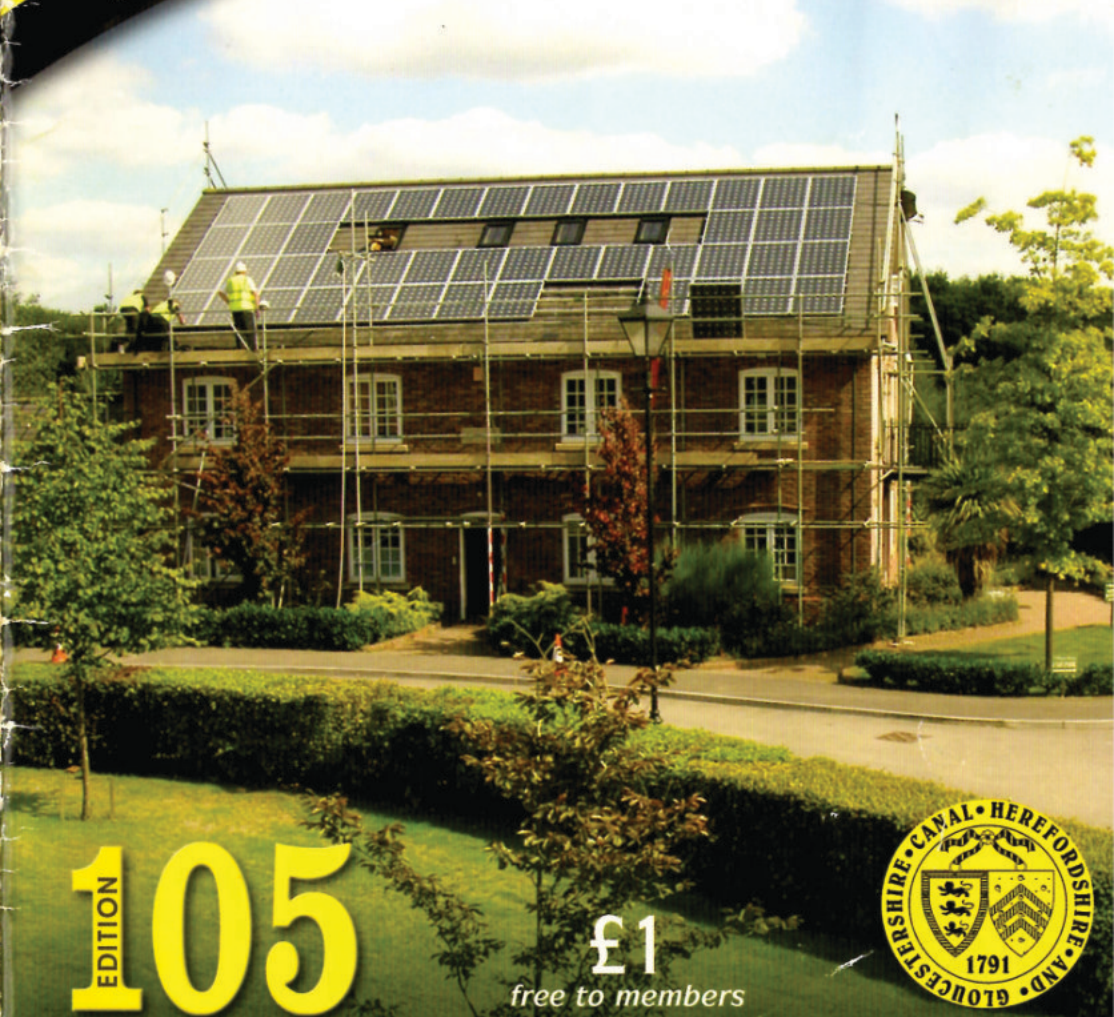


The

Wharfinger

Autumn 2010

Magazine of the Herefordshire and Gloucestershire Canal Trust



EDITION
105

£1

free to members



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

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*Working together in the present to revive
the past and secure a better future. ©*

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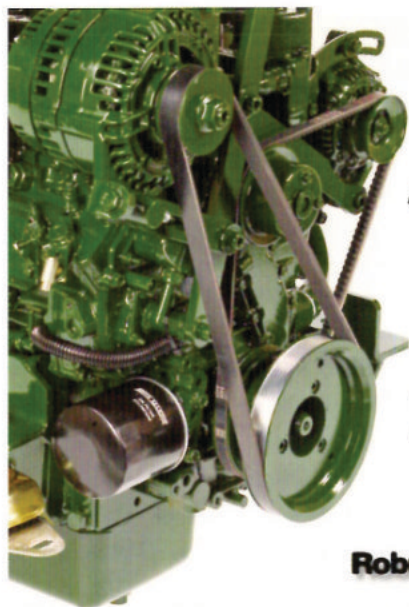
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Front Cover: Photovoltaic Cells are installed on
the roof of The Wharf House: Chris Byrne



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Chairman's Column from Janet Moulton



Another AGM has just taken place – it was good to see familiar faces and to meet some new members. Although only a small proportion of the membership (currently over 1300) were at the meeting – those that were there could appreciate the complexity of running a Charity with two Trading Companies and the work that is put in by the Treasurer.



The slide show after the AGM gave an insight into the many tasks taken on by our volunteers. Canal restoration is not only building slipways, clearing towpaths and playing with “big toys”! Our Llanthony Lock Cottages need maintenance and upgrading, the boats need maintenance, interior decorating skills were needed for ^{THE} WHARF HOUSE Bed and Breakfast rooms and the Trading Company travels around the country to shows big and small.

The latter can be a logistical nightmare at times. The only show where we hire a van is the ‘National’ (not inexpensive – would any one like to sponsor part of the cost?) For all other shows displays, stock, etc and sometimes the gazebo has to be packed into cars. Now that I hold the stock it does mean that everything is in one place – our spacial awareness is improving!

