

The *wharfinger*

Summer 2010

Magazine of the Herefordshire and Gloucestershire Canal Trust

EDITION
104

£1

free to members



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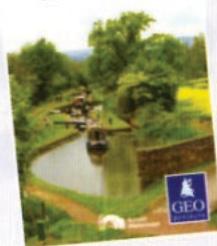
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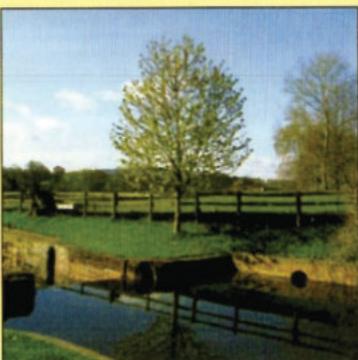
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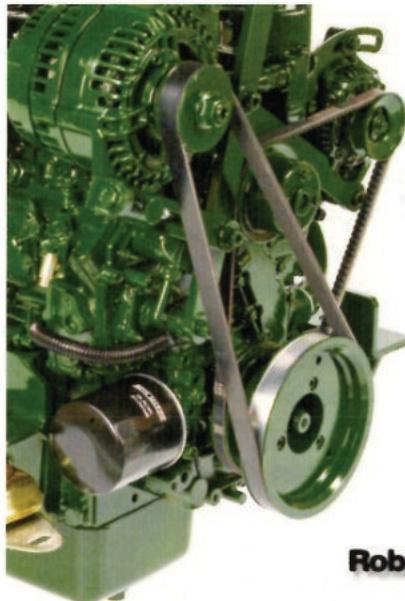
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Front Cover: The cherry tree at Oxenhall Lock
by Brian Fox



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Chairman's Column from Janet Moulton



I am writing this column having just spent two days with the sales/display stand at the University of the Great Outdoors, held at Hampton Court near Leominster. This seemed to be the ideal show to promote the joys of canal restoration on the H&G and of the canal camps held both in Herefordshire and Gloucestershire – as well as around the country. We may not be able to compete with zip wires, brush boarding and bungee jumping but there is a lasting legacy in a fully restored canal. This was also an opportunity to promote Aylestone Park, a short stretch of calm water and a slipway, within Hereford City.

The opening of the B&B accommodation at ^{THE} WHARF HOUSE, and the very successful first few weeks of trading, is covered elsewhere in this issue of **The Wharfinger** – congratulations to all those involved over the years. [see p.11]

It is now a year since the website was re-launched, so I have been looking at the log book of enquiries received from the website. By far the largest number has been requests for information on how to get involved with the restoration at our sites along the canal. This is very encouraging and, as a result, most of the sites have gained new volunteers. There are obviously many wood-burning stoves in the two counties (including the one in Yarkhill Village Hall beloved by the WRGies) as requests for logs also come in regularly!

We do get offered some strange services – one that appeals after late evening and Sunday phone calls is to set up a call centre in Hong Kong! [I think there might be a hint here to those who 'phone the Chairman late in the evening and on Sundays – Ed.]

The sales/display stand and the website are just two of the ways in which we promote the H&G Canal Trust. We could do a lot more (we are full of ideas) but may not be able to carry such projects forward without more people getting involved with all the many aspects of the organisation and administration of the Canal Trust. There are only 11 members on the Council of Management at present (I will not mention the average age!) and of 10 members on the Trading Company committee two also serve on the CoM. Reading other Canal Trust magazines and talking to their members at meetings, this is a challenge for both large and small societies/trusts; including those who have paid administrative staff.

Please think what *you* can do to support the H&G so we can move forward into the future with renewed vigour!

◆ *Janet Moulton, Chairman*

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More working together ...

When, two editions ago, I was writing my editorial on the theme of working together little did I realise that the next edition would have to be put together without my involvement (I did manage a little dabble at a very late stage!). Thank you to everyone for working together ... In this edition we have yet more examples of this philosophy in action – it is almost as famous throughout the Inland Waterways system as our not having any problems (only challenges)!

Dymock Parish Council have been working together with the H&G CT and local landowners regarding proposals for much needed 'affordable housing' in the heart of Dymock that would also see the Canal brought back to the village (on an essential diversion route) as an integral part of the development. This co-operative partnership will also deliver significant additional benefits for the community including a new play area and open space. David Penny gives further details on page 6.

New Corporate Member Withington Group Parish Council have also been working together with their community and their Parish Plan survey identified exceedingly strong support for the restoration of the H&G Canal. On page 28 H&G CT Member Jackie Bremner, a resident at Withington Marsh, tells how she and her colleagues at Cargill Meats Europe were successful in building on the parish Council survey, and our working together approach, to secure a £3,000 donation from the Company. However, we must forgive the local press for reporting that the £3,000 would enable us to restore all 34 miles – if only!

Some examples of working together are not as obvious as might be expected. Over the years a number of respected senior people within the inland waterways industry have supported the H&G CT in various ways. Apart from his generous annual support in donating the first prize in our Grand Holiday Draw, Tim Parker of **Black Prince Holidays** picked up the phone to be one of the first to congratulate the team at **THE WHARF HOUSE** on their achievement in getting the majority of the B&B accommodation completed utilising funding generated by the Tea Rooms and Restaurant. Tim then generously sent a cheque for £5,000 that will enable the fit-out of the disabled bedroom to be completed. *Thank you most sincerely Tim for your long-standing encouragement and especially for this specific donation.*

For the past twenty editions of **The Wharfinger** Colin Dymott has been our volunteer Advertising Co-ordinator, taking over the role at a time when our cover was still a black and white photograph (and full colour throughout had not even been considered!). All advertising in **The Wharfinger** is paid for and Colin, by working together with the businesses involved, has very successfully retained our regular advertisers and secured many more – an excellent mix of local and national businesses. However, Colin wishes to retire – *something that even volunteers do eventually!* Thank you, Colin – have a happy 80th birthday. (Vacancy – see page 35.)

Please – how can **you** work together with us? Help us to ensure that we are reporting yet more successes in future editions of **The Wharfinger**.



Dymock Partnership Project

By David Penny

Dymock has always been one of the most go ahead Villages, when faced with a pub closing they bought it, and they really believe in partnership and action to make things happen.



One of Dymock's clear wishes for many years has been to see the Canal back as soon as possible, and 3 years ago I was guest speaker at their AGM explaining how we could all work together to make the dream a reality.

It not just the Canal, the Village needs car parking and a new play area to replace the one that is on the Canal line, as well as a supply of affordable housing to keep it a vibrant community. A vision was formed between the Parish and Canal Trust that all this could come about with the Canal as the axis upon which it all hinged....

Well, after several years behind the scenes, the drawing alongside represents part of that vision now shared with local developer Tomack. This will be going forward as a Planning Application over the summer to see 12 affordable houses for local people, 5 open market properties, the play area moved to the site to free up the line of the Canal for restoration at the other end of the village, a car park for the village, and the transfer of the balance of the site to the Canal Trust to build the Canal. The developer will be moving the electricity cable on site out of the way of the Canal so we have a clear site to work on. The site also makes provision for the future new small branch canal to the pub....

As normal for the H&GCT all the houses on site will make annual payments towards the maintenance, management and restoration of the Canal in perpetuity, so subject to Planning Permission, we very much hope to be seeing this as a new site in the near future.



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The WRGies come to Llanthony

Waterway Recovery Group (WRG) volunteers (WRGies) from all over the country regularly hold canal camps to assist local volunteers who are restoring canals and inland waterways. *The last edition of The Wharfinger reported (on page 6) that WRG had visited three of our restoration sites in Herefordshire. Shortly after it was Gloucestershire's turn! A 20 strong group of WRGies came for a weekend and helped with various projects around the Llanthony Lock site.*

One of the tasks was to move the old footbridge which crossed the lock. This required the erection of a platform inside the lock which **Severnside Scaffolding** very kindly supplied and erected for us; *our sincere thanks go to them for their help.* The wooden walkway on the bridge was first removed to reduce weight then the girder frame was mounted on rollers and carefully winched across onto the side of the lock chamber. The bridge will be now assessed to



Top: Scaffolding platform set up in the lock to remove the old bridge. (note: the bridge being removed is behind the newer access bridge in the foreground.)

Middle: Putting the rollers in position.

