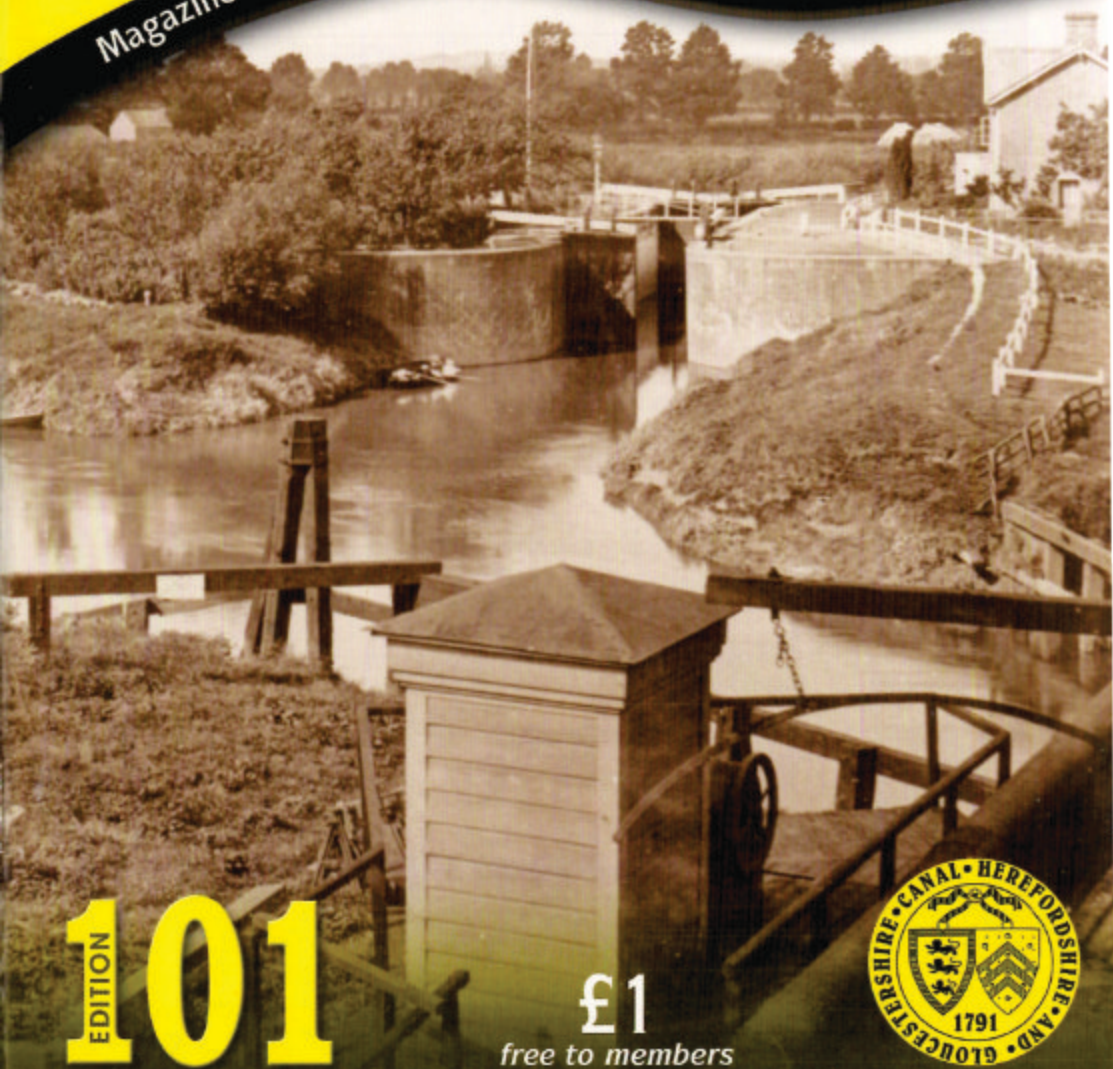


The *Wharfinger*

Autumn 2009

Magazine of the Herefordshire and Gloucestershire Canal Trust



101
EDITION

£1

free to members



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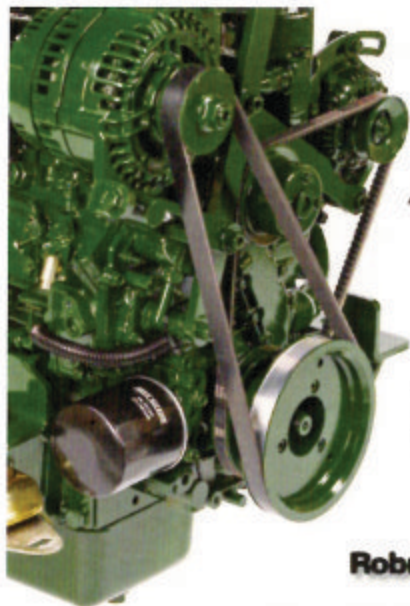
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Front Cover: Llanthony Lock in the Late Nineteenth Century, Courtesy of Keith Hickman of Thornbury



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Green Line



Chairman's Column from Janet Moulton



This is the 13th column I have written as your Chairman, so I thought I would look back and see what changes have occurred within the H&G Canal Trust. So many good things have happened over the past couple of years.

The unexpected legacy and the opportunity to buy Llanthony Lock (and the cottages and adjacent land) secured our access to the network. THE WHARF HOUSE survived floods and roadworks and it is gaining a reputation for good food in a lovely setting. The gardens around the Basin are bedding in nicely and now Alder is moored it is a CANAL Basin again. Yarkhill is starting to give a good impression of how our mainly rural canal will look in the future and the Ell Brook aqueduct shows off the skills of our Oxenhall team; Aylestone Park will soon have its own slipway. Apart from physical restoration/rebuilding/improvements at all of our sites volunteers expend an increasing number of hours each year 'just' maintaining each section – this year breaking all records in the need for grass cutting etc! And we must not forget the vitally important 'behind the scenes' liaison and negotiations – one of the most crucial in these recent years secured the routing of the massive National Grid (Transco) gas pipeline safely over Oxenhall Tunnel.

