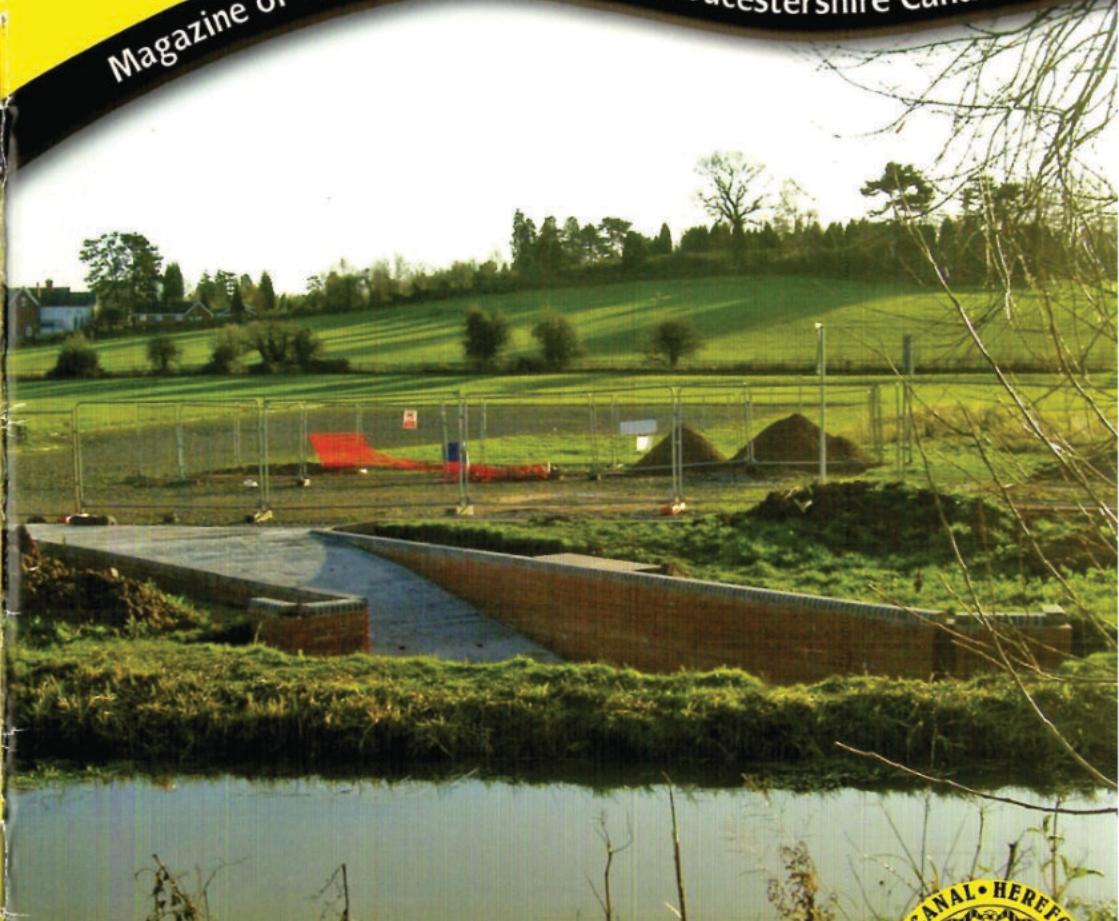


The *wharfinger*

Spring 2010

Magazine of the Herefordshire and Gloucestershire Canal Trust



1
EDITION
103

£1

free to members



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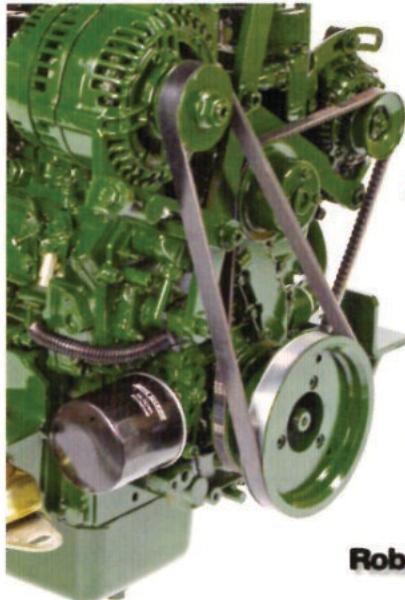
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Front Cover: New slipway at Aylestone Park bathed in winter sunshine by Martin Donks



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Chairman's Column from Janet Moulton

As you will read elsewhere our editor, Cliff Penny, has been unwell recently and we wish him steady progress in his recovery. Our thanks must go to all the contributors and to Maggie Jones for producing this issue of **The Wharfinger** and keeping up the high standards. When I meet members the most frequent comment is how much they enjoy reading **The Wharfinger**.

More thanks must go to a number of members who have relinquished their posts after many years. Tony Boonham has given up keeping an eye on, and producing the inventory, of tools at Over. Bernard Ingram has stepped down from the Council of Management, but will continue as a volunteer and wield the chainsaw. Pam Day has moved from the area. Our thanks go to Pam for the loan of the marquee and collecting aluminium cans for our funds (see page 39).

Sadly one of our long time supporters has died; Joyce Smith was born at the Wharf House at Crews Pitch and recorded her memories of life alongside the Canal at Yarkhill.

Mention of Yarkhill reminds me that I must apologise for leaving it out of my list of restoration projects in the last issue! Many of you will have seen the progress being made when you went on the New Year's Day walk. Another walk and lunch will take place in May thanks to Nigel Jefferies (details on page 11).

I am still looking for someone to care for the photos and keep up the press cuttings books – not a very onerous task. In the meantime please to me send any items of interest.

As you probably realise a number of **The Wharfingers** are hand delivered with a considerable saving on postage. The increase in postal rates in April will increase the Trust's expenditure – if anyone would like to sponsor the postage on an issue of **The Wharfinger** – please contact me.

Lastly, a very big thank you to all the volunteers over the years who have made the opening of ^{THE} **WHARF HOUSE** 'Restaurant with Rooms' possible.

How many times have I used the word THANKS? It just goes to show what a tremendous membership we have in the Herefordshire and Gloucestershire Canal Trust.

◆ *Janet Moulton, Chairman*

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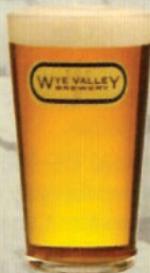


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Editorial Note

Those of you who read Cliff Penny's excellent editorial in the last edition of *The Wharfinger*, will have noted the headline 'Working Together'.

This edition is a reflection of that editorial as, unfortunately, Cliff has not been at all well in recent weeks and was unable to work on this edition in its early stages. The various members who regularly write articles for the magazine plus a new contributor, Chris Byrne, have all worked together to bring you *The Wharfinger*, edition 103, out approximately on schedule.

We have missed Cliff's input and attention to detail hope and apologise in advance should any errors appear on these pages.

I am glad to say Cliff has been able to make a limited (but welcome) contribution just before we went to press.

All the regular features are here and lots of great photos. Thank you all for your contributions and support.

Cliff, we all wish you a speedy recovery and hope you are back in the driving seat for edition 104.

◆ MJ

Once again we have some great prizes for this year's

GRAND HOLIDAY DRAW 2010



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1ST PRIZE **NARROW BOAT HOLIDAY for FOUR**
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2ND PRIZE **ONE DAY'S BOAT HIRE** on either the Kennet and Avon or Mon & Brec Canal. To be taken prior to 31/5/11 - excluding Bank Holidays. Donated by UK Boat Hire.

3RD PRIZE **TWO NIGHTS DINNER, BED & BREAKFAST**
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Premier, Mrs E. Cawnes, 188, Ethelbert Close, Sutton GL1 5HL, Gloucester, GL1 2EF
Prizes to be drawn at National Waterways Festival, Beale Park, Reading.
09/08/10. Registered under the Gambling Act 2005.

TICKETS £1 each

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

We are very pleased to report that the printing of the tickets once again is sponsored by **Bulmers** - thank you.

Prizes to be drawn late afternoon at the National Waterways Festival, at Beale Park, Reading, on 30 August, 2010.



Our grateful thanks to **Black Prince Holidays**, **UK Boat Hire** and **The Wharf House** for donating the Holiday prizes - so every pound raised is a pound towards restoration of the Canal.

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

The WRGies are Coming Again!