Bottom: Winching the bridge onto the lockside.

see if it is worth restoring for use elsewhere on the H & G canal system. It was constructed as a swing bridge although it was not installed as such. We have, however, located the swing pivot and so it is possible that previously the swing mechanism was operational.

Removing tree stumps and clearing brush from the "North West passage" into the lock were valuable activities carried out by other WRGies in the group.

Our thanks go to Simon, the WRG team leader, and also to our own volunteers who, amongst other things, lugged the scaffolding from the yard to the lock and back again when the project was completed. They all did a great job, thank you.

Please give me a ring on 01684 292997 if you wish to join our team of volunteers, you will be made most welcome

◆ PH



Photos: Alan McBride

Above: Setting up the winch to remove the tree stumps.

Below left: Removing the decking on the bridge.

Below: Placing the bridge alongside the lock.



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“ The most charming hotel I’ve ever stayed at! ”

I travel a lot for work and stay in a lot of good quality hotels but this one is a cut above the rest. The restaurant is well established but the accommodation has only just been opened and I was very fortunate to be given a free upgrade to the luxury room on the top floor which was very spacious and had a huge jacuzzi bath. The staff were friendly and there was plenty of choice on the menu (with a special deal for guests ...). It is right on the canal and I imagine it is fantastic on a summer’s evening sitting on the terrace with a glass of wine. Although it’s not cheap, all of the profit they make goes to the canal trust to help with restoration of the Hereford and Gloucester canal, so it feels like you’re giving something back. ”

“ Slice of heaven ... ”

“ A pleasant surprise ”

“ Brilliant new accommodation, excellent value ”

“ Lovely hotel. Twin spa bath was wonderful. Staff were very friendly. ”

“ Room and food were excellent – service was also excellent ”

“ Lovely Little Find ”

Described as a restaurant with rooms, we were not disappointed! The accommodation has only been open since mid March 2010 and the quality of the rooms was very good: lovely little touches with sumptuous bedlinen and fine toiletries made for a very pleasurable stay. There are only five rooms currently, but a sixth ground floor room is due to be available [during] 2010. The food in the restaurant was absolutely superb and this, coupled with the lovely accommodation, made for a perfect wedding anniversary weekend. Also really good to note that all the profit goes to the Hereford and Gloucester Canal Trust, who have a huge canal restoration project. ”

Thank you to the customers who have taken the trouble to comment on their visit and WELL DONE to the staff at THE WHARF HOUSE !

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AYLESTONE PARK

By Martin Danks



Top two: The bank between slipway and canal is removed and the base puddled.

Left: One of the buffers on the corner of the slipway.

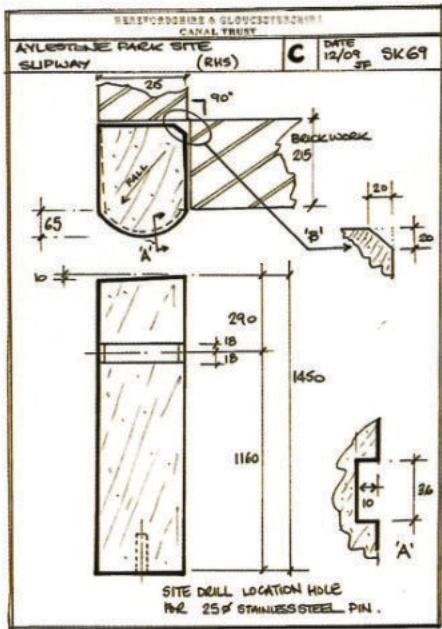
Below: The slipway and canal are now connected.



Photos: Colin Dymott and Cliff Penny

Last time Martin reported on the work achieved on three of our sites in Herefordshire following a much appreciated **Waterway Recovery Group** weekend visit in February. Some two dozen WRGies, and a dozen of our own volunteers from both counties, had an excellent weekend at Yarkhill and Newtown Road, Hereford – as well as at Aylestone Park. As they left the barometer was having an uncharacteristic steady spell so the decision was made for our volunteers to immediately press on with more work at Aylestone ...

After the weekend the plant was kept on hire and pumps continued to lower the water level in the canal allowing the bank between the slipway and the canal to be reduced further, and the base of the canal puddled using the tracks of the excavator. Thanks to Herefordshire Council contractors Amey Herefordshire for the loan of a 3 inch pump (and then the prompt loan of a second one as the canal water level got even lower). The plan had been to await the spring before taking out the complete bank but with 10 days of relatively dry weather the opportunity was seized to press on. The second wooden buffer strip



Above: John's plan of one of the slipway buffer strips.

was installed on the Thursday with help from Corporate Member John Arnold. John had helped collect the timber from Over and then machined each strip to plans drawn up by John Forrest. This was by use of hand tools and a little "chain saw sculpting"! And he made a lovely job of it. *Thank you, John.*

So as the light faded on the afternoon of Saturday 13th February, the excavator lights were turned on and the bottom layer of the canal bank removed and the canal bed puddled by the excavator tracks. The canal water was at about top track level, and 3" below the exhaust pipe, so in a calm and sedate manner work continued 'til 8pm. The next day saw more material removed from the canal and the banks profiled at the edges of the slipway. *Whilst a little more work is needed here, and elsewhere on this stretch, the slipway and canal are now connected!*

◆ MD

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Winter is finally over – I think – and we can at last get on with some real work, by which I mean actual restoration of the canal and associated features. This last 6 months we have been almost entirely involved in maintenance of towpaths, hedges, trees, and canal banks.

Willows have been pollarded with the assistance of Bernard with his chainsaw, without which the task would have been impossible; he can now give his back a rest. The logs generated have been taken away by our 'log man', Robert. Several trees and bulbs have been planted along the hedgerows to fill in gaps and some of the flowers put in last year are now in bloom. Maintenance will not stop altogether and our assortment of mowers has now been overhauled and road/grass tested! The first cut of the year has been completed. The tractor has a 'new' (second-hand) battery donated by Ian, one of our newcomers, and will now start first time without the aid of jump leads. *With its fresh coat of paint, and a new windscreen fitted, it looks ready for whatever we can set it to do.*

The site of the old Willows nursery is looking a lot tidier as well. Since we purchased the ground from the Highways Agency some 5 years ago there has been an invasion of young saplings seeded by adjacent mature trees and these were left to grow unchecked. The smaller ones were simply removed by a couple of deft blows with a mattock but the older ones had grown to a height

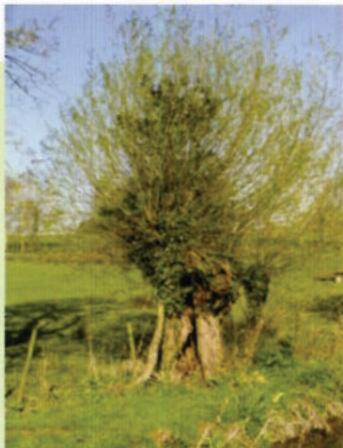


The pound below House Lock at Oxenhall.

of up to 15ft and were a bit more of a challenge to get out. The tractor once again proved its worth and with a stout strap wound around the trunk even the biggest came out without too much effort. There is now a pile of good fence posts cut from the trunks and a big pile of branches which made quite a bonfire. At the other end of the Willows our neighbour also had a bonfire, in March, which unfortunately got out of hand and spread onto our land burning down several square yards of brambles; but he got it under control before it spread into the trees. It saves us from clearing that area and we can now keep it under control with a strimmer.

Left: a pollarded willow.

Right: new growth springs forth on the pollarded stump.



Photos: John Chappell



The duck island and ...



... the smart new duck house!

Over the years we have erected several nest boxes around the site which have been very successful so we thought it was about time to try something different for the benefit of the wildlife. It has been reported (*in The Wharfinger*, edition 101) that our colleagues at Over had constructed an island from a pallet and a family of moorhens took a liking to it and raised a small family. Not to be outdone, we persuaded them to give us the unpatented specifications and Peter volunteered to have a go at making one to float on the canal at Oxenhall. Having successfully made and launched it together with some grass and even a snowdrop on board Peter decided to make a mark 2 version – slightly more upmarket! This was still based on a pallet but this time a 'duck house' was erected on top and the whole lot launched onto the pound just below the lock and about 20 yards from 'mark 1'. A second 'mark 2' version has now been launched on the pound above the lock. At the time of writing none of these highly desirable residences has been occupied but there have been several comments from passers by –

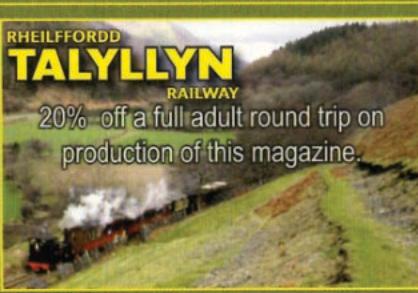
generally favourable. Peter is now considering advertising his 'mark 2' version of the duck island in the *House of Commons* journal and at a very competitive price!

