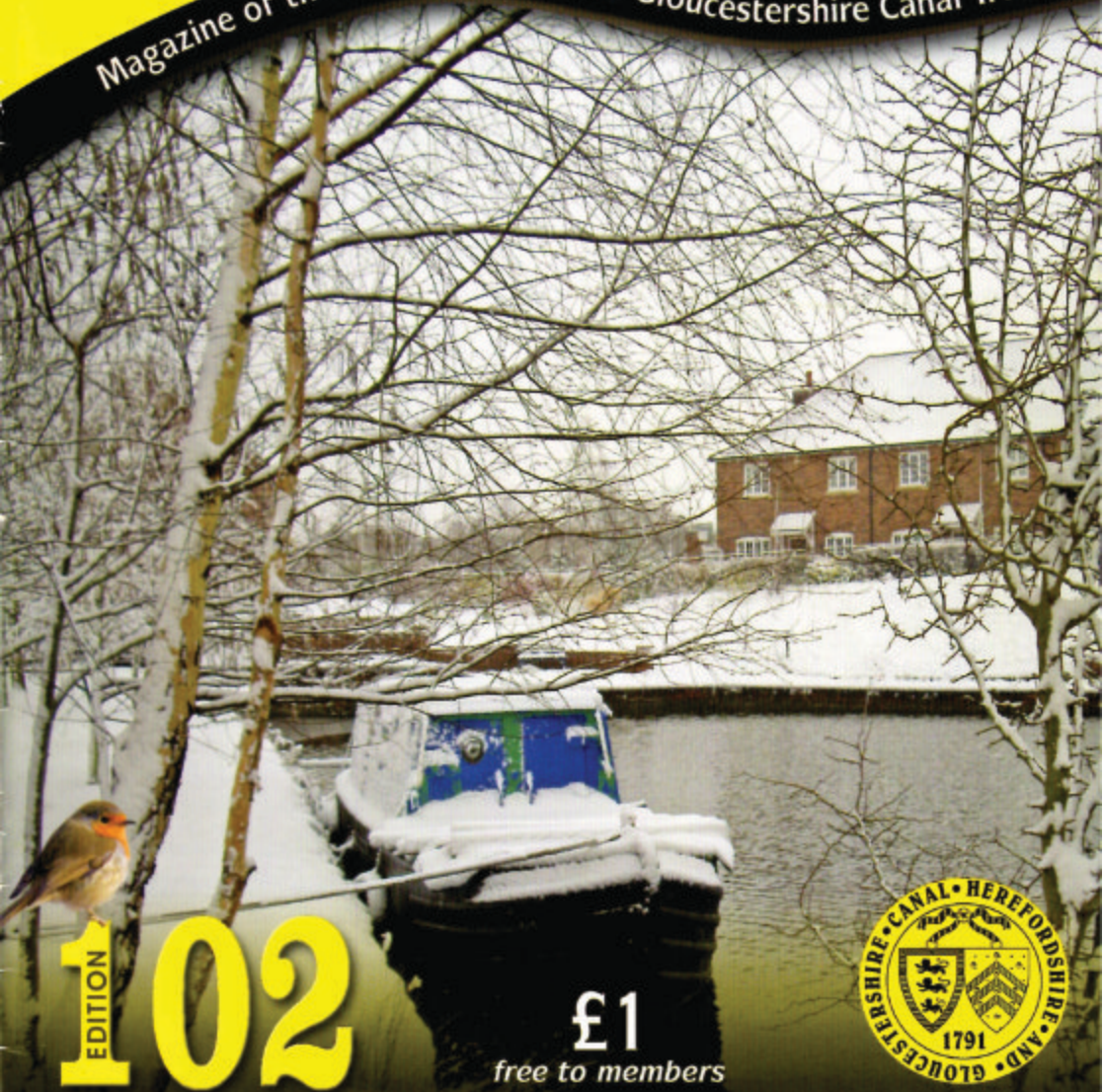


The

Wharfinger

Winter 2009-10

Magazine of the Herefordshire and Gloucestershire Canal Trust



EDITION
102

£1

free to members



WORKING TOGETHER IN THE PRESENT TO REVIVE THE PAST AND SECURE A BETTER FUTURE®

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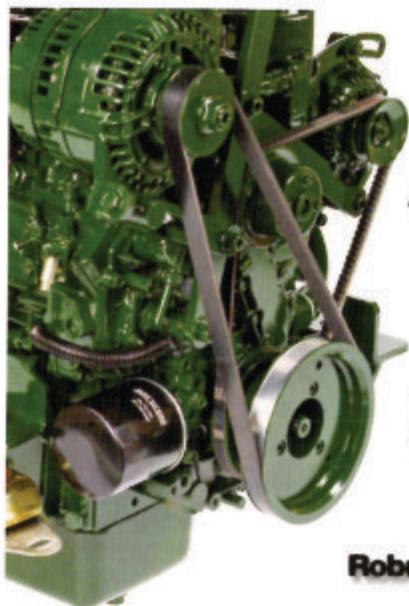
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Front Cover: Alder in the snow at Over Basin
by Barrie Haysman



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Chairman's Column from Janet Moul



By the time that this reaches you we shall be in the run up to Christmas and looking forward to 2010.

2009 has been a tough year for many – but the H&G CT's volunteers have achieved a number of successes, including the recent Planning Appeal decision on the future of the redevelopment of Holmer Trading Estate in Hereford – with the restoration of the H&G Canal forming a key part of the Inspector's decision for it to go ahead (*read more about this on page 4*). At the adjacent Aylestone Park our new slipway is almost complete, and progress at Oxenhall, Over and Llanthony continues – as does the near constant expansion and improvement of our new website. The Grand Holiday Draw raised £2,750 (beating last years record-breaking total). THE WHARF HOUSE continues to trade quite well compared to the significant downturn being experienced by the majority of other venues. H&G CT Members have stayed loyal to us (thank you) and we are still attracting new Members.

I must thank 2 Members who are relinquishing their posts. Lucien Perring has looked after the photo archives and press cuttings and has had to contend with the challenges presented by digital photography (*see p. 7*). Heather Worth will be getting her spare room back as she gives up the stock control and mail order sales for the Trading Company as from the end of February. I shall then look after that with the help of daughter Beki.

The Trading Company has been looking at its "vision for the future". Although we try and raise as much money as possible at the events we attend it is just as important to be seen and to raise our profile both locally and nationally. Regrettably this year we have been unable to attend all of the events that we had planned due to lack of volunteers to ensure adequate manning. Next year members of the committee will each take over the organisation of attendances at specific events. I will still organise the stand for the Crick and National Shows and then step down from the Trading Company in 2011.

My thanks to Steve Bence, a Member and long-standing H&G CT volunteer (despite living over 60 miles from the nearest point on our Canal) for once again devising, organising and printing another canal quiz for us – *see page 21*.

We are looking forward to 2010; I hope that there will be yet more exciting news from various sites along the H&G Canal. *Wishing you all a very happy and healthy Christmas and a prosperous New Year.*

♦ Janet Moul, Chairman



Working together ...



*As regular readers will know our approach to virtually everything that we do is based on our motto **"Working together in the present to revive the past and secure a better future"**. One example of this is that we have always sought to work with landowners and developers who are seeking to develop land that involves the line of the Canal (or lies close to it).*

Very recently the benefits of **working together** really have been proven and produced an unexpected bonus for local landowners (and the potential developer of their land). In this particular instance the developer was aware of our past successes and therefore sought the landowner's agreement to get the H&G CT involved from a very early stage. *When they did little did they know that, some 4 years later, this would result in a possible report heading:-*

Canal Restoration Wins Planning Appeal for Trading Estate

In the summer of 2007 (p.6, edition 92) we reported that a Planning Application had been submitted to Herefordshire Council for the redevelopment of the Holmer Trading Estate, Hereford. 115 new homes would be included in the new proposals, together with a small convenience store, in addition to considerable employment and retail floor space. Also, as part of the re-development of the site, the developer undertook to:-

- Excavate the infilled Canal cutting and restore of ¼ mile of the H&G Canal to an agreed specification from the boundary of

Aylestone Park right up to Aylestone Tunnel (including appropriate disposal of contaminated material). This would cost £1.2 million at 2008 prices.

