

The **Wharfinger**

Magazine of the Herefordshire and Gloucestershire Canal Trust



Spring 2009

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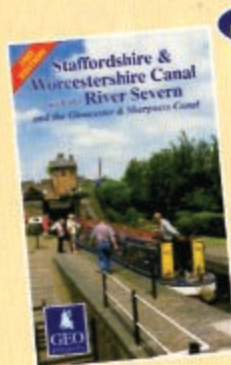
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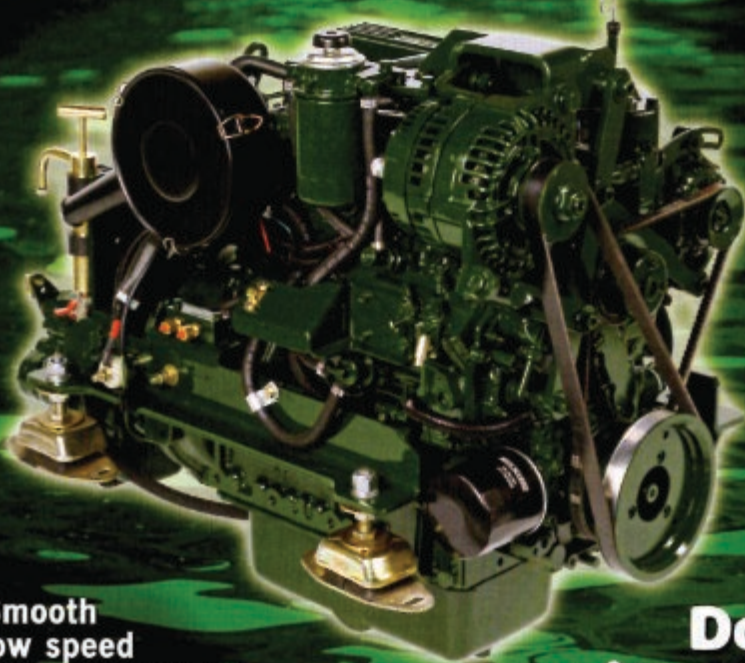
Inside back cover: Contact details



FRONT COVER IMAGE: Spring is just around the Corner! – a frozen Oxenhall Lock by John Chappell

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◆ CHAIRMAN'S COLUMN ◆

IBy the time you read this, I hope to be more mobile as I am now on crutches after a knee replacement – exacerbated by trudging about in mud? (Yes, I know – that word again – not that I'm obsessed!). While I am less mobile than I would like to be, it has turned my mind to how people with long term mobility (and other) problems get around and about.

It has struck me that the canal system is becoming more accessible to the less able in many ways. Many charities now run boats specifically adapted for trips or longer holidays. My 90 year old mother-in-law enjoyed trips with the Peter Le Marchant Trust at Loughborough, and the Bruce Trust has a number of boats on the K&A. One of our long-term supporters, **Starline**, can adapt private boats in response to any special need. Fishing is another hobby enjoyed by those in wheelchairs with special landing stages along the canals. Towpaths are, for the most part, on the level and without steps. They are an ideal place for everyone to get their 20 minutes exercise three times a week and also act as a 'green lung' in towns and cities. They allow everyone to see a bit of nature and wildlife while keeping up with the changing seasons.

As we move forward with the restoration of the H&G, accessibility will be a top priority. ^{THE} WHARF HOUSE Restaurant and Visitor Centre is already fully accessible to people with disabilities. The B&B accommodation will have a specially adapted 'accessible' ground floor room. When we come to restoring further stretches of the Canal, we will be doing all we can to make the environment suitable for everyone.

We are looking forward to a successful season with some decent weather! See Trading Company Outings on page 21 for details of this year's travels and, if you're in the area, do pop along to the stand to say hello!

◆ Janet Moulton, *Chairman.*

*Your
HELP
please!*

My garage is full of the displays and equipment that we take to smaller events, but there is no room for the extended display used at the National Waterways Festival. Do you have a lockable dry garage or shed (preferably in the Hereford – Ross – Ledbury area) where we could keep the panels? They would only need to be accessed for this one event in August. If you think you could help, please give me a ring and we can discuss the space required. *Thank you.*

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Remember 2009 ... ?



by Cliff Penny

Obviously the hot topic remains the economy – on both a personal level and in respect of the H&G CT's prospects for the year ahead. It would be foolish to try and ignore it, yet some will say that there is little that we can do as individuals to influence the impact of the economy on us all. Whilst that might appear to be the case there is much that the Canal Trust can (and is) doing to try to minimise adverse impact – both in the short and long term. Our finances have always been closely scrutinised (thanks to hard work by our long-standing Treasurer Liz Connors). The Finance Committee and the Council of Management will be taking all steps possible to manage our income *as far as we have control over it*, and our expenditure, in the light of what is happening elsewhere.

As in everything we do, it is not just our own actions that influence our destiny but also those of third parties too. It has never been more critical that we watch the reactions of others to the current economic situation to try and ensure that they don't take short or medium term decisions that have far reaching (adverse) impacts on the H&G Canal. In the past we have regrettably had to expend very considerable effort in, for example, *successfully* challenging the (then) Department for Transport's costings and lack of provision for the Canal in the original proposals for a Hereford bypass. Also, we *successfully* challenged a local authority's strategic Plan Policy that was wholly inadequate in defending the route of the Canal within their District. In addition there are many Planning Appeal decisions where we have

successfully ensured that development did not adversely affect the Canal. For many years now such conflict has been avoided; developers have entered into *meaningful* negotiations with the Canal Trust – resulting in a number of projects that have proved *successful* for all concerned.

Will "the economic crisis of 2009" result in, and be the excuse for, bad strategic decisions that will be felt for generations to come – and fly in the face of what has already been decided (and tested) in Public Consultations and Inquiries? What a shame it will be if 2009 proves to be a year to be remembered because we are yet again in conflict.

By the time that you read this we will have experienced at least two months of what 2009 has in store; *will it all be doom and gloom?* As you will read elsewhere in this edition ^{THE} WHARF HOUSE has started the year as it means to go on – bucking the national (*and international*) trend and smashing turnover records for January by a considerable margin!

As far as the Canal Trust is concerned, the weather always follows as a very close second to pound notes, yet the weather is something that (thankfully?) we most definitely are unable to influence. Its effect on our voluntary endeavours is wide-reaching. Restoration, maintenance, promotional and fund-raising work can all be seriously affected; as can trade at ^{THE} WHARF HOUSE. Hopefully the weather in 2009 will be kinder to us than in recent years *but, if not, the H&G CT will rise to the challenge!*

◆ CRP

Sir John Lushington Bt.

My connection with the H&G CT is through my first cousin (twice removed), Beth Gadesden. She was my maternal grandmother's first cousin! As was reported on page 7 of edition 96 of *The Wharfinger* our family had the opportunity to allocate a portion of Beth's estate to charities of our choice. The H&G CT was chosen as Beth had been a member for many years and had always been interested in the progress of restoration.