The Trading Company (see page 28) had mixed fortunes with the weather but has managed to donate nearly £10,000 to the H&G CT in the past few years.

The purchase of the historical papers from Bonhams and the share certificate from Spinks has encouraged a great interest in the history of the H&G Canal. We thought that there were very few artefacts and documents remaining but more and more are coming to light. Please keep your eyes open at antique fairs and car boot sales – you never know what you may find!

The CoM is working to full capacity and we must remember that they are all volunteers. Unlike some other Canal Trusts we do not have paid project managers and administrators. Many of our forthcoming projects are big ones and we are still seeking people to fund raise, write grant applications and help us to progress these interesting engineering projects. Please do get in touch with me if you can assist.

I hope that some of you will have been able to see our progress at Yarkhill at the Open Day in August – and please come on **Sunday September 6th** to our **Triple Open Day** and see the progress that is being made to restore OUR Canal in Gloucestershire (see page 21).

♦ Janet Moulton, Chairman

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Keep on Growing!

*As we were (yet again) cursing the weather and its effect on our (canal) holiday I realised that there was at least one benefit to be derived from the rain – **there was a good depth of water in the canal.** But there was the downside that the persistent rain and (almost) seasonal temperatures were encouraging a virtual forest to grow along the towpath.*

On the H&G Canal we learnt a long time ago that the weather conditions have a **huge** influence on our voluntary efforts – already this year our stalwart volunteers have expended a great deal of time and effort in keeping nature in check on our sites along the Canal for which we are very grateful.

The two weeks of **Waterway Recovery Group** Canal Camps working to construct a new slipway in Hereford at **Aylestone Park** no doubt would have benefitted from drier weather – a report on their progress will be in the next issue. Over the border in Gloucestershire a very successful launch of 'Tapas on the Terrace' at **THE WHARF HOUSE** has subsequently been restricted at times thanks to the rain but trade is growing again following completion of the roadworks. The (well watered) gardens are looking very good – even through the weeding has required a lot more effort!

Just as nature has proved to us, time and time again, that things will in general keep on growing they need to be managed, and even harnessed, to get the maximum benefits. Hence our volunteers undertaking tasks in the autumn such as hedge-laying in order to develop denser, stronger and more manageable hedgerows. Our detailed plans

for a given site always seek to gain maximum benefits from nature – ensuring that clean surface water run-off from the majority of the paved areas of the Stauntons Hill development at Over were directed into the Canal (and not 'lost' to the River Severn) being a very good example. More recently we have obtained Planning Permission for photovoltaic cells on the roof of **THE WHARF HOUSE** and this project will proceed soon (subject to appropriate grants being forthcoming) – *we must ensure that nature works for us and not against us whenever we can!*

Just as in nature the H&G CT needs to keep on growing. Given the current economic climate many voluntary and charitable organisations are suffering significant downturns – in our last financial year however our membership numbers have remained steady (and whilst we have lost just one very small business Corporate Member we have gained two new ones – who are welcomed on page 37). **Thank you to all of our Members and Corporate Members for your continued support.** However, we cannot be complacent, so please do consider assisting us by recruiting a new Member (or two!) – *please see page 14 for details of how you can obtain copies of our new and completely revised recruitment leaflet.*

The launch of the new website (www.h-g-canal.org.uk) has received good publicity both locally and in the waterways national press (and it continues to be developed and improved – *it keeps on growing!*). A number of publications included a colour image of the cover of our 100th edition of **The Wharfinger** to illustrate their report. *Thank you to all of them.*

♦ **CRP**

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The Transport Trust Awards

Caroline Jones put a large amount of work into the negotiations with British Waterways that resulted in our successful acquisition of our first 'heritage workboat' *Alder* and into the ongoing restoration of the vessel. She has also spent time researching and applying for possible grants to help fund the work. Little did she know that she, and husband Neil, would be travelling to London to receive an award – and a much appreciated cheque ... !



Caroline Jones receives the Transport Trust Award from His Royal Highness the Duke of Kent.

Photo: Neil Jones

As you may know the **Transport Trust** awarded us a grant of £500 last year. The award was made towards work required on our workboat *Alder* and was at the time very gratefully received as it paid for the new portholes and paint required to tidy up the boat. Circumstances have prevented the works being completed in time for the award ceremony but undeterred Neil and I went to Hendon for the ceremony on Wednesday June 24th.

The Transport Trust make a number of awards annually, always for the preservation of British Transport, this years winners were quite varied encompassing transport on land and water as well as in the air. The big winner was a gentleman who had masterminded the retrieval of a WWII Hurricane aeroplane from India and its full restoration to flight by a team of engineers and researchers. Other winners included tramcars, trolleybuses, seagoing sailing ships, steam engines and, of course, our little workboat. At the ceremony we felt quite humble to have been included in what seemed a quite prestigious gathering of restoration projects from all over the UK.

The ceremony was held at the RAF Museum Hendon, the awards being made by His Royal Highness the Duke of Kent, patron of the Transport Trust. Everyone was expected to make a short speech and mine included thanks to the Transport Trust for the vote of confidence they had given us and our work on both the boat and the canal, and to the small but dedicated team of volunteers who have helped out with the work on the boat.

We still have work to do on Alder and now have 'Renton' to also add to the list of jobs. If anyone would like to join the small band of volunteers undertaking this varied work please do get in touch. Tel: home 01594 861286 or work 01452 318224.

♦♦ CJ



Alder is craned into the water at Over after restoration of the hull.

Photo: Ted Boagies

The Crucial Connection

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So out came John Forrest with me one evening with his level and his staff (the graduated pole, not more volunteers!) and the possibility of several different routes were considered; namely A, B and C. Next came the necessary go-ahead from Herefordshire Council Parks and Countryside Service, an estimate of the plant and material needs and costs and alerting the volunteer workforce. (Note: I always add 17/6d, or equivalent, to any cost estimates to follow the example of the canal builder's precise estimates of £xxx,xxx 17s 6d to complete a canal!). Our suggested route B was agreed.

