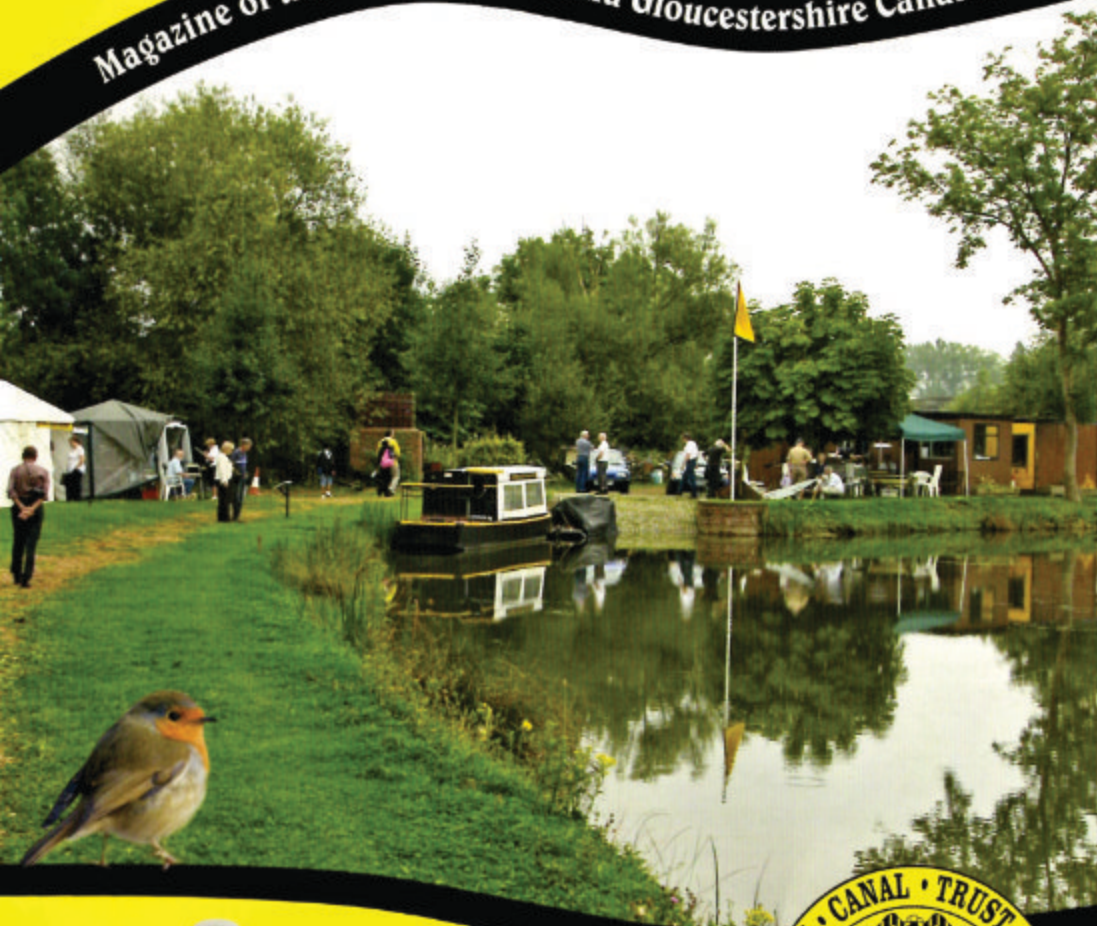


# The Wharfinger

Magazine of the Herefordshire and Gloucestershire Canal Trust



Winter 2008/9

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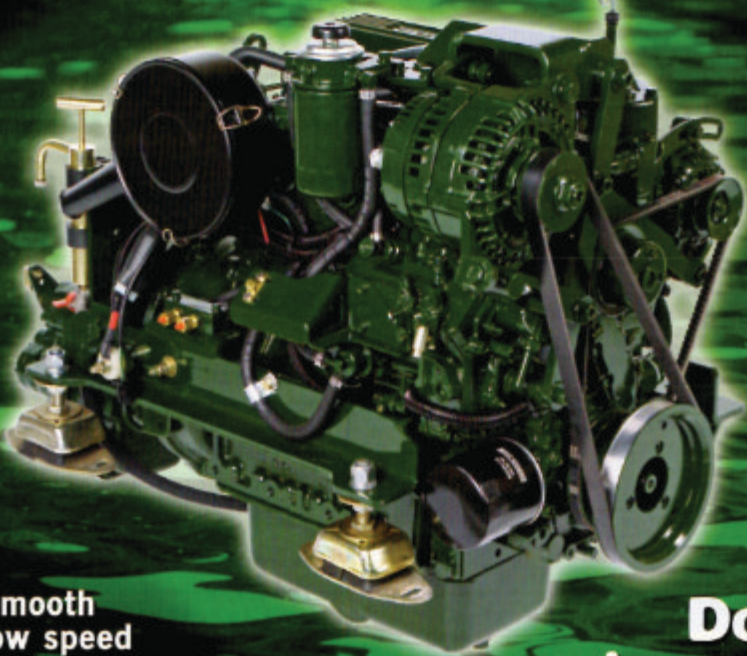


FRONT COVER IMAGE:

Open Day at Over Basin by Ted Beagles

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## ◆ CHAIRMAN'S COLUMN ◆

I will not dwell on rain, mud or roadworks – or even the credit crunch! A bright autumn cheered us all up and by the time you read this the A40 roadworks should have been completed.

I will, however, look back to a very successful 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary year. This involved many of our active volunteers and our events were well supported by the membership. We started with the splendid film show at the Courtyard Centre for the Arts and introduced Amanda Huntley and her archives to Hereford – *perhaps we can do the same for Gloucester next year?* Two events were held at <sup>the</sup> WHARF HOUSE – our splendid anniversary dinner and Nigel Jefferies' enthusiastic talk on Thomas Telford. A mini-bus tour along the route of the canal brought more members and friends to see 'our' canal. Three Open Days at Yarkhill, Over and Oxenhall saw the unveiling of 3 milestones – *a permanent reminder of our 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary.* 2008 also saw the purchase of Llanthony Lock so securing our route to the national network – NOT A BAD YEAR!

*What will 2009 bring?* A lot will depend on attracting more volunteers, not just for physical restoration of the canal, but to help with all aspects of our work – not least the sales company outings – a vital part of keeping up the H&G profile in the national canal world. Grants will be needed to fund future restorations, so grant applications will need to be made and other fund-raising ideas put into practice. We know it is going to be a difficult year ahead but I am confident that our members will continue to support us in our long term aims.

*I wish you a very Happy Festive Season and look forward to meeting as many of you as possible in the New Year.*

◆ Janet Moult, Chairman

Your  
**HELP**  
please!

### SITUATION VACANT

For 2009 the IWA's **National Waterways Festival and Boat Show** will be held adjacent to the River Soar at Red Hill, near Ratcliffe on Soar, just south of Nottingham (see 'Wandering to Wolverhampton' on p.12 for the report on the event this year). We urgently need a volunteer, please, to drive a hired light van containing the display material and sales stock to and from the event next August. A free pass to the event and lots to see and do can be assured! Janet Moult will gladly give further details.



# More than just a holiday...



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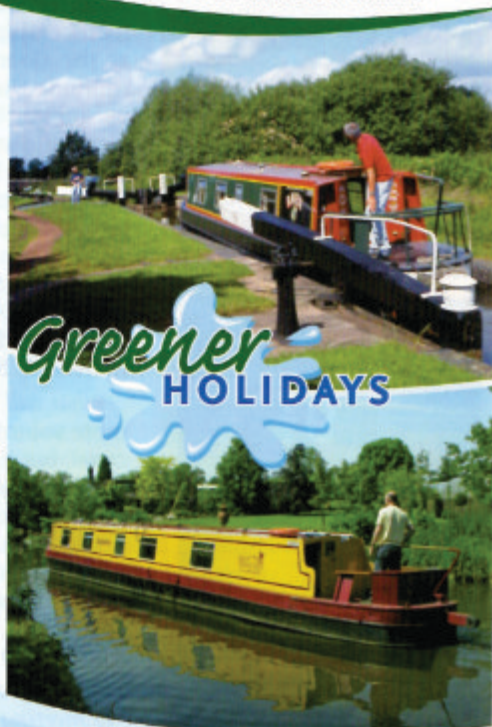
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## Working Together



by Cliff Penny

In her Chairman's column in the last edition Janet Moulton referred to our motto "Working together in the present, to revive the past, and secure a better future" – and to the fact that the national press had (then) recently used a similar phrase on the positive effect of inland waterways on the value of nearby property. Since then the press has been very much in 'negative mode' and, most certainly, it is easy to let the current climate (*for once I am not talking about the weather*) get you down! *It is so easy to convince yourself that what a few months ago was a very positive situation is now the complete reverse.* But what does that achieve? Take a short-term view, influenced by what is going on around you, and you may fail to achieve your long-term objective!