One of the shows we attended recently was the Braunston Historic Boats Rally where we received a donation of £200 from Tim Coghlan of **Braunston Marina**. Many thanks for your continued support of the H&G Tim, it is greatly appreciated.

Another group of volunteers which I must mention is our “hand deliverers”. Most of you receive **The Wharfinger** by post but over 300 individual, and another 300 bulk copies, are hand delivered at a considerable saving. I take batches to members in both counties for onward delivery. A number of these I leave in porches, dustbins or at the backdoor and rarely see the deliverer – others include a cup of tea and a catch up on their news. [That dustbin option has me a bit worried – Ed.] I shall shortly be studying the current membership list to see if there are other pockets we could cover as I am sure postage rates will go up again soon.

By the time you receive this issue we will have attended a new show at Foxton Locks, the ‘National’ at Beale Park, Reading, and Yarkhill will have held their Open Day.

We will be getting ready for the Triple Open Day at Over, Llanthony and Oxenhall at the end of the month.

I look forward to meeting as many of you as possible at the Gloucestershire Triple Open Day and at other events.

♦ Janet Moulton, Chairman



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New Opportunities

The economy continues to be debated in the media almost daily, with diverse opinions as to how and when there will be significant improvements.

One of many indicators used by numerous experts in their assessment of the state of the nation's recovery is the construction sector and the number of new residential and industrial developments commenced each quarter. One of the effects of the economic downturn was the swift and very significant reduction in the number of new starts in the construction sector. This, in turn, impacts on the potential that we have to progress partnerships to the benefit of both the landowner/developer and the canal. However, new opportunities will present themselves when the construction sector recovers and we look forward to negotiating new partnerships (and progressing those that are currently awaiting better times).


Strategic planning policies form an essential part of the process that assists us in delivering the restored canal as a lasting asset for the local community and visitors – as well as providing an important ongoing contribution to the local economy. Whilst new development might have appeared to be at a virtual standstill, that is changing behind the scenes and the need for 'protective' and 'supportive' policies remains so that we are ready for the economic recovery.

Herefordshire Council are required to produce a Local Development Framework and have recently published a 'follow-on consultation' showing their Draft Preferred Options for a number of market towns – including Ledbury. This will ultimately form part of the Core Strategy setting out long-term planning objectives for the area.

The longest section of the canal where we need to run along a new route is at Ledbury. We welcome the reinforcement by the Council of their long-established planning policies relating to the canal corridor with their specific proposals for this essential diversion route for the H&G Canal. The new canal will run parallel to the bypass (on our proposed route) to form an enhanced linear park embracing both the canal and the River Leadon. Some 700 new homes are planned in a single urban extension to the north of Ledbury railway viaduct. Specific policies require the developer/s of the housing to 'facilitate' the reconstruction/construction of the canal with contributions for the provision of land for the canal as well as funding the actual construction of the canal and making provision for the maintenance of the canal in perpetuity.

By working together with **Herefordshire Council, Ledbury Town Council** and potential developers we need to ensure that these important planning policies are translated into detailed plans that, when the development proceeds, deliver the maximum from the canal and for the canal in this area – to the benefit of all concerned.

Welcome to Martyn Hake, our new volunteer Advertising Co-ordinator; given his expertise I am confident that he will soon be seeking 'new opportunities' for **The Wharfinger!** (See page 39).

Sunday 26th September will be a **Triple Open Day** at our Gloucestershire restoration sites. **THE WHARF HOUSE** will be celebrating the 10th anniversary of the reconstruction of Over Basin on the Saturday and Sunday with a local beer, cider and perry Festival. *Why not join us for tapas on the terrace and a glass of something local – and toast the achievements of all our volunteers?* (See page 7.)  **CRP**



Annual General Meeting – report

Held on Tuesday, 20th July, at The Royal Oak, Much Marcle

The meeting opened with a welcoming address by our Chairman, Janet Moulton, in which she reviewed the many events over the period from March 2009 to February 2010 and thanked all our volunteers for all their hard work during that time.

Nigel Jefferies, our Membership Secretary, was pleased to report an increase in our membership figures and Liz Connors, Treasurer and Company Secretary, followed with a comprehensive breakdown of the Trust's accounts.

Caroline Jones and David Penny were re-elected to the Council of Management and Wilf Jones offered himself for appointment as a Director, having sat on the Council for the past twelve months. Ralph Barber, a volunteer from the Yarkhill restoration team, was nominated as a new co-opted member of the Council of Management.

Reports from each restoration site were given after the formal meeting and accompanied with a Powerpoint presentation by Ted Beagles. Each of the site leaders spoke to the photos giving Members an update of the work that had happened along the canal route and the opening of the bedrooms at ^{THE} WHARF HOUSE. Janet Moulton reported on the Trading Company stands at various events both locally and around the country.

♦ MJ

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Refreshments

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tug boat, **ALDER**

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Events on the Water

CANAL TRIPLE OPEN DAY!

A chance to
visit three of
our restoration
sites in one day!

**Sunday, 26th
September**
11 am – 4.30 pm

Oxenhall

See the restoration of
House Lock and
Ell Brook Aqueduct
and the stretches of
adjoining Canal.

Llanthony Lock

Join a guided tour to Llanthony
and view the work being done
around the old river lock.

FREE ADMISSION
to all three sites

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During early July we had an excavator, dumper and ride-on roller on site to carry out major improvements. Our volunteers have completely resurfaced the whole of the compound area with road planings, built a gravel access road to the Severn Trent sewage pumping station, put in a new path from the flood plain to the grassy area by the lock and have undertaken numerous bits of 'tidying things up' around the site.

Throughout the spring and early summer all the vegetation has been growing rapidly, and much time is spent keeping it under control, with all the refurbished mowing equipment working very hard. We recently planted 3 large container grown trees on the border between the canal land and housing development which has required a significant watering effort during the hot weather.