Hence to work on May Bank Holiday weekend, marking out and preparing to drop two kerb stones and careful "fun" with the brick saw slicing up said kerb stones. Each side of me our volunteers, Ashlyn Dunlop and John Feeney, had a bucket of water apiece, cooling the saw, lubricating the cut and keeping down the dust. Then I 'clocked it' with a sledge hammer – and it broke in the wrong place ... *The second one worked beautifully.* A very useful person (henceforth to be known as a VUP) suggested I speak



with "Mike" down my street in Hereford for a couple of 6" kerbs ready made, going begging, and a couple of 'droppers' too. Two shallow kerb stones duly collected on Saturday evening – thanks, Mike.

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Photos: Alexander Gibbs

Above: Martin Danks concentrates as he develops his skills in excavator driving whilst helping to construct the missing link path.

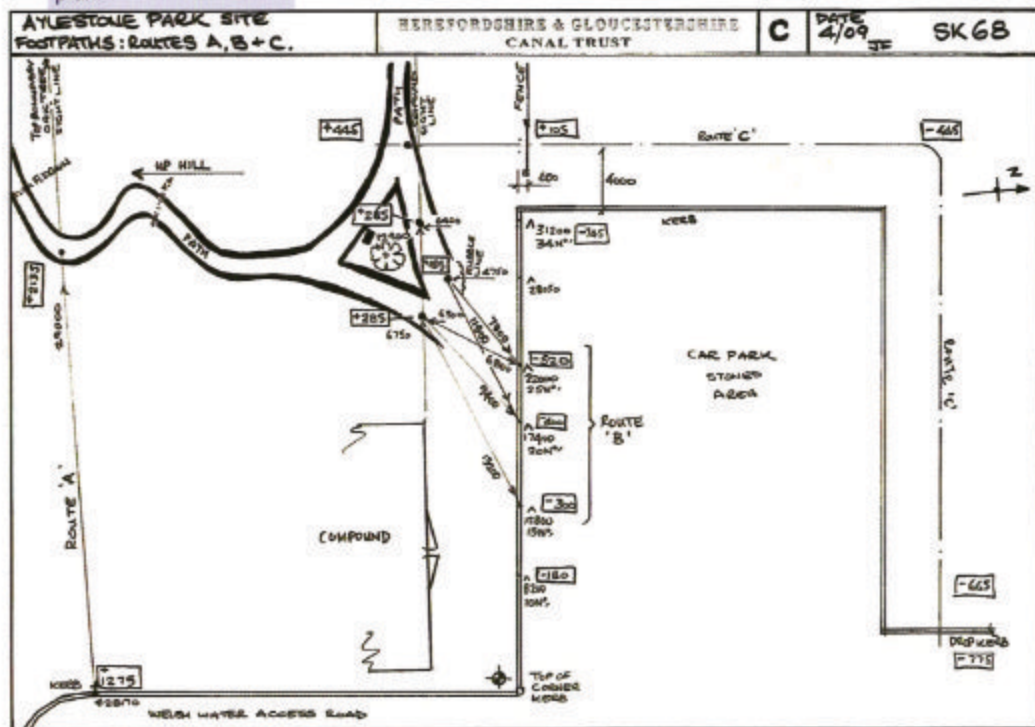
Below: The survey sketch plan.

dimensions for users of 'hand powered' wheelchairs. It seemed sensible to follow his guidance. *Thanks, Al!*

Sunday dawned and a **Waterway Recovery Group** Camp Leader was commandeered to help in the afternoon. He gave a sublime performance on the excavator, dropping mere shovelfuls of scalpings in just the right place, minimising the strenuous rake work — and what a performance on the walk-behind roller! *Thanks, Martin T.* He was allowed to escape back home to Berkshire at 5pm when Jude came to “baby sit” me on the excavator as we finished up for the day.

Volunteer day on Wednesday saw the majority of the top layer of fine limestone collected, poured, placed and spread. Thanks, Eddie for help and advice and to John F, on site yet again, despite the drizzle and feeling under the weather (sic/sick). Brian Fox then helped out while we still had the plant on hire and before the weather was due to break.

Oh what a lovely path! Made possible by the help and assistance of many volunteers cajoled and persuaded into action! The buggy pushers, hobbling gentry, pedalled go-karters (as well as the specified wheelchair users) will love you and be forever grateful!



LLANTHONY LOCK *in the Late Nineteenth Century*



By Hugh Conway-Jones

One of our long-standing Members is well known maritime author and historical researcher Hugh Conway-Jones. Our purchase of Llanthony Lock set Hugh delving into the records and here he gives us an insight into the traffic passing through the Lock at the time the photograph was taken. At this time the H&G Canal had been closed for some 17 years and the Gloucester & Sharpness Canal provided an alternative route for some of the earlier traffic to and from locations downstream of the Lock on the River Sever ...

The photograph shows Llanthony Lock as it was in the late nineteenth century, with the weir channel to the left and the lock keeper's cottages to the right. The view is from the pedestrian footbridge over the GWR Docks Branch railway line that crossed the river by a swing bridge, part of which can be seen in the bottom right corner. The side girder of the bridge has the original balloon-shaped top flange designed by I K Brunel, so the photo must have been taken before 1899 when this original span was replaced.

A good impression of the traffic through the lock at the time can be obtained from a register for the years 1898-1924 now held in the British Waterways Archives in Llanthony Warehouse. This shows that in 1898, barges made a total of forty cargo-carrying trips through the lock, the most regular being the barges *Finis* and *Rapid*, both owned by Frederick Wood of Westbury on Severn. Between them, they made 25 trips upstream, evidently carrying Forest coal to the riverside brickworks above Gloucester and to Butlers



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tar works at the Upper Parting. They also made 4 trips carrying sand to the brickworks and 5 carrying limestone to the limekilns just above Llanthony Lock. William Halling's barge *Mystery* made 4 trips downstream with stone, presumably to protect the river bank, and a steam barge owned by William Butler passed upstream on her way from Bristol to Worcester.