The 'real' work to which I referred at the beginning is the continuing work on the aqueduct. Although the major work is now completed there are several small jobs to get on with and now that the water level in the Ell Brook is lower we can put the wellies on and get in and under the arch to finish one of the wing walls and complete the pointing of the stonework. Spoil has to be removed from the bank of the Brook in order to get at the remains of the buried wall and our electric hoist has been erected on the 'bailey' bridge above to facilitate its removal - it will be placed and compacted in a large hole close by. The hoist will also come in useful for lowering the stone required to rebuild the wall. Once this is finished, and the bank re-profiled, it will ease the flow of water under the arch during flood and greatly reduce the scouring of the banks and bed of the Brook. Roll on summer!

◆ BF

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With the onset of spring we have all been pleased to get out into the sun again with lots to catch up on. Top of the agenda was to recover our grassy bank following major reconstruction in the autumn; it has now been levelled and rolled by hand, ready for the mowing season.

The gardeners have been hard at work pruning and tidying up flower beds, filling the area once occupied by the old site hut with top soil etc., ready for spring planting. The hedge along the towpath has been extended to the far end of site using some plants left over from work at Aylestone Park and Mike Bowden has also been busy harvesting willows in our osier bed for sale in aid of Canal Trust funds.

Our mowers have been a bit of a disaster area recently with several of the old machines, including the ride on mower requiring major repair work by the mechanical team; but, fingers crossed at the moment all are back in service and ready for action! Work continues on the long term project to refurbish the 6" pump for topping up the basin during the summer.

We are still looking for a replacement engine for the trip boat, Mr Maysey. We recently carried out some trial runs with a small outboard motor, temporarily loaned by member Derek Gray (*thank you, Derek*), which demonstrated that the boat could be operated satisfactorily with a smaller engine under most conditions.

In March we were sorry to lose Barrie Haysman, one of our regular Wednesday team volunteers (and writer of this column). Barrie left, after three and half years with us, to start a new career as Quality Consultant; we all wish him well in this new venture.



Top: Malcolm prunes the hedgerow along the towpath.

Above: Mike mulches 'Skew Gardens' with wood chip.

Below: John, from the mechanical team, busy in the workshop.



Photos: Ted Beagles

Tenth Anniversary of OVER BASIN

This September sees the 10th year of the restored Canal Basin at Over. Volunteers are planning a Special Open Day on Sunday 26th September. Please see next edition for further details.

The Wharf House Fit-out

A lovely sense of achievement has been felt by all the volunteers after most of the bedrooms are now 'operational', with guests enjoying their stay at THE WHARF HOUSE.

It has taken us a while to get used to the new room names, *Llanthony*, *Maisemore*, *Ballard Suite*, *Oxenhall*, *Dymock*, *Ashperton*, *Withington* and *Aylestone*; all of which tie in really nicely with the H&G Canal.

The rooms transformed in appearance very quickly once the furniture had arrived, the mirrors and fittings had been installed and curtains hung. Many hours were worked in the final finishing of the rooms ready for our first guests, some with only minutes to spare!

Llanthony

Maisemore

Ballard Suite

Oxenhall

Dymock

Ashperton

Withington

Aylestone



Oxenhall

Photo: Chris Byrne

The feedback received from these guests (see page 11) has been very positive with some already making a returning stay and others booking a future visit.

It has been really good to see the bedrooms in use and the Tea Rooms and Restaurant busier again after the long period of poor winter weather.

Our focus has now moved on to finishing off the last two rooms and the manager's flat. Now the weather has improved work has also continued finishing off the 'bar cellar' on the terrace and other work around THE WHARF HOUSE.

◆ CB

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We have a wide client base with particular involvement in hydraulic press, concrete, materials handling, feed and flour milling industries.

It has been our pleasure in supporting the Herefordshire and Gloucestershire Canal Trust for over 17 years, and we will continue to work together in the present, to revive the past, and secure a better future.

© H&GCT

For further details please contact Simon Hayward –

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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.

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.

AUGUST 17TH

An Informal Get-together

– hopefully on the patio of the Royal Oak.

SEPTEMBER 21TH

BCN Boatbuilding –

narrowboats and tugs

Malcolm Brain

OCTOBER 19TH

River Severn – part two.

Brian Draper

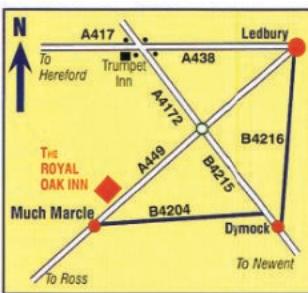
NOVEMBER 16TH

We are not alone!

Pat Skeet



The Royal Oak, Much Marcle



OUR APRIL MEETING

TALYLLYN RAILWAY with David Mitchell

David introduced us to a railway that has a unique place in rail history. Originally built to transport slate down from mountain quarries, it was the first narrow-gauge railway to be built for steam, rather than horse-drawn, haulage. It also became the first volunteer-run preserved railway in the world when, on the owner's death in 1950, it was taken over by a Society led by Tom Rolt – one of the saviours of the inland waterways network, and co-founder of the Inland Waterways Association (IWA). A film covered the early period of the railway including some of the problems encountered, sheep on the line being a common occurrence! A salutary lesson learnt was that when shunting a wagon into a siding, particularly on sloping ground, the final action was to set the brake lever!

David concluded with a series of slides showing some of the present stock of locomotives, carriages, and wagons on their travels through the picturesque Snowdonia Park countryside.

◆ *Pat Skelton*

Our thanks to The Talyllin Railway for being one of our regular advertisers. - Ed.



ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING of the HEREFORDSHIRE & GLOUCESTERSHIRE CANAL TRUST

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

to be held on TUESDAY, 20TH JULY, 2010
at the THE ROYAL OAK, MUCH MARCLE,
NEAR LEDBURY, COMMENCING AT 7.30PM.

ANNUAL REPORT AND ACCOUNTS FOR YEAR ENDING 28TH FEBRUARY 2010

AGENDA

1. Welcome and formal opening of the meeting
2. Chairman's Report
3. Group Reports
4. To receive and approve the report of Council, the Income and Expenditure Account and Balance Sheet of the Trust (and associated Companies) for the year ended 28th February 2010, Report of the Honorary Auditor thereon, and the Report of the Honorary Treasurer
5. To Appoint the Auditors of the Trust (and associated Companies)
6. To Re-appoint those Council Members retiring by rotation who offer themselves for re-election:-
Caroline Jones and David Penny

To note the Council intend to make Wilf Jones a Director of the Trust.

7. Close of Formal Business

We aim to allow people ample time for general questions after the close of formal business. **Prior notice of questions should ensure a comprehensive response and would be greatly appreciated.**

Apart from the formal business there will be a lively mix of overhead projections and commentary on the successes of the year. Members and friends will be made very welcome.

This is the eighteenth Annual Report of the Herefordshire and Gloucestershire Canal Trust Limited [a non-profit distributing company [formed in April 1992, No.2704407], which is a Registered Charity [1010721] and of the wholly owned Trading Company – Herefordshire and Gloucestershire Canal (Sales) Ltd. [2710215]. They replaced the Herefordshire and Gloucestershire Canal Society which was launched in 1983. It is also the report of ^{THE} WHARF HOUSE COMPANY LTD. [4627931], the wholly owned subsidiary of the Canal Trust, donating all profits to canal restoration. The Canal Trust is indebted to its *Council of Management*, and to the *Trading Company Board*; during the period under review [year ended 28th February 2010] those listed below have been members:-

**COUNCIL OF MANAGEMENT OF THE
CANAL TRUST (12 MONTHS TO 28-2-10)**

Tony Austin-Bailey; Liz Connors; Martin Danks; Brian Fox; *Bernard Ingram* (to 11/09); Nigel Jefferies; Caroline Jones (IWA Nominee); Maggie Jones; *Wilfred Jones* (co-opted); Janet Moult; Cliff Penny; David Penny.