By Martin Danks



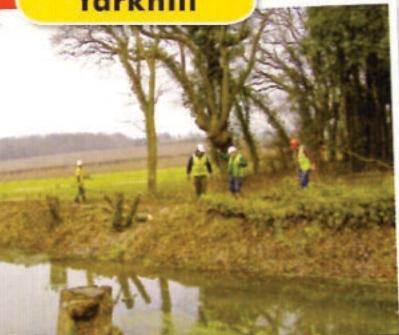
Hereford was invaded by two dozen WRGies from far afield for a weekend of work restoring our Canal. The Waterway Recovery Group (WRG) is part of the Inland Waterways Association, who organise support for canal restoration throughout Great Britain.

On average, they host Canal restoration work camps for over 5,000 volunteer days a year and Herefordshire continues to get a good share of this labour, with people giving up their weekend and holidays to get muddy and tired while camping in a village hall. Commonly known as the WRGies, volunteers may be local or travel from afar.

“It speaks volumes when volunteers will travel from as far as Crewe, Norfolk, London and Plymouth to spend the weekend supporting us in restoring the Canal” said Martin Danks, who liaised with the Waterway Recovery Group to organise this three-site occasion on behalf of the Canal Trust.

Overnight accommodation for the WRGies was at Yarkhill Village Hall where the stalwart cooks catered for two dozen hungry volunteers. At each site there was a group of local volunteers from H&GCT working with the WRGies.

Yarkhill



Three sites in Herefordshire that received a “wash and brush up” were:

Yarkhill – under the guidance of local leader, Chris High, winter maintenance work continued on both banks of the Canal on this 1,000 yard stretch which has footpaths open to the public for walkers.

Aylestone Park – Martin’s team continued work on the Aylestone slipway on the 350 yard stretch of the Canal in Aylestone Park in Hereford. Jobs included landscaping next to the new slipway walls, laying paving slabs (for boat launching) and fitting a wooden buffer (to absorb shocks when a boat touches the corner of wall).



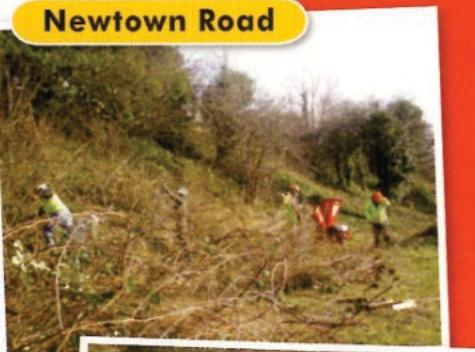
Newtown Road – for the first time, work started on the stretch of the Canal line at Newtown Road in Hereford, which is owned by the Canal Trust. Vegetation and scrub was cleared, pruned and tidied. This will allow new trees to be planted. Maggie Jones was the local leader on this occasion. Progress here can be viewed from the pavement on Widemarsh Canal Bridge, with its original iron railings.

A big thank you to both WRGies and our local volunteers who took part in this very productive weekend event.

Aylestone Park



Newtown Road



Photos: Chris High, Martin Donks, Maggie Jones

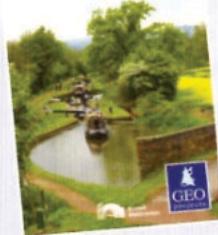
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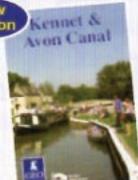
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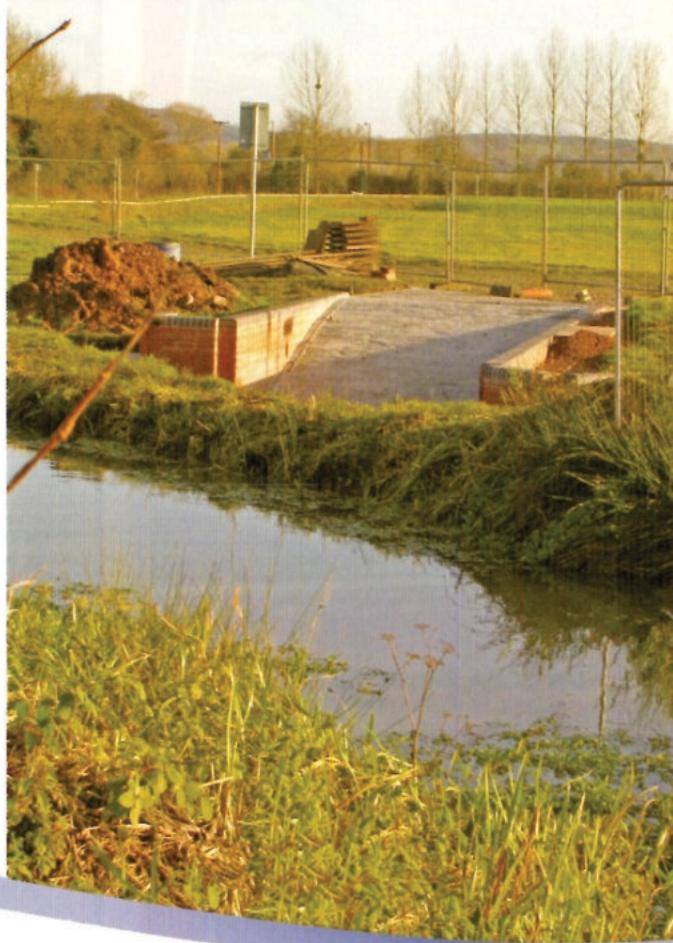
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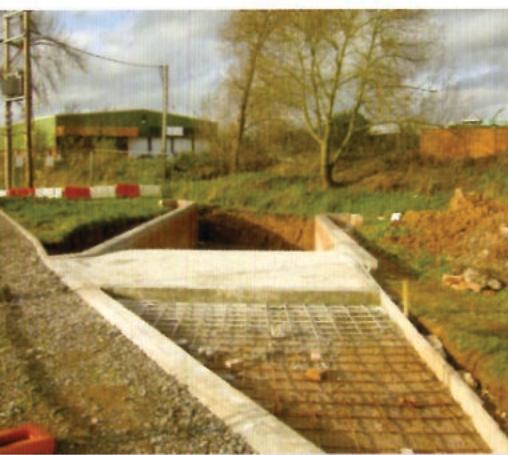


Slipway

Arranging concrete to be poured for the slipway ramp involved inviting volunteers well in advance, booking the ready-mix for a Saturday and arranging for the other tools and materials to be available (but not wasted), and small plant hired. While we can anticipate the weather we cannot control it! So despite driving rain we cheerfully(?) placed 8m³ concrete on a weekend in mid-November and another 1.5m³ on the Wednesday.

The three different gradients on the ramp were achieved. Work on the join between the slipway walls and the ends of the canal bank started using sandbags filled with a weak concrete mixture. It is vital to provide a good seal between





Main photo left: "sunny" view of the slipway with the Park behind.

the new structure and the canal that presently holds water well. We have also started placing the paving slabs adjacent to the coping stones to give a good footing for those using the slipway and a pleasing finish. A further WRG weekend is planned for February to start reducing the height and thickness of the canal bank at the bottom of the slipway and landscaping the surrounding area before the grass begins to grow. This does not feel imminent during the present conditions of melting snow but it does grow apace once the ground warms up!

The final bank removal and sealing of the canal base and walls cannot take place until the Spring. Both the canal and ground water levels need to be lower and much drier conditions for the clay base to be puddled. In the meantime there are plenty of other jobs to finish and winter maintenance tasks to complete.

Buffer Strips

The design of this slipway incorporates wooden "buffers" to absorb and spread the shock load of any boats and colliding with the brickwork. I'm told this has happened even to the most experienced boaters! While simple in design, the fixtures and fittings need to be resilient and corrosion resistant. Portions of an



Photos: Martin Danks and Colin Dymott

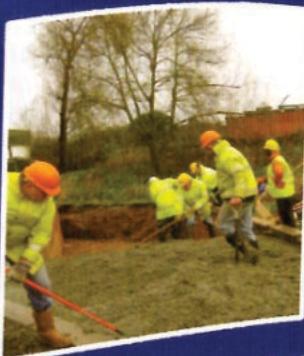


Photo strip above shows action pictures of concreting the ramp and laying the coping stones.

old lock gate, in elm, were collected from Over Basin by local volunteer, John Arnold, who is busy fashioning them to the design in the working sketch.

These will be fitted to the corners of the slipway walls before the final bank removal.