A tricky swing bridge

One difficulty for barges using this stretch of river was that the Great Western Railway Co staff were sometimes reluctant to open their swing bridge just upstream of the lock. Frederick Wood made several complaints about vessels having to wait until low tide to get underneath the bridge and sometimes for several days when there was a great deal of fresh water in the river. It was said that the bridge-opening mechanism had become defective, and it had needed two or three horses to make it move. The GWR management denied there was any problem, but the following year they did replace the ancient wrought iron span designed by Brunel with the riveted steel structure seen today. (For more about the railway bridge, see the *Journal of the Gloucestershire Society for Industrial Archaeology* 2005.)

1898 – a fatal mishap

As well as the barge traffic in 1898, a variety of locally owned narrow canal boats made almost eighty cargo-carrying trips through the lock. About half of these were collecting hay from the riverside meadows for sale in Gloucester, 24 carried Midlands coal downstream and 10 carried stone downstream. The coal passing downstream was evidently destined for riverside communities below Gloucester, the most regular trader being the *Fanny*

owned by coal merchant Henry Cooper of Westbury Flat (near the present Severn Bore pub on the A48), about eight miles below Gloucester. On such trips, a boat would have been accompanied by bowhaulers on the bank or may have drifted with the tide, probably dragging a heavy weight on a long rope when needed to slow the boat relative to the current and so make the rudder effective.

One entry in the lock keeper's register for the boat *Fanny* on 24 September has an additional note that "W Tonks drowned" – an item in the *Gloucester Journal* explains what happened. On his way up-river from Westbury, skipper Walter Tonks and his mate stopped for drinks at Minsterworth and again at Stonebench and then drank some more when they reached Gloucester. On returning to his boat moored in the docks "about half drunk", Walter had to climb over other moored boats, and while doing this he fell into the water and was drowned.

HC-J



substitute so a trawl around the yard revealed some suitable lengths of well seasoned oak and work has commenced on cutting and shaping.

The water level has been lowered while we removed the 2 worst planks and whilst the level is down repairs are being made to the canal bank where it is collapsing; this is partly due to the swans that use it as a route in and out of the water! We don't want a car turning around at the Cottage slipping into the Canal. A stone retaining

wall was constructed in the past but this has not proved successful and the decision was made to use gabions to make a permanent job of it. A gabion is a galvanized wire basket filled with large stones which is covered with turf when finished and soon blends into the surroundings. The smallest size available was chosen but it still takes a lot of stone to fill and with over 20 yards of bank to repair that is a lot of stone to find. There just happens to be a large pile of debris taken from the aqueduct when we started repairs a few years ago so that will go and at least our yard should be even tidier when we have completed the job!

Maintenance

Further repairs have also been made to the bank of the Ell Brook where it is slipping away. The old engineers did not always do a good job or this problem would not have occurred. The aqueduct was built in 1796 and wing walls were built on either side to prevent erosion of the foundations, then in 1883 the railway took over the canal and built a bridge just upstream from the aqueduct – again with wing walls. Unfortunately the railway engineer did not



Dave Mordaunt inspects work on the Ell Brook Aqueduct with his daughter and the other volunteers.

quite join his wall to the aqueduct wall, leaving a gap of only about 8ft but enough to allow the water to get to work. I suppose it has taken over 100 years to erode but a simple construction of a concrete block wall has now rectified the omission for the time being (and used the last of the blocks which came from Over).

Grass cutting and strimming are taking place every week now as we try to keep pace with the growth, some of it untouched for a few years and threatening to take over our storage yard and encroach onto neighbouring properties as well. A large (about 4ft long) grass snake(?) was disturbed last week but quickly disappeared again. Chris has volunteered to come down from Kidderminster with his scythe mower to help with the big stuff, but I haven't told him about the snake!

Swan song

For several years now there has been a family of swans raising young after nesting on the island behind Lock Cottage. This year was no exception and the 2 proud parents have been showing off their 7 cygnets every week. One cygnet disappeared after about a

month and we suspect it was taken by the mink which was seen in the Ell Brook recently but the remaining 6 were growing nicely and all were quite happy. Another swan family was in residence further up the canal with another 7 youngsters. But drama last week when the upper pair decided for some reason that their patch was not good enough and decided to take over the canal by the Cottage. The new occupant of the Lock Cottage informed me that the 2 male swans fought for about 2 hours, although he tried to separate them, until the 'Cottage swan' was dead and the remaining mother and her 6 cygnets were driven off. No sign of the mother and family this week and the new swans are proudly showing off their new territory. *Nature can be cruel.*

◆ BF



Photos: John Cheppell

The Lock Cottage swans show off their brood before the unfortunate attack.

*Your
HELP
please!*

The pressure for us to obtain a ride on mower is growing by the week so if anyone out there just happens to have one they aren't using, please give Brian Fox a call (see page 39).

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April saw a return visit from WRG – BITM (Waterway Recovery Group – 'bit in the middle'; the latter loosely describing the areas of the country to which their volunteers travel!) The group split into two with the first team removing brush from trees previously felled across the Canal.



April's 'turning green' to June's forest.



Above: A useful water source when it rains.
Below: Nice tidy towpath at the site hut end.



The small and medium trunks were hauled from the canal using the 'Fergi'* and logging up started. (*Paul's old Ferguson Tractor.) The team changed direction on Sunday and spent the day removing the sandbag dam and rebuilding it at the 630 yard mark. The second team set about stump removal from the towpath bank and achieved a good number of 'extractions' during the weekend. *Our thanks to them all for their hard work and achievements.*

The Yarkhill team followed on from BITM cutting the larger trunks so that they could be hauled from the canal. Logging up continued and several loads were moved to the site hut area. Levelling of the 'wild side' has continued but not before a rescue mission by Stella and Peter who spent a day trans-planting cowslips before they became buried. The area around the site hut has had the vegetation cut back, the ditch cleared by our 'water babies' and the rough woodpile logged up. A load of the logs has been donated to Yarkhill Village Hall.

Strimming and mowing are now a constant occupation but still the 'turning green' of April has turned into a jungle. Seven tonne of brick hard core has been collected from Hereford for future use – *our thanks to Mr. and Mrs. Tyrer especially for the donation to offset transporting costs!*



Above: the area around the site hut has the vegetation cut back and the ditch cleared by the 'water babies'.