**TRADING COMPANY H&GC (SALES) LTD
(12 MONTHS TO 28-2-10)**

Liz Connors; *Margaret Holmes*; *Mike Holmes*; *Ray Moses*; Barbara Moses; Janet Moult; *Penny Shetliffe*; *Pat Skeet*; Derek Weaver; *Heather Worth*.

**THE WHARF HOUSE COMPANY
(12 MONTHS TO 28-2-10)**

Liz Connors; Janet Moult; David Penny

Italics indicates not a Director.

The 12 months ended 28th February 2010 was another busy year with *physical work continuing* at all of our canal restoration sites – Llanthony, Over and Oxenhall in Gloucestershire; Aylestone Park and Yarkhill in Herefordshire. For the first time work was also undertaken at Newtown Road, Hereford. Work also continued with the fitting-out of the upper floors of ^{THE} WHARF HOUSE at Over and on the restoration of our small 'heritage fleet' of former British Waterways workboats. As always, extensive *negotiations* continued in respect of a number of sites in both counties. During the year under review the 100th edition of **The Wharfinger** was published.

The purchase of Llanthony Lock & Cottages,

and adjacent land/river, was completed during the year with a second & final instalment of £74,700. As with the first instalment this was paid using a proportion of the legacy which we received from the estate of **Miss Beth Gadesden**. The Trust continues to support ^{THE} WHARF HOUSE with volunteers but no further loans to were needed during the year. The completion of the bedrooms is being financed by ^{THE} WHARF HOUSE which also transferred £1,500 to the H&G CT in partial repayment of insurance paid by the Trust for ^{THE} WHARF HOUSE during the start up. During the year a further £9,000 was repaid to a Member being the balance of £20,000 loaned at the start of the fit-out. Donations and grants included £3,000 from **Hereford City Council** and £3,545 from **Herefordshire Council** for work at Aylestone Park on footpaths plus £820 from **Aylestone Park Association** for work carried out installing park furniture. £5,000 was received relating to the partial discharge of a covenant relating to a property at Over. £400 was received from **IWA Warwickshire Branch** following a talk by **Timothy West**. We are very grateful for these donations and grants, and for regular donations to the **Restoration Fund** which totalled £1,680.50 and was used for the initial restoration work on our heritage boat Renton and ongoing work on Alder. We are also grateful to those Members who have indicated their willingness for us to claim **Gift Aid** (£1,970 was received from the Inland Revenue as a result) and to those who make a donation in addition to their membership subscription. Gaining funds to support and increase our current level of restoration has continued to be a significant challenge in the current economic climate. During the year each restoration site team gained income for use in the restoration of their site via the sale of items such as scrap metal and logs. Membership increased by 55 to 1,324.

Herefordshire & Gloucestershire Canal (Sales) Ltd. did not have to cope with the bad weather of the last few years, but sales were still hard to come by as the recession took hold. Conversely the **Grand Holiday Draw** had excellent results with a profit of £2,750 and advertising within **The Wharfinger** generated just over £2,000. Attendance at the **National Waterways Festival** and **Crick Boat Show** is very expensive, but our presence keeps the H&G Canal, and the work of the H&G CT, in the public (and canal-world) eye. We shall continue to attend these and

other shows, but our team is very small and unless more volunteers come forward regrettably our presence at some local shows will not be possible in the future. During the year we were able to pass £3,000 to the Canal Trust. **Social Evenings** continue to be held at the Royal Oak, Much Marcle and a wide range of subjects were covered; attendance numbers have started to rise again and guests are welcome. Speakers' expenses continue to increase and will do so with the rise in petrol prices – a nominal charge and raffle assist in defraying costs.

In Gloucestershire our site at **Llanthony** has seen a lot of activity over the last year. A car parking area has been constructed and new fencing erected at various locations around the site. Work has continued with the clearance of scrub vegetation from the South East channel leading into the lock and the ongoing herbicide treatment programme to eradicate the Japanese Knotweed appears to have been successful in halting the spread of the plant. Some maintenance work has been carried out on the cottages and the outside toilet has been completely refurbished. The year at **Over Basin** started with a visit from specialist tree surgeons who, following an earlier professional assessment, undertook a major programme of tree maintenance around the site. Our gardening volunteers have been very busy planning, preparing and maintaining the more formal garden areas adjacent to **THE WHARF HOUSE**. Regular grass cutting around the site required significant volunteer hours; our ageing mowers having been skilfully kept in service by our mechanical team. Works to the entrance driveway were completed and bollards were installed. Our volunteers working on the B&B accommodation at **THE WHARF HOUSE** had an amazing 12 months – think of virtually any construction/finishing task associated with the fitting-out of a commercial building and they have successfully done it! Professional carpenters installed oak staircase cladding on the steel staircase – preparation of which had been another volunteer task. Tight budgets, looming deadlines (with some rooms already booked!) and the need to work with minimal disturbance to our customers dining on the ground floor just added to the challenges that were successfully overcome. For the **Oxenhall** team this has been a year of little jobs that have been put by until we had sufficient time available. Final minor repairs to the aqueduct are still ongoing but the rest of the time was spent on maintenance and vegetation management. The

canal bank by the cottage is now rebuilt using gabions and stop planks above the lock replaced. Unmanaged hedges have been laid and are already forming an impenetrable green barrier. The tractor had a few coats of paint and a full service.

In Herefordshire at **Aylestone Park** our volunteers completed a connecting path between the Aylestone Hill car park and footpaths on the Park. Planning for the slipway continued and successful bids were prepared and presented for grants towards construction costs. Two week-long Waterway Recovery Group (WRG) camps, together with our own volunteers, enabled the walls of the slipway to be built, 200m of canal-side path constructed and 4 picnic tables installed within the Park. Subsequent WRG weekends assisted our own volunteers to complete the slipway bar a small amount of ancillary work. The line of the Canal in Hereford at **Newtown Road** (which is owned by the H&G CT) was the subject of work for the first time during the year with vegetation and scrub being cleared and tidied. The team at **Yarkhill** had another good year with the summer months spent mowing and strimming to maintain the pleasant walks. Autumn and winter saw the initial levelling of the wild side completed, the stripping of vegetation from the canal bed, leak investigation at a culvert and the selective felling of trees followed by general site maintenance. An anonymous donation of a brand new ride-on mower was very gratefully received. Another successful Open Day, a Winter Walk and firewood sales produced over £500 toward site expenditure.

Our 'Heritage Boats' fleet of former British Waterways workboats was expanded by the arrival of the tug 'Renton' which was dry-docked for a week of intensive work on the hull and to check running gear. The engine was thoroughly checked/serviced, the cabin de-rusted, carefully prepared and base-coat painted. 'Alder' was kept in running order through the year getting a preparatory paint job on the cabin roof and sides plus new portholes. Deck boards were made and fitted by volunteers from the **Gloucester & District Model Boat Club**.

*The Council of Management thanks all of our volunteers for the splendid effort and hard work which has been undertaken on the various projects along the line of the Canal and all of those who have worked at **THE WHARF HOUSE**, on the boats, on our display and sales stand and to those who have assisted the H&G CT in many other ways during the year.*

Summary (abridged) Accounts will be available at the AGM or Members may obtain a full set by sending a large SAE to the Treasurer. The full accounts will also be available at the AGM.

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 available from Liz Connors. The forms must be completed, signed and returned to her so that they are received at least 48 hours prior to the commencement of the AGM.

Note regarding Agenda item No.6; one third of the Members of the Managing Council are required to stand down each year. All those standing down

(listed at 6. on p.19) are offering themselves for re-election unless otherwise stated. New volunteers to serve on the Council of Management are welcome; as reported in the last edition of **The Wharfinger** formal Nominations (on forms obtainable from the Treasurer) have to be received not less than 7 days nor more than 28 days prior to the AGM. The maximum size of the CofM is 18 and, unless new nominations bring the total in excess of this number, the above stated Members will be returned un-opposed. The CofM is also empowered to Co-opt Members during the year (subject to the maximum size not being exceeded).

