this of course is for letting rainwater out!); the bows have already been patched in places so a few more patches won't be out of place! The hull and cabin will then need rust treatment, priming and painting, both inside and out. The propeller is cracked and we have just removed it for repair; while that is being done the stern tube 'stuffing box' has also been removed for inspection and for new bushes to be fitted. Once the propeller is refitted and the hull has been patched, made watertight, and 'blackened', the tug can be launched into the basin at Over, when internal works can begin.

The hold in the bow had 5 inches of water in it and we have 'made' a better cover for it to hopefully keep the rain out! [Does anyone have a small submersible or bilge pump that could be used to help to keep the hold dry, please?] We removed 9 inches of water from the cabin so it has been gutted. It will need to be completely refitted to give simple accommodation for the crew taking it to waterway shows in the future. We already have a bottle stove from a working boat to fit in the cabin and a primus stove for cooking!



Inside Alder's gutted cabin.



There is no urgent work required on the engine (as far as we know), the Lister fitted in the 1960s appears to run well. We will, however, want to get the electric start working again, and a preliminary boat safety inspection picked up the lack of a breather for the diesel tank so that will have to be resolved. The engine will need servicing and the engine room a good clear out and a repaint.

If anyone would like to have a go at scraping the hull or painting when the time comes, please do give me ring on 01452 318224, weekdays, or 01594 861286 weekends. We will have to wait for dry weather for all the jobs on the current list, but as soon as we get a dry weekend we hope to be at the Basin, chisels, scrapers and wire-brushes in hand!

◀ CJ



Alder's front hold.

Our grateful thanks to the anonymous reader who donated £500 towards the refurbishment of Alder - Ed.

Peter Bell's



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ALL JUMBLED UP

Our Members Ray and Barbara Moses organise and 'man' an important part of our fundraising by attending the annual Boat and Watersports Jumble at Gloucester Docks each year – for which we are very grateful. However, the success of their annual efforts does depend on having appropriate items to sell ...

Once again we are organising a stall at the Gloucester Boat and Watersports Jumble in April. As usual we require items to sell please, either donated or to be sold on commission. The items must have a waterways connection, however tenuous, but please, no magazines as we still have plenty left from previous years.

We can collect items from the March Social meeting at **The Royal Oak**. If this

is not convenient, please phone 01989 780325 or e-mail r_w_moses@yahoo.co.uk to make alternative arrangements. *The more donated items we get, the more money we can make for the H&G Canal Trust.*

The **Annual Boat and Watersports Jumble** is held at **The National Waterways Museum**, Gloucester Docks. This year the event is on Sunday 6th April from 9.30am to 3pm. Admission is £3.50 – accompanied children are free. Whilst the actual Museum is closed for refurbishment entry to the Jumble includes a 'Waterways Festival', and the steam dredger and tugs should be operational, making it a good day out for all the family. *If you would like to help us on the day please do get in touch – you will be made most welcome.*

♦ RM

NO PASSPORTS NEEDED!

As volunteers it is very easy each week to concentrate on our own patch forgetting that out there is another 34 miles of canal, as well as other volunteers toiling just like us, and relics of the past (*that is in canal archeology terms not volunteers – before anyone gets the wrong idea*). We'd read the book (*well The Wharfinger anyway*), we even have the teashirts and so it was time to make the pilgrimage to the Hereford sites!

It was a bright November morning when around a dozen volunteers from the Over end of the Canal set off to look at the Hereford stretch. First stop was Yarkhill where Chris High was waiting to give a conducted tour, and share knowledge. I think the thing about Yarkhill, that struck those who hadn't been before, was just what a long stretch it was. It can't always be envisaged from the photos in **The Wharfinger**.

Next stop, of course, was the pub for a drink and sandwiches before setting off to Skew Bridge and the surrounding stretch in water. From there it was time to move on to Aylestone Park. Although the Canal is not completed, the work of removing the silt is done. We then visited the Holmer stretch next door to Aylestone and were shown the entrance to Aylestone Tunnel, lying hidden from general view by much undergrowth.