How easy it would have been for everyone involved at THE WHARF HOUSE to effectively 'give up' once the full extent of the chaos to be imposed on us by the A40 roadworks had been appreciated. Instead, a very positive attitude prevailed and we have thankfully weathered that storm including the last minute additional challenges of severed electricity cables and solemn promises of the final completion date for the roadworks failing to be met. Everyone involved at THE WHARF HOUSE has worked together, been exceedingly flexible and made the best of the extremely difficult situation that has been thrust upon us for a period in excess of six months. As soon as the scale of the (*huge!*) impact on visitor numbers became clear it was prudent that we placed a temporary embargo on further expenditure on fitting-out the upper floors. Our volunteers managed to make some progress working with the materials that

we already had (*thank you*). After many deferrals the contractor who will clad the steel staircase in hardwood has agreed to set his team in motion and revised work plans for our own volunteers have been drawn up, budgets agreed and targets set. ***Now it is all systems go, working together, to complete the B&B facilities!***

We have always stressed that our motto is also the secret of our success in different elements of our external liaison (whether with local authorities, developers or other bodies). What perhaps is not so obvious is that the motto *equally* applies *within* the H&G CT and our two associated companies! It is particularly important that we all do our utmost to work *together* during what clearly will be difficult times in the coming months (or more?) - then, as we have proved time and time again - ***by all working together we will succeed!***

### STOP PRESS – A40 ROADWORKS FINISHED!

Easy access to Over Canal Basin and THE WHARF HOUSE has now been restored – ***the roadworks are finished*** – do please come and see us soon. Why not take a walk around Over Basin, pick up some H&G CT gifts for Christmas (see pages 22 - 23), then refresh yourself before you depart? Choose morning coffee and cakes, lunch, something from our 'light bites' menu in the afternoon – or why not book a table for dinner, pop into Gloucester to see the Christmas lights, then finish your day out with dinner at THE WHARF HOUSE? You will be made very welcome.

◀ CRP



# MILESTONES

*In more than one sense...*



The first part of our article about the skilled volunteer work involved in the production of the milestones was published in the last edition of *The Wharfinger* (pages 8-9). Nigel Jefferies now completes the story - telling how the cast mileage indicator plates were made - and confirms that (as always!) the skills of our volunteers have achieved professional results at a fraction of the cost...

When the Council of Management resolved to reinstate, as part of the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebrations of the formation of the Society and Trust, three of the milestones which were positioned along the canal I felt I could make a contribution, since I had made the cast aluminium elliptical plaques which we have erected in the past on buildings and structures (see 'A Marque of Success', edition 83 of *The Wharfinger*).

The milestones were positioned at every mile and half-mile along the canal on the non-towpath side, since this was

embodied in the original Act of Parliament of 1791. However I am uncertain if any were erected on the first stretch of the canal from Gloucester to Ledbury, which was built between 1793 and 1798, because none appear to have survived. On the second half of the canal from Ledbury to Hereford, built between 1839 and 1845; only one appears to have survived *in situ*, but two others have been repositioned by a local landowner, as features in his garden. As David Bick makes the point in his book about the canal, the simplicity of their design reflects the Canal Company's lack of money - they consist of a stone block with a cast iron plate recessed into the surface, which records the distance to and from Gloucester. The only acknowledgement to aesthetics is a modest shaping of the top of the stone and a slight chamfer on the front edges.

On a sunny afternoon in February last year, with a biting easterly wind and squally showers (which chilled me to the bone), Brian Fox took me to view the two milestones which a landowner has relocated. This enabled me to take detailed measurements of the stones and cast iron plates (including the figures). I also took some photographs of these two milestones. On a warmer day my wife and I found the remaining *in situ* milepost, which I also measured. The measurements I recorded proved that the stones and the cast iron plates varied in size.

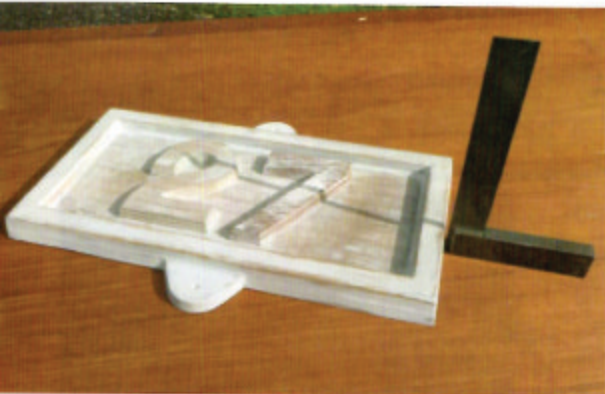
At the next meeting of our Finance Committee we discussed the likely cost of making the milestones. I pointed out that I thought I would be able to make the wooden pattern required to make the sand mould into which the molten metal is poured to produce the casting. However, I

An original milestone *in situ*.



Photos: Nigel Jefferies





The finished pattern; draft angles and a good surface finish facilitate removal from the mould.

would be unable to make the castings, as I had in the past. We considered a £200 budget for each milestone would be realistic.

On a shopping trip to Hereford I showed photographs of the stones to the stone masons restoring Hereford Cathedral; they confirmed the stone is red sandstone and gave me details of two suppliers in the Forest of Dean. I contacted both suppliers and the most competitive quotation for a piece of stone 800 x 355 x 203mm was £150.00 + vat, or for three, £390 + vat, totalling £458.25.

I liaised with the site leaders at Over, Oxenhall and Yarkhill and it was agreed that the cast iron plates would show  $\frac{1}{2}$ :  $9\frac{1}{2}$  and 27, respectively. I then made an accurate full-size orthographic drawing of the backplate and designed the figures as closely as possible to the original plates. I made the backplate from plywood and used oak for the raised rectangular moulding. On this occasion I had to make the pattern in my garage and was limited to using hand saws and a plane. When I made the elliptical plaques, I was able to use the various sizes of plastic letters I had obtained from a foundry merchant, that can simply be stuck on the back plate. However on this occasion I did not have any of a suitable size, so I decided to make them using plywood. Due to the lack of a jigsaw to cut out the figures, I had to make the three elements of the  $\frac{1}{2}$  larger than on the original plaques, but as they would stand alone, and since they were to be replacements, I thought this was acceptable. The two most important features of a pattern are that all vertical

edges must slope or have draft angles and it must be well finished, to enable it to be easily removed from the moulding sand. When I had finished making the figures, I used double-sided tape to secure the figures to the back plate.

By searching the local editions of *Yellow Pages* I found a foundry in Thrupp near Stroud, Gloucestershire and after emailing them a photograph of the finished pattern, D. M. Foundries of Stafford Mill, agreed to cast the plates in aluminium alloy or cast iron for £42.30 inclusive of VAT. So far we were well within our budget of £200.00 per milestone! I duly delivered the pattern and decided to have them cast in cast iron, in-keeping with the original plates. Trust member Don Gaunt, who lives at Stonehouse, collected the castings and brought them to a social meeting to avoid me having to make another journey to Stroud.

During the interim, Brian Fox told me that the owner of **Cope's Quarry** had left his card at **THE WHARF HOUSE**, with an offer to assist us in the future. An inquiry revealed he had three suitable pieces of stone at £20.00 each, inclusive of VAT! The stones were shaped as was illustrated and explained in the previous edition of **The Wharfinger**. Consequently, the milestones for which we had budgeted £200.00 per stone, were made for just £62.30 each; a testimony to what can be achieved by our volunteers "Working together!" and, if I might say, the careful use we make of our financial resources.