MEMBERSHIP FORM

Please complete below and return this form to:

HEREFORDSHIRE & GLOUCESTERSHIRE CANAL TRUST
6 CASTLE STREET, HEREFORD HR1 2 NL

Name

Address

Post Code:

Telephone:

E-Mail:

New member

Renewal

Gift

Please help us to keep our subscriptions low and to accelerate our restoration progress by making a donation.

Subscription

£

Donation

£

Total payment

£

Thank You

GIFT AID: as a Registered Charity we can increase our income from subscriptions, and any donations, by almost one third provided you pay tax. If you DONT pay tax or DONT want us to do this tick this box.

Date:

/

/

Details of membership rates can be found on the inside back cover.

BANKERS ORDER

To: (Name and Address of Bank)

Sort Code:

My A/C No.

Signed Date

Please pay to account No. 11600694, Sort Code No. 16-21-20 of the Herefordshire and Gloucestershire Canal Trust at the Royal Bank of Scotland, 21 Broad St. Hereford, HR4 9AP, the sum of £ on this day and thereafter **annually** (on the anniversary) until further notice.

This instruction CANCELS any previous Annual Bankers Order in favour of the Canal Trust or former Society.

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.

June 26-27	Braunston Historic Boat Gathering
Aug 1	Herefordshire Country Show
Aug 14-15	Foxton Locks Festival
Aug 15	Yarkhill Open Day
Aug 28-30	National Waterways Festival, Beale Park near Reading
Sep 4	Alfrick Show
Nov 13	Winter Bazaar, Ledbury

Your
HELP
please!

We urgently need additional volunteers to help us at these interesting events. Please contact Janet Moulton (see inside back cover for Contact details).

Thank you.

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GRAND HOLIDAY DRAW 2010

HEREFORDSHIRE & GLOUCESTERSHIRE CANAL TRUST - H&G SALES
GRAND HOLIDAY DRAW 2010

1ST PRIZE NARROW BOAT HOLIDAY for FOUR

Donated by Black Prince Holidays

ONE WEEK PRIOR TO 5/1/11 Excluding Bank Holidays

2ND PRIZE ONE DAY'S BOAT HIRE on either the River

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excluding Boat Hire. Donated by H&G Boat Hire

3RD PRIZE TWO NIGHTS DINNER, BED & BREAKFAST

for TWO at THE WHARF HOUSE, Over, Gloucester.

Presented by H&G, Cavers, 118, Cheltenham Road, Ledbury, Herefordshire, HR1 3EP

and 20-30/9/10. Total value prior to £1,000.00 -

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Work at YARKHILL

By Chris High

The long and forced inactivity of Christmas, and the bad weather in January, took its toll on the Yarkhill Team and when work resumed our creaking bodies were not as willing to take their weekly exercise as usual!

Light work and a steady pace was the order of the day as we brought ourselves back to an acceptable level of fitness. The initial 'spring clean' tidying of the towpath, the removal of logs to the site hut, the strimming and raking of the far end canal bank and fires to get rid of the rubbish soon got us back into shape.

Early February saw weekend work carried out by a joint London and South-West WRG visit assisted by a contingent of the Yarkhill Team. The branches were removed from trees that had been previously felled across the canal, enabling the trunks to be hauled across to the wild side bank and further manoeuvred up the bank ably assisted by Sam our excavator. Logging up, log stacking and brush burning then followed. Many thanks for the efforts of all concerned which achieved the timely completion of the planned work by mid Sunday afternoon.

Subsequent Yarkhill work parties – now in full swing – concentrated on completing the



Top: Signs of new growth.

Below: WRGies hard at work!

Inset: Another load of logs about to be delivered.

Bottom left: Tim (WRG) and Ken (H&G) work together on the clearance of dead wood.

Bottom right: The end of the WRG weekend.



tidying of the towpath prior to moving to the wild side. More logging up, log stacking, brush removal and fires followed as the Team started to work its way down the wild side.

The site eventually dried out enough to get the pick-up out and for the accumulation of log orders to be delivered. *My thanks to our customers for their patience and for their contributions to Trust funds.*

We welcome Robin Nicol and Robert Comba who have recently joined us at Yarkhill. *Hopefully we didn't work them too hard and they will become regular volunteers!* Regrettfully Eileen Stevenson has had to give up her active restoration role. Thank you Eileen for your support. (See page 39)

Why don't you volunteer and come and help with our work at Yarkhill? We will make you very welcome, you will have some fun and it gets you/keeps you fit! Please contact Chris High on 01568 615575.

◆ CH



Top: The towpath bank cleared.

Below: The thaw gave us an excess of water.



Yarkhill Canal Walks

Sunday, August 15th, 2010

10.30 am–5.00 pm

from Yarkhill Village Hall – GR 600 436

Refreshments • Displays • Tombola • Sales

Guided Walks

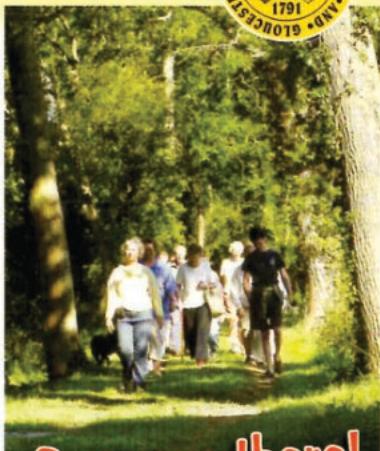
of 1½ hours at

- 10.45 am • 11.30 am
- 2.00 pm • 3.30 pm

Or enjoy a saunter at your own pace along the sign posted route. Even bring a picnic lunch. Volunteers at the canal to provide canal history and enthuse about our work.

Wellingtons if wet, else stout shoes.

Enquiries to Chris High, 53 Mill Street, Leominster HR6 8EB. 01568 615575.



See you there!

The Restoration Fund 2010

*In the last edition of **The Wharfinger** it was announced that in the current year the H&G CT's Restoration Fund would be allocated to the ongoing restoration of the H&G Canal Trust's boats – including our small 'heritage fleet' of ex. British Waterways boats ...*

At the moment our 'heritage fleet' includes the ex BW icebreaking tug **Renton** (collected from Marsworth on the Grand Union Canal last Easter by the Jones' family – see p.10 of *Ed 100*, for the story). **Renton** is kept in Gloucester Docks on the Waterways Museum site and in late May last year was taken to A&D Marine's dry dock on the Gloucester & Sharpness Ship Canal for a week of intensive work to clean and black the hull and check the running gear. Over the summer the engine was thoroughly checked and serviced and the cabin was de-rusted, carefully prepared and base-coat painted.

The second boat in the 'heritage fleet' is **Alder** – brought by road from Devizes to Over Canal Basin in October 2007 – the story of the move being told on p. 27 of *Ed 94* and of the initial stages of restoration in subsequent editions. The work completed included thoroughly cleaning the hull back to bare metal, some re-plating/repair of the hull, rust treatment, priming and blacking – inside and out. The running gear has been repaired/refurbished/renewed. The engine has been



thoroughly checked and serviced. Extensive preparation of upper steelwork and the hold and cabin, plus the initial paint job on the cabin roof and sides has been completed. New portholes have been fitted in place of (inappropriate) small rectangular windows. New deck boards have been made and fitted over the hold courtesy of **Gloucester and District Model Boat Club** – see their report on the following page.

There is plenty of interesting work still to do on both boats – *painting and carpentry skills would be particularly appreciated* – as both boats now need final topside paint jobs and hold floors fitting, and both cabins need attention. To get involved with our 'heritage fleet' please contact Caroline Jones on 01452 318224 (weekdays) or 01594 861286 (weekends) – you will be made very welcome!

A brief update on work on our small trip boat **Mr Maysey** is on p.16 – within the Over Update.

For further details of the Restoration Fund see p.16 of the last edition or please contact the Fund Secretary, Peter Lawrence, on 01684 564 075.



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MODEL BOAT CLUB at Over By Ted Tedaldi

The Gloucester & District Model Boat Club's Chairman, Ted Tedaldi, reports on their recent activities with boats (large and small) at Over – and the Boat Club's 'Dinner Ladies' get another mention . . . !

After our Christmas Hamper sailing Over Canal Basin was been frozen over until early February. One club member used his boat as an icebreaker to discover the ice was also a splendid paint remover!