I feel very privileged to be invited to be one of your Vice-Presidents. My



Sir John Lushington Bt.

interest in canals goes back 40 years when we started to take several holiday on the English and French canals. One wonderful experience was to sit in the bows of a 60ft boat watching a dabchick swimming ahead under water, keeping up with the boat (we were going down the Northampton Arm, and back again, just for fun).

The work of the H&G CT in restoring one of the links to the system is to be greatly commended. Our industrial heritage is one of the finest in the world and the canals form a vital link and reminder of the achievements of our forebears. I look forward to following your progress with great interest – I am sorry that I live so far away that my visits will be rather intermittent.

♦♦ JL

This photo: Howard Colegrave, MFFH Northantsshire Hunt



Beth Gadesden, cousin to Sir John Lushington.



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Prizes to be drawn at National Waterways Festival, at Ratcliffe-on-Soar, 31st Aug 2009. Registered under the Gambling Act 2005

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 sponsored by **Bulmers** – thank you.

Prizes to be drawn late afternoon at the **National Waterways Festival, at Ratcliffe-on-Soar, on 31 August, 2009.**

Our grateful thanks to **Black Prince Holidays, Mrs A Wood** 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.*

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The Canal Trust Craft Fair at Ledbury

by Pat Skeet



As with so many H&G CT activities, our annual Craft Fair involves a great deal of essential volunteer 'behind the scenes' activity in planning and organising the day - it doesn't just happen! This is in the capable hands of **Pat Skeet** - who also wrote this report on yet another rewarding event . . .

Saturday, November 8th. saw our Annual craft Fair in St. Katherine's Hall, Ledbury. We had several new stallholders and were looking forward to a colourful occasion.

We were not disappointed. The weather was mild and dry after a very wet night and we had a steady trickle of customers through the morning and again in the afternoon. The trickle unfortunately dried up at lunchtime, so fewer were able to benefit from our superb range of home-made soups than might have done! The atmosphere was happy and relaxed all day. Unfortunately the current financial situation saw most stallholders' takings down slightly, but they were satisfied, if not flush! The refreshments sold brilliantly, a suitable testimony to the delicious cakes and soups on offer.

Thanks to the very hard work of the team of volunteers, a record profit for recent years of over £308 was made. As with all of our Trading Company events it is not just sales that are important and our updated display panels generated further interest in our voluntary work. *My grateful thanks go to all who helped in any way and a request that November 14th. is put in your diary for next year.*

♦ PS

Top: Caroline Jones demonstrates the craft of Canalware painting.

Left: Dick Skeet indicates the location of Llanthony Lock.

Below: Needlework, glass engraving, greetings cards - some of the varied stalls at this year's Fair.



Llanthony Lock

Paul Henshaw reports



Work has continued apace during the last quarter. The programme to remove the undergrowth for the proposed car park is now complete. A Method Statement for the project has highlighted the various bodies and organisations from which we need to seek approval. This will be the next phase of the project. We are now in the process of thinning the willows along the southern river bank and can now actually see the weir whilst we are enjoying lunch al fresco style!

Ted Beagles has completed the new steel gate which has been installed at the entrance to the footbridge and very fine it looks too. *Thank you Ted.* We have developed a small garden area by the footbridge, to enhance the entrance to the site, and Wendy Henshaw has kindly offered to take this over and handle the planting.



Top: Alan breaking up clods in the new garden.

Above: Ted's new gate to the footbridge.

Below: Work is progressing clearing alongside the lock.





Above: Found in the undergrowth – the new volunteer mess hut! A lick of paint and it will be as good as new? Note the cat flaps!



Above: Pivot plate from the old swing bridge.



Alder trees planted by the river bank.

Approval was granted by the local TPO (Tree Preservation Order) Officer to carry out a modest lifting of the canopy of the black poplar, which is protected, and this has now been completed. In addition 20 Alder trees have been planted by the river bank. On the Northern side of the site 2 new volunteers, Alan McBride and Alan Brown, have made really good progress clearing undergrowth. *We extend a very warm welcome to them both.* Whilst undertaking this work they came across the old pivot plate for the swing bridge.

Simon Baggart is continuing the sterling work renovating the outside loo and a new vent fan has been fitted in the bathroom of one of the Lock Cottages.

If you would like to get involved with our work at Llanthony please contact me (Paul Henshaw) on 01684 292 997. You will be made very welcome.

PH



Simon on the Job!

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The Restoration Fund 2009

The purchase of Llanthony Lock, the Lock Cottages and a considerable area of surrounding land was made possible thanks to the timely legacy of **Beth Gadesden** (see full story in edition 96 of **The Wharfinger**).

Recognising that fund-raising will become even more difficult over the coming year the H&G CT Council of Management has decided that the Llanthony Lock restoration project will be supported in 2009 by the proceeds from **The Restoration Fund**. This will enable preliminary works to be undertaken in preparation for the work required, in the longer term, to identify major funding for the ultimate restoration of the Lock and approaches.



The lock and cottages at Llanthony.

Later in the year all of the Restoration Fund contributors will be invited to an exclusive buffet at **The Wharf House** and a conducted 'VIP tour' of the Llanthony site to see how the work that their contributions have funded is progressing. Details of **The Restoration Fund** are on the facing page.

New subscribers are welcome to join at any time and the Fund Secretary, Peter Lawrence, will be pleased to answer any queries on 01684 564 075; alternatively please just complete the form and return it to our Treasurer, Liz Connors, at the address indicated on the form.

Thank you.



FORMAL NOTICE OF 2009 AGM



**TO BE HELD ON TUESDAY 21ST JULY, 2009
AT THE ROYAL OAK, MUCH MARCLE, AT 7.30PM.**

This is the formal notice of the 2009 AGM in order to give Members the opportunity to make a note in their diary; this year the AGM will be held on Tuesday 21st 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.



Above: Some of the Restoration Fund subscribers in 2007 viewing the restoration work at Oxenhall, completed with their support.

It is now over seven 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.*



I wish to contribute to the H&GCT Restoration Fund

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OVER

Update

by Barrie Haysman



Ted Beagles makes a start on the roof of the old site hut on a particularly frosty New Year's Eve.

Our gardeners have been busy during the dormant period for plants cutting back hedges, trees and undergrowth. ^{THE} WHARF HOUSE flower beds have been given a bit of a short back and sides where they had got a little out of control and some transplanting between areas has also taken place. We are producing a planting plan for the gardens round ^{THE} WHARF HOUSE to provide an even better visual presentation for everyone coming to visit us here at Over.

The **Bridge Training** volunteers have complemented our volunteers, and undertaken various works on site,

concentrating at the bottom of the Canal. Clearance of the overgrown far Canal bank, and improvement of the wooded area, has been started by removing brambles and the deep undergrowth (and trimming of the ivy that was stifling the growth of the trees). 800 bulbs of 3 different varieties of daffodils have been planted on the woodland bank so hopefully, in time, it will be an area of colour for those enjoying a walk alongside the edge of the Canal (*thank you to one of our neighbours, Mr Tony Peters, for the gift of the daffodils*).