- Transfer the freehold of the Canal and associated Operational Land (and Aylestone Tunnel) to the H&G Canal Trust.
- Ensure through appropriate Covenants and Land Charges that *all* the residential properties and the commercial units pay an annual lump sum in perpetuity (index linked to adjust for inflation) towards the maintenance and management of the H&G Canal in the City.

Prior to the submission of the Planning Application there had been 18 months of confidential negotiations between the developer and landowners with the H&G CT. Following submission of the Application negotiations between the developer, the Canal Trust and Herefordshire Council Officers continued for a further 15 months. However, in September 2008, the Planning Committee voted (by a very small margin) to refuse to grant permission.

An Appeal was registered and David Penny presented formal evidence on behalf of the H&G CT to the Appeal Hearing in June of this year. He told the Inspector that we fully supported the proposals *provided key issues relating to the Canal were covered in a legally binding Planning Obligation – to be signed by the Developer, the H&G Canal Trust and Herefordshire Council.*

Whilst the Planning Obligation had been drafted it had not been finalised and signed. The Inspector gave the parties 7 days after

the close of the Hearing in which to achieve this - by much midnight oil burning and co-operation the deadline was (just!) met. *However, this did not mean that the Inspector was going to approve the proposals - there had been exceedingly strong representations made against the development at the Hearing.*

In his decision letter the Inspector said "... the likely benefits associated with the re-opening of the Canal would be substantial. It seems to me that this is an important section of the Canal in terms of achieving the Unitary Development Plans long-term restoration aims." ... "Restoration of the length of Canal indicated in the Obligation would add substantially to the significance of the Canal as a feature within the City. In my judgement, the benefit of the scheme to the restoration of the Canal is sufficient to tip the balance in favour of allowing the Appeal..."

This means that the proposals have been granted Outline Planning Permission by the Inspector. In doing so he stressed that the proposals *were* in conflict with the Unitary Development Plan in that there would be a loss of some employment land. **However, as he very clearly stated, the proposed restoration of the H&G Canal was the sole issue that persuaded him, on balance, to grant the Appeal.** Had it not been for the case made by the H&G Canal Trust regarding the ultimate benefits that restoration of the Canal will bring (in terms of both public amenity and to the local economy) - and the evidence presented to show the developers' intentions to facilitate this -

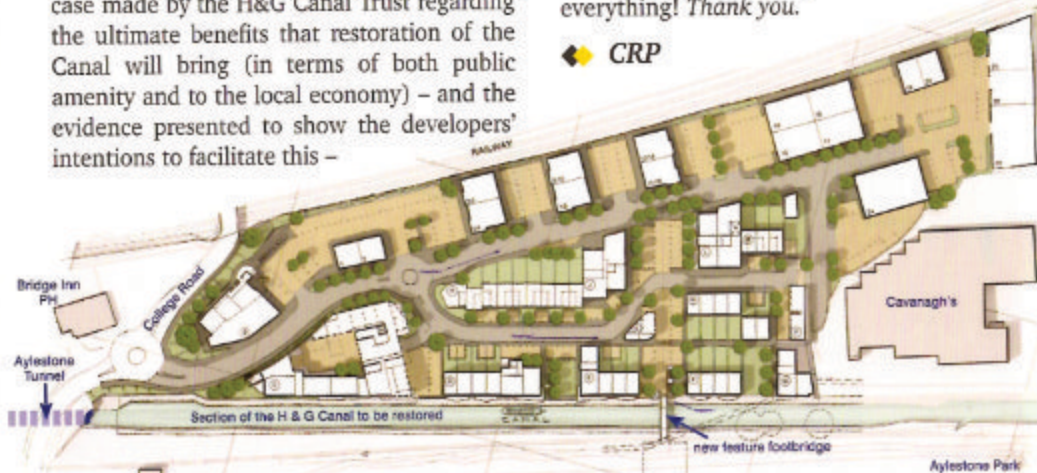
it is clear that the Appeal would have been lost. Within Town Planning circles nationally there is much ongoing debate about the merits of Planning Obligations and what should reasonably be included within them. In his decision letter the Inspector said "The s106 contributions [the Planning Obligations - which cover the Canal and other issues] ... would be necessary and reasonable to enable the appeal scheme to go ahead ...".

However, in the current economic climate the re-development of the estate is unlikely to proceed in the immediate future.

Your
HELP
please!

Do you live in a parish or town through which the Canal runs - are you aware of any development proposals or any other matters that might, in any way, affect the H&G Canal now or in the future? By **working together** with us - *be our eyes and ears in your locality* - we can work to ensure that the H&G Canal is not overlooked in your area. Wally Thrush, David Penny or the Chairman (*contact details are inside the back cover*) would appreciate any such information - your Council of Management, and other Committee Members, cannot be expected to be aware of everything! *Thank you.*

◆ CRP



Plan and image: Stride Treglown Limited

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Photo Archivist/ Press Cuttings



Following the retirement of Lucien Perring (*see Chairman's Column*) we need to fill this important voluntary role within the H&G CT. As interest in the H&G Canal has grown, more historical details have emerged and digital photography has become the norm. We are therefore considering splitting the post between a number of volunteers on the following basis:-

- 1 Press cuttings/scrapbooks - this would suit someone who enjoys being methodical but is not (necessarily) "into" computers.
- 2 Photographic prints/copies of Members' research - again a computer is not essential although indexing could be computerised. All original historical material goes to the Records Office for safe keeping in controlled conditions.
- 3 Digital photos - Colin Dymott has volunteered to collect and catalogue all digital photos. NOTE: Please contact Colin (*see Contacts - inside back cover*) before sending digital photos as we shall be working to the guidelines/standards used by the National Waterways Archive. Further details will be in a future edition of **The Wharfinger**.

Do we have any librarians, archivists or other volunteers who are willing to help with this important role with time on their hands? Janet Moulton will be pleased to discuss this with you. ◆ JM



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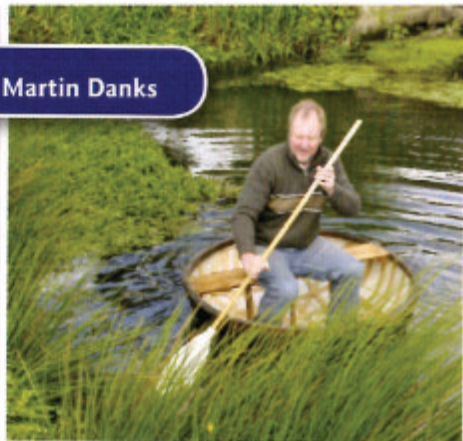
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New Slipway

Following work removing contaminated silt from the Canal at Aylestone Park in 2007 we were left with 300 yards of the Canal that, once we have done a bit more work on it, will be ready for use - but with no means for boats to enter the water. With an access road for vehicles, and a large car park within 10m of the Canal, it seemed the ideal place to build a slipway that would ultimately serve the whole of the Canal in this area.



Will Edwards, from the Hereford Voluntary Youth Service, brought his coracle to the almost restored section of Canal at Aylestone Park to help with our grant application and publicity.

The Planning

A project plan was submitted to the Council of Management, together with a budget, suggesting the use of a standard Inland Waterways Association slipway design and that we apply for Waterway Recovery Group work camps to build it. Having the support of CoM and then The Aylestone Park Association the project was submitted to WRG in the autumn of 2008, at the Annual Reunion, where the final camps programme was announced. This resulted in us being offered two weeks of camps during this summer.

Behind the scenes, following a survey by local volunteers, the design was adapted to suit the site. It was suggested that the slipway enter the water at an angle to the line of the Canal to allow boats up to 35ft in length to enter the water. This would permit the use by trail boats of all types should a trail boat festival be envisaged in the future.