Since restarting sailing the weather has been variable. The wind direction at Over is ridiculous, it can be uncontrollable and unpredictable. Very often you can sail downwind from either direction and then come to a stop outside the cabin. It is also possible to sail from the cabin when it is raining! Much testing of new sail boats has taken place.

Following agreement with Caroline Jones, H&G CT's heritage workboat 'fleet' manager, five of our members set to work and created a new removable deck for Alder's forward hold. The idea is that Alder can be towed to the bank sides and the weed removed from the canal edges. This should be easier than working from the sloping bank. If you



Model Boat Club members walk the plank?



Some of the Model Boat Club members who join us at Over. (Ted in the front.)

know of a spare horse just let us know! [We greatly appreciate the ongoing help of the Model Boat Club members – the hold cover was part of the planned work on Alder – with more yet to come. I suspect the provision of a key to start the engine might be the preferred solution rather than a horse! – Ed.]



The current weed situation in the canal is that it is dying back; we suspect due to the continually cold temperatures. Just before Christmas the Club obtained a large bale of barley straw, which was converted into smaller bales and placed in the canal. It is hoped that as this rots away it will check the new growth of blanket weed that was forming.

The growth of early flowers is at least a month behind this year – *at the time of writing spring has not arrived!* Sadly, we think the kingfisher and woodpeckers that we so enjoyed watching at Over may have succumbed to the hard winter; however, the rabbits have survived.

Early in the summer the club is hosting the Gloucester branch of The World Ship Society to a sailing evening. Our 'Dinner Ladies' could be in action again?

◆ TT

Cargill Meats Europe assist the H&G CANAL

By Jackie Bremner

In this edition our historical series of articles, based on Stephen Ballard's diaries and notebooks, reaches the point where the Canal was opened to Withington Wharf (see p.30). With excellent timing, one of Herefordshire's largest employers has just chosen the H&G Canal Trust to benefit from a £3,000 donation – to be spent in that area. The Company have issued the following press release: –

"The Herefordshire and Gloucestershire Canal Trust is celebrating after receiving a donation from local business Cargill Meats Europe. Following a rigorous application procedure, £3,000 has been awarded to the Canal Trust, to help towards the costs of restoring the Canal to a beautiful, navigable waterway for everyone in the two counties to enjoy.



Above: The Canal close to Withington Lock.

Yana Childs of Cargill Meats Europe commented: "We have decided to support three really exciting projects this year as part of our 50th anniversary. We selected each project on its individual merits and the Trust met our Cargill Cares Council criteria – health, environmental stewardship and innovation in education – in every area. What made the project stand out was the opportunity for our employees to volunteer and get involved themselves. The H&G Canal is a major feature of the local environment and landscape, and I



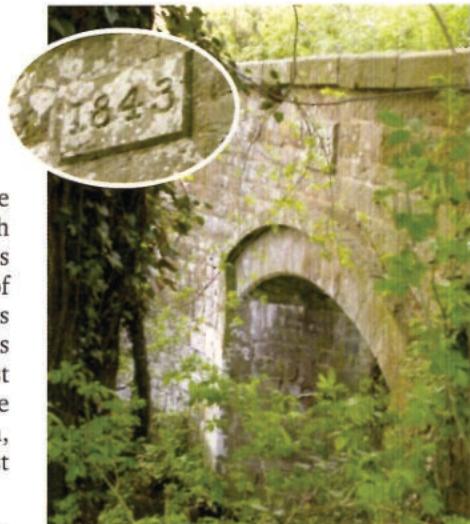
Below: The Wharfinger's House at Withington Wharf from which our magazine gets its name.

Inset: There is still some evidence of the original traditional signage on the side of the house.

can't think of a more deserving charity to celebrate our 50th anniversary 50 Good Deeds campaign with."

Withington Group Parish Council – the second Parish Council to become a Corporate Member of the Canal Trust – conducted a Parish Plan survey which revealed that 77 per cent of parishioners across Withington, Westhinde and Preston Wynne are aware of the H&G Canal and 63% support its' restoration. This overwhelming support from the local community is because the project will improve the area as a tourist attraction, enhance the local environment, create walking routes, attract more wildlife to the region, preserve and restore local heritage and perhaps most importantly, help towards alleviating local flooding.

It is hoped that around 30 homes in the Withington Marsh/Cross Keys area, which flooded in July 2007, will benefit directly from restoration of this section of the Canal. What's more, Cargill Meats Europe are helping the H&G Canal Trust to enhance a historically important geographical feature that has the potential to provide so much enjoyment to the people of Hereford.



The bridge by the lock.

Inset: Date plaque on the bridge.

Our very sincere thanks to those staff of Cargill Meats Europe who selected us for this award.

◆ Ed



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The Diaries of Stephen Ballard

Researched and written by Caroline Jones

PART FIVE

Stephen Ballard
(1804-1890)

Caroline has continued delving into the Ballard Collection at the Herefordshire Record Office for this, the fifth in her series of articles about the Civil Engineer who successfully promoted, planned and constructed the 'second phase' of the Canal - completing the line to Hereford. Before the Canal reached its ultimate terminus, however, completion as far as Withington Wharf was celebrated in a long day of frantic activity and celebrations ...

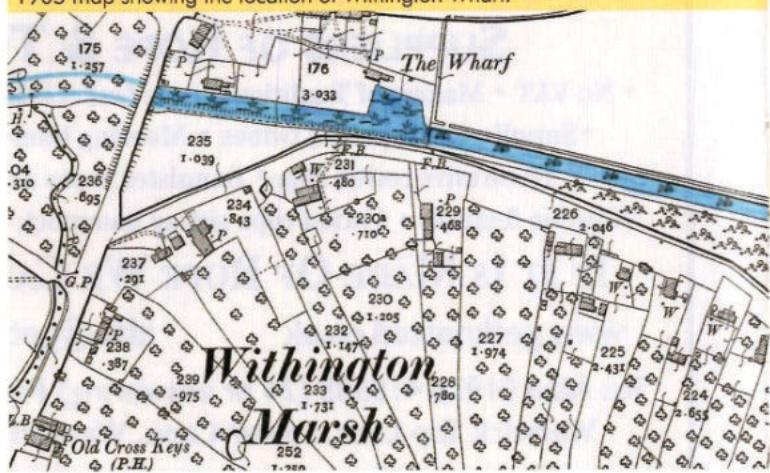
The H&G CT would like to thank our Member Rosemary Ballard (the wife of the late Stephen Ballard III) for her willing agreement to our publication of this series of articles and the staff of the Herefordshire Record Office for their assistance and co-operation.

We have now got to the opening of the canal to Withington which is recorded in Stephen's diaries but is in fact an account of the celebrations by another writer, who starts with a potted history of the canal so far; 50 years since the line to Ledbury opened. In 1838 the shareholders, along with Stephen Ballard, began a concerted effort to complete the line to Hereford and increase traffic on the section of already completed canal.

So when, in February 1844, the work had progressed as far as Withington Wharf there was "much celebration" and he records that the public dinner given to Stephen Ballard at the City Arms Hotel in Hereford (now Barclays Bank on Broad Street) was a "well-earned tribute of respect to the engineer" from the "landowners of the line and others interested". There then follows a detailed description of the dinner and surrounding events.

The day had started with two of the canal company's packet boats leaving Ledbury Wharf in the morning with over 70 gentlemen on board. A 2 hour trip brought them to Canon Frome Wharf, opened a month earlier, by when they had picked up yet more passengers (no Health and Safety concerns there then?). At Canon Frome other packet boats, a wide boat containing the "artillery" (which was a marching band) and 27 boats carrying all manner of goods joined the boats. This flotilla then proceeded to the terminus of the canal at Withington where there was "a neat house, the residence of the engineer, together with warehouses, weighing

1905 map showing the location of Withington Wharf.





"At Withington there were carts waiting to unload coal"

machine etc ... also a dock for the mooring of boats whilst loading". The writer described the scene as "extremely picturesque" and "peculiarly animating". At Withington there were carts waiting to unload coal and other carts loaded with wheat for "exportation"; fifty or more labourers had been working to complete the arrangements and the writer calculated that there were 3,000 spectators there to see the flotilla arrive, the towpath being "one dense mass of pedestrians as far as the eye could see".