Incidentally, on the original plates I could find no trace of paint, but they are of course more than 160 years old. Cast iron does not rust, but when first exposed to the atmosphere the surface develops an orange discolouration, so it was decided to paint the plate black and pick-out the surface of the figures in white. ◆◆ NJ





## Oxenhall OPEN DAY *by Brian Fox*

The day started misty and murky with a promise of sunshine later (which unfortunately never materialised). Thankfully the rain held off and, despite a slow start, the visitors turned up in good numbers so the ladies in the kitchen providing refreshments were kept busy – and Penny on the Sales stand also did some good business. The car park was full to capacity for much of the afternoon and the overspill field, kindly made available by Member (and Lock Cottage owner) Nigel Freeman, was much appreciated. *Thank you, Nigel.*

Down on the canal everything was looking tidy and the volunteers were standing by their handiwork ready to chat and answer all the questions – well *most* questions! Seats had been provided at strategic points for those unable to walk too far and we must also thank the new tenants of Lock Cottage for their forbearance at having their Sunday so disrupted by myriads of visitors. They were also good enough to provide cups of tea throughout the day to



The Oxenhall milestone was unveiled by Deputy Mayor of Newent, Councillor David Blick.

the volunteers on duty and some volunteers were lucky enough to have a guided tour of the Cottage. It is difficult to imagine how a family with 5 children and 3 lodgers could have lived here (as the 1861 census tells us they did)!

At precisely 2pm a small party was seen to be walking down the towpath to the area just below the lock where a mystery object had been noticed covered with a plastic bag and tied with a pink ribbon. The answer to one of the questions was revealed as the ribbon was cut, the bag removed, and another of the commemorative milestones was unveiled by Councillor David Blick, the deputy mayor of Newent. This was the last of the three stones to be unveiled as part of our 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebrations and was then inspected with many complimentary comments made by those present.

◆ BF



The Oxenhall milestone.





Photos: John Chappell

Oxenhall volunteers pose next to the newly unveiled anniversary milestone below House Lock.



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# 25 Years Anniversary



Above: The car park fills up.  
Below: The local fire station shows support.



Above: Old friends meet up. The whole place was buzzing.  
Right: Chris Clarke's Lanchester took the milestone unveiling party along the towpath in style.

Somewhere between heavy showers and the major roadworks on the A40, we successfully held an Anniversary Open Day at Over. Our local volunteers had put a lot of work into getting the site looking good. The road signs were put up some distance from Over to encourage visitors to brave the contra-flow and join in the fun. Thousands of leaflets were distributed, posters displayed and local event websites and media all alerted. So after a slow and very wet start we just crossed fingers.

*It paid off* – Paul Brown's car park team did sterling work controlling the traffic. Even the over-spill car park became full. Chris Clarke organised vintage cars and even a fire engine! Refreshments were available at both <sup>THE</sup> WHARF HOUSE and by the Basin run by Gill Beard and her team. There were stalls of local produce and plants, and local crafts people joined us. Tug boat Alder toured the Basin. Eileen Shacknell made a magnificent cake depicting many details of our Canal. The place was buzzing by the time Mike Pott's mini bus tour of the Canal arrived. The Over Milestone was unveiled by Nigel Jefferies and Mike Potts, two of our original members.

Thank you everyone



Right: Teamwork – Nigel Jefferies says a few words and Mike Potts unveils the milestone.





# Open Day at Over

Below: Wendy Henshaw brought a great display of plants for sale.  
Right: Visitors explored the whole site.



Above: Janet Moulton presents an Honorary Life Membership to Nigel and Liz Bailey for their work with the Trust.



Left: 'Roll up, roll up', says Simon Baggart on the coconut shy.



Below: Jane Green sells local fruit juices.



Above: Bernard Tudor and Phyllis Edwards display their walking sticks.

Left: Transport Artist, Eric Bottomley, talks to Bernard over a 'cuppa'.



Below left: Eileen Shacknell made a great Anniversary cake for the occasion.

Below right: Vintage car owners display their vehicles beside the Basin.



Thank you to everyone for making it happen!



## Wandering\* to Wolverhampton

I could have given you another picture of mud (*inside* the marquee this time!) but I think we will try and forget it this year. The **National Waterways Festival** was held at a rather soggy site in Wolverhampton but our campers and caravanners were moved to the Racecourse so we had extra facilities there. The Festival site was served by a Park and Ride from the Racecourse so there were no worries about getting the car off site this year.

Many thanks to Derek Weaver for braving long queues, and one-way systems, to get the van nearer to the marquee than last year! He and Taryna, Des Pick and Ray and Barbara Moses were joined by Kelly and Matthew to form our team this year.

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

Becca and I went up on Monday (it was the first time for many years that the August Bank Holiday had not been taken up with the 'National'). As usual, Des was on great form selling Grand Holiday Draw tickets and we were very pleased that Tim Coghlan of Braunston Marina made the Draw for us.

Great interest was shown in our plans and many congratulations were received on our purchase of the Llanthony site.

*Next year the Festival moves to the banks of the River Soar - so we hope the water stays in the river and that we can have a dry site!! [We are seeking your help with next year's event, please see bottom of page 3]*

♦♦ JM

\* for non-football fans - Wolverhampton Wanderers is the local football team!

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## GRAND HOLIDAY DRAW WINNERS

The Grand Holiday Draw 2008 *broke all records* and raised £2,692; our sincere thanks, once again, to everyone who bought and sold tickets and (in particular) to those who donated the prizes - *Black Prince Holidays, The Wharf House, Mrs J Thomas at Penwern Farm and British Marine Federation*. As the cost of printing the tickets was sponsored by *Eastnor Castle* every single pound raised has gone straight into H&G Canal Trust Funds - *thank you everyone!*

The winning tickets were drawn on 25<sup>th</sup> August at the **National Waterways Festival** in Wolverhampton by Tim Coghlan of Braunston Marina - *thank you, Tim.*



Photo: Janet Moutt

Tim Coghlan (right) of Braunston Marina draws the winning tickets aided by Matthew Dyer (left) and Des Pick (centre)

### 1<sup>ST</sup> PRIZE ticket no 10915 -

One week narrowboat holiday for four donated by **Black Prince Holidays...**

**Mrs Judy Malet, Pudleston, Leominster**

### 2<sup>ND</sup> PRIZE ticket no 08057 -

Dinner, B&B for 2 at <sup>THE</sup> WHARF HOUSE...

**Mrs E Hale, Gloucester**

### 3<sup>RD</sup> PRIZE ticket no 05872

One night B&B for 2 in the Brecon Beacons NP, donated by **Mrs J Thomas, Penwern Farm...**

**Mrs Anne White, Llanwrst**

The following people each won a pair of tickets to **The London Boat Show 2009:**

- **ticket no 4410** Des Pick, Newbold Verdon, Leicestershire

**ticket no 5176** Mr JP Lock, Langport, Somerset

**ticket no 5317** Mrs G Woodhams, Northampton

**ticket no 6328** Mr A Riley, Rickmansworth

**ticket no 1848** Mr & Mrs ML Winney, Ross-on-Wye

*We hope that the winners all enjoy their prizes and our repeated thanks to everyone who helped, in any way, to make the draw this year such a success.*



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or phone **01452 790 459**.

## THE TUG

# ALDER

*and friends*

by *Caroline Jones*

*In the last article on our workboat Alder I reported on the work undertaken to get her back into the water at Over (and that yet to be done now that we were safely afloat). Our work over the 'summer' has been severely hampered by both the weather and the time taken to get to and from Over – how good it was to hear that the A40 should be back to normal by the time that you read this! You will also see that, just like like Thomas the Tank Engine, Alder will soon have some friends ...*

The main job undertaken was to repaint the main roof area of the cabin; this was by far the most corroded and in need of protection. In the few dry spells we had this summer the roof was sanded to a stable surface, coated with zinc anti-rust treatment and, at the August Open Day at Over, given a good coat of 'red rattle'. 'Red rattle' being a sort of substitute red oxide coating with additional ingredients to make it more hardwearing. Traditionally the roof of a narrowboat would have been given an annual coating of red oxide paint to keep it in good order, we can't do that today as traditional red oxide has a lead content and, in any case, we'd rather not have the annual job - so 'red rattle' was the product to use. The rattle, along with the other top coating and sign-writing paints, has been supplied at a very good price by a Birmingham company **Rapidpaint Ltd**, their narrowboat range is called appropriately **Narrowboat Colours** and can be found at their website [www.narrowboatcolours.co.uk](http://www.narrowboatcolours.co.uk). We are very grateful for the assistance they have given both with the cost of the paint and valuable advice.





**Alder** toured the Basin on the Over Open Day, avoiding the small model boats that were sharing the water.

Photo: Ted Beagles

The next painting job will be the sides and ends of the cabins. We have at last (after a long wrangle with the manufacturers) got a pair of new portholes for the boat and as soon as these are fitted the painting can proceed – weather permitting of course!