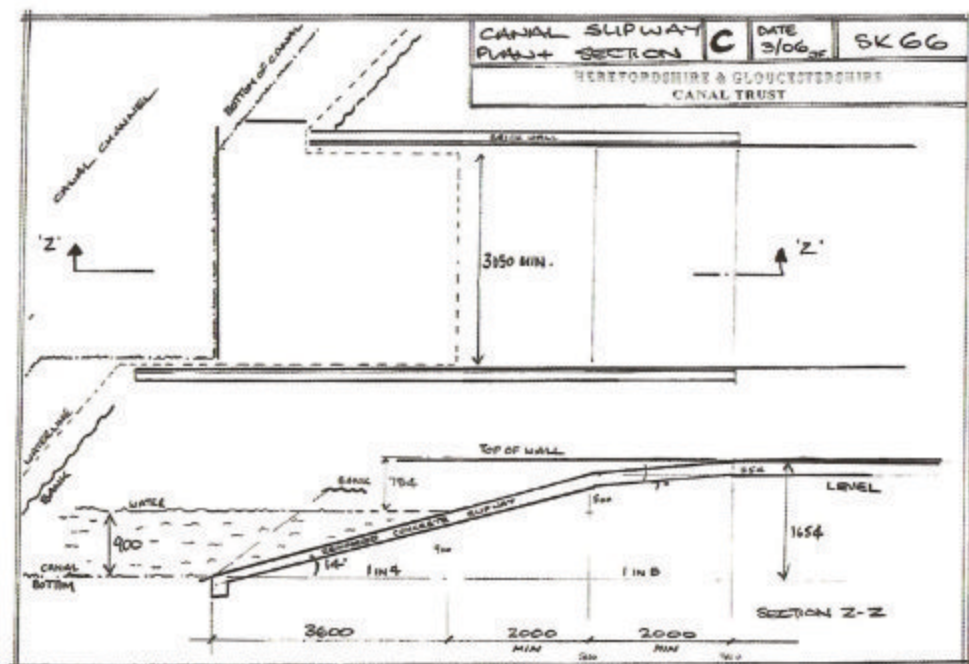
There were slight "inconveniences" of an underground high pressure gas pipeline and electricity (both over and underground). Plans were sent to these utility companies and their engineers came on site visits, the correct procedures were followed, and the services were successfully and safely worked around.

WRG holds a Leaders Training Weekend

each spring and this was duly attended with the opportunity of meeting the camps' leaders and I volunteered to be the assistant leader for the second week. Yarkhill Village Hall was booked for accommodation and visited by the leaders on their site visit to make sure the facilities were sufficient as a home for 18 volunteers for 2 weeks. The lack of showers meant we asked Hereford Leisure Centre if, after muddy days on site, we could use their facilities – which was agreed; and they waived their charge, so thank you, Hereford Leisure Centre.

The Presentation

The project costs were broken down into materials, fuel, volunteer costs and plant hire. While the costs had been estimated and approved, the project lent itself to grant funding so an application was made to the Hereford City Council "small grant fund" for £3,000 and a presentation was prepared for this "waterborne activity access facility"! Something visual was needed to show one of the future uses of a slipway. So I persuaded Will Edwards (from the Hereford Voluntary Youth Service) to bring his coracle to the Canal and asked Robin Smithett to photograph the occasion. So we gingerly launched the coracle from the muddy bank and narrowly avoided a ducking. *The slipway would make this much*



easier! The pictures were great and, with the help of Becca Moulton, a 'Powerpoint' presentation was prepared for when Janet and I spoke for our allotted 10 minutes to Hereford City Councillors. They seemed to like the project and, following the submission of more financial information, we were awarded the grant – thank you, Hereford City Council.

In the meantime, the designs were being worked up into flow charts, method statements and risk assessments. Lists of materials were toted around builders merchants for the best prices, and surplus timber and fencing were procured from local building sites (to save them having to take them away..!) ➡

Extreme surveying!



Work commences.





Foundations poured ...



... and onto the bricklaying.

The Work Camps

July arrived to find both camps fully booked and complete with leaders, assistants and cooks. Week 2 had local volunteer Stella Hurdidge and her sister cooking for the camp, travelling from Weobley every day. *Your pies and sherry trifle will be forever remembered, thank you Stella.*

The scope of the work was extended to include a 200m path alongside the canal and the installation of 4 picnic tables on the park. This gave the volunteers the opportunity to try a variety of jobs as we could not fit everyone into the slipway itself! Sterling work on the slipway walls was carried out by 'master bricklayer' and leader Martin Thompson, John Hawkins, Frank and other old and new hands.

We had slight setbacks with the weather, plant challenges and a bypass pipe in the middle of the works but these were all overcome – but this did result in a delay to the completion of the actual slipway project. The path and picnic benches were completed and there were cheers on the last day as a newly installed bench was seen to be used by the public for the first time.

An important part of a canal camp is the evening activities – most volunteers are using their summer holiday to attend a camp. We visited the Canal at Yarkhill with a guided tour by Chris, a visit to Over Basin and a trip on Alder, thank you Caroline. And of course the usual visits to the pub and ten-pin bowling!

A big thank you to everyone who supported

The paths team!



A bed for the night!



Photos: Charlie Forbes WRG



Grading the slope.



Coping stones are laid.

the planning and execution of this project. Following the two week long work camps, two WRG weekends were spent finishing the slipway walls with blue coping bricks which

look very fetching in the canal-side setting. Further weekends are planned to complete the project as well as the Wednesday volunteer day at Aylestone Park.

◆ MD

GRAND HOLIDAY DRAW 2009 – Winners

The Grand Holiday Draw 2009 *broke last year's record breaking total* and raised exactly £2,750; once again our sincere thanks to everyone who bought and sold tickets. As always our particular thanks to those who donated the prizes – **Black Prince Holidays**, **Mrs Wood** and **THE WHARF HOUSE**. As the cost of printing the tickets was sponsored by **Bulmers** every single pound raised has gone straight into H&G Canal Trust Funds – *thank you everyone!*

The winning tickets were drawn on 31st



Photo: Janet Mould

Martin Ludgate, Deputy Editor of Canal Boat magazine, draws the winning tickets whilst Des Pick looks on.

August at the National Waterways Festival and Boat Show at Ratcliffe-on-Soar by Martin Ludgate, the Deputy Editor of Canal Boat magazine.

1ST

ticket no 5065

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

Tony Wallace, Gloucester.

2ND

ticket no 1347

One week self-catering holiday for four at private bungalow in quiet Herefordshire village *donated by Mrs A Wood*.

Paul Henshaw, Tewkesbury.

3RD

ticket no 2285

Two Nights Dinner, B&B for two at **THE WHARF HOUSE**.

Sally Taylor, Ledbury.

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

Open Day Report

Visitors to the Open Day were blessed with fine weather and were more numerous than ever before. The overflow car park in Mr. Freeman's field was well used (thanks Nigel) and the ladies on the refreshment team sold out of rolls and cakes just before the end of the day – so it was well worth the effort. A tombola stall proved very popular with all prizes donated by generous Members.

The canal itself was looking very tidy after several weeks of grass cutting, and strimming of the heavier stuff, and the short walk from the car park down to the aqueduct was busy all day. The Oxenhall volunteers were on hand to show people around and answer numerous questions. The aqueduct proved a popular stopping point and a platform had been built on the bank of the Ell Brook to enable visitors to get a better view of the stonework involved in the reconstruction. The brick arch and the stone of the spandrel walls contrasted with the

blue stones finishing off the parapet and in the middle of it all a stone proudly displaying the finishing date (2008 – although it was really just into 2009!). The underside of the arch, which is not visible unless you get down into the water, has also been restored where large holes had been eroded in the stonework over the years. There are still minor works to be done underneath but that has been put on hold for the moment while we get on with more pressing jobs.