Below: 250 wet sand bags were moved and rebuilt at the 630 yard mark.



Photos: Alison High and Clive High

An 'Argo cat' trial proved it could be of use to us on both land and water.

If you wish to join our work at Yarkhill then please give me a ring on 01568 615 575 *you will be made very welcome; it is not all work, we do have some fun too!*



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The Royal Oak, Much Marcle

SEPTEMBER 15TH

Bats

Rebecca Collins

The flying sort, not those made from willow!

OCTOBER 20TH

H & G CT's Heritage Fleet – so far

Caroline Jones

The history of the boats and progress with their restoration.

NOVEMBER 17TH

River Severn – part two

Brian Draper

Brian returns to give us a second installment of this trip along the Severn.



OUR JULY MEETING

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The meeting opened with a welcoming address by our Chairman, Janet Moul, in which she reviewed the many events of our 25 years Anniversary in 2008. Membership Secretary, Nigel Jefferies, reported on our membership figures which have largely remained steady and Liz Connors, Treasurer and Company Secretary, followed with a comprehensive breakdown of the Trust's accounts.

Nigel Jefferies and Cliff Penny were re-elected on to the Council of Management and Bernard Ingram offered himself for appointment as a director, having sat on the Council for the past twelve months. Wilf Jones was nominated as a new co-opted member of the Council of Management. After David Penny had given an update of new projects in the pipeline we had a short break.

This AGM took on a slightly different format to previous years, in that the reports from each restoration site were given after the formal meeting and accompanied by a Ted Beagles Powerpoint presentation on our progress up to February 28th, 2009. Each of the site leaders spoke to the photos giving Members an update of the work that had happened along the Canal route. This included Caroline Jones, who spoke of the work on our Heritage boats.

◀ MJ

Triple Open Day!

Sunday, September 6th, 11 am – 4.30 pm

Over Basin

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A guided riverside walk of 1.5 miles will take you from Over to Llanthony. (We hope to offer transport between the two.)

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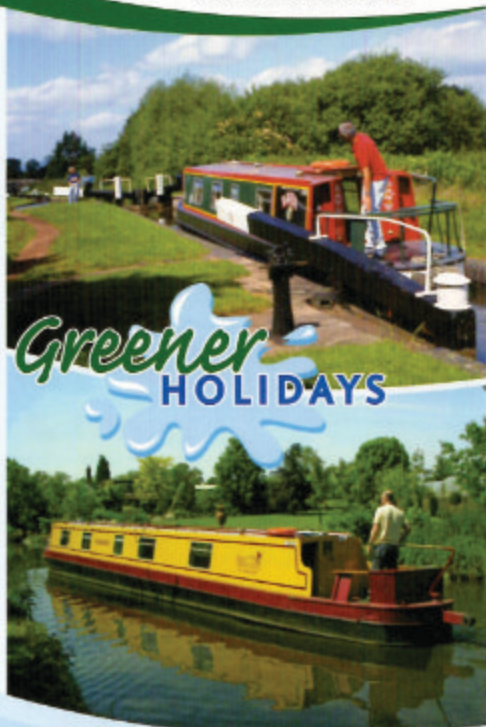
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...wide horizons



Skew gardens is a mass of flowers this year.

Our gardeners have been hard at it during the summer period weeding and cutting back the prolific growth of the plants and now the flower beds are showing a wonderful display of colour and variety. Sometimes it's all our gardeners can do to cut the grass around site and do some weeding in a day.

Two large compost heaps have been built and are successfully transforming suitable waste from ^{the} WHARF HOUSE into compost for use on site. The logs resulting from the tree surgeons cutting trees down around the site have been moved to a central location ready for some lucky buyer (see p.39). Spraying of weeds has been completed around the walk areas, the edge of the Canal, the bottom of ^{the} WHARF HOUSE terrace and the Car Park. The information signs around the site are being renewed and those on the bank have been made removable to ease grass cutting by our volunteers.

There are now four bee hives at Over.



A new swarm of bees arrived on the flood plain and clung to a small tree trunk until the local bee keeper moved them to a new hive.

Photos: Barrie Haysman

The Birds and the Bees

Moorhens have adopted our floating island and have produced a clutch of 4 chicks; 3 have survived and are nearly fully grown. The island has been very popular with wildlife – ducks have tried to nest there, but were chased off by the moorhens, and a heron uses it as a base for his fishing. We have been very fortunate this year with kingfishers – a family of 4 have been spotted on site – the flashing turquoise green colouring must be one of the most beautiful sights in nature.



A nest on the corner of the floating island.



Mike Hunt and Dave Hurran add a smart new rail around the stern of our trip boat, Mister Maysey, as part of the major overhaul.

One of our Over volunteer Members has lectured on beekeeping at a local college and, following his advice plus a detailed risk assessment, a local beekeeper has positioned 4 beehives on site. He started with 2 and we were fortunate enough to have a swarm arrive on site – and he moved them into a hive. The bees have been flourishing and with any luck before long we will be selling Over honey from ^{THE} WHARF HOUSE. With bees reported to be reducing in numbers nationally it is good for the H&G CT to be supporting them.

A Mechanical Challenge!

The Mechanical Team have continued work on bringing Mr Maysey back into service, hopefully in time for our Open Days, the engine, fuel tank, controls and skipper seat being permanently fixed to the stern. Work had to stop for a week because a swarm of wasps decided to nest in Mr Maysey so it was not safe to go near her until the beekeeper came and removed the nest.

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It's a bigger pump, but will it work?

We have had to change the old 3" pump which could not pump enough of the surplus water from the Leadon to the Canal Basin. Waterway Recovery Group have loaned us an even older Lister 6" pump which should be man enough for the job but considerable works need to be done to it before we can reap the benefits of its larger pumping capacity. *Our thanks to WRG who have also promised monies to help us repair the pump.*

The side of the storage container facing the houses has been rubbed down and re-painted (someone suggested Banksey be invited in!) and railway sleepers placed under it ready for the hole left from removing the old site hut to be filled with earth. We have also started stacking some heaps of bricks on pallets ready for relocation.