Acknowledgement must go to Herefordshire Council Parks and Countryside Service for their support and encouragement for the projects carried out during the summer, and to the Estates Department for promptly ensuring the necessary consultation and notices were carried out correctly. *Thank you Rob, Fran and Alison.*

The finishing touches to the slipway are important for a structure expected to be in place for the next 150 years of the life of the canal. While my great-grandfather's company Danks, Venn and Sanders traded on the canal through the Park in the 1850's I do expect it to

be in good condition for my great-grand children who may well travel through the Park, possibly via the waterbus from Withington to Widemarsh!

Items such as the fixings for the buffer strips in stainless steel, blue bull-nosed corner coping bricks, an interpretive plaque and mooring bollards need to be funded since the original budget was to provide the main structure. Each item comes in at about £150 and I would be delighted for any potential sponsors to come forward. I would like to see some "meaty" bollards in cast iron and choose a pattern in keeping with the 1840's. I still have contacts in the foundry industry where I used to work so I would expect to get an H&G standard bollard pattern made that could also be used elsewhere as further stretches of the canal are restored.

◆ MD



Formal Notice

2010 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

TO BE HELD ON TUESDAY 20ST JULY, 2010
AT THE ROYAL OAK, MUCH MARCLE, AT 7.30PM.

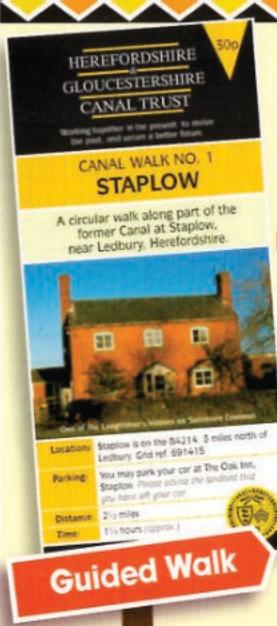
This is the formal notice of the 2010 AGM in order to give Members the opportunity to make a note in their diary; this year the AGM will be held on Tuesday 20th July. The Agenda and Annual Report will be in the next edition of **The Wharfinger**.

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

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

Every Member who is entitled to vote at an AGM may appoint a proxy to vote in his/her stead. A proxy must be someone entitled to vote at the Meeting. Proxy forms are also available from Liz Connors and must be completed, signed and returned to her at least 48 hours prior to the commencement of the AGM.

Thank you.



Lunch at The Oak Inn, Staplow, Nr. Ledbury

followed by the inaugural

STAPLOW CANAL WALK

Sunday, 16th May, 2010

Meet at The Oak Inn, Staplow at 12.15 p.m. for 1.00 p.m. Lunch

Followed at approximately 2.15 p.m. by a circular 1.5 hour walk along part of the former canal, inspecting some of its original features. Participants will be provided with a copy of our new Staplow Canal Walk Guide, now in preparation.

Walking boots or stout shoes will be suitable.

The walk is largely over grassland and field boundaries.

You will have to cross some stiles and uneven ground.

Cost £2.50 per person payable on the day
+ £14.00 per person for a two course Sunday Lunch
OR £17.00 per person for a three course Sunday Lunch.

Booking - Send a non-returnable deposit of £10.00 per person, made payable to The Oak Inn, Staplow by Monday, 26th April, 2010. For more information contact Nigel C. Jefferies on 01432 850661.

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Our Restaurant with Rooms offers luxury accommodation, stunning riverside views of our restored Canal Basin, and of course, the excellent food of THE WHARF HOUSE.

Initially, there will be four king size rooms and one twin/king, all with luxury en-suites spa bathrooms. The price of the room, including a full breakfast, will range from £65 to £95 per night. All rooms will have the latest state-of-the-art, wide screen televisions with integrated film on demand, DVD, music systems, and full data link-up. All this great technology having been sponsored by one of our customers in the trade!

The existing team of staff at THE WHARF HOUSE have been building up to this for some time! We have a dedicated and flexible team in place, that will continue to be led by David Penny, in a voluntary capacity, to take us forward into this exciting expansion of the business and the achievement of the long term goal that we have always had – to have the business fully up and running.

Members and friends are encouraged to visit Over for an enjoyable meal and a good nights stay. Remember, your support will also help the Trust restore and promote the Canal. *A big thank you to all involved for this achievement.*

Dine early for £15 for two courses

This special off to customers seated between 3pm and 6.30pm. is proving very popular. Diners are offered a choice of starters and main course for £15.

Popular with Valentine's couples

Once again the Restaurant proved a perfect romantic setting for couples not only on Valentines day itself, but also on the Saturday and Friday before it.

Watch out for regular updates on THE WHARF HOUSE website – www.thewharfhouse.co.uk



Photos: Liz Bomken

Yarkhill Winter Canal Walk

REPORT



Stella and Penny ready to collect for Trust funds.

Guided Walk – REPORT

The year started with a very successful walk organised by Chris High and the team from Yarkhill, on New Year's Day. Chris takes up the story ...

We kept our eye on the weather forecast and just hoped for an improvement as the day of the walk grew nearer. Friday 1st. January arrived and with it a sunny, dry and crisp winter's day – ideal for our walk !

The Yarkhill Team were out in force erecting signs, deploying emergency vehicles, collecting money, directing traffic and mingling with our visiting walkers whilst George Hicks from Canal House took on car parking duties – thanks George.

As it was cold and standing around was not a good option, walkers were organised into groups of about twenty as they arrive and quickly started on the walk led by members of the Team.



One group of walkers pause to view the cleared and in-water canal.



The walk left Kymin via the permitted footpath, crossed over the line of the canal at Barrs Lock to gain the towpath through the Yarkhill site. The route continued along the towpath via the Wharf and Skew Bridge through to Middle Court Bridge. From the bridge we took to the lane and then bridleway crossing the Lodon coming to rest at the accommodation bridge, where we devoured our food and drink.

On the return journey we walked the road to Skew Bridge before retracing our steps along the towpath. Over sixty walkers joined us on the walk. Feedback says we all enjoyed ourselves and we were able to raise £147 for Trust funds.

Our thanks to Major Barnes, Mr. Thomas and Mr. Fancourt who gave their permissions for us to use their private towpath for the walk.

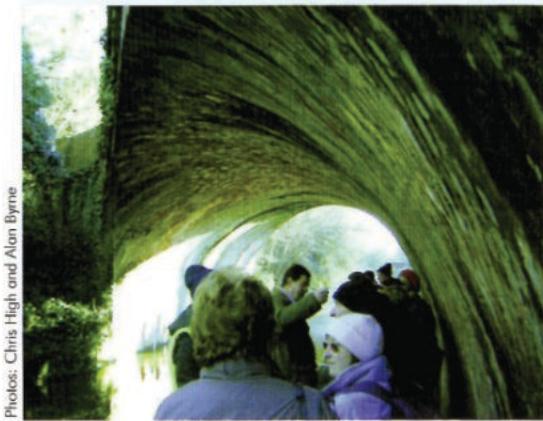
Top left: Walkers dotted all around the woodland at the accommodation bridge.

Middle left: Groups stop for a food, drink and chat break.

Top right: A brisk walk along the Yarkhill towpath.

Middle right: The towpath from Skew Bridge.

Bottom right: Walkers study the amazing geometry of Skew Bridge.



Photos: Chris High and Alan Byrne

The Restoration Fund 2010

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

How it works

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

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



Tug Boat Alder craned into the Basin at Overton Lock

This year's funding

Restoration of the Trust's Boats

The H&G CT recognise the good work that has already been achieved on the Trust's small heritage fleet by Caroline Jone's team of volunteers in securing and commencing restoration on both *Renton* and *Alder*. In time they will play an important role in the restoration of our Canal and more boats will be added to this heritage fleet.

Over trip boat, *Mister Maysey*, was unable to play a full part on public occasions at Overton during the past few years due to engine failure and is undergoing further work.

Council of Management has decided that the Trust's boat restoration projects will be supported in 2010 by the proceeds from **The Restoration Fund**. This will enable further works to be undertaken in restoring *Alder* and *Renton* as well as *Mister Maysey*.



Tug Boat Renton arrives at Gloucester Docks in 2009 ready for its restoration.



In 2009 Caroline Jones gave an informative report on the progress of the Heritage Fleet to the Restoration Fund contributors.

Join the Restoration Fund

Please support this year's Restoration Fund – this source of funding really is greatly appreciated by both the H&GCT and our volunteers! New subscribers are welcome to join at any time.

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

Thank you for your support.

Mike and Dave work on the refurbishment of Trip Boat, Mister Maysey, at Over in 2009.