Our Trusty Tractor

Our trusty tractor was looking at its best for the Open Day with David and Elizabeth putting the final touches to the repainting just the week before. A bit of research had revealed that the H&G CT purchased the tractor, a Massey Ferguson MF20, in 1992 (it was already about 17 years old then). This means that we no longer pay tax on it as it is more than 30 years old although it doesn't get driven on public roads very much anyway. It has been to Monkhide before although it took almost an hour to do the journey with a maximum speed of 12 mph. *I'm now looking for someone to do a bit of fancy sign-writing on the side advertising the H & G Canal Trust, please!*

The underside of the arch on Ell Brook Aqueduct had large holes where it had eroded over the years.

The holes in the stonework have been repaired.





Our trusty tractor transports stone from the yard to the gabion wall next to the lock.

Now that we have use of the tractor again its first job is transportation of stone from our yard up to the gabion wall which has been under construction next to the Lock Cottage. The wire baskets are not that big but it takes an awful lot of stones to fill them up and wheeling them up the towpath from the compound was not an option. The visible face of the baskets has been filled with neatly stacked bricks but the remainder at the back uses up much of the rough stone and rubble accumulated when we demolished the failing aqueduct walls before our massive rebuilding commenced. The top of the baskets is filled with smaller stones and then a permeable membrane is laid on that before a final layer of soil which has been grass seeded. By this time next year it should begin to blend in with the surroundings as the grass grows.

The Spill Weir

Work has commenced on the brick spill weir which takes the surplus water through the culvert under the Cottage and returns it back to the canal at the lower level. The water has been lowered and has not topped the weir for several months while we have been building the gabion wall. Much of the mortar jointing between the bricks has disappeared over the years and there is now a prolific growth of weeds coming through the joints. This job could well take us several months as there are hundreds of bricks to remove, clean and then replace. It will be satisfying to see the progress, and the finished job! *Why not join us at Oxenhall on a Tuesday – please telephone me to discuss on 01432 358628 – you will be made very welcome.*

♦♦ **BF**



Work continues on the gabion wall.

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Each August Bank Holiday the **Inland Waterways Association** organise the **IWA National Waterways Festival** and Boat Show at a location somewhere in the inland waterways system to promote all aspects of the inland waterways to a wide audience. The H&G CT have always regarded this as an essential event to promote the restoration of the H&G Canal and to showcase our progress – regardless of the location. The logistics of transporting our display etc and then setting up (and down!) and ‘manning’ the three day event at locations that, in recent years, have been remote from this part of the country is a daunting task for Janet Moulton and team. **Tony Austin-Bailey** was part of this year’s team so it was off to Nottinghamshire for him ...



August Bank Holiday Monday 2009, 6.30 am. I leave my son’s house at Measham and head for the M1 and Ratcliffe-on-Soar. For the first time in several years I am off to the National.

As I drive I am remembering other such occasions. Hawkesbury in 1984 (as a visitor and at that stage not yet hooked on canal restoration) and again in 1987 as a Member of the very young HGCS; Castlefield, Manchester the following year, braving the rain where our ‘stand’ was a small caravan and a large plastic sheet; 1989, loading the van and driving with Ian Reid to Waltham Abbey on the River Lee; Gloucester Docks in 1990 and Windmill End the following year; Chester 1995 (cycle to MacDonalds for breakfast before the rest of the team are up!), back to Manchester, at Salford Quays, in 1998, but – to my shame – nothing since ... until this year.

Arriving at Ratcliffe, I park and am allowed onto the site at the ridiculous time of 7.00am. I find the stand – it’s still closed up and only security people are in sight. Strolling around the site I see again



the variety of stands which, for me, has always characterised the National. I walk across the damp grass and am amazed at the size of the display arena – which makes for a lot of walking to get from one end of the site to the other.

9am approaches and signs of life begin to appear. I unzip the stand (that stalwart volunteers had set up the night before) and shortly afterwards I am joined by Janet, Becca, Barbara and Ray, Steve, Des and Mike. As I look inside I am surprised; where are all the goods for sale which characterised the earlier years – the fluffy toys, the tee shirts and sweaters? However, as I look more closely, I see a new approach which Janet confirms. The National is no longer seen by the H&G CT as a major sales event (apart from the highly successful final push to sell the last of the draw tickets!) but rather as an opportunity for promotion and publicity.

Around the marquee new, bright, Maggie Jones' glossy and extremely professional displays have been mounted to illustrate the efforts of a hard-working, dedicated bunch of people who are doing the actual work of restoration. The number of our active sites is impressive, as is the number of volunteers. The site displays have been arranged in a logical sequence, from Hereford to Gloucester,



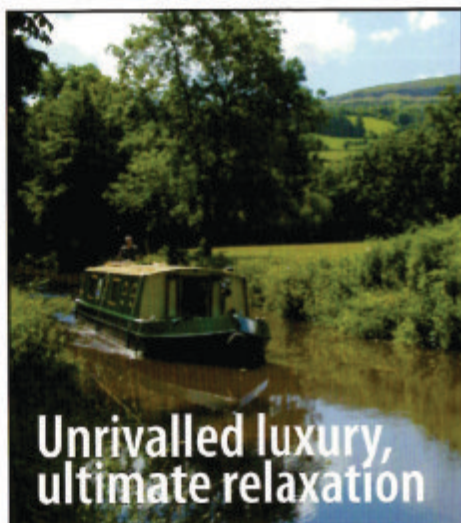
Photos: Janet Meall and Margaret Holmes



Top: The show ground spreads out below the gigantic cooling towers at Ratcliffe-on-Soar.

Middle: Some of the displays showing the work done by the H&G CT.

Bottom: Volunteers gather round to watch Martin Ludgate draw the winning tickets.



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www.beaconparkboats.com

enabling those of us talking to the public to give a progressive account of the work to date and in progress, and to indicate the next stages.

But, back to this year. Not unusually, the weather was overcast, the sun was rarely seen, and it felt odd to be overshadowed by the vast cooling towers of Ratcliffe power station. Nor was our location particularly favourable. Because of the size of the display arena, it was a long way to our area from the entrance; there were many attractions en route to us so our stand, and those near us, did not receive the number of visitors that I am told we would normally expect at this event. However, for my part it was good to feel involved again, and once again to be able to talk about us and what we are achieving. *Hey Ho! I am assured we will have better luck with both the weather and the marquee location at Beale Park, Reading, next year. Why not join the team – you will be made very welcome!*

◀ TA-B



Above: Some of the 200 visitors who made their way across the fields to the canal on the Open Day in August.

*The Team busied themselves tidying up the site in preparation for our August Open Day. The Open Day was very successful with over 200 visitors being taken on guided walks around the site whilst the Village Hall contingent plied even more visitors with tea and cake, raffle tickets and items from the various sales stalls. The event raised over £500 – and attracted a number of new Members – **well done everybody!***

Our excavator, Sam, was used to continue levelling the wild side and was finally extracted over a new simple sleeper bridge constructed across the spill weir adjacent to the lock dam. Sam was then immediately employed to extend the hand excavation implemented to investigate a leak through

Above: Sam, the excavator, cleared the bank to the bend ...

Below: ... emerges from the wild side ...

Below right: and helps with the leak investigation.





Above: Skimmed and trimmed banks.

Above right: Barrs Lock site has been tidied and fenced.

the canal bed and into the culvert that runs under the canal. Further investigation, using a camcorder, suggests the need for some major works but further checks are to be made prior to making any decision.

The team has not been idle, it is not all done by machine! Ground clearance, hedge cutting, mowing, strimming and racking all continued at a pace. The end of the bird nesting season enabled selective tree felling to commence along with brush removal and logging up; the brush being cleared to the lock dam and the logs to site hut storage. The access field (courtesy of Mr. Mess) has been cleared of brush and the Manor field cleared of all logs and tidied. Wood sales are also increasing and providing much needed income.

The harvest is now in which enabled us to burn the material accumulated over the summer at the lock dam. Along with the

erection of a post and rail fence around the lock this has returned this area to a tidy state. September saw the delivery of a brand new ride-on mower donated by a well wisher who wishes to remain anonymous. What can I say other than – “Thank you very, very much!”