The Wharf House Fit-out

THE WHARF HOUSE project has seen the professional Carpenters continue fitting the oak stairway and the adjacent cupboards, the inside of which our volunteers have papered and painted. We have finished rebuilding and decorating the Staff Room and varnished and fixed skirting in the Bathroom of Bedroom 1. We have also completed the bath panel in Bathroom 2



A bath panel is tiled and fitted with blue downlighters for that WOW factor!

(with inbuilt downlighters for an extra wow factor!) and in Bathroom 3 the wall has been adjusted and re-tiled in order to fit a corner sink unit – and we have started on the bath panel. Steady progress – *why not join us – Maggie Jones would be pleased to hear from you.*

◆ BH

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The Diaries of Stephen Ballard

PART TWO

Stephen Ballard
(1804 – 1890)

The original Diaries of Stephen Ballard, who successfully completed the H&G Canal to

Hereford, are safely held at Herefordshire Record Office but are written in a form of shorthand not in use today! As Caroline Jones explained, in her introduction to this series in our last edition, the lengthy transcripts tell only part of the story with much additional material available in the form of his original notebooks and within other material held in 'The Ballard Collection'. As promised, this time we look at Stephen Ballard the boy, man and engineer – based on his autobiography and other notes within the Collection ...

The H&G CT would like to thank our Member Rosemary Ballard (the wife of the late Stephen Ballard III) for her willing agreement to our publication of this series of articles and the staff of the Herefordshire Record Office for their assistance and co-operation.

Stephen Ballard was born in 1804 in Link Villa on Malvern Link Common. He had seven brothers and sisters, Thomas, Phillip, Robert, Edmund, Anne, Charlotte and Betsey; Edmund died in infancy and was not remembered by Stephen. His father was an attorney who, it is recorded, unfortunately drank rather too much leaving his mother to bring the family up in relative poverty. He went to school from an early age beginning with "an old woman below the Cockshot on the link where I suppose I learned my A.B.C." He later attended schools at the bottom of Malvern Link, at Barnards Green, Ledbury and finally the College School in Worcester. He did not have a high opinion of any of his school masters or mistresses, considering that he had wasted much of his younger life in attending the various schools, indeed his headmaster at Worcester he considered very disagreeable and ran away from home to avoid returning to school after one holiday! When he returned home and was asked why he had not returned to school his explanations of the headmasters conduct were enough to persuade his parents not to send him there anymore.

Stephen then continued his 'education' at home, he was given a flock of Malvern Hill sheep by his father and tended these with great care, profiting from the sale of their wool. He also took a great interest in the family garden, improving crops for the family table, and studying botany taking a particular interest in British wild plants. In 1822 when Stephen was 18 years old the house, Link Villa, was let to the Marchioness of Donegal. On seeing his work in the garden she found him a position at the nurseries of

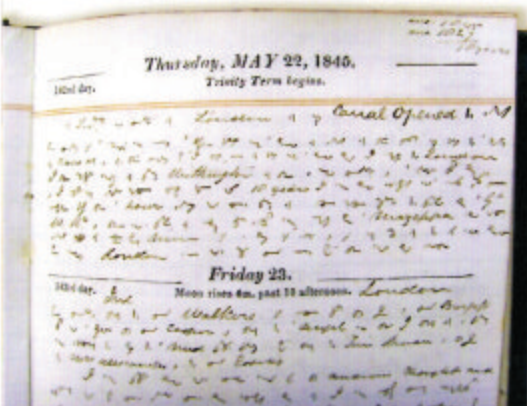


Image of one of the diary pages showing the original shorthand.



On his many fact-finding tours Stephen Ballard visited Pontcysyllte Aqueduct – fortunately (or is it unfortunately?) he did not manage to incorporate such a vast aqueduct within his plans for completing the H&G Canal!

Working for the Herefordshire & Gloucestershire Canal Company

By the spring of 1827 the building business had died down and he left Mr Lucy's employ, he applied for the position of clerk to the Herefordshire & Gloucestershire Canal Company and on the 13th August 1827 was appointed at a salary of £60 per annum, *"with house and travelling expenses"*.

During his time as Clerk to the H&G Canal Co Stephen travelled a great deal inspecting other canals and works. In 1829 he began a tour of works which would take him to see the Shropshire Canals and the Ellesmere Canal; in particular the Pontcysyllte Aqueduct. In the same area he visited slate works and saw mills, closely examining the machinery, and he also visited the new Conwy suspension bridge and a stone single span arched bridge over the Dee. Further north he toured Liverpool and Manchester, the Bridgewater Canal, the Rochdale Canal and the Mersey and Irwell Navigation. Having seen over 100 miles of canal he went home to Ledbury via Birmingham. All the time that he was touring, inspecting and seeing new marvels of engineering he was sketching and making notes for the benefit of his employers, the H&G Canal Co.

His work with the H&G Canal Co seems to have been both enjoyable and hard. He put a

Messrs Lea & Kennedy at Hammersmith; thus Stephen left Worcestershire for London. He stayed at Hammersmith for nearly 2 years moving on to work in the gardens of the Earl of Plymouth's Hewell Grange near Bromsgrove. His wages at this time were 10/- per week and he lodged at *"Hunts at the Olde wharf close by the canal"*. This was possibly the first time he came across a canal in his daily life, in this case probably the Worcester & Birmingham Canal. At this time he began to take an interest in geometry and bought a copy of 'Euclid's Elements', on credit from a Bromsgrove bookshop, he worked hard to pay for the book and having studied its contents decided to give up the gardening he so loved as a career.

In May 1825 Stephen took an apprenticeship with a Cheltenham builder, Mr Lucy. He was paid 12/- a week in his first year and worked almost exclusively on carpentry on the many new buildings being erected in Cheltenham at the time. He worked hard and studied the new buildings, carefully storing knowledge of both building principles and business management for the future.

lot of effort into finding engineering solutions to overcome challenges on the canal, he drew up plans and sections both of the Canal and the River Severn and both rode and walked many, many miles in surveying the line of the Canal and keeping an eye on works. He took a great interest in the Severn, recording its flow and taking sections to calculate the locations of scours and shoals. His work included overseeing contractors and other workers and his earlier experience as a gardener of poor pay and uncomfortable living made him a tolerant and, when possible, a generous master.