During the cold period we have been



GOING ...



GOING ...



GONE!



Wilf Jones checks the foundations dug for the drop bollards at the entrance to Over Basin.



The paviors are being relaid in places where heavy vehicles have caused settlement.

doing some heavy work clearing up all around the site and had some big bonfires! The areas cleared of undergrowth have been made neat and tidy and prepared for filling and levelling so we can increase the 'picnic area' in size. We had a special team day one Saturday starting to empty the materials from the 'Old Site Hut' in preparation for its removal. Then, during the weeks following, the contents of the small gardens around it were transplanted and the hut was stripped of its internal walls and internal cladding and windows. A Method Statement and Risk Assessment was prepared and agreed (*thanks Wilf*) and on New Years Eve the Wednesday gang descended on the Hut with cold determination (*to match the weather!*). We started 'top down', first removing the roof, followed by the walls – and the light gave out just as we were removing the last of the flooring – a hard days work but one finished on time.

Works on the driveway (between Horseshoe Drive and the approach to the Lock) have started; the first part was putting in concrete foundations and then fitting 3 bollards. The repair of the driveway has also been started to correct settlement caused by heavy vehicles. The pathway and the lower part of the driveway were taken

up in the cold weather, when the paviors were frozen in, and deeper foundations dug so the driveway would be better able to carry the traffic in the future. The paviors were cleaned by the many and re-laid by our own 'paviors expert', Paul.

THE WHARF HOUSE project has moved into a phase of mainly professional works with Plumbers coming in to complete the plumbing and Carpenters working on the stairway and associated cupboard fronts. Our volunteer works have concentrated on preparing for the professionals, and the works following, to complete the bathrooms and stairwell. We have also been grinding down some proud welds on the balcony and rubbing down and completing the second coat of paint.

The mechanical team has been working on repairing the concrete mixer (which gave up the ghost due to its previous heavy workload!) and have got the new engine for Mr Maysey working perfectly. This is ready for fitting so that we can hopefully have a trip boat for the kids at next seasons Over Open Days. Assessments have also been started on the reed boats to ascertain what is necessary to complete the refurbishment to give us a working reed cutter. ♦ BH



News from... THE WHARF HOUSE

RECORDS BROKEN!

2009 started very well for ^{THE} WHARF HOUSE with turnover in January over 40% up on the same period last year. The hard work and dedication of our small team was rewarded with a trend that many long-established businesses would envy in the current difficult trading conditions.

♥ ST VALENTINE'S ♥

February 14th has also been another record breaking time – by a considerable margin. This year Cupid aimed his bow well and truly at ^{THE} WHARF HOUSE! The special Valentine's Day menu proved to be such a hit with couples that it became a three day event in the restaurant – the Saturday night could have been fully-booked several times over. Two of our diners travelled from Taunton; *our reputation really is spreading* ♥



♥ WEDDING RECEPTIONS

Now that the A40 roadworks are thankfully a memory (except from the very large scar in last years trading figures) our popularity for wedding receptions is being regained with a number of bookings already confirmed for later in the year.



TOP TABLE REVIEWS

Our reputation on the internet also continues to grow - not least on the reputable 'Top Table' web site. Thank you to one recent visitor to the area who braved the freezing weather and then wrote:-

'Very good setting, pictures on here (the website) simply do not do The Wharf House Restaurant justice! Located close to the canal, this secluded restaurant is well worth a visit – superb food, I had the chicken stuffed with brie and mushrooms and the goats cheese tart to start with, the only thing making me want to leave is the journey back in -5 conditions! Would certainly make a stop here again if I'm ever in the area again! Great work and compliments to the chef!

Robert Le Boutillier

CANAL VISITORS

Of course ^{THE} WHARF HOUSE is much more than just the Restaurant and Tea Rooms – it is our unique opportunity to 'spread the word' about the H&G Canal and our work to restore and reconstruct the 34 miles; for example every bill at ^{THE} WHARF HOUSE is accompanied by our information and Membership leaflet and a 'back issue' of **The Wharfinger**. And our Visitor Centre is equally popular with both walkers and diners.

Please come soon and help us continue to break records throughout 2009!

... AND UPSTAIRS ...

The long-awaited fitting of the oak hand-rail, banisters and fitted cupboards within the stairwell is well underway.

Our pictures show the work so far which, when completed, will totally transform the stairwell.

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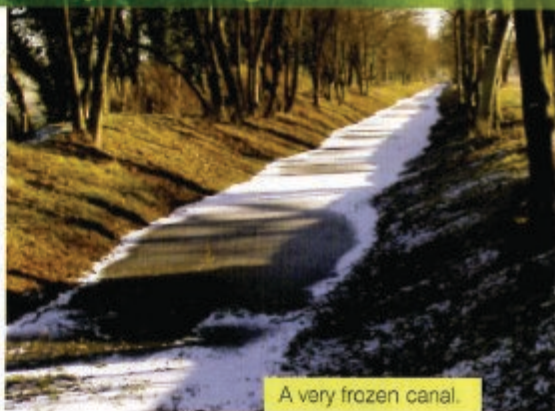
Work at Yarkhill *by Chris High*

A passer-by suggested we would have to stop work soon as there would be fewer volunteers willing to brave the wet, windy and cold winter weather – *they obviously were not familiar with H&G CT volunteers!* My last article reported the return of some of our volunteers from their summer escapades; now Eileen (from nursing her husband) and Stella (from her travels) have also returned.

Winter to us is a time of opportunity, it is the time when site maintenance is much reduced and therefore when restoration work can move forward. Coppicing and tree felling followed by the necessary clearing of brush, logging up and much-enjoyed bonfires are now in full swing. Recently Paul deployed his tractor to remove felled tree trunks from across the wild side ditch, saving a lot of time and energy. The homeward trip also sees a good load of logs on their way to storage at the site hut.

We invested in the use of Ken Trehern, along with his tractor and flail to cut back the stubborn snowberries on the canal banks towards the lock end. Sometimes events miraculously fall in place. Flaied Saturday. Rained somewhere Sunday and Monday. Canal in water Tuesday. *Oh!, and identified a further leak Friday!*

Trees that had fallen into Mr. Mess's



A very frozen canal.

field across our access route were stripped of brush, logged up and stacked in the rain. Three trees have been planted on the towpath ditch bank; vegetation removed from part of the canal bed, canal banks trimmed and rubbish disposed of.

The team visited Aylestone Park and built the bonfire for The Party on the Park. Then, to celebrate the 3rd birthday of current work parties at Yarkhill, we visited Over and met Paul Henshaw at Llanthony for a guided tour – *many thanks Paul*.

Yarkhill featured in a talk I recently gave to **Leominster Historical Society** which led me to compare 'before and after' photo's. I have included a couple of examples from the last three years to chronicle our progress (*photos on right*).



*Don't forget,
to get involved,
please ring me
(Chris High) on
01568 615 575*

◀ CH

Paul bringing logs
homeward from the
fallen trees.



July 06



Flailing



Just after flailing



March 2006



January 2009

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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.