Another hurdle has been overcome. The dry weather and lack of water in the canal enabled Sam to be deployed at vegetation removal and bed skimming. The canal bed is now clear of vegetation from the sandbag dam at 630 yards back to 100 yards and the towpath bank is in the process of being strimmed. All in all it is starting to look like a canal and not a green-way!

If you wish to join in our days at Yarkhill then please give me a ring on 01568 615575. You will be made very welcome.

◆ CH

The canal bed has been cleared.



The dam by the site hut is now visible.



LLANTHONY LOCK

By Paul Henshaw



Wilf clearing the mound of rubbish.



Compacting the hard core.



Is this a corn dolly?



The car park taking shape ...

During the summer a 4 day working weekend was arranged to clear an area for a small car park. The undergrowth was cleared and, with the aid of an excavator, a mound of rubbish which had been dumped over the years was removed and the site levelled. A layer of Terram was laid on which hard core was compacted before applying a final top dressing of scalplings. The result is a great improvement and our neighbours are appreciative of our efforts in tidying up this corner of the site.

The outside toilet is now completed and very fine it looks too! Thank you Simon. In addition, the guttering on the cottages has been replaced. Much of June through to September saw the usual round of strimming to keep back the undergrowth.

'Petrolheads' versus 'Corn Dollies'

We have some volunteers who like kit with engines on them and there are those volunteers who prefer to work with hand tools. Both are very effective. At one of our coffee breaks there was an in-depth discussion whether there was a suitable collective noun for those who liked to do things manually. Alan McBride came up with the phrase "Corn Dollies" However, we would welcome any other suggestions. There will be a prize for the best offering – possibly a carefully potted up root of Japanese Knotweed!



... and in use!



Simon's loo



Replacing the guttering.

Photos: Alan McBride

Your
HELP
please!

We are always on the lookout for hand-tools – such as shovels, spades, forks, rakes and loppers. If you have any such items that you can donate, we would very much appreciate them and put them to good use. Please contact me on 01684 292 997 – thank you. ◆ PH

"I remember coming to Llanthony Lock to visit my grandfather when I was a little girl of 3" reminisced Mrs Chris Fletcher when she visited Llanthony Lock at the recent Triple Open Day. Her grandfather, Henry James Presdee, worked for the Severn Commissioners for 46 years from 1910 to October 1956. He and his family lived at Llanthony Lock for most of his working life until he retired in 1956. In the next edition of *The Wharfinger* we will be telling more of the story of his life thanks to Mrs Fletcher sharing her family archives with us.

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The third Tuesday of every month (except December), 7.30 for 8pm start.



The Royal Oak, Much Marcle

JANUARY 19TH

Gloucester's Dockside Community

Hugh Conway-Jones

A new talk by our local historian.

FEBRUARY 16TH

Barges, barley and bark

Heather Hurley

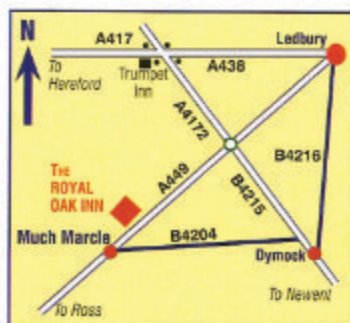
We go to our other county to learn about river navigation on the Wye from Hereford to Ross

MARCH 17TH

Lydney's Lost Fleet

Paul Barnett

Following Paul's talk last year on the Purton hulks we cross the Severn to hear of Lydney's lost fleet.



OUR SEPTEMBER MEETING

BATS by Rebecca Collins

A very interesting talk and slide show was given by Rebecca, from the Bat Conservation Trust. There is much to learn and understand about the life and habits of these fascinating creatures. They often live in close proximity to humans and use our gardens as an important source of food. Rebecca brought along some specimens and we were able to see just how tiny and intricate they are. The evening was made complete for those who, after the meeting, were able to track down some pipistrelles flying round the car park!

OUR OCTOBER MEETING

H&GCT'S Heritage Fleet

by Caroline Jones

A very informative talk was given by Caroline about the history and how we obtained our small historic fleet to date. She explained the way in which the boats had been refitted through time to suit their changing roles on the waterways. Sometimes this entailed cutting boats in two and making them shorter, or longer, depending on their purpose. In the second half Caroline gave a very witty slide show of her family's adventures whilst bringing *Renton* from Marsworth to her new home in the Docks.

↔ MJ

Something to help pass those long winter evenings?

A few years ago we ran a highly successful competition in which one of our long-standing Members, Steve Bence, set you a series of cryptic (and, we were told, infuriating) clues to the names of British canal tunnels. After much persuasion, our devious quiz-inquisitor has come up with a new test of your canal knowledge. Members* will find this little challenge included as an insert with this issue of **The Wharfinger**.

It costs as little as £2.00 to enter, all proceeds will go to the H&G CT's Restoration Fund and there's a tasty prize for the brainiac who achieves the highest tally of correct answers. In the case of a tie, our Chairman, will draw the winners name from a rabbit! So why not settle down in front of the fire with a bold heart, possibly a glass of inspiration, a few reference books and try once more to beat "Der Meister"!



* Non-Members may obtain a copy from Steve Bence, 35 Lime Road, SOUTHAM, CV47 1EQ (01926 817 026).

Yarkhill Winter Canal Walk



Friday, January 1st, 2010, 11am

Kymin to River Lodon and return

Prompt start from Kymin GR. 587 450

Ample parking at Kymin.

See website for directions:

www.h-g-canal.org.uk

£2.50 per adult, children under 16 free.

Pay on the day in aid of Trust funds.

For doubtful weather walk information, visit our website or listen to Hereford and Worcester Radio announcements.

The walk is approximately 5 miles, is generally on the flat and is expected to take 3 to 4 hours. This allows for a break for food and hot drink, which you are strongly advised to bring with you.

See you there!

Guided Walk

The wearing of walking boots is advised, else stout shoes.

Enquiries to Chris High 01568 615575.



Healthy tree in 2002 ...



... Spring 2009



... Summer 2009



... now in 2009

The horse chestnut tree (situated behind the retaining wall on which the commemorative plaques are fixed) that we took so much time and trouble to protect during the reconstruction of the Canal Basin has become a victim of a disease that is spreading and affecting such trees through parts of the country. After researching the options two of our trained chainsaw volunteers, Bernard and Ted, have expertly cut down the tree and, in order to minimise the risk of spreading the disease, they have cut it into manageable pieces ready for burning in situ. Plans are in hand to plant a number of additional trees at Over.

Our volunteers have continued their hard work maintaining the gardens, cutting the grass and tidying the hedges around the bottom of the site. The spraying of weeds around the walk areas of the site has also continued. Between the slipway and the dam we have been unhappy with the towpath levels and finish. Work has commenced on improvements to the towpath and the adjacent picnic area has been stripped of turf and top soil so the levels can be improved. This area is therefore looking a lot worse than usual – please bear with us – it will be well worth it in the end.

Mechanical Challenges!

The mechanical team completed work on bringing Mr Maysey back into service ready for the Triple Open Day. A new wood guard rail was fixed to the stern, deck plating added, new engine mounts were fitted and the fuel tank and engine controls boxed out. A coat of paint to the superstructure and we were ready to go! All in all a great deal of effort but all was to no avail – on our first trip out onto the Basin with a full load of passengers the engine electronics system failed and she was towed back to her berth by a (very powerful) model tug – see page 26. Work on the Lister 6" pump has been started; it has been stripped down and various



One of the waxed oak cupboards in the staircase.

spares for the engine and vacuum pump have been identified and ordered. It is not going to be an easy job bringing it back into service and alternative arrangements have been put in place to top up water levels in the Basin.