Following favourable reports on our progress in restoring **Alder** news has just come through from **British Waterways** that we can take possession of two more

boats from their workboat fleet. These are **Renton**, an ex Grand Union Canal Carrying Co. motor boat, which was sold to the Ministry of War Transport in 1943 and shortened to become an icebreaking tug; and **Tow** an ex River Class butty converted by British Waterways into a mud hopper. The 'new' boats are both in good working order, if a little tatty, and are currently afloat on the waterways system. **Renton** is at Batchworth on the Grand Union Canal just north of London and **Tow** is at Icknield Port in Birmingham. *There will be more information on the boats and, hopefully, more photographs next time.*

We need to get the two boats to Gloucester and as both are afloat and licensed I feel an expedition coming on to bring the pair to Gloucester in the traditional manner! On a more serious note the tug and hopper will need to get to Gloucester by water, that is a trip we are currently organising and if anyone fancies a day out to help anywhere between Gloucester, London and Birmingham please do give me ring on 01452 318224 (weekdays) or 01594 861286 (weekends) so that when we finalise dates I can let you know. Hopefully this will all happen this year but, if the River Severn is not accommodating, we may have to do the river section next spring!

◆ CJ



Photo: Neil Jones

**Renton** (above) – ex Grand Union Canal Carrying Co. motor boat, which was shortened to become an icebreaking tug.

**Tow** (right) – ex River Class butty converted by British Waterways into a mud hopper.



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# Llanthony Lock

*Paul Henshaw reports*

**W**ork has been progressing – clearing undergrowth from the southern side of the site to make way for a small car parking area for visitors and volunteers and to provide an area for landscaping.

A new steel gate, for the entrance to the footbridge, is in the process of being fabricated by Ted Beagles and work has been started renovating the outside loo at one of the cottages. ♦ **PH**



A small team of volunteers do a fine job of clearing a badly overgrown area south of the river.



The undergrowth is burnt on the bonfire as the site is tidied.

Below: Paul and Ted survey the cleared area.



Above: A mature black poplar tree graces one end of the site.

Below: The footbridge over the river will be getting a new gate.







The Gloucester & District Model Boat Club enjoy the clear, weed-free, water that they help to maintain.

The quarter has been a challenging one with the focus on making the site presentable for the H&G CT's 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Open Day at the end of August. Our gardeners did sterling work in the run up to make the site look good for all the visitors attending; the road works on the A40 made the day uncertain in terms of numbers but, at the end of the day, it was judged a success (*Maggie Jones reports on the Open Day on page 10*).

All year round our gardeners have done a wonderful job and the site has been at its best ever; the increased amount of work they have to do now has been taken on board by all! The newly built flower beds are showing colour and the car park, flood plain and the front gardens of THE WHARF HOUSE have been given even greater attention to ensure that they make a good first impression to those coming to explore the Visitor Centre or to have a meal. Skew Gardens have been soft landscaped and the first shrubs planted and these are currently in flower. A base for a seat has been laid in a semi-circle of slate and a temporary seat (whilst an appropriate permanent one is sourced)

has been placed for visitors to enjoy the view of the Canal Basin – and beyond.

Our volunteers working on THE WHARF HOUSE project have completed the painting of the external doors and have moved onto works on the first floor. In the staff room alcoves have been started and, on the stairway, cupboards are being boxed out and panelled (and shelves fitted). The build of the balcony has further progressed with a second coat of paint having been applied and the ornamental wall supports have been made and fitted. The electrical



The freshly laid towpath surface made easy walking for our Open Day visitors.



wiring has been completed to enable lights to be fitted into the underside of the balcony making an inviting entrance when coming from the car park.

**Bridge Training** volunteers have been hard at work assisting in cutting grass and strimming. One team has been busy rubbing down all the containers on site and painting them and have also helped with the second coat of paint to the balcony.

**Bridge Training** have also assisted in clearing the Canal Basin of weed, this was hard work throwing rakes with rope attached into the Basin and dragging the weed out – then barrowing it to break down into fertiliser under the hedgerows.

**The Gloucester and District Model Boat Club** has also been assisting getting the weed out of the Basin (*thank you*) so they can race yachts around buoys placed down the middle. It's not unusual to see up to six yachts competing here! Apart from yachts I have seen submarines, motor torpedo boats, customs cutters, steam tugs and all types of speed boats (all in miniature and remote-controlled!) on our water. The road works have affected the numbers of modellers coming but with the works due for completion before this is published I know we are going to see our water being used much more – especially on most Saturdays.

Our mechanical crew have also been very busy. The sit-on-mower needed major works including welding on the drive pulleys for the cutters and the 'out of commission' wheeled trimmer needed safety works (having shaken itself apart during operation!). Brackets and a plate have been fitted underneath and a rubber protection mat (ingeniously made from a lorry mudguard) has been fixed to the rear to safeguard the operator from flying debris. One of the hand held trimmers had a brush cutting blade fitted – simple you would think, not a bit of it, hundreds of left-hand thread screws in the shop – *not one fitted* – it needed a special order to the manufacturer and many visits to make it happen (*thanks Mike*). ◆ **BH**



Above: At the entrance to the Visitor Centre, Henry Clarke and Andy Smith take a moment to inspect their handiwork.



Above: A model boater adjusts his craft on the slipway.

Below: A number of moorhens have been nesting at the far end of the Basin and so the weed has not been disturbed.



Photos: Ted Beagles and Barrie Hayman



# 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.

Janet has put together some great topics for you to enjoy over the next few months. We look forward to seeing you there.



## DECEMBER

Please note: *no meeting in December*

## JANUARY 20<sup>TH</sup>

**How green was Mr Brindley's stinking ditch? – Dick Skeet**

A different approach to canals.

## FEBRUARY 17<sup>TH</sup>

**50 years on the water**

*Norma Perry*

A member's memories of holidays afloat.

## MARCH 17<sup>TH</sup>

**Royal National Lifeboat Institution**

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# THE WHARF HOUSE *Season's Greetings*

The road works on the A40 have caused a major impact on the trade at THE WHARF HOUSE right through the summer. On occasions it was a challenge to find any entrance through the mass of traffic cones and the contra-flow. The good news is that the chaos will be over by the time you read this

## PIRATES IN THE DOCKS

As customers were finding it hard to get to THE WHARF HOUSE, it was decided that THE WHARF HOUSE should go to them! On the weekend in October when Gloucester Docks became overrun with pirates, the staff 'jumped ship' and set up on the quayside with a pig roast to feed the hungry 'pirates'. This proved to be very popular.



The Christmas Season is here and new seasonal menus are available to tempt partying groups and family gatherings. There is a choice of 2 menus with a good range of seasonal fare and yes, turkey is not on either of them!

## IWA ANNUAL DINNER

The local Branch of the Inland Waterways Association will once more be partying at THE WHARF HOUSE for their Annual Dinner in the new year. Their last visit proved to be very popular and so it was agreed that they should make a return visit on Friday 27th February 2009. If you are interested in joining the Dinner please get your booking in early to Martin Turner on 01291 650605.

**PLEASE NOTE:** THE WHARF HOUSE will be closed from Monday, 22<sup>nd</sup> December until Friday, 2<sup>nd</sup> January except for private functions.

# THE WHARF HOUSE

## WATERSIDE RESTAURANT

Celebrate this Christmas at THE WHARF HOUSE, the perfect location for family reunions and festive parties. We pride ourselves on our freshly prepared dishes using only the best of local produce. Our new Christmas menus for 8+ people are from only £18.95. Visit [www.thewharfhouse.co.uk](http://www.thewharfhouse.co.uk) to view our festive menus, or contact us now to reserve a table.