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

MARCH 17TH

Royal National Lifeboat Institution

We are very pleased to have a speaker from one of our regular advertisers.

APRIL 21ST

Fore & Aft: The Purton Ships Graveyard *Paul Barnett*

The story of dozens of vessels deliberately beached and holed on the banks of the River Severn.



MAY 19TH

Member's Evening

Bring your own canal-related pictures for a member's slideshow.

JUNE 16TH

Speaker to be confirmed

JULY 21ST

Annual General Meeting

NOTE 7.30 pm start

The evening will include a slide show of the more recent work and events of the H&G Canal Trust.

JANUARY'S MEETING

Our dark winter evenings were given some light relief when our very own speaker, Dick Skeet, spoke at our January meeting. A good turnout enjoyed the superb photos and witty repartee making his subject "*How Green is Mr Brindley's Stinking Ditch?*" a great deal of fun.

So how *Green is Mr Brindley's Stinking Ditch?* – the question was looking at the environmental issues around the waterways and generally they came out very favourably indeed, we knew they would, but it is good to have some facts to prove it!

Thank you Dick – a very enjoyable talk.

♦♦ MJ

Congratulations!

Our congratulations to *James Hervey-Bathurst*, of Eastnor Castle, (one of our Vice-Presidents) on being awarded a CBE, for services to Heritage, in the Queens New Year Honours List.



This is our provisional list of the shows and events that we hope to attend this year – raising funds and promoting our work both locally and further afield.

Apr 19	Gloucester Boat Jumble and Waterways Festival
May 23-25	Crick Boat Show
May 30-31	Tall Ships at Gloucester Docks
June 27-28	Braunston Boat Show
June 27	Lydney Boat Gathering
July 11	Sutton Fete
Aug 2	Herefordshire Country Show
Aug 29-31	National Waterways Festival and Boat Show, Ratcliffe-on-Soar
Sep 5	Alfrick Show
Sept 12	Newent Onion Fair
Sep 3	Leominster Vintage Show
Oct 17	Oxenhall Apple Day
Nov 14	Our very own Craft Fair, Ledbury



*Your
HELP
please!*

Why not have a good day out with the H&G CT? We cannot promise that you will see the world with us but you may visit an area that is new to you – and we always do our utmost to ensure that you have some time to look around (and your admission to the event will be free!).

We urgently need additional volunteers to help us at these interesting events. Our well established small team will welcome you and you will have a choice of tasks from which to choose. Please contact Janet Moulton (*see inside back cover for Contact details*) to discuss where and when **you** can get involved. **Thank you.**

RESTORATION at Oxenhall *by Brian Fox*



This time of year our programme of work for the day is necessarily decided as we arrive on a Tuesday morning. The weather is the main influence, and the number of frosty mornings has been exceptional, so the final work on the aqueduct has (not surprisingly) suffered.

Whilst we did not quite achieve completion of the top walls by the end of 2008 (as stated on the date stone) by the time you read this that should have been rectified! The west face is completed

and the scaffolding removed; that is what we show off to visitors for the time being. The plea in the last edition of **The Wharfinger** for blue bricks to complete the top course on the other side did not go unnoticed. I had an e-mail from a member in Rutland, who used to live in Dymock, and he remembered that there were similar bricks edging the old railway platforms there. They are indeed still there, in a restored state as part of a public park, but I don't think it would be appropriate to ask if we could pinch a few

Before and ...

after – the completed west face of the aqueduct over Ell Brook.



Photos: Brian Fox, John Chappell and Cilla Penny



John has built a retaining wall/seat in the bank around the newly positioned milestone.



Our trusty tractor was absolutely essential to pull out the boughs from the water.

for our job! Our friends on the Cotswold Canals restoration got in touch to invite us to go and look around their yard and see what they might have - *thank you*. If all else fails there are hundreds along the wharf wall at Over . . . !

Bernard hasn't minded the cold weather as it meant he could get on with the programme of maintenance along the towpath testing his newly acquired skills on the chainsaw. Most of the hedge below Lock Cottage has now been laid over, although some of the old hawthorns just snapped off at the base instead of bending. A few cuttings will be required to fill in any gaps and we have planted one or two indigenous trees to give some variety. The biggest challenge faced so far has been the pollarding of a large willow, just below Lock Cottage, on the edge of the canal. One large branch snapped off last summer and fell across the towpath and, after inspection, it was considered urgent to remove two others before they fell. They created quite a splash as they toppled into the canal. Our trusty tractor was absolutely essential to pull the boughs from the water so that they could be cut into manageable lengths.

Talking of tractors, the plea in the last edition for painters was answered by David and Elizabeth who last joined us some years ago when they painted the bailey bridge, caravan, and Mister Maysey before it went to Over. It is great to see them again and we would welcome others who have been on long term absence but are missing us at Oxenhall! It was good to see Martyn again after his op, although

not in a fit enough state to work yet. (*In the meantime Martyn has turned his skills to writing for **The Wharfinger** - see Training the Ell Brook on page 24 - Ed.*)

John has had a chance to demonstrate his brick-laying skills by building a retaining wall/seat in the bank at the back of the newly positioned milestone. A chance to rest and contemplate as you explore the restored canal? John is also an accomplished photographer and our 'nature' man who writes his own piece for **The Wharfinger**. A few well chosen plants along the top should finish the job off nicely.

Lucien, who joined us some years ago, when he moved from voluntary work on the Wey and Arun Canal in Surrey to Ross on Wye with wife Doris, has decided to give restoration at Oxenhall a rest. He was actively involved from fairly early on in the lock restoration and then the aqueduct. He is happy to continue with his duties of archivist, keeping a photographic record of canal works and a scrap book of all relevant newspaper cuttings. *Thanks for everything Lucien.*

One disadvantage of having a secluded rural site is that it can be seen as a tempting target for thieves. Unfortunately there was a break-in last November when someone came prepared with bolt cutters to break the lock on the gate and then gain entry into the tool shed. Our generator was stolen but fortunately a couple of other valuable items were left. Security has been reviewed and no tools of any value are now left in the store.



Photos: John Chappell

TRAINING THE ELL BROOK

by Martyn Treasure

*What do you do if you are one of our regular restoration volunteers and find yourself with site frustratingly 'off limits' while you recover from major heart surgery? Rather than being idle, Martyn Treasure decided he would write a piece for **The Wharfinger**! We hope that you are back to full fitness soon, Martyn.*

In his article on The Ell Brook (edition 97 of **The Wharfinger**, page 30) John Chappell described how the Brook can rise rapidly to a great depth during times of flood – here Martyn explains how our Oxenhall team have taken steps to deal with one of the potentially serious consequences of flooding at this location – and how they found both an economical and sustainable solution ...