His work on the H&G Canal was well respected and drew some attention from the Institution of Civil Engineers; this in turn led to other work on buildings, roads and railways not connected with the Canal. By 1837 he had his brother Phillip working with him, mainly on surveying and helping out with general engineering matters. In January 1839 he was presented with the Telford Medal of the Institution of Civil Engineers for his design for an icebreaking boat that had been launched from Ledbury Wharf on 20th December 1837.

In October 1839 his salary was increased to £400 per annum payable until completion of the Canal. He worked hard for this and

commented, at the end of 1841, that *"This year I have been very much engaged. Not a single day, not even Sundays have I been disengaged from the work on the canal ..."*

All the time he was working for the H&G Canal Co he was studying plants, trees and farming methods. In 1836

he published a treatise on 'the Pruning of Small Trees' that was eventually translated into French and published. His work with trees was used on the Canal as all the boundary hedges were pruned in accordance with

his wishes. He also published studies on the eradication of weeds.

The Canal opened in Hereford on Wednesday May 21st 1845, Stephen and Phillip Ballard let water into the Canal, no one from the City of Hereford was present and Stephen only stayed to witness the lifting of the stop planks. That same day he left Withington for London to begin work on the Middle Level Drainage system in the Fens. However, he continued to keep in touch with the Canal Co, receiving copies of their accounts and attending meetings.

Between 1848 and 1851 Stephen worked for the Great Northern Railway, specifically he engineered the Peterborough to London line though the Fens, difficult terrain that he worked hard to master. He then moved to Holland working on the new Dutch Rhenish Railway from Rotterdam to Utrecht, this was partly across soft peat land similar to the Fens and his experience there served him well.

Ballard – the Family Man

In 1854 Stephen married Maria Bird; her father was an agriculturalist whose land had been split by the route of the Great Northern Railway through the Fens. He met Maria in 1847 when she was only 17 years

"This year I have been very much engaged. Not a single day, not even Sundays have I been disengaged from the work on the canal ..."

Part of the Ballard Collection at Herefordshire Record Office.

Photos: Caroline Jones and Herefordshire Record Office



Over 40 years after his work on the H&G Canal was finished Stephen Ballard was responsible for constructing The Jubilee Drive, at Malvern, to commemorate the 50th year of Queen Victoria's reign in 1887.

Malvern Hills Conservators, he built a workmen's hall and Temperance Hotel in Malvern for Maria to run as a charity and he built the Jubilee Drive to commemorate the 50th year of Queen Victoria's reign in 1887.

By 1862 he was a partner and agent for the Evesham and Redditch Railway and by 1868 was undertaking the same roles for the railway from Bedford to St Pancras. He also helped to build the Evesham and Ashchurch Railway and the Worcester and Hereford Railway!

Stephen Ballard died in 1890 and his estate, valued at £130,000, was left in trust, administered by his sons Fred and Stephen; Maria died in 1915. At the time of his death Stephen Ballard was the oldest listed Member of the Institution of Civil Engineers.

In the next article I will begin delving deeper into the transcriptions of Stephen's diaries to find out more about his work on the H&G Canal ...

◀ CJ



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A Natural Explanation? By John Chappell

Time to get to know all about yet another of the plants growing at our Oxenhall restoration site – and also to put that apron on and get into the kitchen. And if it all goes wrong and you chop your finger whilst cooking, or end up with an unfortunate digestive disorder, then (as regular readers might have come to expect) this plant will also provide the cure ...

The plant pictured here, thriving on the bank of the Ell Brook at Oxenhall, is easily overlooked despite it being one of our most common wild flowers. It is a leafy plant with small, un-exciting, white, mid-summer flowers. Inhabiting shady places, often in the lee of a hedge, the country name of 'Jack by the Hedge' is not unsurprising. The similarity of the plants' flowers to that of cabbage tells us that it is of the Brassica family and the smell and taste of its leaves caused countryfolk to give it yet another descriptive name, Garlic Mustard.

Garlic Mustard, or botanically *Alliaria petiolata* – “resembling Allium” (i.e. smelling and tasting of onion or garlic) – is a biennial plant. The first year's growth is an attractive clump of rounded, slightly wrinkled leaves close to the ground followed in the second year by a one metre tall flowering stem with nettle like leaves topped by a spike of white, densely clustered, cross shaped flowers. The flowers produce large quantities of seed and after its introduction to America, in the 1800's, has become an invasive species dominating the understory of the native forests and crowding out native plants. It is now considered one of the most potentially harmful and difficult to control plants in America.

In this country we are fortunate that the plant has natural predators and it is kept in



Garlic Mustard, or botanically *Alliaria petiolata*.

Photo: John Chappell

check by feeding insects, especially seed and stem mining weevils and flea beetles. Nonetheless it forms leafy ranks in the shadow of our hedgerows and acts as a food plant for many other insects and butterfly larva. Several species of adult butterflies will feed on the flower's nectar, including the Orange-tip butterfly seen in the picture. The Orange-tip is a striking example of how two forms can occur within the same species, with the bright orange wing tips of the male being absent in the female; a rare instance where the male is prettier than the female!

The first year's leaves, flowers and seeds are edible, have a mild flavour of both garlic and mustard and can be used in salads and pesto. In America the young leaves are harvested as a foodstuff in a vain attempt to control the plant and surely in these green times we have no excuse for not using some of our own native plants!

Here is a recipe for Garlic mustard pesto (using the young leaves as you would basil and parsley etc.):-

- 1 cup garlic mustard (young leaves)
- ½ cup basil
- 3 cloves garlic
- 2 oz roasted pine nuts
- 4 oz olive oil
- Juice of 1 lemon

Combine the ingredients in a food processor, except olive oil, which is added with the processor running. *Toss pasta or ravioli in the pesto – it provides a delicious dressing.*

Taking the recipe a greener step forward why not use bulbs of our native Ramsons *Allium ursinum* (see 'A Natural Explanation?' p37. of Ed 95 of **The Wharfinger**, Spring 2008) instead of the garlic cloves?