The Wharf House Fit-out

THE WHARF HOUSE fit-out is once again gaining momentum and we have recently welcomed a number of new volunteers to join the team. Following the completion of work by the professional carpenters on the oak stairway and cupboard doors, volunteers have rubbed it all down and given the staircase and doors multiple coats of hard wax. Volunteers have also completed the rubbing down and varnishing of the Velux windows in the Stairwell and Staff Room. We have also fitted out a plumbing cupboard in the stairwell, built a step in the bottom stairwell cupboard and finished installing fire alarms in the cupboards ready for the expert commissioning of the complete fire alarm system.

In Bedroom 1, following the completion of the plumbing of the bath and shower, the bath panel has been finished and installed. Work has been completed to the floor of bedroom 2. In bedroom 4 bathroom, our volunteers have finished the plumbing of the shower, as well as adjustments to the wall and tiling, and started installing the shower frame and sliding doors. Services have been repositioned in the ceiling and it has been repainted.

Externally we have completed the final coat of paint on THE WHARF HOUSE balcony – just in time for winter!

◆ BH



The oak staircase is now finished.

IWA The Inland
Waterways
Association

Gloucestershire & Herefordshire IWA Branch

Gloucester Yacht Club,
7.30pm

Thursday, 3rd December 2009
Junction Heritage Project

Thursday, 7th January 2010
Gloucester Harbour
Trustees

To talk about the Pilots on the Severn
and the History of the Trustees and
all the fun and games that go with
the running of the Waterways.

For further details of any of the above:
Martin Turner 01291 50605

Triple Open Day!

at Over Basin



The Triple Open Day Over, Oxenhall and Llanthony restoration sites was blessed with fine weather, and got off to a busy start with car parks filling to capacity.

At Gloucester Docks, Caroline Jones was on hand with our tug boat, Renton. At Llanthony, Paul Henshaw showed visitors around our newest site. The guided walk proved very popular with Felicity, from Gloucester City Council, adding details of Alney Island as the walkers made their way to Llanthony Lock. Wally Thrush was on hand with a minibus to bring visitors back to Over.

Pat and Chris had their work cut out with a very busy car park. THE WHARF HOUSE staff served local beers, wines, juices and relishes. They also turned their talents to face painting.

On site, the homemade cakes and refreshments did a roaring trade. Thank you to Tony Peters and Nestlé for the ice creams. Wendy Henshaw ran another very good plant stall, Simon and Barrie ran a raffle and coconut shy. Paul Brown brought a very topical sustainability stand.

The Model Boaters, walking-stick makers and jewellery sellers and Vintage Car Clubs all came to support the day. All day Over buzzed with a steady stream of visitors – 7 new members for the Trust were recruited and 5 new volunteers, and nearly £1,000, came from the Open Day.

Thanks to all concerned including David H and the team for the valiant efforts on Mr Maysey, Liz B and David P for the advertising and backroom organisation.

Following the Open Day the residents, volunteers, staff and helpers enjoyed a barbeque laid on by THE WHARF HOUSE.

Many thanks to all those who made the Open Day a success – a great team effort!

◆ BH & MJ





Photos: Bonnie Hayman

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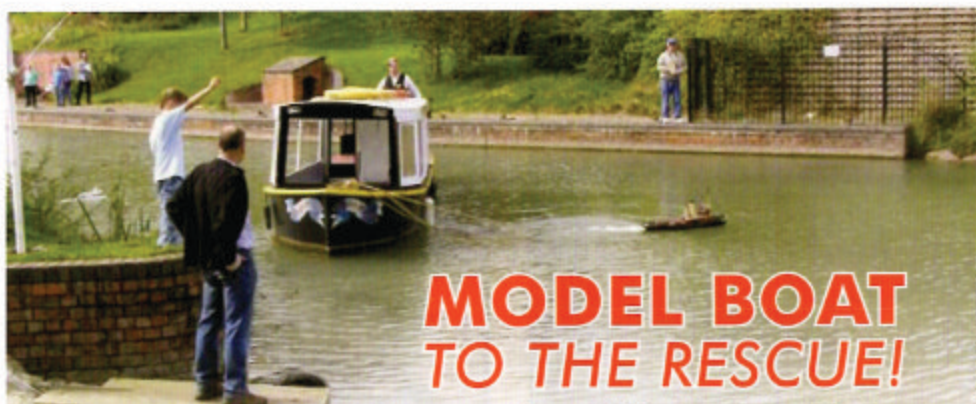


Photo: Ted Tedaldi

MODEL BOAT TO THE RESCUE!

Gloucester & District Model Boat Club Chairman Ted Tedaldi and his colleagues are regular visitors to our Over Canal Basin, at Gloucester, and Ted reports on their recent activities ...

The Gloucester & District Model Boat Club continues to make good use of the Over Basin. However, the weed growth has been quite considerable in the recent warm weather which combined with low water levels; a concentrated spell of weed cutting a few weeks ago produced mountains! There was a newspaper report that a certain pond weed was being treated and used as a medication for piles. *If only our weed was compatible!*

We had a good turnout on the Open Day in September. A model tug, owned by one of our members, was on hand to rescue the H&G CT's trip boat Mr Maysey when the engine failed. Passengers were landed on the Highnam wall then "Imara", a twin screw model tug, towed Mr Maysey back to her Over mooring. At no time was life or limb in danger!

The original steam tug "Imara" was built in

the early 20's to the Crown Colonies contract for Dar-es-Salaam to act as a harbour tug. Following a chequered career she was modified and in 1932 she entered the Royal Navy and was renamed "Perseverance". The model is one thirty second scale by Caldercraft, is twin screw, with twin motors each independently controlled. 1,400 parts and lots of paint!

On the Open Day the Club sailed various naval craft including a Perkasa with working torpedo's. The fishing fleet were also out, but with nil catch! At times we do see some quite large specimens (up to eighteen inches long).

The retired section, and those unable to work, normally sail on a Wednesday afternoon and 'bank banter' is always prevalent. A few buoys are thrown out to start some light hearted sailing, but soon the adrenaline starts to flow with many pit stops for fine tuning. As the tummy rumbles so it is time to make for home. Sailing is also very active on Friday afternoons, Saturdays and Sundays, so you can see we are frequent users of the Canal and are looking forward to the day when we can sail through to Hereford.



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RENTON TO THE RESCUE!

It's not just a Model Boat Club tug that has been rescuing stranded boats recently! H&G CT's former British Waterway's workboat Renton (see page 10 of our 100th edition) is moored at the National Waterways Museum in Gloucester Docks whilst Caroline Jones and other volunteers restore her. Little did we know that Renton would be brought into 'active service' quite so soon – Caroline takes up the story . . .

As you may know I work in the Waterways Archive in Gloucester Docks. On Wednesday September 30th, at around 3.30pm, I was sitting at my desk working away when I got a telephone call from the National Waterways Museum. "Have you got keys for Renton?" said the concerned voice. "Yes" says I, "but why do you ask?" I was then told that Queen Boadicea II, the larger of the Museum's trip boats had broken down in the Docks. They were offloading the schoolchildren passengers on to King Arthur, the other trip boat, and would I with Renton help with the recovery of Boadicea back to her mooring at the Museum?

As it happened I had my daughter Beth in the office; so I had trained crew! We went out to see that Boadicea was stranded across the Docks, near to the lock, and the Museum's tug Severn Progress was on its way over to her. As we were facing towards Sharpness we reversed across the Docks and pulled alongside Boadicea. As the crew put it, they had been executing their usual full circle turn in the main basin when there was a big bang and everything stopped! They suspected the gearbox but for now had no power whatsoever and had drifted onto the West Quay.

I was asked to use Renton to pull Boadicea, with Progress acting as brake and additional steerage at the stern - well the bows really as Boadicea was pointing the wrong way! Boadicea had drifted to a point about 20feet behind a large, expensive looking cruiser whose owner was understandably concerned that neither Renton nor Boadicea should touch his boat. This all added to the challenge! We safely got Boadicea's stern well away from the quayside, and the cruiser, and then pulled her across the basin to her usual mooring on the Museum quayside. I think it was probably the hardest that Renton's Lister HR2 engine has worked in a few years!