On to Hereford city centre and the 'Farriery College' where the diverted Widemarsh Brook marks the future Canal route very clearly, complete with recent bridges. We finally looked at where land was cleared by Widemarsh Bridge in readiness for the Canal to lead out from the brand new basin that will one day be the hub of the major regeneration project within Hereford.

You can imagine we had walked some considerable distance by this time. David Penny had filled in many details and given small detours to complete the picture. I think we all gained something from the day and it was great to get the following note of thanks from two on the trip.

◆ MJ



Photos: Cliff Penny and Muggie Jones

Top: Part of the group visiting Yarkhill.

Middle: Skew Bridge in Autumn sunshine.

Bottom: Diversion route reserved for the Canal in Hereford adjacent to the A49.

Thank you for organising the visits yesterday. It was very interesting and informative to know what is happening and to see some of the old structures and archaeology from past times.

Malcolm & Sandra Claxton

If you would like to see more of the Canal there will be some minibus tours organised in the summer as part of our 25th Anniversary Celebrations. Details on page 7.

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HEIDELBERGCEMENT Group

Just one day in the life of Over Volunteers!

We may be in the midst of winter but here is a typical Wednesday in February at Over Basin.

Before the mist has cleared Ted Tedaldi and his team from the **Gloucester and District Model Boat Club**, row out on to the Basin to continue clearing the weed. Down by the workshop John is overhauling an outboard motor.

As the sun breaks through the mist Paul and Barrie can be seen continuing the brickwork of the wavy wall in the newly nicknamed 'Skew Gardens'.

Meanwhile, Henry and Andy are on site to continue work on the balcony for ^{The} WHARF HOUSE, and Mike and Dave are on the slipway working on the weedcutter. There were other volunteers gardening and planting around the site.

Work is always varied at all our sites along the H&G; would **YOU** like to join one of our teams?



Photos: Ted Beagles



We would like to recruit YOU to help!

If you would be interested in joining one of our teams on the Hereford and Gloucester Canal please contact one of the following: -

Over teams

Saturdays: Maggie Jones 01452 618 010

Wednesdays: Wilf Jones 01452 413 888

Oxenhall team

Tuesdays: Brian Fox 01432 358 628

Yarkhill team

Thursdays: Chris High 01568 615 575

Canal Trust Craft Fair 2007

Report by Pat Skeet

at Ledbury

Saturday November 10th 2007 was the day when H&G Canal (Sales) - on behalf of the H&G CT - once again took over St Katherine's Hall in Ledbury for our annual Craft Fair. Our Trading Company volunteer, who undertakes all the organising, is Pat Skeet (thank you, Pat!). Here is her account of an exhausting but rewarding day...

Just prior to the event, I was in total despair. Three of my "usual" helpers had had to cry off and two of the stallholders had cancelled! Thanks to the valiant efforts of the other helpers who could come, and the miraculous arrival of a Fairtrade Craft stall at 36 hours' notice, we were able to open for "business as usual".

The day went very well, with hot soup and rolls served for lunch instead of our more normal cold rolls! Our cakes,

as usual, were extremely popular. The atmosphere was warm and friendly, with a steady trickle of customers. We ended the day with general enthusiasm from the all stallholders to repeat the experience next year,

a profit of £185.00 and even more people becoming aware of the H&G Canal and of our voluntary work. My heartfelt gratitude to all who helped so willingly:

The 2008 Craft Fair is on Saturday, November 8th, again at St. Katherine's Hall in Ledbury.

If you know of anyone who would like to have a stall there, or if you can come along and help, please contact me on 01568 797032. If not, please put the date in your diary now, before you forget, and come along and shop early for Christmas, in comfort and with a wide choice of beautiful, unusual gifts.

PS



Ledbury Craft Fair 2005.

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SKITTLES SOCIAL



Report

This year's Skittles match held in January, was held at the *Rising Sun* at Hartpury. Over volunteer, Tony Boonham took up the challenge to organise and co-ordinate the volunteers, and a grand job he did, with 30-40 volunteers and their families turning up from both ends of the Canal.