A handy use of Garlic Mustard for us on the Oxenhall site is as an antiseptic. A leaf applied externally to a wound will act as a temporary covering until we can get to the first aid box. Very useful if one of us suffers a minor cut or scrape!

'*Culpeper's Herbal*', published in 1694, firmly linked healing to astrology and according to his doctrines Garlic Mustard is governed by the planet Mercury. His beliefs are a fascinating insight into the value of plants in medicine and in the next edition I will be looking at one of the prettiest plants on the Oxenhall site, a plant Culpeper believed was governed by Saturn. In the meantime I will eschew Culpeper's remedy for colicky wind – *Garlic Mustard seeds boiled in wine* – as it sounds revolting. I think I'll just stick to the wine and follow up with Bicarbonate of Soda as necessary!

♦♦ JC

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Our Corporate Members By Cliff Penny

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Welcome also to new **Corporate Members** Terry and Carol Huckerby, the new owners of *Starline Marine*.

Our Corporate Members have always been very important to us – both in showing support for the objectives of the H&G CT by their Membership and, in a number of instances, by their business assisting our voluntary endeavours in various ways. *Thank you – the support is not taken for granted.*

We particularly appreciate our Corporate Members support (which, in many instances has continued for a considerable number of years) during the current difficult financial times. Thank you also to those Corporate Members who regularly advertise in **The Wharfinger**.

Thank you also to our other advertisers for their support and the other firms and businesses that assist the H&G CT in various ways.



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Volunteer Newsletter Launched

If you are a volunteer Member who assists the H&G CT in any way you should have received the first edition of an occasional **Volunteer Newsletter** written (and sponsored) by our Chairman, Janet Moulton. It is intended to be a newsletter for active volunteer Members both bringing them up to date with news in between issues of **The Wharfinger** and to hopefully contain an exchange of news between volunteers. If you are an active volunteer and have not received a copy then please let Janet know.

*Your
HELP
please!*

Bottles wanted for our Bottle Draw at the Winter Bazaar, all shapes and sizes, any food/drink related content – please bring to a monthly

Social Evening or, for larger quantities, please contact Janet Moulton and we will endeavour to collect.

Thank you.

CoM Officers Re-elected

At the July CoM the following Officer appointments were made. **Janet Moulton** continues as Chairman, as does **Liz Connors** as Treasurer & Company Secretary. **Martin Danks** was appointed Vice Chairman and **Tony Austin-Bailey**, formerly Minutes Secretary, was appointed Minutes & Admin Secretary.

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HANDYMAN REQUIRED

Do you live in or near Gloucester? Are you handy around the house, confident in fixing that dripping tap or replacing a cistern washer; able to fix a shelf bracket to the wall without drilling through the nearest pipe or cable (or needing to redecorate afterwards!)?

We are looking for a volunteer handyman (or *handylady!*) for ^{THE} WHARF HOUSE who would be prepared to undertake minor 'running repairs', sometimes at short notice, to enable us to maintain high standards throughout the building. (The cost of materials/fittings used would be reimbursed).

Please contact David Penny at ^{THE} WHARF HOUSE (01452 332 900) to discuss – you will be made very welcome as a vital part of the team.

LOGS for SALE

We have a number of sites where we have logs, mainly ash and hawthorn, available.

All proceeds support the Canal Restoration.

For more information please call David Penny at
The Wharf House 01452 332 900.

Your
HELP
please!

Ride-on Mowers needed please?



Our present mower at Over, (photo taken a few years ago). It is a crucial piece of equipment to keep the grass neat around the Basin, along the riverside and across the flood plain – it gets heavily used.

You will have read on page 17 Brian Fox's plea for a ride-on mower for the Oxenhall site. At Over too, the volunteers are looking for another ride-on mower. The present one has been giving good service for a number of years, but the terrain is heavy going in places. It is becoming difficult to maintain this machine and keep things looking neat and trim around the large site. It is regularly breaking down and although the volunteer mechanics can fix most things, it puts it out of action at this crucial time of year. So the pressure for us to obtain a newer ride-on mower for Over, and one for Oxenhall, is growing by the week. If anyone out there just happens to have one they aren't using, it would be very much appreciated if you could give Ted Beagles or Brian Fox a call. Numbers are on the inside back cover.

➡ MJ

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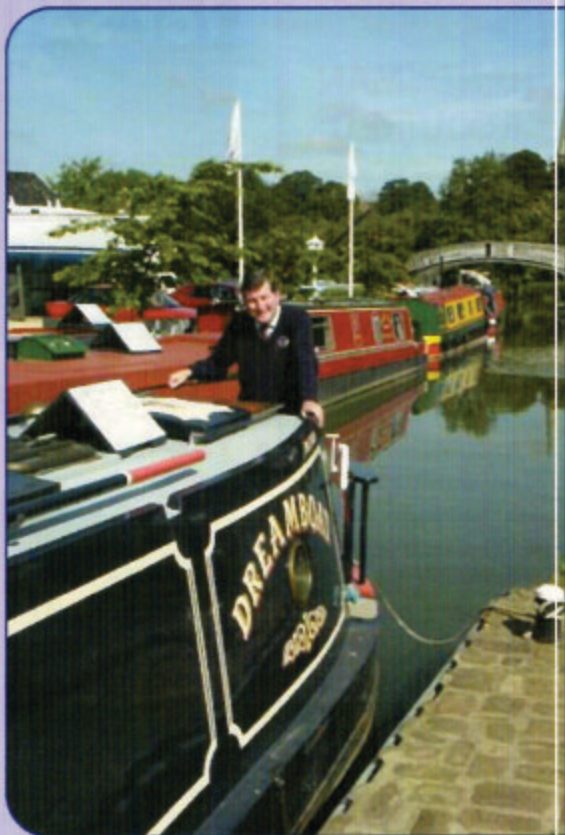
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Want to help?

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.

Contacts

Contact any of these names TODAY!

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The Wharfinger

The Herefordshire & 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.



= restoration sites suitable for public access.