The Ell Brook flooded badly following the severe storms of July 2007. The surcharge on the upstream side of the aqueduct resulted in the water flowing through at a very high velocity. Whilst the recently restored structure had sufficient strength to withstand the loads imposed, without any damage, at the downstream end of the aqueduct a potentially serious situation developed. As the water pressure suddenly lessened it created a vortex which caused substantial erosion to the almost vertical bank on one side, immediately beside the abutment,

exposing the soil beneath. We considered that a similar storm event in the future could cause severe damage by washing out the remaining ground beneath the abutment foundation and that remedial measures should be taken. Fortunately the other bank had a gentle slope and the storm water was able to flow over it without creating a vortex.

We considered several repair solutions; loose rock fill, masonry wall, stone filled gabions and Reno mattresses. All would require considerable engineering input and possibly the use of heavy lifting equipment which would have been expensive and difficult to position. Eventually we settled on experimenting with a willow spile wall. This had the advantages of using locally sourced material and no construction costs! The wall consists of upright posts driven into the edge of the stream bed and willow prunings woven between them, similar to a hurdle.



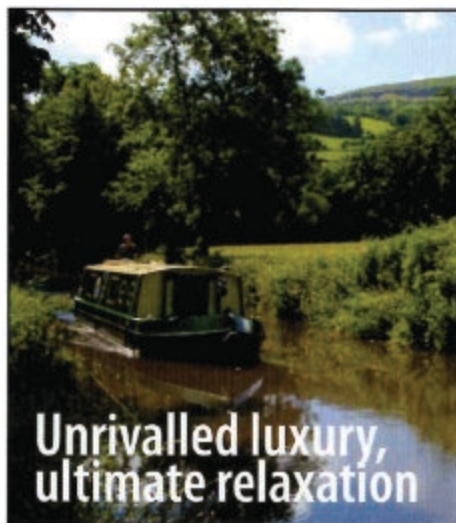
A live willow pile wall keeps the bank stable adjacent to Ell Brook Aqueduct.

By luck, in March 2008, a couple of willow trees just along the canal were in need of pollarding and would provide suitable material. Ideally the uprights (spiles) should be about 100mm diameter and placed at 1m centres with a 20 degree slope away but our largest prunings were only about half that size so we spaced them more closely. A couple of planks placed on rocks kept the builders clear of the water while they drove the uprights in using a post rammer, and jolly hard work it was too with frequent rests to recover our breath! The uprights were not straight and the slope did not really work. Achieving the angle was made even more difficult when we wove the horizontals in between as the natural spring of the saplings tended to pull the uprights vertical. Eventually we achieved a wall but it was not as neat and tidy as we hoped. We then cut back the vertical soil slope to an angle to use the material to fill in the void behind the wall. Later in the summer more fill was placed in the hole during the exploits of a group of volunteers from **Mid Counties Co-operative** (see edition 97 of **The Wharfinger**, page 29.).

Willow roots very quickly and within a month green shoots had appeared all over

the wall. By the end of the summer the entire structure had grown into a thicket of willow shoots which should grow together to provide a secure defence in future flood events.

◀ MT



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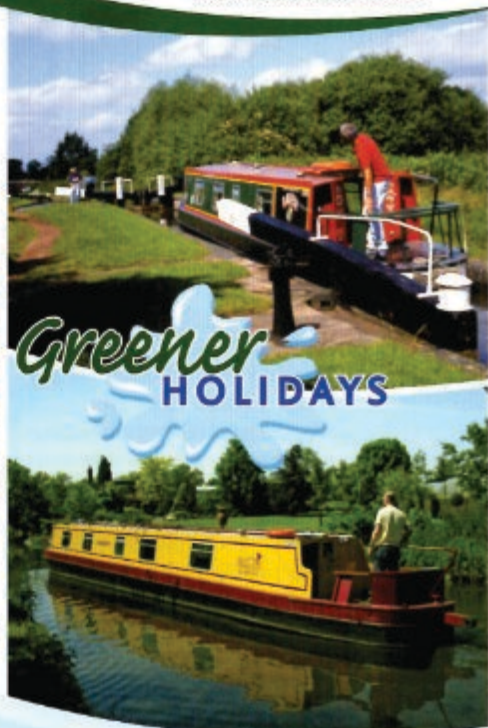
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women



men



women



men



we're all
volunteers!

"Why do they do it?"

In the previous edition of **The Wharfinger** we carried reports from passengers on the guided tour of the H&G Canal (page 32). A question kept on recurring throughout Sheila and John Campbell's contribution – "**why do they do it?**". Two of our long-standing volunteers and regular contributors have responded – it is not just a man's world (as one writer might have you believe) ...

Why do we men do it?

It is indeed a mixture of many things, as the 'Tour' writer suggested, appreciating the work of those who first built the canal and wishing to preserve their legacy is one. The bonds of friendship established over a period sitting around during breaks and chatting is another. A desire to keep active as one grows older (and a bit of fresh air never did anyone any harm). *Perhaps the chance to have some time away from the wife for a day – but to go home afterwards with something different to talk about!* Or could it simply be **men** doing what men do *and women don't always understand* – reliving their youth and mucking about getting dirty and wet in the process?

♦ BF

Why do we ladies do it?

For me it combines my love of the waterways with my interest in nature and the countryside. After a week in an air-conditioned office, with no windows nearby, I need a way of getting some exercise away from my desk – helping construct the wharf wall at Over was my introduction to the H&G CT! Canal restoration suits me, I have met lots of interesting people, made new friends and I have learnt lots of new skills; and passed on some knowledge too. We have many volunteers, not just the men *and women* who come weekly to help with restoration and maintenance of the canal but all those who help with the many important tasks both 'in front' and 'behind the scenes'. Some of our volunteers may appreciate a chance for a few hours away from a partner; they will go back tired, but with stories to tell about their day. *It is not simply something that men do!* As for getting wet or muddy – male or female, *you don't really notice the weather when you are enjoying what you are doing!*

♦ MJ

A NATURAL EXPLANATION?

John Chappell has, yet again, been delving deeper into what grows right alongside us at our Oxenhall site. Our natural surroundings at just this one location continue to be a fascinating area to explore - and if it all becomes too complex and you get a headache well, as always, read on.

Arriving at the Oxenhall site one Tuesday in early April we were all struck by the strange appearance of a tree near our car park whose branches are illustrated far right. It was clearly a willow (*Salix*) but not one we were familiar with. Willows are, with few exceptions, dioecious (ie. male and female flowers borne on separate trees). Although we all know 'pussy willows', with their softly-hairy silver buds becoming fluffy golden-yellow globes in early spring, few of us realized that these are usually best on male trees. The female of the species is less common and has smaller flowers.

However the tree we had spotted on arrival was indeed a female and what had caught our eye was the seed capsule resulting from the female flowers having received pollen from the male. Once fertilized the fruit contains numerous tiny (0.1 mm) seeds which are embedded in a white down. The fluffy down assists wind dispersal once the seeds are ripe and the 'pods' have split. After a week or two Mother Nature was doing her thing and the seeds were blowing around the site. (see main photograph)

Walk along the tow path at Oxenhall and you will see many willows around the edges of the site. Some have 6-10 ft tall trunks with large, straight branches sprouting from a crown and some are multi stemmed at ground level. These are trees that were once pollarded; in this instance the thick rods were

probably used for farm fencing. Today the old pollarded willows on short trunks have become broad open crowned trees providing ideal nesting sites for birds (including willow warblers, wrens, wagtails and nearly all members of the tit family). In time the crown also collects leaves and other organic debris which supports a mixed population of insects. Compare these trees with the willows actually growing out of the canal banks and you will see that the latter are much taller with conventional tapering trunks. Willows like these would not have been planted in such a situation but are self sown and have not been pollarded.