A short shower of rain on their arrival in an otherwise fine and sunny day caused the gentlemen to delay getting out of the boats but they eventually all transferred into stage coaches supplied by Messrs Bosley of Hereford and drove to Hereford preceded by the artillery band. That afternoon the workers on the line of the canal were regaled with gifts of hogsheads of cider and the boat captains, gangers and foremen dined at the Cross Keys Inn at Withington (which still remains as a public house).

Back in Hereford the party was greeted with "utmost enthusiasm, and merry peals sent forth from the belfry of All Saints' Church" At the City Arms nearly 200 gentlemen sat down pay tribute to Stephen Ballard, among them were the Mayor of Hereford W. Webb, aldermen, town councillors, city magistrates, landowners, county merchants and "many of the most respectable inhabitants and tradesmen of Hereford and Ledbury", also present was WP Price, Thomas and Phillip Ballard and the editors of the various Hereford papers.



Photo: Cliff Penny

Withington as it looks today with the original canal cottages.

The meal itself was interspersed with toasts and speeches, of which there were very many, all of which were answered most courteously with a toast to someone else! We can only imagine what the hungry gentlemen must have thought of all these men effectively congratulating one another on their various achievements. The health was drunk of among others Stephen Ballard for his work on the canal; the Rev Mr Money and the committee; a Mr Thomas and his 'Herefordshire Hounds' and a Mr Kedward, both of whom had organised the dinner; Mr Taylor the assistant engineer; the Bishop and the Clergy; Mr Phillip Ballard; Mr William Price of Tibberton Court; Mr Richard Hereford and other landowners on the line of the canal; Mr Baylis of Ledbury described as 'the father of the canal'; the gentlemen of the press (each standing up in turn to give thanks!); traders who supported the canal including Mr Ledbitter of Droitwich Salt Works, Mr Tripp a Gloucester slate merchant and Messrs Bunning and Gibson canal carriers on the line, and the shareholders.

Many of the speeches given emphasised the importance of completing the line to Hereford, Mr Samuel Baker a member of the

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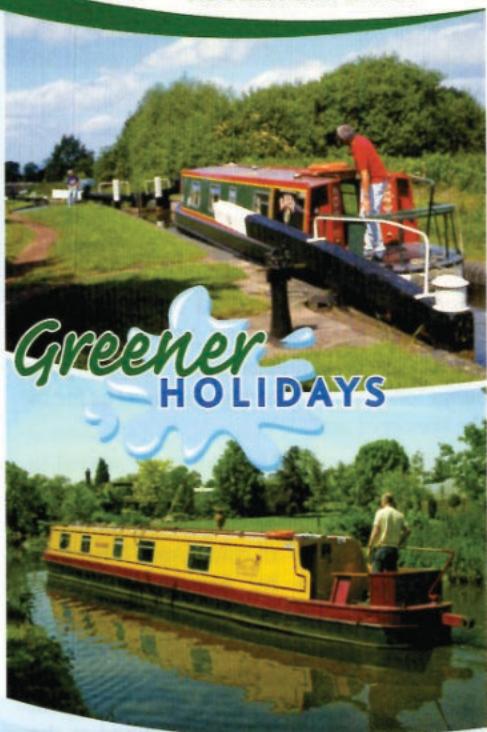
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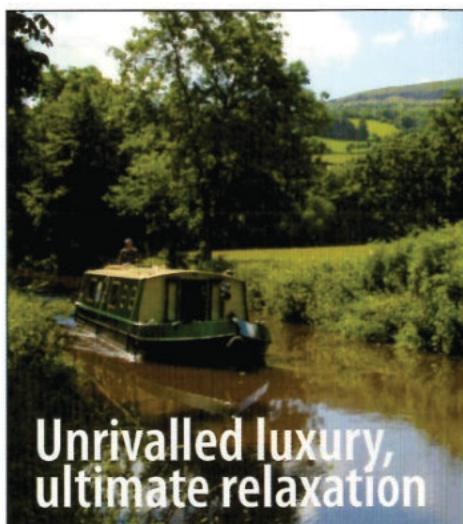
Canal Committee put it very well and I make no apology for transcribing his words here.

"I feel confident that this assembly will not rest satisfied until they see the terminus in Hereford. It is not in my power to say how or when that will be accomplished, but if all parties will put their shoulders to the wheel, it will be accomplished at no distant period (hear, hear.) and then this will have been "a proud day for Hereford" (cheers). Gloucester has become a seaport by the construction of a canal ... - Worcester is preparing itself for similar advantages, by an extensive improvement of the River Severn - and I trust that Hereford will no longer be isolated, but by completing the line of the canal to this spot, she also may share the benefits of those who are on the Severn sides (hear, hear). You will thus get a cheap and easy communication with all parts of the world (cheers). I have been delighted to witness this day the arrival of twenty-seven boats, by the canal, laden with goods, principally coal ... and to see ... wagon loads of wheat ... to be returned by the same boats, probably to those sterile surface soils of Staffordshire and Shropshire, which have yielded up their mineral wealth to you. Thus commencing a mighty interchange for the products of the rich and fertile land of this beauteous county. (Cheers). That, gentlemen, is the free-trade that I would advocate - an interchange of commodities within yourselves, by means of the cheap, conveyance which will be afforded to you by the completion of the canal to Hereford. (Hear, hear and loud cheering)."

Other speeches were longer, some (but not many!) were shorter, all were generally very congratulatory to everyone and it seems the evening went very well. It is reported as having been "spent in the most agreeable manner, the intervals between the speeches were enlivened by several excellent songs, and the company broke up about ten o'clock, evidently much pleased with the proceedings of the day, and in joyous anticipation of the completion of the line to Hereford".

The confidence of the assembled party was obvious, they all absolutely knew that the canal would be a roaring success and would make their fortunes and those of the City of Hereford and all the towns and villages it passed on the way! But they didn't anticipate the railway, did they?

In the next article we will cover the completion of the Canal to Hereford and take a look at Stephen Ballards railway interests.



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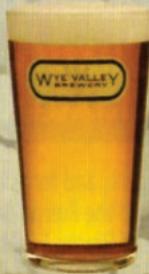
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The Wharfinger Advertising Co-ordinator

The role of **Advertising Co-ordinator** is becoming vacant solely because the current post holder, Colin Dymott, wishes to retire – something that even volunteers do eventually – **have a happy 80th birthday, Colin!**

Be a part of a small and highly successful team – *and see the results of your voluntary work within months!* The role of volunteer Advertising Co-ordinator is a key part of the team who produce **The Wharfinger** four times a year. The current print run is some 2,100 copies. Whilst the magazine is professionally printed all content is written, edited and designed by H&G CT volunteers to produce a 40 page (plus covers) full colour magazine that is highly regarded within the inland waterways system. The income from our advertisers (a record-breaking £2,086 last year) plays a significant part* in enabling us to meet the costs of producing and distributing the magazine. *We thank them most sincerely for their ongoing support.*

- The role is well established with excellent systems and contacts already in place.
- Prior knowledge of advertising is not required.
- Full support will be given when required and Colin will willingly guide the new postholder/s through preparation of the next issue.
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- Can be undertaken by an individual or a couple.
- The successful postholder/s will be happy communicating with people and possess at least basic word-processing and e-mail skills. Some telephone contact with advertisers during the working day is essential at times.

The role includes:-

- Liaison with our existing and potential advertisers with the objective of maintaining the current level of advertising within our magazine from a range of local and national businesses.
- The issuing of invoices as appropriate and monitoring the receipt of payment.
- Liaison within **The Wharfinger** team which comprises the Editor, Cliff Penny and Maggie Jones (Design and Production). The post also involves liaison with the Treasurer, Liz Connors.

Essential expenditure reimbursed if requested – subject to compliance with H&G CT Policy.

Interested? Colin Dymott will be pleased to discuss the role (01981 540 488) as will Cliff Penny (01432 820 866). We are aiming to fill the vacancy by 30th June – so please do get in touch as soon as possible. You will be made very welcome.

*[*The additional cost of printing in full colour throughout the magazine being made possible thanks to the generous and much appreciated ongoing sponsorship of this part of the print cost by Print Plus – for which we are equally grateful.]*

◆ CRP

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THE OAK INN





Working with Nature

By John Chappell

Each Tuesday when our regular contributor, John Chappell, sets off to join fellow volunteers at Oxenham he ensures that he has his camera with him. Many passers-by would miss the wonders of nature that John captures for us in his excellent photographs. His knowledge and thorough research then combines to produce yet another informative article recording the diverse wonders of nature at Oxenham - anyone for a salad ... ?