Over the years both the Museum, and volunteers from the Friends of the Museum, have assisted the H&G CT in various ways so it was good to play a significant role in the successful recovery of Boadicea. It was the gearbox that had failed, a replacement gearbox has been found and fitted and the damaged gearbox has gone to Warwickshire for a rebuild.

As a follow up to this event, Renton's services were requested again, this time to help Severn Progress bring a large dumb barge from the cement works, at two-Mile Bend on the Gloucester and Sharpness Canal, to the Docks for the annual Round Table fireworks display in November. The tugs were due to bring the barge up to the Docks the day prior to the event, leaving it on West Quay to be prepared for the fireworks, then on the day of the display both would manoeuvre the barge into the main basin to act as the base from where the fireworks are set off.



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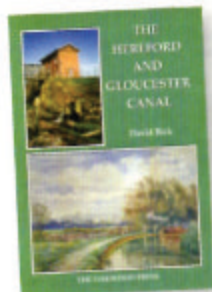
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Why not surprise your loved ones this year with a gift voucher for use at **THE WHARF HOUSE** Restaurant and Tea Rooms, offering the chance to sample sumptuous local food, created with flair and imagination, and wines from just down the road! Vouchers can be purchased in denominations from £5 – £20.



Books and many other Quality Gifts

Every Member and supporter should have a copy of David Bick's book *'The Hereford and Gloucester Canal'* – it makes an ideal Christmas present – as do our wide range of other books (not all of them are about canals!). Or why not give a high quality copy of a 1793 £100 H&G share certificate as issued by The Company of Proprietors of the Herefordshire and Gloucestershire Canal Navigation – available mounted and framed (or just as a print)?



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Why not come and see us soon – do your Christmas shopping in the Visitor Centre then join us for a meal – a far more relaxed way of working through your gift list!



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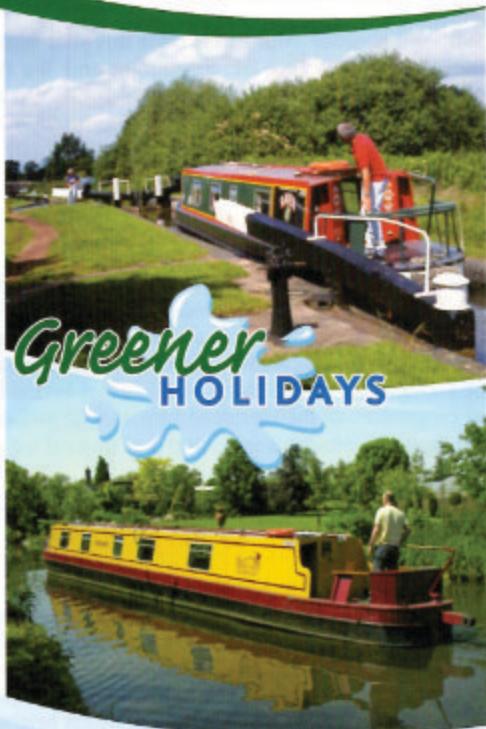
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narrow boats...

...wide horizons

News from the

W NATIONAL

M WATERWAYS

MUSEUM

at Gloucester



The National Waterways Museum in Gloucester Docks.

As many of our readers will be aware, even before the more recent worldwide financial uncertainty, very difficult times have prevailed for the Waterways Museums and, regrettably, the well supported campaign for government assistance to permit free entrance (as exists for so many other national museums) fell on very deaf ears. Undaunted, the Friends of the National Waterways Museum in Gloucester Docks have worked tirelessly to see how they might (continue to) help ensure the survival of this very important local waterways asset. *Hugh Conway-Jones reports...*



After two years of low visitor numbers at the Waterways Museum in Gloucester and talk of possible closure, the outlook is now brighter. Recognising that the Museum is needed to play a vital role in bringing visitors back to the Docks, a range of local authority and community organisations have joined a steering group to provide advice

and support to the Museum management. At the same time, volunteers are being recruited to assist with the day-to-day running of the Museum to help keep operating costs low. Volunteers may now be seen working at the Museum reception, in the administration office and providing site services, and more are in line for training.

These initiatives, aided by the opening of the nearby designer outlet centre, are bringing more people into the Museum than in recent years and are making it possible to keep the Museum open seven days a week (even during the quieter winter period). Recognising the partnership being developed with the local community, the word national will be dropped from the Museum's title and, when finance allows, the exhibits will be developed to feature more of the nature of our local waterways.

♦ HC-J



A recent boat gathering at Gloucester docks organised by the local IWA branch.

Inset: Children visiting the Museum in costume.

Photos: Martin Turner



The Diaries of Stephen Ballard

Researched and written by Caroline Jones

PART THREE

Stephen Ballard
(1804–1890)

Part one of this series (edition 100 of **The Wharfinger**, Summer 2009) introduced **The Ballard Collection**, held at Hereford Record Office, and explained how Caroline came to write this series for **The Wharfinger**. Part two took a look at Stephen Ballard's life based on his autobiographical notes whilst in this part Caroline starts to look at his life as recorded in his diaries – in this article between 1829 and 1837.

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.

As mentioned in Part two the diaries are written in Odells Shorthand, which dates from the 1830s; this was an improved

version of a type of shorthand first proposed in 1786. Modern shorthand dates from the publication of Timothy Bright's system of 'Characterie' in England in 1588, so that by the time Stephen Ballard was using Odells system the use of shorthand was well established and in common use. There is a surviving volume of Odells shorthand, from 1851, in Exeter Reference Library.

Fortunately for us Stephen's diaries were translated in the late 1970s and the translation is held alongside the diaries at Hereford Record Office, this translation was photocopied and a set of photocopies is what we have to work from.

The diaries begin in earnest in March 1836 with regular entries until April 1848 by when he was working on the Middle Level Drainage system in the Fens. There are however journal entries from before these dates and this time we begin with an 1829 entry.

A Canal Committee entry, dated 1st June 1829, states "the sum of £25 be given to Mr S.B. the clerk to enable him ... to see works ... & to obtain information which may be necessary for carrying on the works proposed by the General Assembly". So, as was mentioned in Part two, Stephen was paid by the Canal Company to go on a 'Grand Tour' of British civil engineering works! He was very impressed with the engineering he found being particularly taken with "an excellent pair of lock gates at Spon Lane" which he took care to sketch in one of his notebooks.

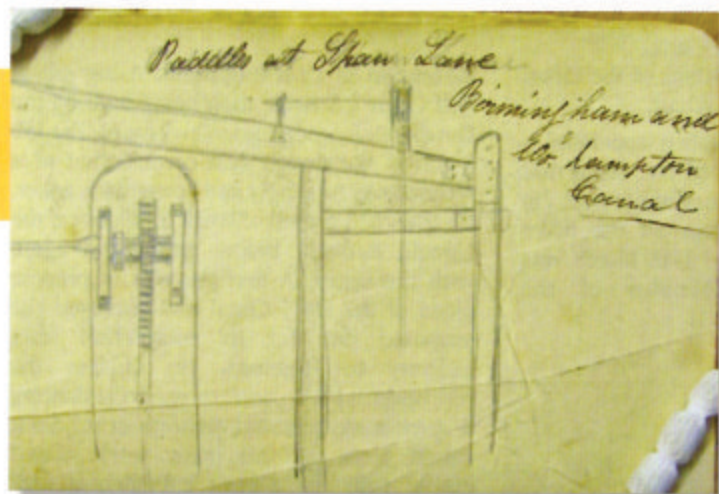
The next entries are in 1832 when, on May 20th, he writes that the "repair canal boat" has passed through Wharf Lock for the first time with 27 tons of stone and sand. In

Thursday, MAY 22, 1845.
Trinity Term begins.

Friday 23.

More rises due, past 10 afternoon. London

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



"An excellent pair of lock gates at Spon Lane" as sketched by Stephen Ballard in one of his notebooks.