With Wilf Jones at the score board, it naturally became a battle of the sexes and although there were some good scores on both teams the women thought it best to let the men win in the end. This was evened up by our closing game of 'Killer'. Anne Hanscombe came out as clear winner, with Franco, who claims this crazy English game is never played in his native Italy, being a close second.

Thank you to Tony for organising the event and thank you also to Caroline, Neil Beth and Sam for all the 'sticking-up' they did throughout the evening.

♦ MJ

Top: Neil Jones

Middle: Anne
Handscombe

Right:
Malcombe
Claxton



Photos: Ted Bingham

The LOCK HOUSE at Oxenhall

by Nigel Jefferies

When the first part of Brian Fox's two-part article about the naming of the dwelling adjacent to House Lock at Oxenhall was published (page 32 of Ed 92 of The Wharfinger) I had no idea that the subject would still be in discussion 4 issues later! Nigel Jefferies dons his historical hat to (continue) the debate . . . to be a House or a Cottage, that appears to be the question!

I have followed with some interest the Articles in **The Wharfinger** by Brian Fox and in particular when the House was first referred to as a Cottage since, in 1996, I made the plaque which the Trust affixed to the property which states "Lock Cottage Oxenhall"; I wondered if I have been party to an error?

The cast aluminium alloy plaque was one of a number I made and before making the plaques I was careful to establish the wording required, so on reflection I have been wondering how the building adjacent to House Lock, has come to be referred to as a cottage. In the last edition of **The Wharfinger** (on page 33) Mike Potts recorded that an article had appeared in an edition published in

1990, containing the first apparent reference to a Cottage in our magazine, but that he could not remember where the reference came from.

Since David Bick wrote the most authoritative accounts of the canal my search started there. In the chapter entitled "Along the Towpath", on page 48 of the first edition of his book **The Hereford & Gloucester Canal** (published in 1979), he refers to "House Lock, adjacent to Lock cottage." However on page 50 there is a photograph of the building and the lock entrance, entitled "Lock House and House Lock, Oxenhall." On page 76 (which gives details of the Industrial Archaeology) it is also referred to as "LOCK HOUSE".

In **Old Industrial Sites in Wyedean**, by A G R Cross (published in 1982), on page 94, there is a photograph entitled "Tow Path and Lock Cottage near Oxenhall". It shows the building from the north, with a wooden fence and overgrown hedge in front.

In **Walking Canals**, edited by Ronald Russell (published in 1984), in the walk along part of the Hereford and Gloucester Canal (on page 66, contributed by David Bick) it is referred to as "Lock Cottage" and David refers to its Palladian style and that it was built in 1838 to Stephen Ballard's design. At the top of the same page is a map showing the section of the canal between Newent and Dymock on which "Lock & Lock Cottage" are annotated.

In 1994 Oakwood Press printed the second edition of David Bick's book and in the chapter "Along the Towpath" (on page 72) there is a new, full page photograph showing "Lock Cottage in 1976" and the entrance to House Lock, with a young child in the foreground, presumably to show the scale.



The plaque on the front of the property.



Photo: Cliff Penny

On the following page he now records that *"Both House Lock and Lock Cottage are Listed structures but in a badly deteriorating condition."* Moreover in the Industrial Archaeology (sic) (on page 102) David made a change from the first edition and refers to it as *"Lock Cottage"*.

Oakwood Press published the third edition of David Bick's book in 2003, on page 71 there is a new photograph showing part of the canal pound restored by the H&G CT (immediately to the north of House Lock) and, in the background, what David refers to as *"Lock Cottage"* in the unrestored state. On page 72 he includes a photograph, taken by Alfred Watkins c1882, which originally appeared on the dust jacket of the first edition. This was mistakenly thought to be of House Lock, Oxenhall and the adjacent building; however, he correctly identified the photograph as being of the lock and building at Rudford. In the text on page 73, he acknowledges the mistake came to light after the careful work of Brian Fox and David Bick stated, *"... my only excuse is that the*

two locks and lock cottages did indeed look very much alike."