The hot and dry weather has also seen the canal level falling over recent weeks; but thanks to **SPP Pumps**, of Coleford, we now have the loan of an excellent pump which is more than up to the job of keeping the canal topped up with water. (See page 28.) Work on restoration of the old 6 inch pump continues and, with the help of manufacturer Andrews-Sykes, a big step forward was made recently when we had the engine running for the first time. Not very well I admit, but it has revealed parts of the fuel system that needed further attention, and enthusiasm to carry on the job is now rejuvenated.

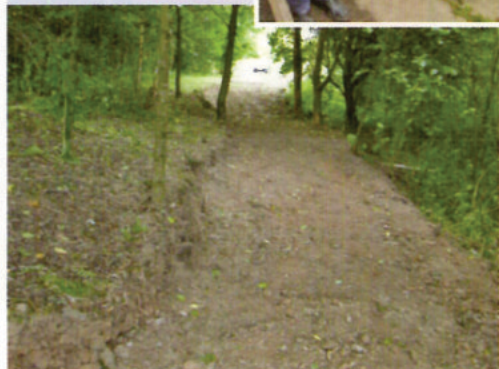


Top: The resurfaced compound.

Above: The new gravel access to the pumping station.

Right: Dave Hurran studies details of the new outboard motor.

Below: The new path from the lock to the flood plain.



We have recently taken delivery of a new Honda outboard engine for Mr Maysey (funded by ^{THE} WHARF HOUSE) and are working to have the boat ready for when Over Canal Basin celebrates its tenth anniversary and takes part in the H&G CT's Gloucestershire Triple Open Day on Sunday 26th September. (See page 7.)

We welcome Simon McFarland to the Wednesday gang whilst he is searching for a new job. The average age of the group was reduced dramatically when he became a regular member! ◆ TB

Around the Lock

During the lovely weather, we have continued working on the 'bar celler' outside on the terrace, whilst continuing to maintain and carry out alterations on the gardens surrounding ^{THE} WHARF HOUSE. We have also tackled the brambles around Over Lock to, once again, reveal the original lock walls and keep the area as a feature at the end of the terrace (until it is restored!). ➔



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The Wharf House Fit-out

Following completion of the final touches by our volunteers our sixth room – *Withington* – has now been opened for customers to enjoy the lovely summer weather. Work has been ongoing to complete the Manager's flat, whilst maintaining the restaurant and the rest of the building.

Some very professional looking new electric induction hobs and an oven have been installed in ^{THE} WHARF HOUSE kitchen, following a small localised fire within the previous gas hob/oven. Thankfully the small fire was contained, and extinguished very quickly by the well trained staff, and only the cooker suffered damage.

As we go to press the long-awaited installation of the photovoltaic panels on the roof begins – scaffolding has been erected around the building. The photovoltaic panels not only further our green aspirations but also helps protect us from long term increases in electricity prices. They also meet our wider objective for the Canal Trust to become as independent and self supporting as possible in the long term. Whilst the scaffolding is in position the outside of the windows and soffit boards have been given a fresh coat of paint.



Photo: Chris Byrne

Scaffolding up and the photovoltaic panels are installed on the roof of The Wharf House.

Open Day and Beer Festival

Preparation is on-going at Over for the Canal Basin's tenth anniversary and the H&G CT's Gloucestershire Triple Open Day on Sunday, 26th September. We are growing the event from last year; over the weekend there will be a two-day – **Tapas, Beer, Cider and Perry Festival** with the Open Day on the Sunday. The Open Day itself will also be larger with two 12 x 6 metre marquees, so more to see, do and enjoy. (See page 7.) Please make a note in your diary – we are all keeping our fingers crossed for good weather! *We hope that you can attend and enjoy this special occasion with us all and look forward to seeing you.* ♦ CB



Photos: Barrie Haysman

Some reminders of last year's event.



Restoration at OXENHALL By Brian Fox

The lack of rainfall has meant that we are now able to get the wellies on and paddle around in the brook beneath the aqueduct without fear of getting a bootful. The stonework of the last wing-wall has now been completed and should continue to protect the foundations of the aqueduct from scouring during periods of flood for another 200 years.

Maintenance work under the arch itself is a bit more of a challenge and we are finding that water seeping through the stonework from the canal above makes it very difficult to get new mortar or concrete to set. Stainless steel pins are being inserted into the cavities using quick drying resin and temporary formers made of thin sheets of plywood are then fixed in place using masonry nails. Stones mortared in place are then set in position behind the former, which is in the sloping sides or underside of the arch, and then fingers are crossed while we leave everything in position until we come back the next Tuesday and take down the plywood. The process will be repeated week by week until all the holes are filled. We have even been given some especially made bat bricks to insert in the underside of the aqueduct – which apparently are very popular with passing bats as temporary roosts.

The low water has enabled us to remove several more large stones, including a coping stone, from the bed of the brook. This stone must have been on top of one of the 4 buttresses to the old railway bridge. It was uncovered several months ago when there was some heavy rain and it is possible there are 3 more still waiting to be found. It must weigh at least 300lbs and the task of recovery would have been impossible without our tractor. *We are not sure what we will do with it yet; it will be put to good use one day!*

The fire in the old Willows Nursery area



Ian building the wing wall to the Aqueduct.

reported last time revealed that there was no longer a feature marking the boundary between our neighbour apart from 2 rusty metal posts. It seemed like too good an opportunity to miss and we quickly set to and have now rectified this omission. We just happened to have available several posts which were cut from some of the trees recently pulled out at the other end of the former Nursery and some rolls of wire left over from our gabion work last year. So about 40 yards of new fencing have now been erected.

Another large willow has fallen on our land, this time in the wood below the old Willows Nursery. It is not clear what caused



The coping stone in Ell Brook.