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Evening Restaurant:

**from 7pm**

*Prior booking is advised.*

Morning coffee  
and cakes:

**10 am – 12 noon**

Afternoon Tea  
and light bites:

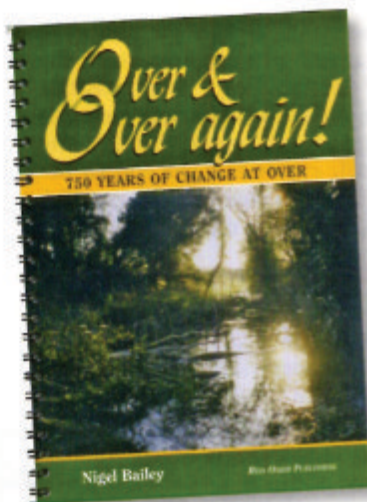
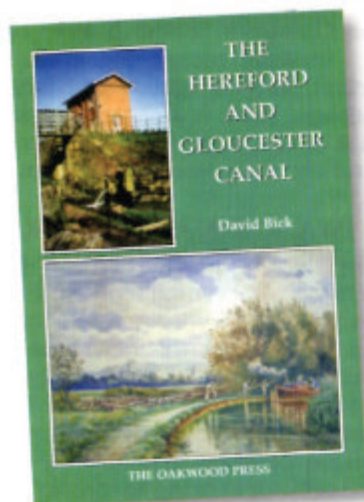
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# Gift ideas from THE WHARF HOUSE



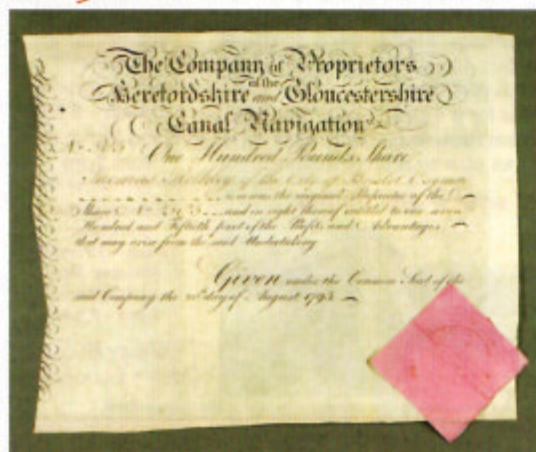
Every Member and supporter should have a copy of David Bick's book *'The Hereford and Gloucester Canal'*; it also makes an ideal Christmas gift.

**£8.95** from THE WHARF HOUSE,  
or by post **£10.95** including P&P from  
Heather Worth see inside back cover.

Nigel Bailey's book *'Over and Over Again'* takes readers back through a fascinating 750 years in the life of Over – definitely one for your bookshelf!

**£6** from THE WHARF HOUSE,  
or by post **£7.95** including P&P from  
Heather Worth see inside back cover.

## Share Certificate



You can now have your own high quality copy of the **1793 £100 share** from the first issue of shares in the navigation – purchased by the H&G CT in April this year (see page 39 of edition 96) – or it makes yet another unusual Christmas gift.

**£7** from THE WHARF HOUSE,  
or by post **£10** including P&P from  
Heather Worth see inside back cover.



# THE WHARF HOUSE

## Gift Vouchers

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.

Free postage and packing for orders over £25.

### Remember!

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



## Gift membership of the HEREFORDSHIRE & GLOUCESTERSHIRE CANAL TRUST

*Gift Membership of the H&G Canal Trust* is an unusual gift for a friend or relative for Christmas that lasts all year!

Just provide their full name and address, your own details – including your telephone number in case there are any queries – and the relevant subscription (see inside back cover for rates).

We will send a H&G CT card at Christmas advising them of your gift and their details will be passed on to the Membership Secretary who will enrol them for 12 months Membership of the Canal Trust.



# Work at Yarkhill

by Chris High

The last edition of **The Wharfinger** had a number of 'stop press' reports on matters relating to Yarkhill. I now catch up with the Yarkhill Team's thanks to the Courtyard Management Team for their enthusiasm and hard work during their day at Yarkhill; also to all the help we received at Yarkhill in preparing for, and organising, our successful third Open Day – *many thanks to all involved.*

Site maintenance continued throughout July and August with much strimming, mowing, log retrieval and rubbish removal. A broken branch was winched from its precarious position above the towpath ditch bank and logged up whilst two ash tree spurs with considerable spread across the towpath, that were considered to be a safety hazard, were felled and cleared away. Further work was carried out to provide the team with a safe access and working area for coppicing on the 'wildside' in the autumn. Our thanks

to Rod of **Stevens & Son Plant Sales**, Whitestone, Hereford who has been on site and helped with this latter work.

In early September, following a couple of days persistent rain, the canal was in water – briefly! This gave some of us the chance to have fun and use a small dinghy to ferry us to and from our work site. Mud lines on the tractor wheels, the ditch banks and in the site hut, suggest a significant flow of water occurred. This being confirmed by the demolition of our sandbag dam! Following the drop in the water level, and the double handling of some 150 wet sandbags, the dam has been rebuilt. On a more positive note Paul investigated a report of running water, found a leak, and carried out an instant temporary fix with a couple of sandbags (*more permanent work to follow!*) Realising the extreme likelihood of further wet weather to come, more hardcore has been added to the site hut access.



Left: The temporary sandbag dam at one end of the pound has been rebuilt and strengthened.

Photos: Chris High





Top: Rod starts work on the 'wildside'.

Above: Volunteers from The Courtyard, in Hereford, spend a busy day cutting back the scrub.

Above: A very welcome addition to our site is the portaloo extension!

Below: A tidy towpath with the hedgerow starting to fill out.



A further beneficial addition to the Yarkhill infrastructure has been the installation of a 'portatoilet' in a purpose built cubicle.

Now that the crops are off the fields it was time to burn the rubbish we had accumulated. Someone must have read my thoughts for, all of a sudden, our site numbers doubled as team members returned to site following holidays, other commitments, convalescence and marriage! *So welcome back to Colin, John, Ralph, and Steve – it's good to have your help once again; in fact the help was so good the mass of accumulated rubbish is no more!*

**Talking of help – we can always do with more.** If you would like to try us for a fun day out, (or two, three or for life!) then give me a call, Chris High 01568 615 575.

◆ CH



The Inland  
Waterways  
Association

## Gloucestershire & Herefordshire IWA Branch

**Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> December 2008**  
at Stables Cafe, Saul, at 7.30pm  
**Cotswold Canals Trust**

-----  
**Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> February 2009**  
at Gloucester Yacht Club, 7.30pm  
**Wilts & Berks Canal Trust**

-----  
**Friday 27<sup>th</sup> February 2009**  
**THE WHARF HOUSE, at 7.30pm**  
**Annual IWA Branch Dinner**

*For further details of any of the above:*  
**Martin Turner 01291 650605**



# RESTORATION at Oxenhall *by Brian Fox*



Photo: John Chappell

Oxenhall volunteer, David Mordaunt, takes a moment to enjoy the sunshine whilst his bonfire gently burns.

**A**t the beginning of the year a list of jobs was made which would supposedly keep us all occupied for the next couple of years. This is a necessary part of the planning together with Risk Assessments, budgets and making sure we have sufficient tools and equipment in good order to undertake all the various tasks. Over the last 6 months however, Keith, Martin and

Peter who were responsible for the completion of the new spill weir have gone – 2 to get ‘proper jobs’ and Martin has a long term sick note but hopes to be back next Spring! Dave G. has also disappeared, we hope temporarily, and Michael just disappeared. Summer holidays have taken their toll and we are now down to about 6 regulars (which was not in the plan). *Thanks to all those who have helped us and a speedy recovery to those who qualify.*

Preparation of the 3 milestones was not in our original programme either, but was an additional task willingly taken on. Now that they are completed and positioned in their respective resting places we are getting back to completion of the Ell Brook aqueduct. The 4 corner buttresses are now being prepared using some of the large stone still in the compound and Bernard is manufacturing our own capping stones to finish off the job. Unfortunately there were not enough blue stones (engineering brick ‘specials’) to complete the coping on both sides and we are looking for another 40 so that we can finish that job. The ones which we have used so far came from the old station platforms at Newent and there are similar coping stones on the parapet of Skew bridge at Monkhide but



Photo: Brian Fox

Blue engineering coping stones on the aqueduct – we need more like these to complete the other side.

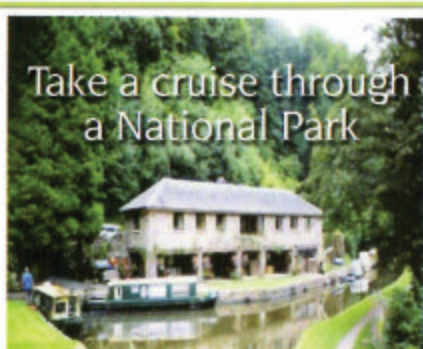




I think there would be objections if we removed them to finish our job! *We do have a deadline on this job as we have already placed a stone in the wall inscribed HGCT with the date 2008. Do you know a source of blue engineering bricks; please see below right to help us achieve this! Thank you.*

Peter has been doing sterling work trying to keep the vegetation down along the towpath. The mower has been on the go at least every other week and a new trimmer has been purchased to keep the heavier stuff at bay. The hedges have also been growing like mad and Dave has already had a couple of good bonfires to burn all the stuff accumulated over the summer and there is nearly enough to justify another very soon. Bernard is looking forward to using his newly acquired skills on the chainsaw – but he is too busy with the coping stones at the moment – some jobs just have to wait.