Willow is a highly commercial tree with basket making and cricket bats among the many uses, fortunately (unlike Over) none of the willows at Oxenhall are of these species or I would be filling a complete issue of **The Wharfinger**!

Identifying different species of willows is notoriously difficult. Consideration has to be given to both young and mature leaves, the overall (and natural) shape of the tree, not to mention the shape and colour of the catkins. One of the willows at Oxenhall that we have positively identified is on the bank of the Ell brook close to the aqueduct. It is *Salix fragilis*, known as the 'Crack Willow'. The crack willow is well named because the trunk grows so fast that it can split open under its own weight - with a very loud crack - which has happened to this one; fortunately no-one was around at the time! Its favoured habitat is damp, flood-prone river valleys, which encourages this tendency to collapse and any branches that fall will immediately make roots. When this species is pollarded it makes the most contorted of all pollards; the crowns are often so full of holes and debris that other tree species can seed and grow within them. Crack willows are



Willow (*Salix*)



Photos: John Chappell

often planted to stabilise stream banks and, as Martyn Treasure explains elsewhere in this issue, we have done this at Oxenhall to protect the aqueduct walls from flash floods to which the Ell Brook is prone. Willows growing by streams should be pollarded regularly to allow light into the water.

The bark of the willow tree has been mentioned in ancient texts as a remedy for aches and fevers. Hippocrates wrote about its medicinal properties in the 5th century BC. Today's Aspirin is a synthesized form of the original willow bark extract. *So if identifying other willows at Oxenhall gives us a headache we have the solution close to hand!*

◀ JC

OVER WILLOW FOR SALE!

The wet summer has been good for some things. The Osier bed at Over has grown well and a number of colourful varieties are now available:-

Fresh cut rods suitable for 'living willow' structures and sculptures.

These are ideal to plant in the dormant season until about early April.

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'**Chinese**' Bright green bark;
'**Leentjes**' Mid green bark

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'**Green Dicks**' and '**Daphnoides**'

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All proceeds to H&G CT funds.

Please contact **Mike Bowden**
(on site at Over on most Wednesdays)
or phone **01452 790 459**.

Thomas Rothley of the City of Bristol, Esquire.

Nigel Jefferies is one of our founder Members who serves on the CofM of the H&G CT and is our Membership Secretary – he also is a keen historian. Our feature on 'Gift Ideas' in the last edition included copies of a 1793 £100 first issue share certificate – which prompted Nigel to undertake some research...

As was reported in **The Wharfinger** – page 39 of Edition 96 – the H&G CT successfully obtained at auction (for a total of £494.00 including buyers premium and VAT) the original share certificate number 585 that was purchased by "Thomas Rothley of the City of Bristol, Esquire".

Since originally I am from Bristol, I thought it would be interesting to discover something about this fellow Bristolian, who, in 1793 was wealthy enough to purchase a one hundred pound share certificate in the Herefordshire and

Gloucestershire Canal Navigation. I own an original share certificate number 116, purchased by Samuel Carless, one of the most respected citizens of Hereford.

Here is a summary of what I found out about Thomas Rothley:-

1778

On the 23rd November, Thomas married Elizabeth Heylyn.

1785

In The Bristol Directory for this year, Thomas is described as a Cheque Clerk for the Customs, of Lower College Green, Bristol.

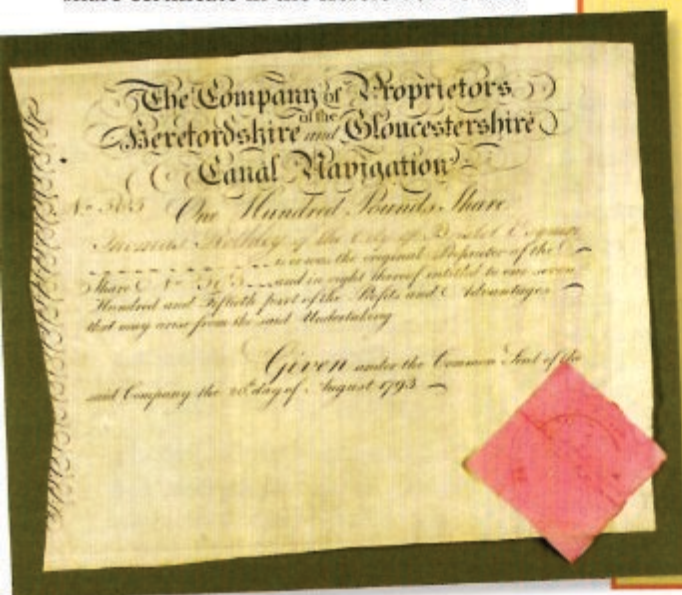
1787

In this year he is described as 'Esquire' and Receiver of the Prizage (sic) of the Holms & Small Lights with Greenwich & Bristol Hospitals. So it would appear, Thomas had been promoted. His address is still Lower College Green, Bristol.

1793

In Matthew's New Bristol Directory for 1793-4, (printed by William Matthews, at 10, Broadmead) Thomas is again described as 'Esquire'.

On this occasion he is listed as Receiver of the Prizage of the Holms & Small Lights, but his address is now The Customs House, Queen's Square, Bristol, Gloucestershire.



I have discovered from the 'Dictionary of English Law', by Earl Jowitt that prisage was an ancient hereditary revenue of the Crown consisting of the right to take a certain quantity from the wine imported into England. In Edward I's reign (1272—1307) it was converted into a pecuniary duty called butlerage. All prisage and butlerage on wines were abolished as regards England, except for the Duchy of Lancaster, by the statute 1809, 49 Geo III and as regards the Duchy by the statute of 1832, 2 & 3 Will IV. For centuries wines have been imported into Bristol, particularly from France, and in 1796 Harveys began importing Sherry from Spain and Portugal - some of which is sold as 'Bristol Cream'.

So it would appear that Thomas Rothley was a customs official, who rose from a clerk to be responsible for the collection of duty, living at The Customs House in the prestigious area of Queen's Square, Bristol.



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Giant Boat Jumble and Waterways Festival

National Waterways
Museum Gloucester Docks
Sunday 19 April 2009
9.30am – 3pm

Admission is £3.50 – accompanied children are free and entry to the event also includes entry to the National Waterways Museum – a bargain day out for all the family!

The event is organised by volunteers from The Friends of the National Waterways Museum and we are very grateful to The Friends for their support.

On April our Members Ray and Barbara Moses will once again be organising and 'manning' our fundraising stand at the annual Giant Boat Jumble and Waterways Festival held at Gloucester Docks. Whilst we are very grateful to Ray and Barbara they, in turn, greatly appreciate your help as the success of their annual voluntary efforts depends entirely on having appropriate items to sell...