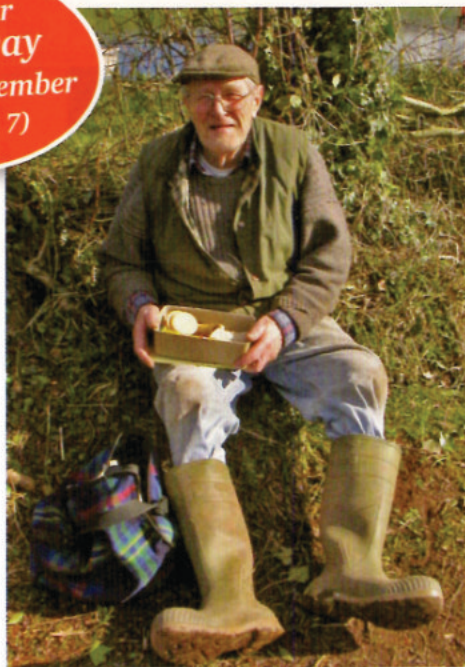
its demise but it could be the excessive amount of ivy growing on it has made it top heavy. Luckily it is not in a public area and there was no danger of anyone being injured but it had blocked our route through the site and down to the old railway station so it was decided best to move it. Bernard somewhat reluctantly dug his chain saw out of its summer hibernation in the shed and set to. Our access is now clear once again and there is another pile of willow logs to get rid of.

Finally, our senior volunteer, Dave Mordaunt, has decided to call it a day as he was finding it all a bit too much. We reported on our celebrations for his 90th birthday last year – he can now have a lie in on Tuesdays! Dave does walk the towpath regularly, as he says “to keep an eye on things”, and pops in for a chat occasionally. He stopped by yesterday with a bag full of rubbish which he had just collected on his walk. *We shall miss his input and enthusiasm for the job and wish him well in his final retirement.*

If you would like to get involved on a Tuesday at Oxenhall you will be made very welcome – *for more details please give me (Brian Fox) a call on 01432 358 628.*



Visit our
Open Day
26th September
(see page 7)

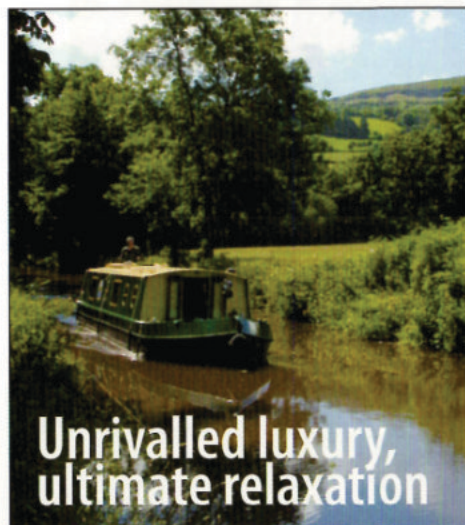


Dave Mordaunt



A swan on the man-made island.

Photos: Brian Fox and John Chappell



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LLANTHONY LOCK

By Paul Henshaw

Visit our
Open Day
26th September
(see page 7)



The last few months has seen much effort expended in keeping down the vegetation either by strimming or by scything(yes some old skills are still being nurtured so much so that we might enter Alan McBride in the National Scything Championships next year.) We have also been logging cordwood for resale.

A start has been made renewing the fencing from the top of the lock down to the Severn along what is affectionately known as the North West Passage. This has involved reclaiming old concrete posts from the original fence line and re-siting them in a new position. Double gates are being constructed by volunteers and these will be installed to allow the future access of plant and machinery onto the site. Fencing between the two cottages has also been replaced in line with our objective of improving their general appearance.

The Japanese Knotweed is gradually being brought under control as the accompanying photographs show, comparing this year with the same period last year. The garden by the entrance to the footbridge, developed by Wendy Henshaw, has attracted much favourable comment especially from our neighbours.

We extend a very warm welcome to 2 new volunteers, Charles Kent and Simon Mcfarland. *If you wish to join our team , please give me, Paul Henshaw, a ring on 01684 292997.* ♦♦ PH

Above: Ted with new vounteers Charles and Simon re-siting fence posts.

Below: Japanese Knotweed this year compared with last year.

2009



2010



Photos: Alan McBride

Llanthony Osiers

By Alan McBride

Some H&G CT volunteers may dream of supplying cups of tea or tankards of ale to passing narrowboats. At Llanthony Lock our volunteers also look forward to seeing baskets and fencing panels made of home-grown willow being transported along the canal!



New willow plantation.



After we'd cleared large quantities of bracken and other weedy shrubs from between the lock and the weir at the Llanthony site, it seemed a good idea to consider what we could grow instead. The area is clearly well watered; bores and even fairly high tides flood the ground. Despite this, the soil does not stay water-logged – so an osier (willow) plantation was thought ideal.

Mike Bowden, a long standing volunteer at Over, has planted and maintained a very productive osier nursery at the Over site. We sought his advice and were very grateful for his ideas, encouragement and, especially, for the "starter pack" of willow whips that he gave us.

The four-foot whips of six different varieties were planted through two layers of black membrane after we'd cleared all the weeds that we could see. The varieties range from the vigorous shiny green Chinese "Super Willow" to the Leentjes Purple. Some are suitable for baskets; others are normally used to make living sculptures and fences.

So, after six weeks all the cuttings seem to have taken, some producing catkins, others stems in beautiful shades of red, orange and purple. In a couple of years we'll have whips a-plenty for ornamental and practical craft use. Now, where are all those narrow boats?

◆ AMcB

Above and inset: Garden at the entrance to the site at Llanthony.