Geoff opted to go on a beginners course to learn driving a tractor and had a wonderful weekend at Holme Lacy driving different sorts of tractor and developing his skills. It was a bit of a come down when he got a go on our little Massey Ferguson which is now over 30 years old and looking a bit like it. Fortunately it still serves us well and Mr Prout at Dymock gave it a good service at a very reasonable cost recently so it should go for a bit longer yet. A couple of coats of paint on the tractor is yet another job on our list. So if you feel like lending a hand with this or any other task why not join us down at Oxenhall on a Tuesday? *You will be made very welcome.*



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*dimensions – 350mm x 150mm x 150mm with two curved corners as in the photograph above.*

***Do you know a source, please?***

If you are able to help us find the blue bricks to finish the coping this year it would be appreciated – please get in touch (see *Contacts, inside back cover*)!

***Thank you.***



# PARTY ON THE PARK



The artwork (by Bobbie Blackwell) was used both in a flier delivered to 2,000 households and as the front cover of a programme.

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The idea of a barbeque on Aylestone Park, Hereford, to go with a bonfire of the pile of logs left from the pollarded poplars was floated nearly a year ago at an Aylestone Park Association meeting. A discrete little group of local residents, enjoying a soiree. Then the idea of a folk band to entertain was mooted. Why not involve young people? This was expanded to celebrate completing Phase 2 of work on the Park and coinciding with the H&G Canal Trust's 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Some months on an outline budget was developed and a (successful!) bid made for a Herefordshire Council Community Projects Grant.

From small beginnings the project grew to include 5 marquees, 12 musical groups and entertainers, some 15 tons of wood moved to the bonfire site - and commercial caterers. Not forgetting all the volunteer time in preparation (*over 30 individuals gave their time to putting on the event*), gifts of materials and services and local firms willing to place adverts towards the costs of the publicity material. We've had banners and fliers, and posters and listings, and entries and bunting!

The objective was to put Aylestone Park "on the map" for local community use; over 40 acres of public park between Aylestone Hill and College Road. The network of over 2km of footpaths and cycleways having been constructed by canal volunteers.

◆ MD

All the planning came together in mid-October when, at dusk, the huge bonfire was lit by the head boy and head girl from Aylestone High School. Entertainment included puppets, Indian dancers, folk groups, heavy rock, reggae . . . *something for almost everyone*. The headline act was 'Brandon Steep', Herefordshire's own indie rock band, who played Glastonbury last year and performed numbers from their new CD. *The event was declared a great success!*



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## A NATURAL EXPLANATION?

*It is so easy to take nature for granted – how much more interesting life can be if we are aware of our surroundings – and this is most certainly true at our Oxenhall site. What never ceases to amaze me is the sheer diversity of the plants that our regular columnist John Chappell describes for us (and the wealth of natural remedies that appear to thrive there) . . .*

**S**nowdrops, seen here at the Oxenhall site, are very welcome as winter releases its grip and they are well known as the harbingers of spring and a symbol of hope. A medieval name 'Fair maids of February' is often heard, which compares the snowdrop's petals to the long, white dresses worn by village maidens when they went to church to celebrate the Feast of the Purification of the Virgin on February 2<sup>nd</sup>. On this day they would light candles and worship the Virgin Mary; hence Candlemas Day.

The botanic name of our woodland snowdrops is *Galanthus nivalis*, from the Greek *gala* = milk and *anthos* = flower; the specific name means winter. You might well imagine the plant is a British native and a once commonly held belief was that the Romans brought them to our shores. Today, however, perceived wisdom has it that snowdrops were introduced as ornamental garden plants at a much later date, their history being traced back in print to sixteenth century herbals and floralegias. Shakespeare, who died in 1616, was fond of wild flowers but never once mentions the snowdrop in his writings. However it is agreed that the bulb's beginnings in this country can be traced to human habitation, usually historic sites and from such places have spread and naturalized, a testament to the suitability of our climate.

The snowdrop is a bulbous plant increasing readily by division, botanists allege that it is sterile i.e. does not set seed and you will rarely find a seedling plant amongst a colony in a wood. The bulbs



Photo: John Chappell

Snowdrop *Galanthus nivalis*

prefer a damp, even wet, situation and the banks of the Ell Brook suit it perfectly; it relishes short term flooding with the blooms emerging as the winter floodwaters recede. Clumps of snowdrops on river banks sometimes get washed out, broken up and carried down stream to form new colonies and this gives us a clue to good management of the plant. A large, established group of bulbs can often be shy to flower and, if dug and split into smaller clumps, will flower better the following year. Spring is the best time to split snowdrops and also the best time to buy bulbs 'in the green' i.e. with the leaves attached. Dried bulbs, planted in autumn, rarely succeed and indeed may be already dead when purchased! Legislation now controls wild-collected bulbs and gardeners should be vigilant and only buy 'in the green' from reputable nurseries. *It is an offence, punishable by law, to take bulbs from the wild without the landowners permission.*

The snowdrop plant is mildly poisonous in all its parts, grazing animals will shun it, but recent research shows that an extract from the bulbs and flowers, called Galantamine, can be used for the treatment of mild Alzheimer's disease and other memory impairments. What a wide range of treatments we have available to us at Oxenhall!

◆ JC



## DAVID COTTERELL

It is with sadness that we report the death, in mid-September, of Member and supporter **David Cottrell**. David had been deeply involved with the restoration of the Lower Avon Navigation from the outset in the 1950s. On completion of the Lower Avon, he went on to support the Upper Avon through to its restoration and re-opening in 1974, and remained a tireless supporter of other waterway projects in the area, including the H&G Canal Trust. As a Solicitor, his well reasoned letters of support in respect of the Hereford Bypass Inquiry and the Forest of Dean Local Plan were typical of his willingness to assist; he rarely missed our AGM and always took a keen interest in our achievements.

In 1968, he purchased a boatyard in Tewkesbury, and founded the marina there, still run by his family, partly to ensure the continued viability and demand for use on the Avon Navigations.

David was a former Chairman and President of the Gloucestershire & Herefordshire Branch of the IWA. He served a term as Lord Lieutenant of the former county of Herefordshire & Worcestershire and, latterly in the marine trade, a three-year term as Chairman of the then British Marine Industries Federation.

Janet Moulton represented the H&G CT at a memorial service at Tewkesbury Abbey early in November.

♦♦ IWA/CRP

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# Guided tour of the **H&G Canal**

*At the end of August four mini-buses took 44 passengers on the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Guided Tour of the H&G Canal. Particular thanks to passengers **Sheila and John Campbell** for their report on the very successful day (which has been supplemented by reports from **Angela and Rupert Cook**, and the **Reverend Robin Noble** and his wife, **Janet**).*

We have been Members of the H&G Canal Trust for less than a handful of years and view in happy admiration the early members who started the whole thing twenty five years ago - whose dedication and enthusiasm, together with that of other long-serving committee members, has ensured that amazing things have happened ever since! Some are the ones who cheerfully spent the last Sunday in August driving mini-buses full of 'armchair members' like us around the country, giving an excellent commentary as they went. *Why do they do it?*

The day dawned to a lowering, grey and moist looking sky, which fulfilled its promise of intermittent rain ahead. At times the rain was torrential; thankfully mainly whilst we were safely within the small convoy of white mini-buses, their windows condensing the breath of the occupants, who spent the day following a wraith through Herefordshire and Gloucestershire. Maybe 'will o' the wisp' would be a better word, for certainly looking for what remains of the Hereford and Gloucester Canal is a game of 'now you see it, now you don't'. Having assembled in Hereford Bus Station car park we headed up College Hill and past the Aylestone Tunnel and on to Aylestone Park to see the partly restored stretch of channel with, encouragingly, water in it. As we pressed on, our expert drivers-cum-guides knew exactly which deep and narrow lanes would allow a glimpse of water reflecting the sky through a canopy of

trees, or a view of the cottage at Withington with the word 'WHARFINGER' written in ghostly letters high on its end wall. *Now we have actually seen where our magazine **The Wharfinger** got its name!* Unfortunately the conditions rendered a visit to the Yarkhill site impractical so our journey continued a little further before the next stop.