In conclusion; I would have been disappointed if I had been responsible for perpetuating any inaccuracy that might have compromised the historical name of the building concerned. However, unless further evidence comes to light, it would seem that David Bick referred to the building as a both a 'Cottage' and a 'House' in the first edition of his book, published in 1979. In subsequent editions of his book and in writing elsewhere, he then referred to the building beside House Lock solely as a 'Cottage', and this is how the change has arisen.

ps. When looking through some documents, since writing this article, I discovered a copy of the (mid 1980's) 'Notification of Listing' of the building adjacent to House Lock - which is identified on the official 'Notice' as "Lock Cottage"!

◆ NJ

continues overleaf...

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Dear Editor,

In the 94th Edition of *The Wharfinger* there appears (on page 33) an additional article by Brian Fox on the Lock House at Oxenhall which contains a photograph by Mike Potts relating to a false name plaque attached to that building in the 1960's. In an editorial comment by yourself is contained a hint of some practical joke on the part of Mike.

May I take this opportunity of completely exonerating Mr. Potts from all such suspicions – the culprit is none other than myself alone! As the then owner of the property I had got so fed up in passers-by frequently commenting on the lines of *"was this old cottage something to do with the railway then, and is that ditch some kind of storm drainage channel?"* that as part of the works then proceeding to the house I obtained a section of hardboard and did a mock-up signboard with acrylic paint.

The wording was painted in a fair imitation of late 18th century script, but such was the state of research at that stage that I wrongly assumed the building was of the same date as the construction of the adjoining canal and lock. It was only later, when someone had taken the trouble of learning the obscure form of shorthand in which the notebooks of Stephen Ballard (held in the Hereford Record Office) were largely written, that they could be translated to get the correct building date; ie. 1838.

As a side issue, may I draw your attention to the front picket fence of the property? This was the original fence when I purchased the house and was constructed of old barrel staves. As such it was finally deteriorating through old age, and I replaced it with a mild steel paddock fence made from scratch, including a gate, to my measurements by Tony Woolrich of Canalside, Huntworth, near Bridgwater. I am very glad to see this attractive fencing has been readapted and repainted by the present owner.

Regards, **Robin Stiles**, Bristol

Thank you for your contribution to the debate, Robin – I am pleased to hear that Mike Potts is innocent! And thanks to the research by Nigel we now know that the apparent confusion in the name occurred before the building was first referred to as a 'Cottage' in *The Wharfinger* in 1990. However, is it correct for us to assume that, just because it is adjacent to 'House Lock', the dwelling was ever called 'Lock House'? The property was

not built until nearly 40 years after this part of the Canal was opened so the **Lock** could well have been called 'House Lock' on account of *another* building in the area – perhaps long demolished?

Also, can a house be a cottage – it is interesting to note that the full (unedited!) definition of such a building in *The Concise Oxford Dictionary* reads "*cottage n. 1. labourer's or villager's small dwelling; small country or suburban house.*"! – Ed.



The steel fence that Robin had made.



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A NATURAL EXPLANATION?

Regular visitors to the H&G Canal will often remark at how the surroundings change as the seasons progress through the year. However, few can be quite as observant as our regular volunteer John Chappell, who continues his fascinating series about what is growing alongside the Canal at Oxenhall – but watch out for the bears . . .

Ramsons, botanically *Allium ursinum*, is a bulbous, wild relative of chives and belongs to the onion family. It is also known as wild, wood or bear's garlic. Brown bears are evidently partial to bulbs of ramsons and dig up the ground to get at them (and the botanic name is derived from the Latin *ursa*, – bear). Fortunately, we don't encounter too many brown bears at Oxenhall – although some of the grunts we hear from the direction of the stone saw when there is a problem, makes us wonder!