Photos: Ted Beagles, Hugh Conway-Jones and Maggie Jones

I wish to contribute to the



H&GCT Restoration Fund

Name: _____

Address: _____

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I wish The Herefordshire and Gloucestershire Canal Trust to treat all subscriptions/donations that I make from April 6th, 2001 until I notify you otherwise, as gift donations.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Please return to:

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Signed: _____ Date: _____

My account no:

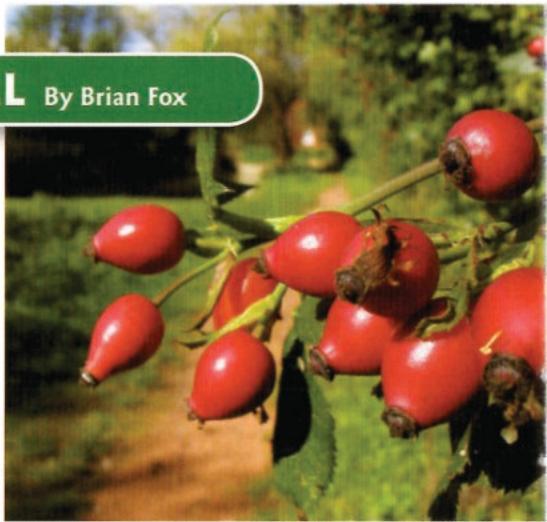
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Recently things have not gone according to plan for the Oxenhall gang and their Tuesdays have been decimated by bad weather. So Brian has taken this opportunity to write about canal maintenance.

Towpath Maintenance

It has been stated many times in **The Wharfinger** that restoration of any section of canal inevitably involves regular maintenance to prevent it reverting back to nature. There will be regular grass cutting, trimming of hedges and strimming of nettles and brambles to keep the towpath open. Wet summers like this last one meant things grew so quickly. There may also be occasions during the summer where a tree might require urgent attention when a branch snaps off, but this will be the exception. This type of work normally takes place during the autumn and winter months (September – February). This is partly because the vegetation tends to be more dormant and partly to fit in with the natural nesting season of the birds.

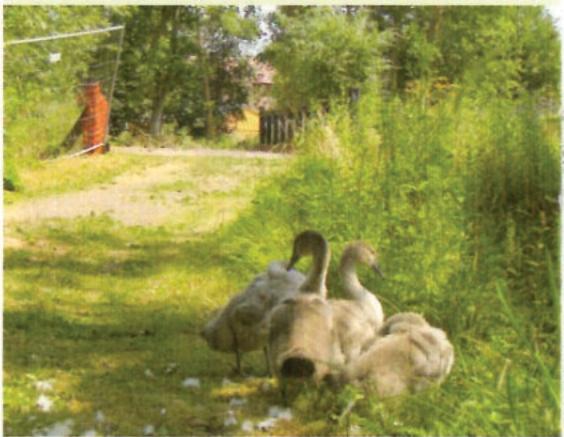
The hawthorn hedgerow edging the towpath gives a fresh burst of foliage in the spring.



Autumn rose hips flourish beside the towpath.

Some of the work done may look a bit harsh, but bearing in mind that the Canal closed about 125 years ago and the railway about 45, with very little maintenance work done in the meanwhile, then it is not surprising that vegetation has got out of hand and requires some major maintenance to get it back under control. When, 12 years ago, the Canal Trust acquired the Lock Cottage at Oxenhall and 1/4 mile of canal, the towpath was virtually unwalkable in the summer due to encroachment of vegetation. It has taken until now to get it back to a managed state.

Cygnets preen their feathers in the summer sunshine by Ell Brook aqueduct.

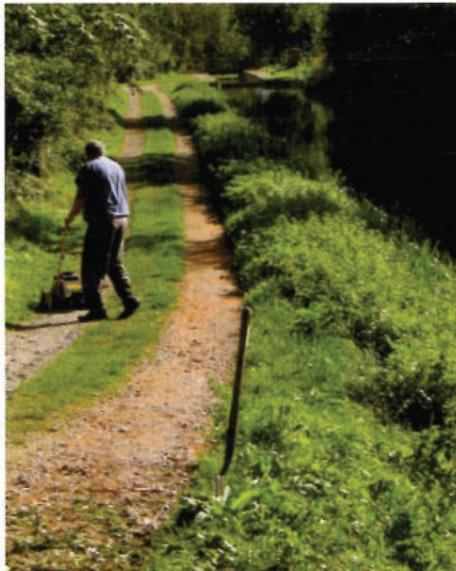


Work on the Wild Side

The non-towpath side is a different proposition and it is Trust policy to leave it in a wild state so assisting the settlement of wildlife, but this does not mean it will be untouched. Branches overhanging the water need to be trimmed back and marginal water plants must be kept from encroaching on the navigable part of the canal. The secret is in finding a balance between 'highly manicured' like a garden and entirely left to nature.

One of our biggest challenges is the growth of willow trees. They tend to shed their branches if left unchecked. Several large branches have snapped off during the last 3 years and the recognised way to tackle this is to pollard them at regular intervals. Several of our members have been on chain saw courses to qualify for undertaking this sort of work and they are very busy this winter as the task continues on all of our sites. The Canal Trust is regularly in touch with appropriate bodies like the Wildlife Trust and Local Authorities who advise us on the best way to tackle this maintenance work.

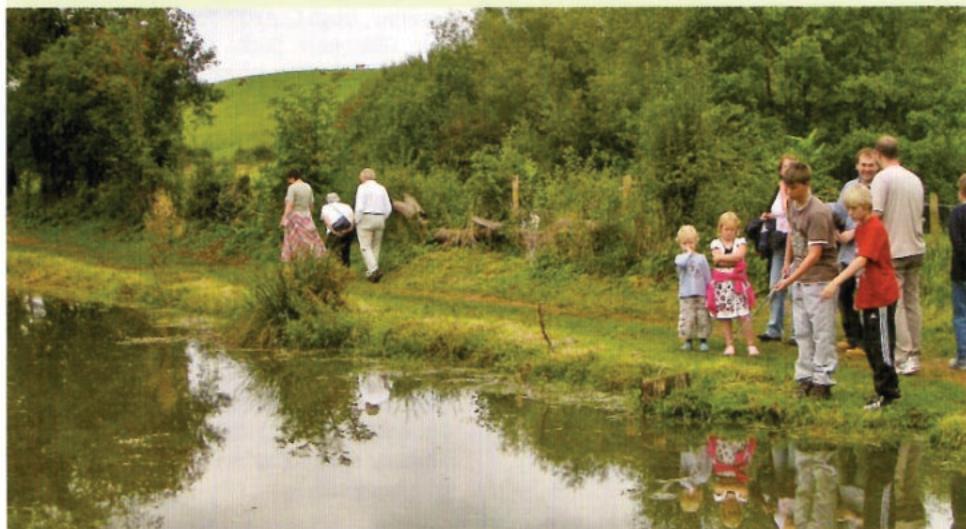
It is not possible to restore a canal without the clearance of some vegetation creating a



Our volunteers take pride in the maintenance of the towpath.

temporary barren waste of new soil and water. The Canal Trust take on such a task after prior consultation with the appropriate authorities. Surveys are carried out to establish what wildlife exists along the line of the canal. In the years to come the vegetation will establish itself and nature will once again take over but with a bit of gentle maintenance to help it along. ◆ BF

Families enjoy walking and relaxing along the towpath at Oxenhall.



Photos: John Chappell and Brian Fox

Social Evenings at The Royal Oak

Please support our monthly meetings, make a note on the calendar and tell your friends and neighbours; we have an excellent venue and interesting speakers on a wide range of topics. **Why not share transport and make an evening of it – everyone is welcome!** The third Tuesday of every month (except December), 7.30 for 8pm start.

MARCH 16TH

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.

APRIL 20TH

Talylllyn Railway

David Mitchell

One of the most successful restored railways with connections to Tom Rolt – whose anniversary year this is.

MAY 18TH

Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust

Bill Francis

Our natural history speaker this year is from Slimbridge Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust.

JUNE 15TH

The Oxford Canal

Mark Davies

One of the most popular in the country.

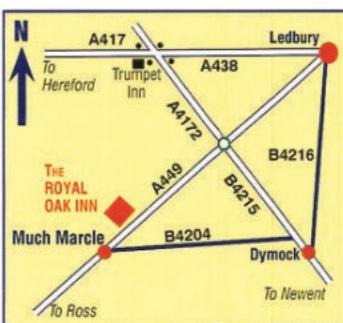
JULY 20TH

Annual General Meeting

Starts at 7.30 prompt.