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The Presdees and Llanthony Lock House

By Caroline Jones

Last September, during our Gloucestershire Triple Open Day (at Llanthony Lock, Over Basin/The Wharf House and Oxenhall) Mrs Chris Fletcher visited Llanthony and offered to pass on details of her grandfather, and other members of the Presdee family, who had a long and distinguished association with the River Severn and Llanthony Lock. Caroline Jones, who had already received some details from another family member, takes up the story . . .

Mr Henry Presdee was a River Severn man through and through. His father William was a Worcester born longboat owner and his grandfather had mastered longboats on the Severn before him. Henry spent all his working life on the River, serving with the Severn Commission for 43 years. Henry's connection with the Herefordshire & Gloucestershire Canal is through his connection with Llanthony Lock; he was the last lockkeeper there (and lived in the Lock House twice!).

Henry Presdee was born on Alney Island in 1866 beginning his career on the Severn aged 14 when he joined his father William as crew on the family owned longboat Louisa, he did this for 5 years and at the age of 19 took charge of barges carrying coal and grain on the river. Henry left the boats to work for the Severn Commission in 1901, firstly at Tewkesbury Upper Lode Lock and then at Llanthony lock where he moved into the Lock House in 1905 and worked for 19 years as the lock keeper until its closure in 1924. He then went on to work at Holt Lock near Worcester until his retirement in 1945 when he went to live with his son, also called Henry, back at Llanthony Lock House. Henry Presdee jr. was living there in his capacity as Gloucester Lock Superintendent. Henry Presdee sr. died in 1948, aged 82.



Henry Presdee Senior 1865 – 1948



Henry's son, Henry James Presdee, known as Harry, also had a long career on the River Severn. Having been born in a lock house in 1886 and moved to Llanthony Lock with his family in 1905 he began working for the Severn Commission in 1910. Harry's first post was as an engineer and driver on the Commission's dredgers and its launch 'Dawn'. During the 1914-1918 war he was enlisted into the Royal Navy and spent the war years working on minesweepers, on demob he returned to work with the Commission and became the assistant toll clerk for Gloucester Lock and assistant lock keeper with his father living at Llanthony Lock. He went on to become the toll clerk at Gloucester. While living at Llanthony Lock Harry would act as the flood warning for the City of Gloucester reporting to civic officials any dangerous rises or threatening outlooks of river levels. The big Severn flood of 1947 very nearly left the Presdee family at Llanthony Lock House high but not dry; the house did not in fact flood but was very much left on its own small island with only the railway bridge for access. ➔

Presdee family boating at Llanthony



Llanthony in flood in 1947.



Henry James Presdee (Junior) born 1886

Photos: The Presdee family/Gloucester Waterways Museum.

In 1948 the Severn Commission was incorporated into the British Transport Commission's Docks and Inland Waterways Executive and Harry became the Lock Superintendent at Gloucester, a post he held until his retirement in 1956 at the age of 70. Harry had worked on the River Severn for 46 years and had lived at Llanthony Lock House for 51 years. On his retirement Harry and his wife moved out of the Lock House and went to live in Matson, Gloucester. Harry Presdee died in his 80s.

Henry James Presdee retires in 1956 as reported in the Gloucester Citizen

I am indebted to Harry's granddaughter and granddaughter-in-law for the information they have given to us in the form of newspaper cuttings, photographs and extracts from the census returns for Gloucester about the Presdees which have enabled this article to be written.

◆ CJ



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There was a real buzz around the Museum at Easter, with good news on the financial front, the opening of a new gallery and plenty of visitors. After losing money for two years, it was good to hear that in the financial year just ending, income had marginally exceeded expenditure. This was the result of a significant reduction in paid staff, the support of local organisations and the recruitment of a good number of regular volunteers working in the shop, in the office and on site services.

It was also good to see the Roses & Castles gallery open again on Level 3, thanks to sterling work by archivist and acting curator Caroline Jones and her volunteers. Unfortunately, the good feeling did not last long as visitor numbers in May were down on last year when we benefited from the Tall Ships Festival but now suffer the adverse effects of the major public realm work around the Victoria Dock which has made parking in the docks more difficult. Hopefully, numbers will pick up again later in the season.

Around the same time, it was announced that the Museum was to be given a new name – the Gloucester Waterways Museum. This is partly to recognise that without qualified staff, it is not proper to use National in the title, and partly to recognise the huge input from volunteers and from local organisations that has helped to balance the books. In due course, it is hoped that the Museum exhibits will evolve to give more emphasis to local waterways, including the Herefordshire & Gloucestershire Canal, but at present it is difficult even to find the



Photo: Hugh Conway-Jones

money to display the changed name on the building!

During the summer, working parties have been clearing the jungle of bushes, brambles and weeds that have grown up around the Museum's off-site store near Hempsted Bridge. As much of this growth was right alongside the canal water, it was really helpful to have the use of H&G CT's Renton to provide a safe work platform and to have help from some of the H&G Llanthony Lock volunteers who have become experts in this kind of work.

Just as this issue goes to press the Friends of the Museum are planning to raise some money for the Museum's steam dredger by running duck races on Bank Holiday Monday 30th August. Numbered plastic ducks will be placed in one of the dredger's buckets to be carried up to the top of the tower and tipped out on to a target on the quayside. The person who has sponsored the duck that ends up nearest to the centre of the target will win a prize; it should be quite a spectacle!

◆ HC-J

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.



The Royal Oak, Much Marcle

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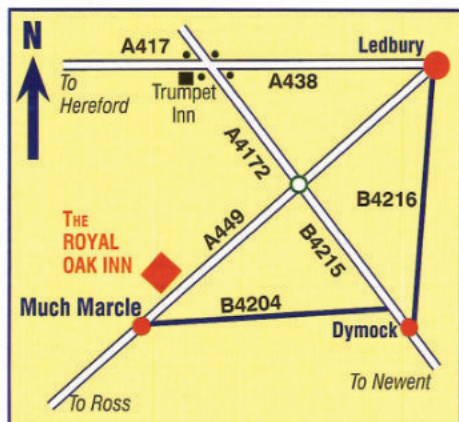
River Severn – part two.