The plant grows mainly in swampy deciduous woodlands, being most common in areas with slightly acidic soils. Flowers are produced before the trees break into leaf and the air is filled with a characteristic strong, onion smell. Given a position in semi-shade, preferably in moist conditions under trees it will succeed in most soils and left to its own devices will grow abundantly forming a dense carpet which can be very invasive. The banks of the canal at Oxenhall are an ideal habitat.

All parts of the plant can be eaten. The glossy green, spear-shaped leaves are delicious raw or cooked and in mild winters can be harvested as early as the middle of January. They have a distinct garlic flavour adding something special to a winter salad and can be used as flavouring in soups and stews being milder than garlic cloves. The white, star-



Ramsons, *Allium ursinum*

shaped flowers have a somewhat stronger flavour and open as the leaves lose their vitality. They can be used in exactly the same way making a decorative and tasty addition to a salad. Bulbs of wild garlic, despite being small and fiddly to harvest are best gathered when the plant is dormant from July to January; like the flowers and leaves they can be eaten raw or cooked and have a strong, but mild, garlic flavour. Wild garlic has most of the benefits of the cultivated form and when used regularly is a very beneficial addition to the diet. It is particularly effective in reducing high blood pressure and blood cholesterol levels so promoting the general health of the body.

If you really like the look of this plant it would be easy to introduce it into the garden and we can offer seeds or bulbs to interested gardeners! *I would caution however that it is very invasive and once introduced to your plot you will never be rid of it.* However, something to consider is that Ramsons were once used as fodder and it is said that cows fed on them gave milk that tasted slightly of garlic. Butter made from the milk was said to be very popular in 19th century Switzerland. *Garlic bread anyone?*

◆ JC

Photo: John Chappell



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Not quite... THE LAST PAGE

25 things to do in 2008 ...

Please enter into the spirit of our 25th Anniversary Year by seeing just how many of the boxes you can tick – if you are able to say to some “I already do that” – then thank you! By the end of our 25th Anniversary Year we will have listed 25 boxes to tick ...

- 1 Recruit a new Individual or Family Member to the H&G CT (information leaflets, which include a Membership Form, are available at ^{THE} WHARF HOUSE, at our monthly Social Evenings, or by post from Janet Moulton.) ☐
- 2 Sell (or buy!) Grand Holiday Draw tickets (see page 9). ☐
- 3 Take a friend to ^{THE} WHARF HOUSE for the first time for morning coffee & cakes/afternoon tea and light bites (for opening times see page 22). ☐

- 4 Help to run a H&G CT Open Day or other event (please see page 21 and contact the relevant organiser; you will be made most welcome). ☐
- 5 Subscribe to the H&G CT Restoration Fund (see page 13). ☐
- 6 Attend a 25th Anniversary Event (see page 7). ☐

To be continued (19 more to come!)
in **The Wharfinger** throughout 2008.

THANK YOU

Following our request for a portable projection screen (at the end of the article on *Talks and Walks*, on page 32 of the last edition of **The Wharfinger**) screens were donated by Members Michael Wright and the Rev Peter Lawrence of Malvern (who donated a projector screen and stand and kindly delivered them to Nigel Jefferies). Several other Members contacted Nigel with offers, which he individually acknowledged and thanked at the time. *Our repeated thanks to all concerned.*

CANAL BOOKS FOR SALE

On page 39 of edition 93 we reported that the H&G CT had been donated over 150 canal books; whilst many have been sold there are still some good ones left! Janet Moulton has the updated list and would be pleased to pass on details. *All proceeds go to H&G CT funds.*