The Royal Oak, Much Marcle



OUR FEBRUARY MEETING

GLoucester's Dockside Community

by Hugh Conway-Jones

Our first talk of the year was given by local historian, Hugh Conway-Jones. He explaining how Gloucester Docks began in the 19th Century with corn, wheat and flour imports.

He gave a brief history of the dockside warehouses, the companies that used them, and the dockside workers, with some great slides of how it all used to be, not much Health & Safety back then!

Hugh then went on to speak about the vast wood imports into Gloucester, which were unloaded in the Docks, then taken up the Severn in barges to the West Midlands, and coal brought back on the return journey.

Hugh concluded his talk by mentioning the dry docks and boat builders, who are still currently there today. A very informative and interesting talk.

Chris Byrne

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

May 22-23	Tall Ships at Gloucester Docks
May 23	Forest of Dean Local History Fair – Coleford
May 30-31	Crick Boat Show
June 26-27	Braunston Historic Boat Gathering
July 10	Sutton Fete
Aug 1	Herefordshire Country Show
Aug 14-15	Foxton Locks Festival
Aug 28-30	National Waterways Festival, Beale Park near Reading
Sep 5	Alfrick Show
Sept 12	Newent Onion Fair
Sep 4	Leominster Vintage Show
Nov 13	Winter Bazaar, Ledbury



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

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

Thank you.



Gloucestershire & Herefordshire IWA Branch

Gloucester Yacht Club, 7.30pm

Thursday, 11th March 2010
Annual General Meeting

Guest speaker: Nick Worthington,
General Manager, British Waterways SW

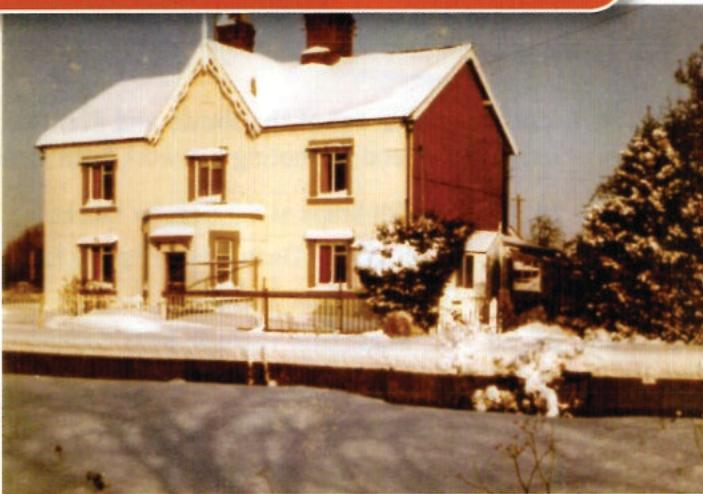
Thursday, 8th April 2010
Severn Pilots

Guest speaker: Mike Johnson,

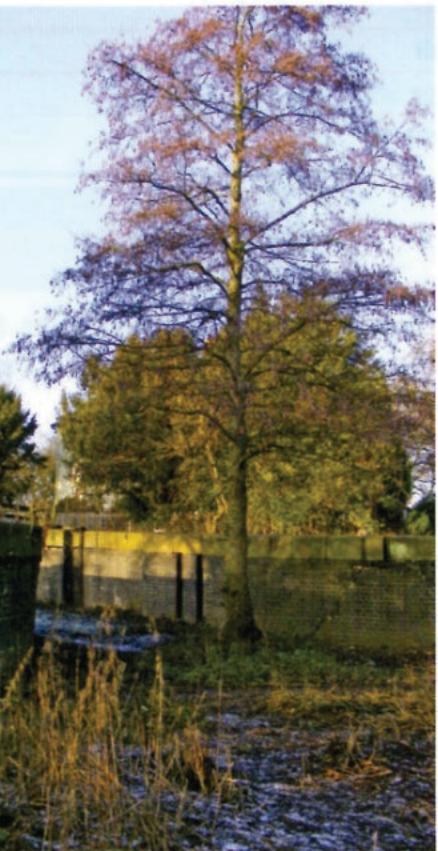
*For further details or information contact:
Martin Turner 01291 650605*

Llanthony is a site with a wide variety of tasks and challenges. Paul describes some of their recent activities:

The autumn months saw further clearing of scrub and undergrowth on the top side of the lock in front of the cottages. We have also been clearing the south east approach into the lock so that you can clearly see the original profile of the channel from the river Severn.



A winter scene of the lock and cottages at Llanthony.



Left: View of the lock from the south eastern side.
Above and below: The two Alans clear the undergrowth and log up timber on the line of the channel from the river to the lock.



The volunteers have also been erecting new fencing to improve the security of the cottages and have replaced a garden wicket gate. (see photos right) This was made partly from recycled timber found on the site.

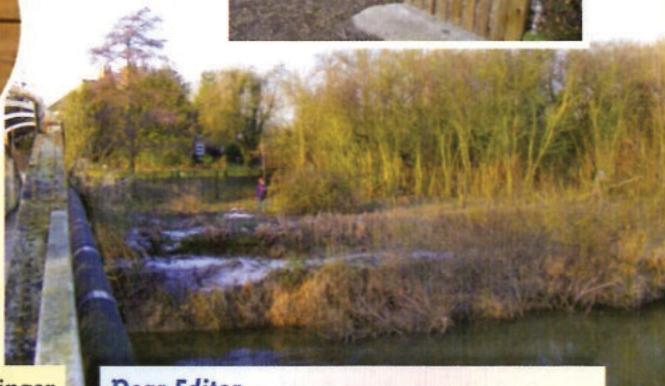
Llanthony goes green

The H&G Trust's first photovoltaic system is now fully installed and commissioned to provide site hut lighting. Our thanks go to Alan McBride for donating and installing the equipment.

◆ PH



Above: The solar panel providing shed lighting.



Right: Clearing the channel from the river into the lock

In the last edition of The Wharfinger we mentioned that we would be telling more of the life of Henry James Presdee. This has been held over to a future edition, due to our Editor being unwell. We apologise to those who were hoping to read it in this edition.

Dear Editor,

Without mechanical aids, "Corn Dollies" [Llanthony Lock, P18 last edition] would not have travelled very far and do not have a national name. Local names no doubt abound; perhaps in the H&G area they are "Luggites"?

John Griffith (Member), Cardiff



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Work at YARKHILL

By Chris High



When the weather has allowed volunteers at Yarkhill have continued with vegetation control, selective tree felling and general site maintenance and progress was achieved.

The last 50 yards of canal bed up to the site hut dam was hand cleared of vegetation whilst Sam, our excavator, was deployed stripping the vegetation along the stretch from the sandbag dam to the lock dam. At last we have achieved a canal bed cleared of vegetation along the whole of the site.

Next came the job of unblocking the pipes at the site hut dam to let in what little water was available. Tricky, as there was the potential risk of getting very wet during this process. For this reason and with the excuse that I had to take the photo, I delegated the job to Paul. Result – I got the photo and Paul didn't get wet and the water flowed.

In fact within 48 hours the 630 yards was 3 foot deep and flowing over the sand bag dam. Following some rain we had nearly 4 foot of water throughout the site.

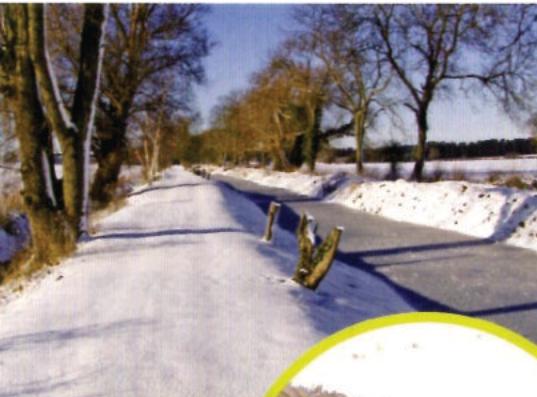


Above left: A very picturesque snowy Yarkhill.
Circle: Paul avoids getting wet during the unblocking of the pipes of the dam.

Below left: Looking along the Canal with sandbag dam in distance.

Below: The mid section of the Canal at Yarkhill.
Bottom: Canal in water at the Barr's Lock end.





Top two: A very picturesque snowy Yarkhill.

Circle: Ice flow not water flow over the dam.