Brian Draper

NOVEMBER 16TH

We are not alone!

Dick Skeet



OUR MAY MEETING

WILDLIFE & WETLANDS TRUST

with Bill Francis

Members and visitors able to attend were treated to a very informative talk by Bill, starting with highlights in the life of Sir Peter Scott who founded the Severn Wildfowl Trust at Slimbridge during 1945-46 (later being re-titled the Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust to encompass the scope of activities). Starting from a basic hut the Visitor Centre was replaced by the current structure whose radical design presents a wildfowl silhouette to visitors, the observation tower representing the head and neck.

Conservation and breeding are major Trust activities, vital for the welfare of many exotic species. Slimbridge is unique in being the only world site where all 6 species of flamingo can be viewed and recent work included the re-introduction of the crane to this country, having once been a native species.

Bill concluded with details of migration studies being carried out using temporary entrapment of birds in specialist nets and tunnels.

◆◆ Pat Skelton

This year **Crick Boat Show** was the Trading Company's first major event – a 200 mile round trip to Northamptonshire. The well tried procedure sprang into action, Ray and Barbara (and dogs) took their caravan with the stock and displays to site; I drove from Hereford and met Becca from London at Rugby station.

We all met up on site, unpacked and set up the stand, between our old friends **Cabincare** and **Lee Sanitation**. The latter has a nice high side to their stand which, in the true H&G spirit of grasping all opportunities, we utilize for display purposes!

Over the 3 days we were joined by Steve Bence (of quiz fame) and Des Pick (our demon **Grand Holiday Draw** ticket seller) – I have asked Des to write a piece for a future edition of **The Wharfinger** "some of the reasons NOT to buy a draw ticket!"

The weather was kind to us again and sales were brisk and information flowed freely. The Canal books did exceptionally well – a big thank you to those who donate to us.

Monday afternoon quickly came – pack up stand – all back into the Discovery and on our way home. A very enjoyable show.

Why not have a day out with us next year?

We have lots of invitations to attend events both locally and further from home and you will be made very welcome as a part of the small team. No experience necessary! Please have a chat with me (Janet Moulton) at the Winter Bazaar, any Social Evening or on the 'phone.

◆ JM



Above: Part of the H&G stand at this year's show.
Below: Crick always attracts a good cross section of visitors ...



Photos: Janet Moulton



**Canal Trust
Winter Bazaar**

Please support our very
own Bazaar – details on
page 6

Historic Double at Staplow By Roger Mallatratt

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CANAL WALK NO. 1 STAPLOW

A circular walk along part of the
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near Ledbury, Herefordshire.



One of the Longman's House on Swinmore Canal

Location: Staplow is on the B4214, 3 miles north of
Ledbury. Grid ref. 691415

Parking: You may park your car at The Oak Inn,
Staplow. Please advise the landlord that
you have left your car.

Distance: 2 1/2 miles

Time: 1 1/2 hours (approx.)



Above: Staplow is the first in a
new series of walk leaflets.

Below: A line-up of the
Staplow walkers under the
guidance of Nigel Jefferies
(centre in black).

Twenty-one plucky Members and friends braved a warm sunny spring afternoon, a pleasant lunch and two hours in the glorious Herefordshire countryside to launch the inaugural H&G Canal Trust **Canal Walk leaflet**, this being the subject of number 1. If the event itself were not of sufficient historical value we took with us our own walking historian in the form of organizer (and Canal Walk leaflet author) Nigel Jefferies.

The walkers met at **The Oak Inn** in Staplow where, perhaps understandably (and to our benefit), we were all put in a very nice back room. Somebody overdid the eating which made us half an hour late arriving at the first port of call, the former Wharfinger's House at Staplow.

Nigel was in his element turning what, to the writer, seemed an ordinary little brick house into the story of canal engineer Stephen Ballard, his architecture and the true context of the house in its time. We were grateful to the occupiers, who we had delayed from going out, for their kindness in waiting and contributing to the discussion.

The party then headed West towards Ashperton, effectively walking on the towpath and with frequent interludes of very watery canal. It was not long before Nigel unveiled the star turn of the walk, namely the last original milestone, set on the offside bank and thankfully well covered by undergrowth. Spontaneous applause broke out at this stage. The remaining canal related items were two buildings which were almost certainly lengthsmen's cottages. These did carry additions but the original designs were clear enough.



Photos: Janet Moult and Nigel Jefferies



The Wharfinger's House at Staplow.

The final treat was the crossing by the canal of Stony Brook. It was not clear whether we were looking at a siphon or a culvert but the stonework arch that we saw at the western end seemed to be beautifully designed and in good condition. Nigel had thoughtfully cleared access for those who were interested to see the eastern end.

We also walked across a light aircraft landing strip, saw the outside of an old chapel and walked through orchards still carrying some blossom. All in all a lovely day. *Thank you Nigel and everyone else involved – and bring on H&G Canal Walk leaflet number 2!*

◆ RM



Above: A derelict, brick-built Methodist chapel, used from 1890 to 1937.



Right: Stony Brook passes under the Canal.

H&G Canal Walk leaflet number 2 is in preparation. In the meantime you can pick up a copy of the H&G CT's Staplow Walk leaflet (price 30p) from **The Oak Inn** – please advise the landlord when leaving your car or bicycle in the car park – and why not enjoy a pint or a meal after your walk? – Ed.