October 1833 he writes about "fixing a new weighing machine at Ledbury Wharf" because the timber frame of the older machine had rotted, although Stephen noted "the wood [oak] appeared to be preserved by the stain that the iron [pin] had given it". On November 22nd he notes that the summer has been very dry with the pounds between Over and Leathermill averaging a depth of only 2ft 4inches, he also records that on that day "poor Mr Maysey died".

In April 1834, canal navvies made a disturbing discovery of four human skeletons. Stephen notes that the bodies were found by workmen on the Upham Estate near Dymock, that the first to be found was damaged by the workmen but that they more carefully uncovered the other three. The bodies appear to have been buried in graves and to have been more than two hundred years old.

Later that year he went to London to see the Exchequer Loan Office, presumably to get money to kick start the completion of the Canal to Hereford. He mentions that he took along a plan showing his proposed deviation from "Cannon fromme" (sic) to Hereford, but does not mention if he was successful. In December 1834 Stephen was occupied with inspecting an old iron mine entrance at Augley (possibly near Newent) and performing land ownership acts on land for

the Colliery Arm and the cutting at Canon Frome.

The main entry for 1835 is the report of an accident on the River Severn at Over; Stephen reports that a Company boat loaded with 27 tons of slate and coal struck one of the piers of the old Over Bridge and swung round in the flow to sit on the remains of other piers from the old bridge. Stephen sent an empty boat from Gloucester Quay to lighten the sinking boat and with the help of workmen (who were taking down the old bridge) they floated the boat and got it relatively undamaged off the piers. This would not happen again as the piers had gone a few months later, the bridge having been replaced by Telfords single span structure that remains to this day.

"poor
Mr Maysey
died"

In 1836 the diary entries become more regular, he spends much of the year working on the River Severn, attending Severn Navigation Commission meetings, taking soundings and cross sections of the river, working on plans of bridges across the river and proposed locations for river locks. His work on the Canal included the invention of an icebreaking boat that broke ice from below (more about this in the next edition), supervising repair works at Rudford Locks, surveying a line for a cut across Alney Island,

making Parliamentary sections of the Canal and marking out Newent Wharf.

For the year 1837, Stephen appended a "Retrospect" in the back of the diary that gives a very handy summary of his year. He began 1837 working again on the River Severn survey and on the 14th March was elected an Associate Member of the

Institution of Civil Engineers. A big job at Pull Court followed, then being built by the Dowdeswell family near Tewksbury. The job involved the design and construction of a waterworks to supply the house with water. He then had a spell of work in Wales on the Llanelli Railway, before getting on again with the Canal. A first job was to prepare plans of the H&G Canal and surveyed the proposed line for its completion from Ledbury to Hereford. He finishes the retrospect with "... took to quadrille dancing & spent many pleasant evenings at it." So it would seem that his many work related entries could have been interspersed with the occasional evening of leisure!

In the Spring edition of *The Wharfinger*, in Part four of this series of articles, I will continue to delve into the diaries from 1838 until 1844. This was to be a busy time for Stephen on the H&G Canal – planning and constructing the Canal from Ledbury as far as Withington.

◀ CJ

Part of the Ballard Collection at Herefordshire Record Office.

Photos: Caroline Jones and Herefordshire Record Office



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A Natural Explanation? By John Chappell

Photo: John Chappell

No cookery lesson from John this time; but we do extend into the realms of astrology. Yet again, no need to go to the chemist, for we have yet another item here for your medicine cupboard. A few more and we will have to consider forming another H&G Canal Trust subsidiary company – H&G Pharmaceuticals – to be based at Oxenhall where this wealth of natural remedies flourishes alongside our restoration site!

What could be prettier than *Stachys palustris*? Commonly known as Marsh Woundwort it thrives by streams, ponds, ditches as indicated by its species name *palustris* – swampy or marshy; it is at its best in June and July.

Marsh Woundwort is rare in some parts of England but can be found in the area covering the Midlands, southern England and South Wales, which has Oxenhall neatly in its centre!

The plant is perennial growing two or three feet tall with square, green, rough stalks and narrow, dark green leaves. The small flowers have reddish pink hoods, their lips intricately patterned in white which attracts and guides pollinating honey bees. Although the flowers bear close inspection they are insignificant compared to the size of the plant which makes it unsuitable for garden purposes, except perhaps around a natural pond. However the genus is represented in gardens by several species the best known being *Stachys byzantina* (no guesses where this plant comes from). This is the silvery, soft-leaved plant we know as Lamb's Ears. The connection to Marsh Woundwort may not be obvious at first but it is the flower's characteristics that



Stachys palustris – commonly known as Marsh Woundwort

determine the genus and an examination of both plants will reveal how similar the flowers are.

Culpeper, the 15th century London apothecary to whom I referred in the last edition, believed that certain parts of the body were influenced by the planets, a belief firmly held by the majority of people in those days who based their use of plants on astrology. Marsh Woundwort was associated with the planet Saturn and syrup of the plant's juice was considered effectual in staunching the flow of blood when used both externally and internally.

It is surprising how often these old cures are so near the mark, as in today's medicine the juice of Marsh Woundwort is styptic and highly valued for its wound healing properties. This is another one for the Oxenhall medicine chest as the plant's bruised leaves can be applied to a wound for just that purpose and is also useful for cramps and pains in the joints!

◆ JC

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The Wharf House 01452 332 900.

*Thank you
Timothy!*



Timothy West

Our most sincere thanks to the very well known actor, narrowboat owner and well-respected waterways campaigner Timothy West who asked for his fee for a recent talk to the IWA Warwickshire Branch, and the proceeds from the evening, to be specifically donated to the H&G CT – resulting in a cheque for £400 being received from the Branch. *Thank you to all concerned and, in particular, Timothy West for nominating us to receive this very welcome contribution to our restoration funds.*

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Julia Hones



It is with great sadness that we report the death, in a Dartford hospital in late October, of Julia Hones the past Chairman of the Gloucester and Hereford Branch of the Inland

Waterways Association. Julia, who had been battling against Leukaemia, was a strong supporter of local waterways and a former trustee of the IWA.

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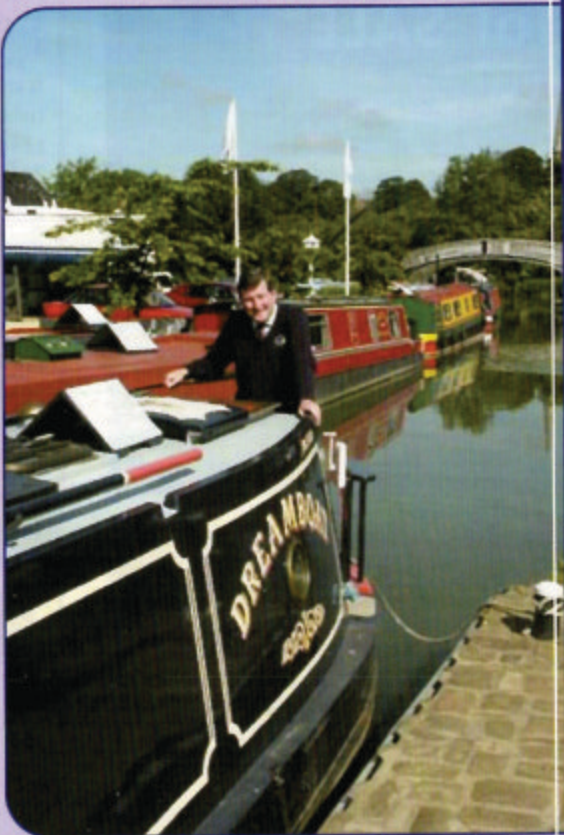
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Want to help?

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.

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Contact any of these names TODAY!

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The Wharfinger

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The Canal Trust

The Canal Society was formed in 1983 and in 1992 became the Herefordshire and Gloucestershire Canal Trust, a registered charity. The Trust has an ordinary and corporate membership of some 1,300 from all over the country and abroad!

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Map based on original by Martin Ludgate, Canal Boat Magazine.