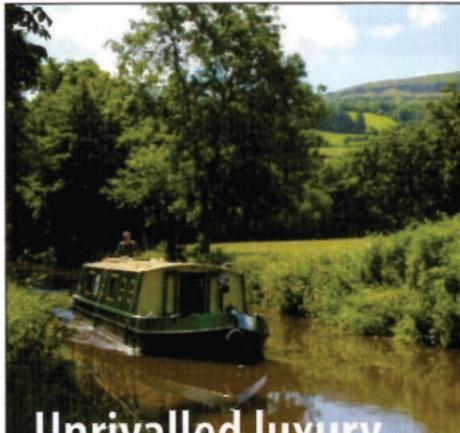
Right: A very snowy site access.

Below: Celebration lunch on the pavillion.



December saw the Team celebrate its four years of work parties at Yarkhill with a walk around the canal in the Frome Court and Asherton area with lunch in glorious sunshine on the veranda of the cricket pavilion.

The year turned and Yarkhill saw a couple of first's; no work on site for a month with two consecutive cancellations due to bad weather, having only cancelled three work parties in the previous four years and the Winter Walk (see page 14).



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For many years the Trust has held a Craft Fair in Ledbury to promote the restoration of the Canal. The H & G Sales Committee decided this year to broaden the appeal of the event and turn it into a Winter Bazaar. Organiser, Pat Skeet, continues ...

We still had stalls selling locally made craft goods, but added other attractions with gifts, Traidcraft and Aquabox products and the ever-popular bottle stall.

Anyone seeing the weather forecast the night before might well have thought it best to stay in bed for the duration. However, on the day, the promised gales turned out to be only occasional mighty gusts of wind and the constant rain expected arrived as frequent heavy showers, which had the effect of driving the unprepared into St Katherine's Hall to seek warmth and shelter.

The Committee's decision was more than justified, the financial result being the best ever, raising £432 for the Trust. This compared with £308 in 2008, which itself was a record.

So a good day! Thanks to all who helped on the day and to those who provided things to sell, or give as prizes. Well done everyone !

◆ PS



Photos: Dick Skeet



Top: Some of the many items on sale at the Bazaar.

Below: Beautifully made, eye-catching cushions tempt visitors to the Bazaar.

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As you might say, things have been a bit quiet around site recently, entirely due to the weather, not our enthusiasm.

When the weather did permit us to work we fitted the three bollards on the site entrance – a job we've been planning to do for a while.

Before the snow fell we had just about finished tidying up and cutting back hedgerows along the towpath, and planting additional whips to fill gaps and extend the length. Over in the woodland, on the wild side of the basin, the overhanging undergrowth was also trimmed back.

Back in the compound our mechanics continued work on the 6" pump refurbishment whilst other volunteers continued work on the trip boat, Mr. Maysey's restoration.

Where the wet and wear and tear had taken its toll on the compound we have spread stone to improve the surface condition, but more stone is needed to complete job effectively.

◆ **TB**

Middle right: A very frozen Over Basin, where tug boat Alder waits for warmer times.

Bottom right: a snowy Mister Maysey is also frozen to the spot while waiting for a spring make-over.



The Wednesday volunteers risk-assess palletting bricks in the snow.



The Wharf House Fit-out

THE WHARF HOUSE fit-out has been coming along well, with various tasks being achieved.

Most of the six wash basins having been fitted and plumbed into the bathrooms, after a few alterations to the previous plumbing work. Various onyx worktops and bath surrounds have been cut and fitted into the bathrooms, leaving our volunteers to get on with doing the final touches and cleaning of the bathrooms.

Many hours have been spent checking out the electrics in the whole building, so they are up to the current regulations standards, and we have had a company come in to test, inspect and sign off all the electrics, which has been another big step to the completion of the fit-out.

In rooms on the top floor of the building, the shelves and clothes rails have been made and fitted into the built-in wardrobes. Most of the rooms are now clear of building materials and volunteers have been started a deep clean, repairing marks and dents and touching-up paint work.



An antique corner wardrobe is fitted and the carpets are laid.



One of the recently fitted smart wash basins.

A final colour has now been chosen for the walls of the stairwell that emphasises the beauty of the oak staircase and a team of volunteers wasted no time in transforming the stairwell with the new shade.

With the furniture positions and sizes marked out in bedrooms, the furniture was ordered and completion is now in sight. The plan is, before the next edition of **The Wharfinger**, the rooms will be open for business!

◆ CB

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- follow the lifeguard's advice
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- *never* use when orange windsock is flying, as this indicates offshore winds.

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MODEL BOAT CLUB'S HAMPER DAY

By way of a Christmas Party, and not deterred by the winter chill, Gloucester & District Model Boat Club met at Over Basin just before Christmas. Ted Tedaldi takes up the story ...

The Gloucester & District Model Boat Club's Christmas Hamper Day at Over was blessed with fine variable weather with a north east wind along the length of the canal. Like a gift from heaven.

It was good to see a mix of interests, seven sailors outnumbered by nine motor boat boys. Some had both types of craft to intermingle.

The three 'dinner ladies' soon had the cabin warmed up with tea and coffee being served.

The first event, a knock-out sailing competition saw nine participants take to the water. Even two of our dinner ladies won their first rounds!!! Gerry, not unusually, had an electrical problem; he aimed for the far bank. The walk to retrieve his boat, warmed him up. The benevolent and mild mannered Commodore for the day, allowed him a bye.

Some exciting racing and close calls saw Sandra, reach the semi final where Gerry disposed of her to the cabin to prepare lunch!! Mike, 'The Pipe', bellowing smoke across the course to make Mike Norman's eyes water so much he finished second. The final, to much cheering and hissing saw 'The Pipe' put Gerry in his place.

The next competition, nautical skills for motor boats, saw nine competitors produce a cracking contest and was finally won by Mark Dawson.

The timed section for yachts and motor boats saw five competitors for yachts and seven competitors for motor boats. A close call for yachts saw Peter, (21 seconds out) win from



The model boaters prepares for the yacht race.

Photo: Ted Tedaldi

Mike N. The motor boats saw Brian G win from Mike N, bang on his selected time.

At the middle of the day lunch served. The bare table decorated with a royal blue tablecloth. The cabin transformed into a nice warm atmosphere. Glowing faces devoured beans on toast at an alarming rate.

Each competition was run off in stages not to have competitors standing around too long.

NO HIDING PLACE

A competition offered a cash prize, if you could guess how many estimated hours sailing and working the boat club members had spent at Over in 2009?

This was won by Sandra and Jean, who were the nearest to the answers. So do not think your wife doesn't know where you are. Take heed, are they psychic!

Free sailing followed as the sun set, the light faded we all made for home.

A good light hearted sporting day with special thanks to Sandra, Jean and Jane for looking after Peter and the rest of us with warmth, drink and food and "Shut that Door"

◆ TT

The Club 'lovingly' refers to the very patient female contingent of the party as 'Dinner Ladies' in this article. It would be interesting to know what the 'Dinner Ladies' name the male members of the club?

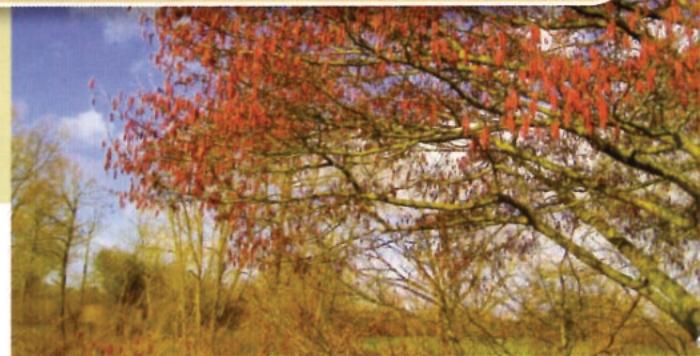
◆ MJ



A Natural Explanation? By John Chappell

John combines his wide knowledge of nature with some very interesting facts about clogs in this article.

Clogs – the very word is suggestive of the industrial north during the nineteenth century. Worn by most mill workers, they were not the clogs we think of today as seen in Holland but were wooden soled 'sandals' having leather uppers. The soles, cheap and easily cleaned, kept the wearer's feet off the detritus found in the factory and street. They were still popular in the twentieth century and until 60 or so years ago, clogs were a common type of footwear worn by anyone from farmers to school teachers.