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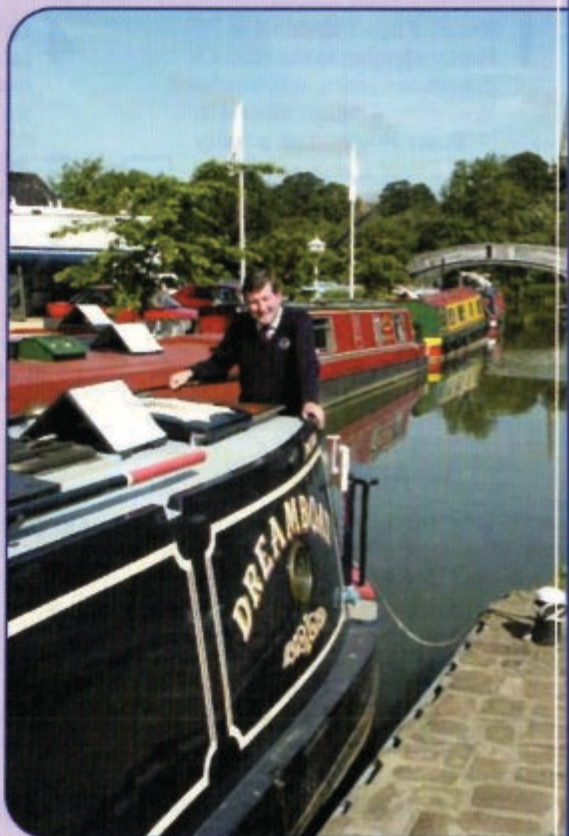
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CONTACTS

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!

Janet Moulton
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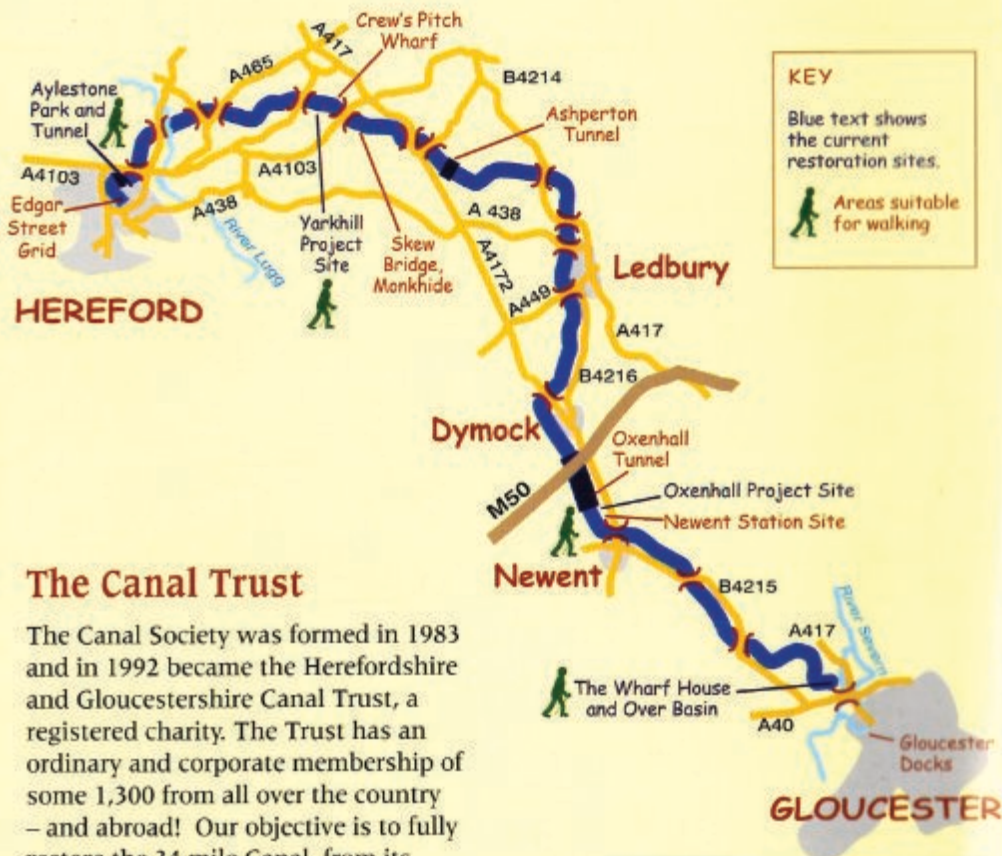
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The Wharfinger

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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.