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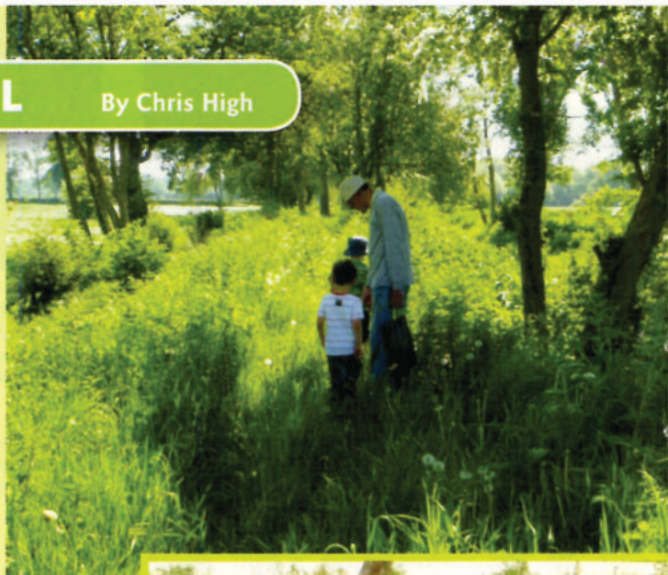
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Work at YARKHILL

By Chris High

The final push to tidy up after the winter has taken place with wild side logging up, and log removal to the storage area adjacent to the site hut, completed. Strimming, mowing and hedge trimming then took over although I am not sure we are winning as I nearly lost my grandsons in the vegetation during a family walk along the wild side!



Stump removal on the canal bank has commenced, rubbish removal to lock fire site completed, the milestone bed and steps have been tidied and revetment building to retain the wild side access is under way. The new ride-on mower, very kindly donated late last year, is proving a great asset in reducing mowing times dramatically and making it easy to mow the field access as well. Firewood sales continue.



Top: Chris takes a walk on the wild side with his grandsons.

Above: Robin and Bernard move supplies across a now dry canal ready to build a revetment.



Left: Bob and Penny complete the towpath hedge trim.



Photos: Chris High

First mow of the towpath.

A 'Team Build Day' for a group from the **Herefordshire Council's** Transport and Planning Department went well. Pipes, kindly supplied by farmer Michael Mess, were installed in the ditches across the field access and the wild side hedge trimming started. A site tour led us to the culvert where our visitors removed some fifty plus sandbags – *well most of them were younger than us!* We were also able to gain some useful suggestions and technical advice. *Many thanks to you all for your help.*



A stump in the process of being removed.

We are glad to report that our new volunteers, Robin and Bob, are still with us and they comment that they are getting fitter and dirtier. *This is a good sign as it means that they have passed their induction tests so I am not as considerate now when I allocate jobs!* We also welcomed John Kilpatrick to the Team in June.

All of this means we must be very appealing – so why not join us? Interested? Please contact Chris High on 01568 615575. ♦ CH

LOGS for SALE

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

All proceeds support the Canal Restoration.
For more information please call David Penny at
The Wharf House 01452 332 900,
or, if you are in the Yarkhill area,
contact **Chris High on 01568 615575.**

The demise of Kes

On all of our restoration sites our volunteers take a keen interest in their surroundings and in the wildlife that is attracted to the Canal. Aylestone Park is no exception and wildlife has been flourishing – with one notable exception ...

Volunteers working at Aylestone Park during 2009 frequently saw a small bird of prey hovering, looking for food, and occasionally diving down to ground level. Initially quite nervous of our activities, it became more confident and would perch on the slipway site fencing or the litter bin in the car park. We thought it might be a sparrowhawk?

Walking along by the canal in early December I was dismayed to find the carcass of a small bird of prey next to the path. The immediate reaction was who could have shot or poisoned "our" little bird. So it was scooped up and taken to the nearest likely source of advice, the **Herefordshire Nature Trust**, not far away, at Lower House farm in Tupsley. There were several ideas about the cause of death including collision with a tree (they often collide with windows) or a crash landing. We contacted the RSPB who were helpful in suggesting a group at Lancaster University might be interested but if not, they suggested that we should return the carcass to the Park where it would be "naturally scavenged".

The **University of Lancaster's** Centre for Ecology and Hydrology run a **Predatory Bird Monitoring Scheme**. They are interested in

the carcasses of birds of prey to analyse for both the cause of death and the health of the bird population. So they kindly agreed to send me the special packaging so I could forward the carcass for post-mortem analysis. *The temporary mortuary was a wrapping of a couple of carrier bags hung from my back door in the cold weather!*

The PM results confirmed the bird as a juvenile female Kestrel, over a year old, in a state of emaciation and died of starvation. The feathers were at the "blood stage after moult" which is late in the year and may have inhibited her ability to hunt. The body organs showed no signs of pesticide poisoning or disease; she had laid eggs at some stage.

So there was no foul play from shooting, poisons or pesticides; nor were there signs of any injuries. *The demise of Kes was due to a lack of food.*

Those interested further will find the **National Birds of Prey Centre** near Newent worthy of a day's visit – or the **Small Breeds Farm Park and Owl Centre** near Kington.

Our thanks to Lee Walker at the University of Lancaster's Predatory Bird of Prey Monitoring Scheme for their interest and analysis report.



Photos: Martin Danks

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New Pump at Over

On any canal nature conspires to reduce water levels by evaporation, and Over Basin is no exception. Whilst the situation is helped by the deliberate design of the drainage, which ensures most of the rainwater from the adjacent housing runs into the Basin, in summer it can get very low. Our tug Alder does on occasion ground on the foundation concrete of the gabions that form the basin wall at the mooring. H&G CT volunteers are working on the refurbishment of an old Sykes pump, currently in the compound at Over, but when this is operational again it will be a noisy beast and unfortunately not suitable for use in the vicinity of properties.

A welcome new addition at Over is a large, yellow canopied, contractor's pump. This is an **SPP Pumps Ltd** pump, very kindly on extended loan from the manufacturer, whose base is at Coleford, in the Forest of Dean. Fortunately the trust has contacts within SPP and their Autoprime Key Account manager, Neil Jones, has secured the loan of this demonstration pump for Over Basin.