Alder (*Alnus glutinosa*) in spring showing the large male catkins

What has all this got to do with the Oxenhall site you might ask? The favourite wood for the soles of clogs was Alder and as these trees grow well in any wet situation they are plentiful on all the H & G Trust's sites. *Alnus*, the botanic name for Alder, is present in most countries in the Northern hemisphere but it is an unassuming tree with



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little beauty and hence is frequently overlooked, nevertheless it is worth taking a closer look.

Our native species is *Alnus glutinosa*, so named because the young shoots are covered in minute, sticky glands. It forms a narrow somewhat pyramidal tree of fifty to ninety feet tall when mature. Of little decorative value a tree in full flower can nevertheless be quite striking in spring when covered in male catkins, the whole tree taking on a reddish hue.

Spring is perhaps the best time to study an alder because it is then that both male and unfertilized female catkins can be seen. The alder bears a superficial resemblance to birch, being in the same family, but differs mainly in the shape of the 'fruits'. In birches the fruit (or seed bearing capsule) is longer and falls to pieces after the seed is released, in alders the fruit is more globose and will stay on the tree long after the seed has been released.

When fertilized by wind-borne pollen female catkins develop into woody cone like fruits called strobiles, see above right.

In autumn the fruits ripen, split and the small seeds fall out, incredible to think such a large tree can grow from such humble beginnings, see above right.

The alder is a tree free from disease and attack from insect predators and has a long life. Nevertheless, some of the trees at Oxenhall are dying simply due to old age but



A view in spring showing the large male catkins



Close up of the female catkin

Female catkins develop into woody cone-like fruits called strobiles in late summer.



In autumn the fruits ripen, split and the small seeds fall out, incredible to think such a large tree can grow from such humble beginnings.

there are always plenty of young saplings, usually growing from water-borne seed, ready to take their place.

The timber is useless as firewood and refuses to burn with a bright flame, the logs simply smouldering. However, in years past there was a regular, if itinerant, trade enjoyed by woodsmen buying, felling and selling the timber to clog manufacturers. During the war you needed coupons to buy rubber-soled shoes, whereas you could buy whatever clogs you liked, and as they were also more durable and easier to repair than other types of shoe or boot, they were extremely popular. On the bottom of the clog an 'iron', like a small metal horse shoe, was nailed onto the toe and heel both for grip and to stop the wood wearing out.

People repaired their clogs at home, replacing the iron or fitting new leather uppers as required, making them last twelve years. In these straitened times perhaps we should take to wearing them again – they are the ultimate 'green' shoe with no environmental issues!

JC



The Diaries of Stephen Ballard

Researched and written by Caroline Jones

PART FOUR

Stephen Ballard
(1804 - 1890)

In the fourth part of this interesting series Caroline continues 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.

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.

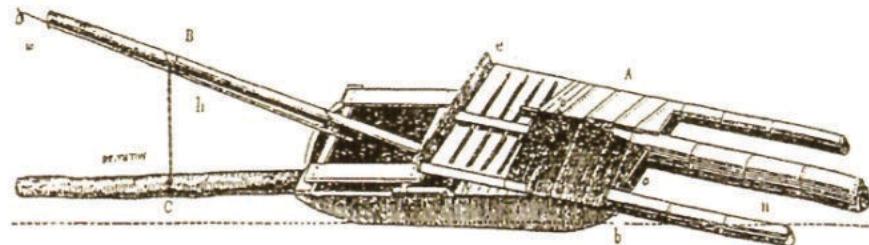
1838 was a busy year on the canal; apart from completing works at Pull Court all of Stephens efforts were concentrated on the canal. His iceboat was working well, freeing boats from up to 18 inches of ice. In the early part of the year he surveyed the River Lugg but soon began drawing up plans for the extension of the canal to Hereford and levelling the line ready for work to begin. He was also designing and supervising the building of wooden lock gates and a lock keepers house. On December 1st he notes, "At Newent saw the new house at Oxenhall,

thought it looked very well". [Now owned, and restored by, member Nigel Freeman.]

For Stephen 1839 was to start on a high, on January 15th he attended the Institution of Civil Engineers in London and was presented with the Telford Medal for his ice boat design and was complimented on his works on the Canal. His year progressed well with work on plans of the canal's bridges and aqueducts, repairs on Horse Lane weighing machine and Leathermill lock gates and finally towards the end of the year the canal extension was begun. He notes that on December 17th he went to "Furnimore" where the first contract was starting and that when he saw men at work "the appearance of them had an electrical effect on me, never shall I forget it ..."

By 1840 work on the canal was in full swing, there are many entries simply stating "On line of canal" showing that he was out and about supervising the contractors constructing the canal. All this hard work took its toll on Stephen and other frequent entries include "tired" and "headache", still he worked on and towards the end of the year Priors Court Aqueduct was completed.

1841 started with severe frosts hampering work but in February Stephen attended the passage of a boatload of coal into Ledbury for the first time. The main focus of work in



Stephen's ice breaker boat

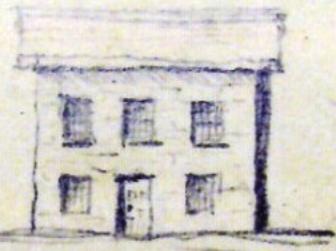
Thursday, MAY 22, 1845.
Trinity Term begins.

19th day.

Trinity Term begins

Friday 23.

the early part of the year was Ashperton Tunnel where Stephen had a house built, that also still stands, having been restored by H&GCT member Michael Peach. Later on in the year he had to focus attention on the landowners along the line of the canal and noted he would "much rather be attending to the works of the canal" though there were "54 land owners between *Canon Froome & Hereford* to deal with". At Over, in late September, flood water washed one of the lock gates away. Nevertheless work carried on and the gates were repaired by the end of November.



A sketch of Stephen's House from his diaries.

*“dancing
in the tunnel
all night”*

The first few months of 1842 were taken up at Asherton Tunnel where a vein of soft clay caused problems, he spent a lot of time at the tunnel and on February 11th "Went with a large party from Ledbury in a boat to view the tunnel, where they took dinner". The tunnel progressed and in May a Mr Hopton being pleased with the work sent cider to the men working on the tunnel who "were dancing in the tunnel all night"! The cutting at Asherton had problems all year with major slips caused by heavy rains in August, September and November. Stephen was very worried by these slips, they delayed progress on works, which cost money and for the first time he reported that the committee had been warned that his estimate of the costs would be exceeded. Towards the end of the year Stephen was more involved with Canon Frome Wharf where warehouses and a weighing machine were being built in anticipation of trade.

Early in 1843 he reported "trade on the Canal is getting quite brisk" and took the decision to live at Canal Frome Wharf. In March he estimated "the market boat will I think pay well, perhaps £50 per annum". In the months leading up to April 1843 the canal company had been in financial difficulty and progress on the canal had slowed but on the 24th he reported that he had been "directed to push on with all possible speed". In July he began planning Skew Bridge, at Monkhide, and by August was planning warehouses at Withington Wharf. In December he inspected Skew Bridge which "looks very well".

There are no further diary entries until March 1844 by when the canal had opened to Withington. During the time covered by

the diaries so far we have seen Stephen working full time on the canal for nearly 7 years. He made good progress but, possibly, to the detriment of his health. He mentions headaches frequently and puts these down to tiredness and working hard, hardly surprising considering the many, many hours he was working not only on site but also drawing plans and keeping up with his administrative duties. Work carried on at the canal and Stephen did write further diary entries to the completion of the canal and later; we will look at these in a future article.

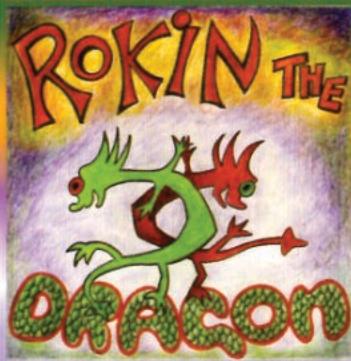
Before then though, the Ballard Collection also contains a full report on the opening of the canal to Withington and it this we will look at next time.

◆ CJ

News from the NATIONAL WATERWAYS MUSEUM at Gloucester

In the last issue (P.27) Caroline Jones reported how Renton, one of our small fleet of ex British Waterways workboats, had come to the aid of the Museum's larger trip boat, the Queen Boadicea, when it broke down in the Docks. It is just one example of the increasing co-operation between the Waterways Museum, the Friends of the Waterways Museum and the H&G CT.