Photos: John Chappell

The Cuckoo Flower or Lady's Smock
Cardamine Pratensis

The Cuckoo Flower or Lady's Smock is a welcome sight in late spring, supposedly heralding the arrival of the cuckoo.

Botanically *Cardamine pratensis* (pronounced kar-dam-i-ne) this plant is a member of the cress family known as brassicas or crucifers, the latter so called because their four petals are arranged in a cross. Other members of the family include Cabbage, Radish, Turnip and Mustard.

The plant is 20-50cm in height with narrow long leaves and clusters of delicately scented, pale violet to sometimes almost white, flowers on each stem in late spring or early summer.

Cuckoo flowers enjoy moist or even wet habitats and are found in damp grasslands, roadsides, ditches and river banks, they will even survive in winter-waterlogged soil so the site at Oxenham suits them well!

As well as being an important larval host and nectar source for the Green-Veined White and Orange Tip butterflies the leaves and young shoots, raw or cooked, are rich in vitamin C. Harvested in spring and used as an alternative to watercress the leaves have a similar, if slightly bitter, flavour. The flowers too make a pleasant nibble and are a delicious and attractive addition to salads.

My herbal says it warms a cold and weak stomach, restores lost appetite and helps digestion - we must add it to our sandwiches!

A close-up of the flower



I have tried in vain to collect seed from the plants at Oxenham

but it quickly ripens and disperses between one Tuesday and the next! Seed is, however, available commercially. Double forms crop up from time to time and have been selected and offered by nurserymen but I much prefer the single form which makes a welcome addition to the garden.

JC

Cryptic Quiz – winners

Our intrepid quiz master, Steve Bence, reports on the outcome of his second successful H&G CT fundraising quiz.

Many thanks to all who entered our winter edition H&G Brain Teaser, and also for the generous additional donations received, as a result of which a total of £161 was raised for the Trust's Restoration Fund.

Although most of you managed to solve the majority of the cryptic clues, the two teasers that stumped many folk were: "One hundred barkers" = Woofferton, an aqueduct on the long defunct Leominster Canal, and "King hides in a Wilts & Berks branch" = Wrantage, a boat lift on the oft forgotten Chard Canal.

However, in a high-scoring contest, eight all-correct entries (that's 80 out of 80!) were received. All were put into a hat and our Chairman pulled out the overall winner:-

Roger McNae, from Ledbury.

His prize was a limited edition canal print by celebrated Artist on the Waterways, Sylvia Hankin.

Well done to the other seven who also achieved a maximum score:-

Roger Butcher, St Martins, Oswestry, Shropshire

John Haines, Corfe, Taunton, Somerset

Graham Horn, Reading, Berkshire

Roy Kenn, Walsall, West Midlands

Will Frecknall, Ross-on-Wye, Herefordshire

Richard Thomas, Hoddesdon, Hertfordshire

Dave Wedd, Blackwater, Camberley, Surrey

So Congratulations Roger, and thanks again to all who took part.

◆ SB

As can be seen from the winners list entries were received from all over the country. Our thanks, once again, to Steve Bence for his painstaking research in compiling yet another interesting and challenging quiz, for sponsoring the print costs of the quiz sheet and donating the prize - Ed.

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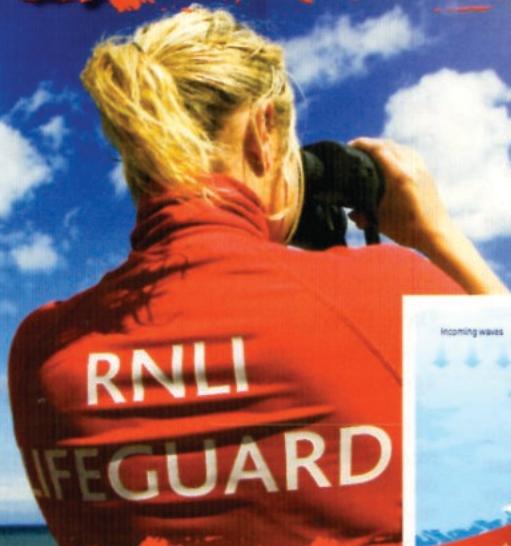
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As our regular readers will be aware, Caroline Jones serves as the Inland Waterways Association's Nominee on the H&G CT's Council of Management, is a regular contributor to these pages and manages (and is actively involved with the restoration and maintenance of) our small 'heritage fleet' of boats. In her 'day job' Caroline has recently been promoted to the post of acting Curator at the Waterways Museum in Gloucester Docks - congratulations Caroline.

◆ CRP

*Congratulations
CAROLINE!*

Bottles

Your
HELP
please!

Hopefully winter is still some time away - but our volunteers are already organising this year's Winter Bazaar (to be held on Saturday November 13th at St Katherine's Hall, Ledbury).

We are repeating last year's very successful bottle stall and need your help, please, with the donation of (full!) bottles. *Bottles of all shapes, sizes and contents will be equally and gratefully received.* They can be brought to the monthly Social Evenings or we will do our best to arrange collections of larger quantities - please contact Janet Moulton.

◆ PS

Yarkhill Volunteer Retires

The Yarkhill Team were sad to hear that our most senior volunteer, Eileen Stevenson, had decided to retire from active canal restoration work. Eileen joined the team back in January 2006 and has seldom missed a Thursday work party since. "To be of use" was what motivated Eileen - and she most certainly was!

We will miss you, Eileen and keep you to your promises to call in for lunch now and again to monitor our progress, and to recruit at least one replacement volunteer at our Open Day in August. Many thanks from all the Team.

◆ CH



Eileen, left, fills sandbags at Yarkhill.

Photo: Chris High

Stan Holland Collection

**FOR
SALE**

The well known historian and writer Stan Holland has decided to dispose of his extensive collection of waterways memorabilia. Most of it will be auctioned by London specialists Dix Noonan and Webb at three of their auctions over the coming months. One of the lots on the 30th September is an H&G share certificate issued to Thomas Ballard, Stephen's brother, on 2 December 1839.

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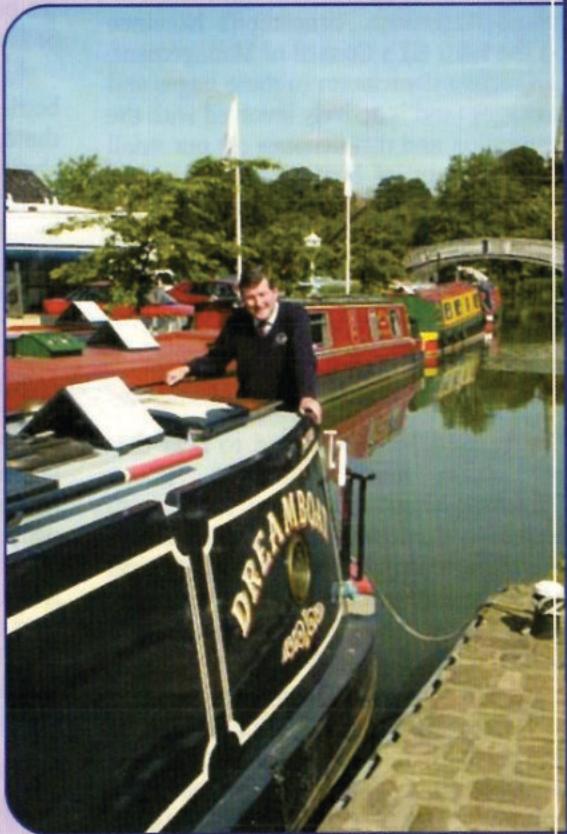
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The Wharfinger

The Herefordshire & Gloucestershire Canal

Work started in 1792 but was not completed until 1845, making this the last major route built in Britain, but for the navigations of Birmingham and the Manchester Ship Canal. The canal stretched for 34 miles from the River Severn at Gloucester, via Newent, Dymock and Ledbury to the city of Hereford, utilising some 22 locks and 3 tunnels. The Canal was formally closed in 1881 to allow construction of the Ledbury to Gloucester railway which in its turn was closed by Dr Beeching in 1964.

The Canal Trust

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

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



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