Not all the things we were shown were wraith-like, by any means. Ballard's Skew Bridge at Monkhide is an incredible and very solid reminder of the heyday of the Canal. The rain held off as we followed each other along the towpath to stand beneath its arch and gaze up at the astonishing spiral pattern of the bricks. Built by Stephen Ballard in 1843 to carry a minor no-through road, it is reputedly the most askew bridge on the entire inland waterway system, and is not only an amazing piece of engineering; the varying colours of the bricks have turned it into a work of art! Also very impressive was the work of the volunteers who had



**Skew Bridge, Monkhide**

restored the once indistinct channel to water in the earlier days of the restoration work on the Canal.

Leaving Monkhide, our attention was drawn to hitherto unheeded features of the landscape which we now know indicate the route of the Canal; an unusual ridge on the skyline of a field was a canal embankment, now covered with wheat; lumpy hillocks in a field were created from the spoil dug out of the tunnel at Ashperton; followed by the impressive cutting and high road bridge - with yet more glimpses of water below! Moving closer to Ledbury, a lane with a hump-back bridge over nothing at all gave a clue to where the canal had once been. We then headed for Dymock Village Hall, where yet



more dedicated people had been beaver-  
ing away all morning preparing a delicious  
multi-choice lunch for some fifty people  
and would be doing the  
washing up afterwards.  
*Thank you!*



House Lock,  
Oxenhall

After lunch, as both  
time and site conditions  
precluded a walk to the  
Oxenhall Tunnel portal,  
the focus was on House  
Lock at Oxenhall. It  
had been restored by  
volunteers who had  
overcome the inevitable  
problems (or should

we say challenges?) associated with such a  
process, and learned the art of bricklaying,  
lime mortar and handling stone as a bonus!  
Photos of 12 years ago showed just how  
much work the trust has done here and it  
all looks very well restored. The volunteers  
spent one day a week for five years before  
they achieved what they set out to do.  
*This is Perseverance with a capital P!* With  
that 'little' job behind them they are now  
tackling the nearby Ell Brook aqueduct,  
another restoration triumph that is nearing  
completion.

The question arises in my mind again;  
*why do they do it?* The project of restoring the  
Canal is vast, and will take a very long time,  
more time than most of the people working  
on it have left to them. I have asked some  
of the volunteers why they do it, and have  
found no-one who was able to articulate the  
reason. Perhaps it's too deep for that, and is  
a mixture of many things. My own feeling  
is that connecting with the past and paying

tribute to the achievement  
of people now gone is an  
important factor. Being part  
of a successful enterprise  
bigger than oneself is a  
good feeling, and the bonds  
of friendship generated  
in such a situation are  
invaluable. There is another  
reason which is possibly  
an underlying influence.  
People are attracted to water,



Open Day  
at Over

as was demonstrated at <sup>THE</sup> WHARF HOUSE at  
Over, which was our final destination. An  
Open Day was in progress when we arrived,  
and despite the inclement weather, crowds  
of contented people were strolling by the  
waterside. *The effect of water on us human  
beings should not be underestimated.*

#### **Some other comments on the day:-**

It was an intense, informative and  
enjoyable day. The remaining obstacles to  
full restoration are daunting, but if this day  
taught us anything it was that the members  
of the H&G Canal Trust are not the sort to  
be daunted. Many fine and impressive feats  
have already been accomplished and these  
people know that there are no problems, only  
opportunities. The whole fine endeavour  
grinds on slowly, and although some of us  
(and some of them!) might not last to see  
the completed restoration, there is a great  
commitment to strive on in faith *because  
it is worthwhile, and a worthy bequest to  
succeeding generations.* The Trust members  
are people of energy and vision and it is a privilege  
to be associated with them.

**Everyone on the Mini Bus Tour, and the  
H&G CofM, wish to thank Mike and  
Joyce Potts for all their hard work on  
the day (and before!) in organising the  
Tour; in turn Mike and Joyce wish to thank:-**

**DRIVERS:-** Tony Austin-Bailey,  
Brian Fox, Nigel Jefferies, Mike Potts

**CATERING:-** Liz Connors, Jill Southall,  
Ann Wood, Heather Worth

**WASHING UP:-** Rodney Wood

**GENERAL HELP:-** Janet Moulton,  
Joyce Potts

**USE OF DRIVE FOR MINI BUS**

**PARKING:-** Chris Clarke

**and finally, THE PASSENGERS:-** For  
turning up because without them we  
wouldn't have had a trip!

*Mike and Joyce are already thinking about a  
future trip (to include some steps that were  
not possible this time). Our repeated thanks  
to them and everybody else who helped  
to make the day a success – despite the  
weather!*



# 25 things to do in 2008



In the last three editions of *The Wharfinger* we asked you to enter into the spirit of our 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Year and see just how many boxes you could tick – here are the last 6 – and just to remind you we are repeating the first 19...

- 1 Recruit a new Individual or Family Member to the H&G CT. ☐
- 2 Sell (or buy!) Grand Holiday Draw tickets. ☐
- 3 Take a friend to <sup>THE</sup> WHARF HOUSE for the first time for morning coffee & cakes/afternoon tea and light bites. ☐
- 4 Help run a H&G CT Open Day or other event. ☐
- 5 Subscribe to the H&G CT Restoration Fund. ☐
- 6 Attend a 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Event. ☐
- 7 Attend a H&G CT Social Evening (and bring a friend who has not been before!). ☐
- 8 If you are an individual Member of the Canal Trust please consider 'upgrading' to Joint/Family Membership. ☐
- 9 Sell (or buy!) another book of Grand Holiday Draw Tickets. ☐
- 10 Recommend an interesting speaker for a Social Evening. ☐
- 11 Re-cycle **The Wharfinger** – give it to a prospective Member and then please encourage them to join the H&G CT. ☐
- 12 Attend the AGM on the 15th July. ☐
- 13 If you pay Income Tax, please ensure that you have agreed to 'Gift Aid' your subscription. ☐
- 14 Display a H&G 'car sticker' on your car. ☐

- 15 Recruit a new Corporate Member to the H&G CT. ☐
- 16 Give some trade to one (or more!) of our advertisers, and tell them that you did so to support the supporters of the H&G CT. ☐
- 17 Have lunch at <sup>THE</sup> WHARF HOUSE – and why not take a friend too? ☐
- 18 Help to 'man' our promotional display at an event that is local to you. ☐
- 19 Collect some Membership Forms and distribute them to friends and colleagues. **Everyone can help to recruit new Members!** ☐
- 20 Give a relative or friend an unusual gift for Christmas that lasts all year – **Gift Membership of the H&G Canal Trust**



– and if they are already a Member then why not send them one of <sup>THE</sup> WHARF HOUSE **Gift Vouchers** – see 'Christmas Gift Ideas from <sup>THE</sup> WHARF HOUSE' on page 22. ☐



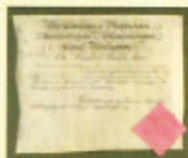
- 21 Please remember The Herefordshire & Gloucestershire Canal Trust (Registered Charity No. 1010721) **in your will**; there is no need to advise the H&G CT of this now if you do not wish; however Janet Moulton or Liz Connors would be more than happy to discuss the matter, in confidence, should you wish. ☐



- 22** Every Member and supporter should have a copy of David Bick's book **'The Hereford and Gloucester Canal'**; and it makes another ideal Christmas gift – as does Nigel Bailey's book **'Over and Over Again'** – further details of both are on page 22.



- 23** Do you remember the article about the H&G CT's purchase of a first edition **share certificate**? Well you can now own your own high quality copy – or it makes yet another unusual Christmas gift – further details are on page 22.



- 24** Show **The Wharfinger** to a business that you know and persuade them to **advertise** – currently full colour rates start at just £17 per issue – Colin Dymott (01981 540 488) will be pleased to hear from them.



- 25** Please have another look at our list – if there is *anything* that you could do (and have not done so already) we really would appreciate your support – help us to build on the successes of the last 25 years!

*Thank you.*

Thank you for helping to make each year a success for the H&G Canal Trust – **we cannot do it without you!**



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\*Based on the findings of Professor Mike Tipton, world authority on immersion-related death.



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# Memories of 86 Newtown Road, Hereford

Member John Preece lives in Oxfordshire; a recent article in **The Wharfinger** stirred childhood memories and prompted a visit to Hereford to undertake some exploration. John recounts past times and suggests that he might be able to claim to have been the first to create a new puddle bed on the H&G Canal – at the age of five ...