The Friends annual **Giant Boat Jumble** and Waterways Festival will be held at the Museum in **Gloucester Docks on Sunday 18th April from 10 am to 3 pm** and is all set to be bigger and better than ever before – don't miss it! Unfortunately, for the first time for many years, the H&G CT will not be having a stand at the Boat Jumble; but Renton will be there and we hope you will be too.



Dance in the Ballroom at the Green Dragon Hotel,
Broad Street, Hereford. Telephone 01432 272506

Saturday, 27th March 2010, 8pm

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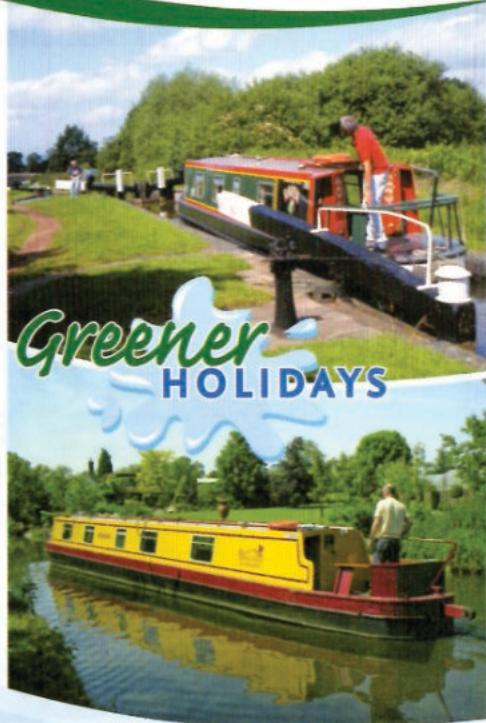
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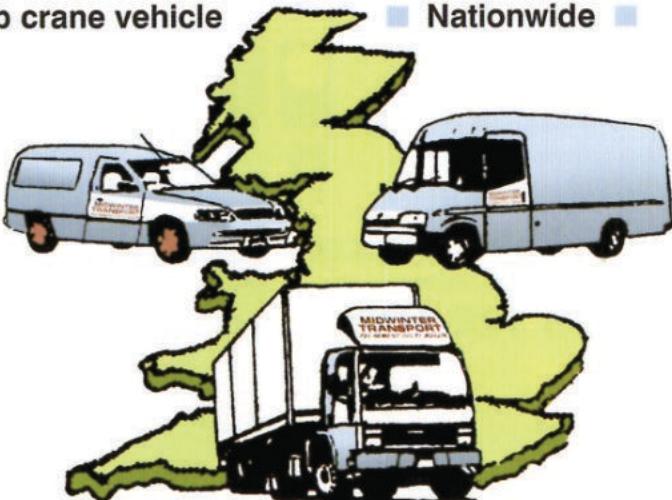
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LOGS for SALE

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.

*Thank you
PAM!*

Pam Day has recently moved from Hereford to Surrey. She has supported us by collecting and selling aluminium cans, the loan of her small marquee and the donation of tools as she cleared her remarkable garage! *Thank you Pam*, we hope you are happy in your new home and look forward to your visit in the summer. We also welcome Pam's neighbour, Maggie Setterfield who will continue the aluminium recycling.

◆ MD

Correspondence with H&G CT

All letters for consideration by the Canal Trust, or for possible publication, **MUST** (whether sent by post or e-mail) include the Members full name and address. In exceptional circumstances senders details may be treated as confidential and not therefore published in any way (but full name and addresses must be provided in the first instance).



Books

Many thanks to all those who have donated books over the year.

We have raised approximately £200 with sales at socials and other events.

Canal related books are always welcome as are local history books.

If you are unable to bring them to socials please let me know and I will try and arrange collection - we have a network of helpers around the country so distance may not be a problem!

◆ JM

Corporate Members

A very warm welcome to three new Corporate Members who have joined since our last edition was compiled:-

Gabbs, Solicitors, Broad Street, Hereford.

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Withington Group Parish Council, Withington, Herefordshire.

Their support is very welcome and much appreciated.

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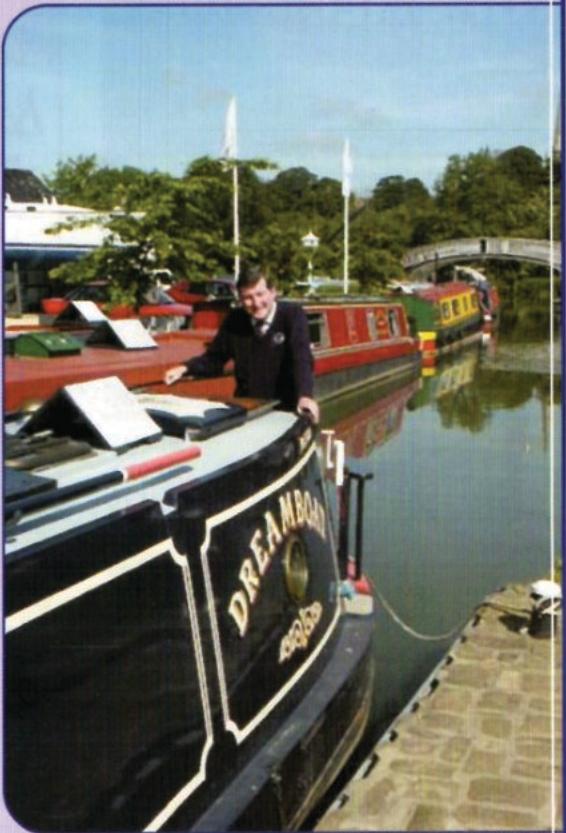
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Want to help?

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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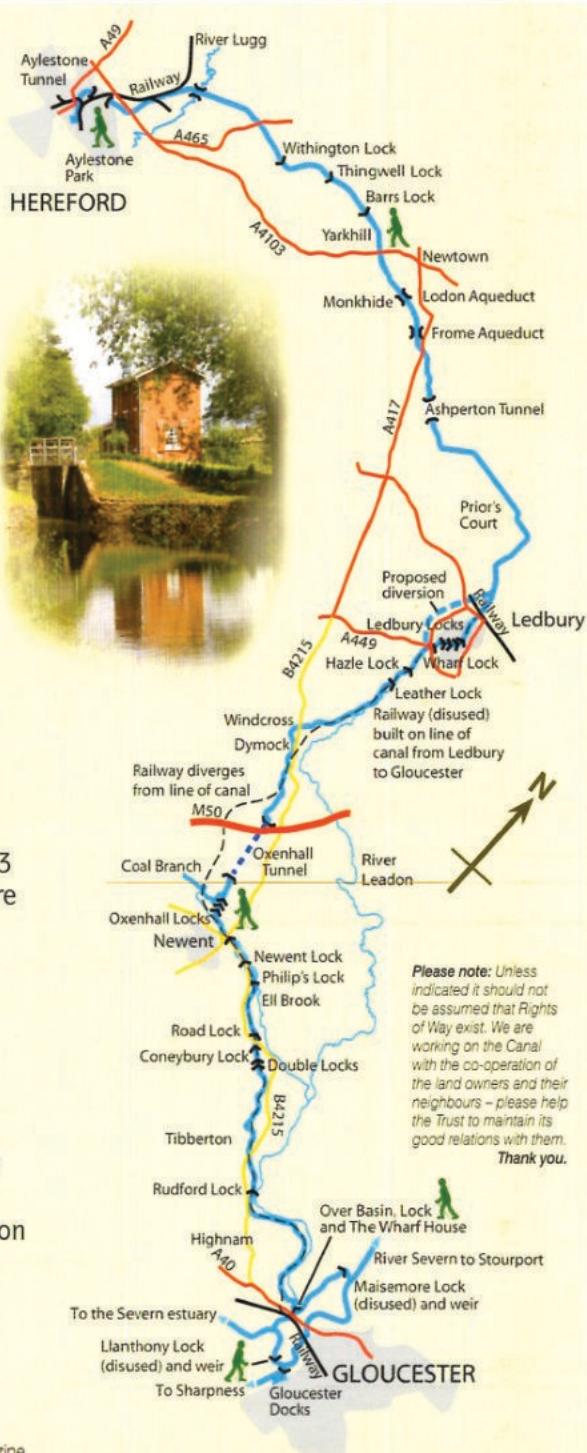
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The Canal Trust

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

Our objective is to fully restore the 34 mile Canal, from its connection with the 2,500 mile inland waterway network at Gloucester to the centre of Hereford. We have major restoration sites in each county, which together extend to some 4 miles.



 = restoration sites suitable for public access