Once again we are organising a stand at the **Giant Boat Jumble and Waterways Festival** in April. As usual we require items to sell please, either donated or to be sold on commission. The items must have a boating, sailing, fishing or outdoors connection, *however tenuous*, but please, *no waterways magazines as we still have plenty left from previous years.*

We can collect items from the March Social Evening at **The Royal Oak**. If this is not convenient, please phone 01989 780 325 or e-mail r_w_moses@yahoo.co.uk to make alternative arrangements. *The more items we get, the more money we can make for the H&G Canal Trust.*

◀ RM

Please do have a look to see if you have anything that can be sold at this event; alternatively (or as well!) if you would like to help on the day please do get in touch with Ray or Barbara – *you will be made most welcome.*

This could be the last 'Jumble' where Ray and Barbara are able to organise our stand and attendance for us – they would welcome offers to assist 'behind the scenes' and on the day. They would be happy to work with such a volunteer to guide them through the next event. Please do get in touch with them (*the contact details are earlier in this article*) to discuss.

Thank you.



The Inland
Waterways
Association

Gloucestershire & Herefordshire IWA Branch

Thursday, 5th March 2009
Gloucester Yacht Club, 7.30pm
Annual General Meeting

Thursday, 9th April 2009
Gloucester Yacht Club, 7.30pm
Purton Hulks by Paul Barnett

Thursday, 28th-30th May 2009
Gloucester Tall Ships Festival
Gloucester Docks

Thursday, 26th-28th June 2009
Lydney Boat Rally

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

Shocking Ruffianism in Gloucestershire!

by John and Daphne Chappell

Our regular contributor **John Chappell** came across a press clipping on the internet from the **Manchester Times**, dated July 1860, headed 'Shocking Ruffianism in Gloucestershire' which related to an incident on the H&G Canal. Fascinated by what he read in this, and a subsequent item from **Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper**, he decided to delve deeper into the matter. John's Wife **Daphne** also became interested having read the newspaper reports and together they have investigated the matter in great depth. 1861 Census records, various texts, historical maps, witness statements at Newent Petty Sessions and records of trials at Gloucester Assizes, shipping news and public notices in the press of the time were just some of their sources – Gloucester Prison historical records even confirmed that one of the boatmen involved had only one leg!

Here is part one of their fascinating tale - to be concluded in the next edition . . .

It was June 30th 1860 when narrow-boat 'Number 7' belonging to carriers **Danks, Venn & Sanders** made her way out of Gloucester Docks bound for Ledbury in Herefordshire. Part of her cargo consisted of two barrels, one of port, one of sherry, each containing 57 gallons, both consigned to a Mr Treherne, grocer and wine merchant. Two men and a boy were on board, the Master James Harper, his son William and the mate William Osborne.

The wine barrels had been shipped from Bristol on June 27th on the Danks & Co's. boat 'Ellen Venn' having been filled, sealed and 'tinned' (this involved nailing a tin plate over the bung to prevent tampering), arriving at Gloucester Docks on June 29th where they were checked by Edwin

Norris, Gloucester agent for Danks & Co. Norris delivered the barrels to James Harper on board the 'Number 7' at about 5 o'clock on the evening of the following day.

Harper had worked for Danks & Co. for three months; he was 48 years of age, a tall man with a long, thin, weather-beaten face.



SEVERN CARRIERS

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DANKS, VENN, AND SANDERS Severn Trows leave daily.

Canal Carriers connecting with – Worcester and Birmingham Canal Company; J Sutton and Co.; Pickford and Co.; Crowley and Co.; and by their boats from Gloucester to Hereford.

The Trows pass the Berkeley Canal. They receive Goods for Gloster, Tewkesbury, Worcester, Stourport, Herefordshire, North Wales, and all parts of the northern and eastern coast.

His appearance, including the large scar across his right eyebrow, suggested a rough and ready life. His son William was 14. The mate, William Osborne, was an old hand and had worked boats for Danks and Co. since he was ten years old. He was 28, a short, stocky man with an eagle and anchor tattooed on his left arm, the epitome of the watermen that carried goods on the canal. *This was to be an eventful trip.*

The Hereford & Gloucester Canal joined the western channel of the River Severn at Over just outside Gloucester City. The difficulties of getting from Gloucester Docks (on the eastern channel) to Over Lock in the unpowered craft of 1860 cannot be overstated. On tidal rivers such as the Severn, boatmen

took advantage of both ebb and flood of the tides to move their boats.

High tide was at 7.20pm on the evening of June 30th. It was essential that Harper's boat left Gloucester Docks as the tide ran upstream in order to take it to the upper parting where it was secured until the tide ebbed. The boat was then able to drift down the western channel where, with assistance from a boat belonging to the Hereford & Gloucester Canal Co. – moored nearby especially for the purpose – it entered the lock. This was successfully done before dusk and once through the lock the boat laid up in the Over Basin ready for an early start the following morning.

Early next day, after hitching the horse to pull the boat, they set off. Horses that pulled canal boats have largely been forgotten; it was said that a strong horse could pull fifty times the weight in a boat than it could in a cart and good progress could be made through calm water with no currents. Consequently the animals were well cared for, being stabled well, rested and given the best food; they were, after all, vital to commercial transport on the canal system.

Harper's boat made its way through Rudford Lock, Double Locks, Coneybury Lock and Road Lock but, before reaching Malswick, temptation got the better of the men. *The barrel of port was opened, the quality tested and after several samplings, approved!* When the 'Number 7' arrived at the bridge over the Upleadon road it caught up with another canal boat 'The Lion'. ➔



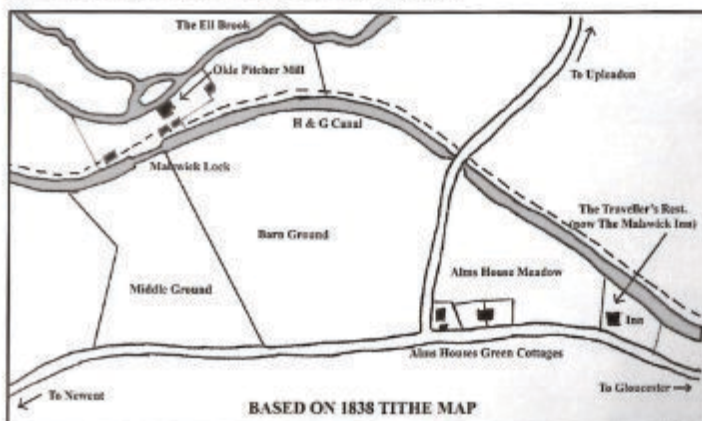
For those not familiar with the River Severn the channel divides close to Maisemore – at the upper parting – forming an east and west channel. Just downstream of Gloucester Lock (the entry to the Docks) the channels combine again at the lower parting.

At the time of this story (1860) the tides ran up the River unchecked. Subsequently a number of weirs and associated locks were built (including, in 1871, those at Maisemore and Lanthony) enabling boats from Gloucester to gain access to the navigations of the Midlands, and beyond, without hindrance from the tides. This also improved access to the H&G Canal.