John Preece alongside the Lilac bushes that still flourish close to what would have been the front door of No 86.

*"By now I was  
feeling like part of  
Time Team"*

of the steps down the bank continued straight along the back of the house, to meet the railway line further round. All this positioned

the house and garden just about where at present there is some shrubbery against the line and bridge slope. *By now I was feeling like part of the 'Time Team'!*

## Why my interest ...

**... you may be asking?** Well, the last tenants of what was then a railway house were Lucy and Sam Curtis, my maternal grandparents. 'Big Grant' had been a blacksmith for the GWR, and moved to No. 86 between the two World Wars; living there until just before demolition. They had a family of Ethel, my mum, and two boys, Ron and Tom.

I had happy times at the house, train spotting; being taught how to garden by 'Big Grant'; being taught how to pickle shallots by 'Big Nan'; playing cricket and rugby with my uncles and my elder brother in the field which eventually became the Farriery College. I was also shown how to search there for mushrooms. Growing so well (according to Grant) because of the presence, at weekends, of the City Council's carthorses! As I got older I enjoyed the occasional unofficial visit to the Newtown Inn with Grant and

Talk of the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary and plans for the Edgar Street Grid have set me remembering years gone by. The appearance of 'No Passports Needed' in edition 95 of **The Wharfinger**, with its photographs, spurred me into putting fingers to keyboard (if you'll excuse the update of an old saying).

The photo of the proposed diversion of the canal line must have been taken very near to the upper gate into what was number 86 Newtown Road, until its demolition in the 1960's. The lower gate/vehicle entrance was further down the slope, across the field, just beyond the elderberry trees. They were there when I knew the house in the 50/60's! Recently I re-visited the area and found, near to where the picture was taken, a railway sleeper set upright in the fence-line. This would have been the gatepost for access to a line of steps going down the bank – *part of the hinge is still there!* I was also able to see a white lilac bush in flower in the fence-line of the railway, coming round from the station. This enabled me to site the house, as this bush was only a yard or so opposite the front door. The line



joining him in the blacksmith shop at the station. This was reached by crossing the canal bridge up the road opposite the Race Horse pub and cutting through the coal yard to avoid Uncle Tom's father-in-law, Mr. Morris, who was station ticket collector. On the way back we'd creep into the Council Depot to examine the steamrollers – *providing there was no sign of the foreman!*

## Now to the Canal connection ...

Family legend had it that the house was originally canal related. Both Uncles, hearing of my membership of H&G CT, tell me of the remains of a 'toll rate notice' painted on the wall of the house, facing away from Newton Road towards the level crossing. There was an odd shaped ground floor room, slightly higher than the rest of the ground floor, which stuck out from that corner. This was said to have been an office.

The most exciting thing that I got up to at No. 86 was to escape into the field down to the far end, where the shops are now. According to big sister, this part always 'lay damp'. Whenever I got there it was always gloriously wet and muddy! I would jump up and down to create a hole (puddling, maybe?) and watch it fill with water. I could also

create streams through the grass. Then, of course, back to the house equally wet and muddy. There I would get told off! 'Big Nan' usually defended me by commenting that *'I wouldn't be a normal little boy if I hadn't got wet and muddy!'* Since joining the H&G CT I have realised this was, in all probability, the original line of the canal.

The above raises a few questions:-

- Is there anyone who has memories of Lucy, Sam, Ethel, Ron, Tom or No. 86 Newtown Road?
- Is the family legend correct – was there a canal connection – did the 'toll rate notice' refer to the H&G Canal?
- Do my activities in the mud of the field count as being involved in the restoration of the H&G Canal since I was 5 years old?!



I hope these memories may invoke something of the same in others out there in H&G CT land. If they do and you would be happy to share them with us, at 'koot@stanthonys.wanadoo.co.uk' that would be much appreciated by my brother, sisters and myself.

Thanks to Nigel Jefferies and Derek Foxton for comments before publication.

◆ JP

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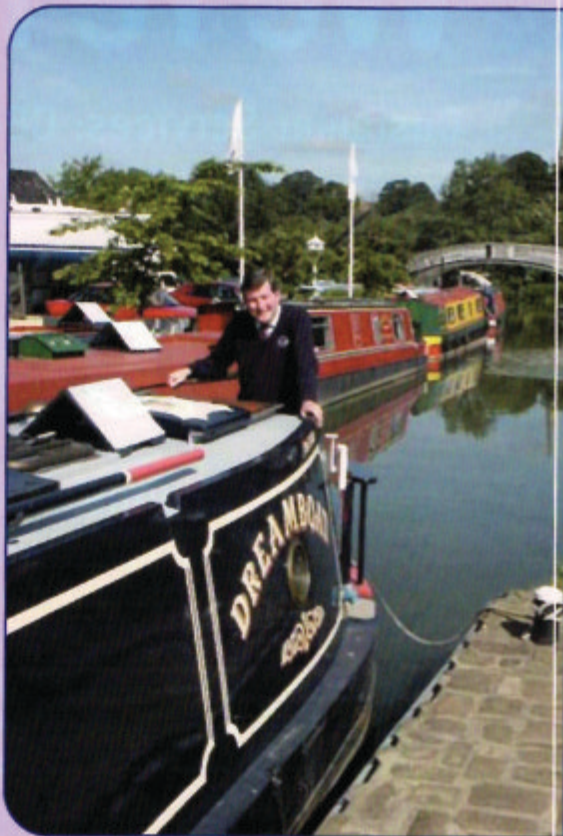
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*Want to help?*

The Canal Trust is always in need of new volunteers as our activities continue to expand. We can normally find a use for any skill from 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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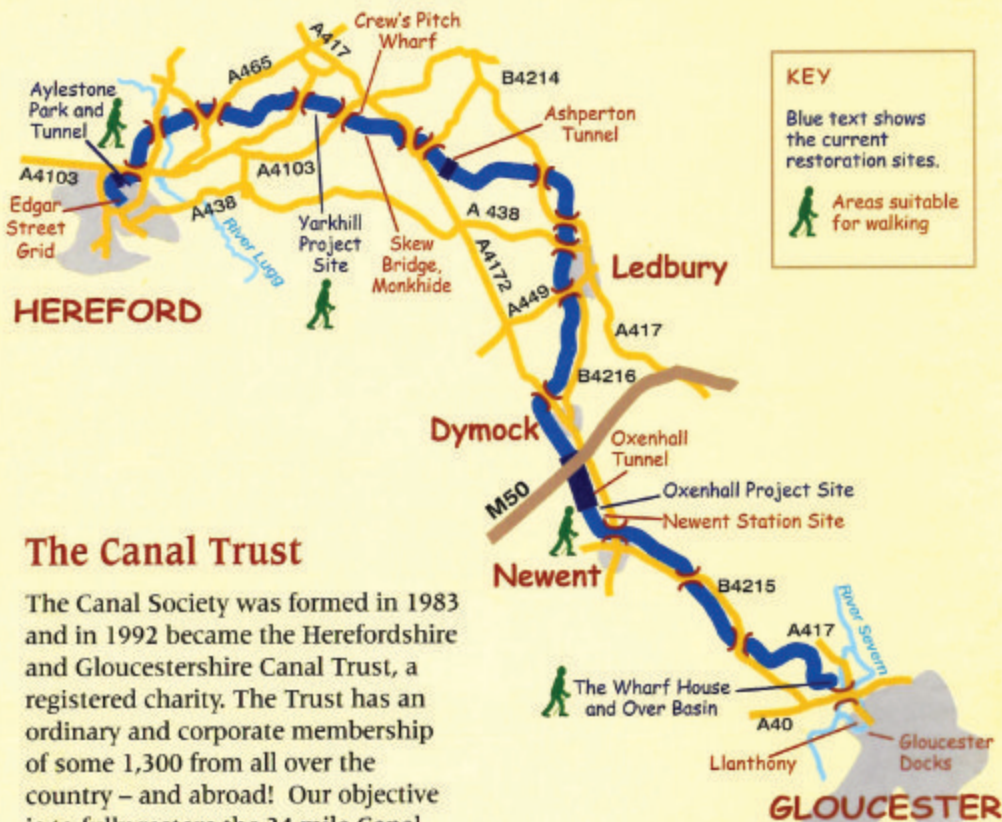
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# The Wharfinger

## 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.