The owner of 'The Lion', John Butler, earned his living mainly from the Newent coal trade and lived at one of the Alms Houses, Green Cottages, on the corner of the lane to Upleadon. Next door lived his recently married son Charles, also a boatman, who worked with his father. Living in a third cottage was John's son-in-law James Edwards and his wife Jane. In such a tight knit community it didn't

take long for the word to spread that wine was flowing on the 'Number 7'!

John Butler persuaded Harper to sell him some wine and went off to his house to get some bottles and jars which were filled and left in the cottages. Butler returned to his boat and both boats proceeded to Oxenhall where events were to take a turn for the worse . . . !



To be concluded in the next edition.

The authors would like to thank Hugh Conway-Jones for his advice and help with tide times.

◆ JC/DC

1838 – The area around Malswick, and the road to Upleadon, where "temptation got the better of the men".

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We even had a small pile of kindling wood and were all ready for our bonfire. "Got a light?" was met with blank stares and sheepish grins. Our only "smoker" was at the doctors and the site hut was ¼ mile away!

There was nothing for it but a tramp back to find the tin containing the box of matches prudently stored in the site hut. The bonfire was GO. Or it would have been if the long unused tin of matches had not succumbed to the all pervading damp!

Oxenhall volunteers, however, are truly resourceful. Back at the site hut even a damp match can be persuaded to flare with the help of a car cigarette lighter! But how does that light the bonfire a ¼ mile away? Well the resulting flame lit paper, which in turn lit an oil-soaked rag wrapped round the end of a stick, which was then taken on an 'Olympian walk' back to the waiting kindling – it was not long before the bonfire was warming our bones and was truly a sight to behold!

◀ BI



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The Wharfinger

The next edition of **The Wharfinger** will be published in June and will be number 100. Apart from all the usual features we will be commencing a new series based on the actual diaries of **Stephen Ballard** – who was responsible for successfully completing the H&G Canal to Hereford.

Stephen's diaries, which are safely held at the Herefordshire County Records Office, were written in a form of shorthand – *but not one that a modern day secretary would understand!* However, the 'code' was cracked and the Editor was lent the (lengthy) transcripts; our 100th edition seemed to be a fitting time to commence the story.

Caroline Jones has inspected the originals and risen to the challenge of producing a series of articles, based on the transcripts, especially for **The Wharfinger**. *Don't miss this fascinating insight into how the trials and tribulations of canal construction were successfully overcome – as well as how every day life was in the area nearly 200 years ago.*

EDITION 100

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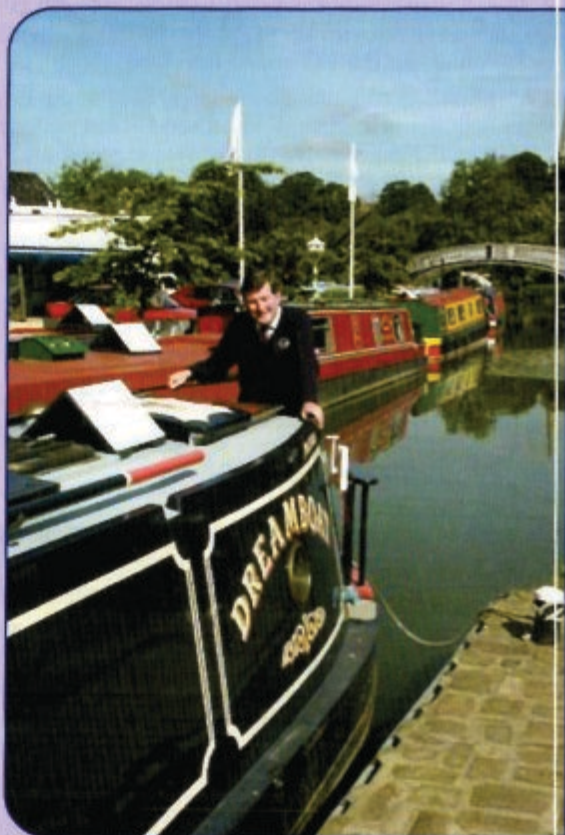
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Want to help?

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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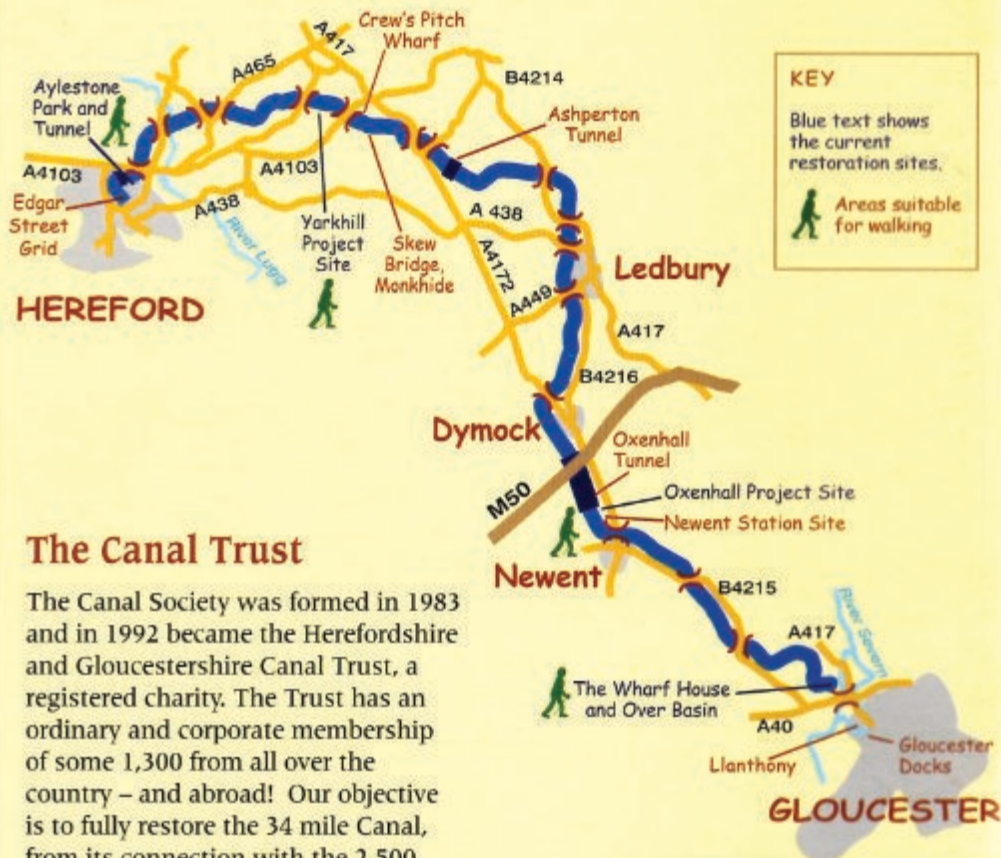
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The Wharfinger

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.