The pump at Over is a road towable contractor's pump designed for use on construction sites and is known as an Autoprime QI 150. It is capable of pumping 250 cubic metres per hour up to a maximum height above intake of 25 metres. So it is more than capable of keeping the basin topped up! Equally importantly it is also



The new pump efficiently and quietly at work. Since this photo was taken we have removed the wheels for added security.

completely enclosed in a fitted canopy, so is both quiet in operation and easy to make secure, this makes it ideal for its new situation on the flood plain between the River Leadon and the Basin.

SPP Pumps Ltd have agreed that H&G CT can use the pump as required and they will also be using it themselves as a demonstration unit. They will bring their customers to Over Basin to see the pump in action and will no doubt show some corporate hospitality at THE WHARF HOUSE (where the company's representatives and their customers will obviously be made most welcome)!

Neil Jones from the Company delivered the pump in May and gave operation training to our volunteers at Over Basin. Over the next few days they connected the inlet and outlet hoses to the pump and then on to the already constructed silt chamber from which surplus water from the Leadon can flow over the aerating channel to the Basin whenever a 'top up' is required. As can be seen in the picture the pump is now working and Alder need never go aground again!

We are exceedingly grateful to both Neil and SPP Pumps Ltd for the extended loan of the pump and are pleased to be able to provide an excellent demonstration site to support them as a local manufacturing business, albeit in a very small way.



Above: Working on the refurbishment of the old Sykes pump in the compound at Over.

Below: Water levels in Over Basin are quickly topped up.



by
Tony
Boonham



Some 3 years ago my occasional column ceased due to serious illness and I had to scale down my voluntary commitment to the work at Over although I still manage to attend fairly regularly and I am slowly regaining my health and strength.

The Over Update pages have kept you informed during my absence of the achievements of the mechanical engineering team here at Over with the work on the tractor lawn mower and the large 6" Sykes pump being the focus of our more recent work.

John Rodgers is our mechanical engineering volunteer at Over (he was an engineer with Gloster Aircraft Company) and I was an aircraft engineer with the RAF.

We are still on the lookout for engineering tools but what we are really short of is a good ratchet socket set. We have a wealth of other spanners but no socket sets, so if there are any out there (and it doesn't matter – single sockets Whitworth, A/F or Metric) requiring a good home, please remember us. *Thank you.*

If you are a retired engineer and fancy getting your hands dirty on some of our marvellous old machines why don't you come down and visit us at Over. We are there every Wednesday, we are a sociable and friendly crowd, no commitment just pay us a visit why don't you? It's especially pleasant in the Summer and as for the Winter we have a nice warm crewroom and we brew a good mug of tea!

♦ TB

IWA The Inland
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Gloucestershire & Herefordshire IWA Branch

Gloucester Yacht Club, 7.30pm

Thursday, 7th October 2010
A nostalgic evening of old films

by Roger Holmes

Thursday, 11th November 2010
Slides of the G & S Canal

by Richard Kelsey

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



Working with Nature

By John Chappell

Regular readers of this column will have come to expect John to describe either a tempting recipe, or a natural cure for all manner of ailments – and sometimes both! But this time we conclude with a stern warning; this attractive neighbour of ours at Oxenhall is most definitely one just to be looked at - unless you happen to spin wool ...



A close-up of the highly ornamental, shocking-pink spindle fruits split open to reveal orange seeds.

The Spindle Tree is a member of the *Euonymus* genus of shrubs and small trees. Native throughout Western Asia and Europe it is found in most parts of the British Isles except the extreme north. It shown here growing along the edge of the towpath at Oxenhall and is the species known as *Euonymus europaeus*.

Euonymus grows 5-20 ft tall and is most often found in woodland but will occasionally be seen forming part of a hedgerow as a bushy shrub with unusually square stems. The wood is very hard and can be cut to a sharp point hence its use in the past to make spindles for spinning wool and giving it its common name. The flowers are small, pale yellowish-green, borne in small branching sprays in May and June; they form a pretty, frothy array and are pollinated by small insects. However the plant really comes into its own in the autumn when the highly ornamental, shocking-pink fruits split open to reveal orange seeds. Purplish red foliage is a bonus, especially if the plant is growing in good light.

There are a number of selected clones suitable for the garden, perhaps the best being *E. europaeus* 'Red Cascade' – a good descriptive

name for a plant whose branches arch under the weight of the berries.

Normally at this point I write about any medicinal properties the plant may have. However, the fruit of *Euonymus* is highly poisonous, and being so attractive is a temptation for young children – a point to consider before you introduce it to your garden or when accompanying children on country walks!

◆ JC



The Spindle Tree growing along the edge of the towpath at Oxenhall.

Photos: John Chappell

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MODEL BOAT CLUB *at Over* By Ted Tedaldi

In our last edition Ted Tedaldi, Chairman of Gloucester & District Model Boat Club, described how aquatic weed growth at Over Basin had been stunted by the cold weather. Then the thermometer started rising ...

Suddenly, just like on land, the weed sprang up needing it's first serious 'crop gathering' followed by a tidy up by our members. Some of our other boat club volunteers had tried using the tug Alder but it was not very successful as the propeller just became a ball of weed



The Model Boat Club welcome members from the Gloucester branch of The World Ship Society.

– it's not just the model boats that suffer when the weed gets bad! *You cannot beat the facts of life. Items are designed for specific purposes.*

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The sailing this year has been very good. The warm weather has brought out the Sunday sailors in good numbers, sometimes into double figures. Such is the improvement in motors, batteries and equipment we now have a small speedboat that can travel from the Basin to the slip in under two seconds. However, it is not possible to race these at Over as the water area is too small.

Mid week has seen good sport sailing usually with Micro Magic's. They are a small sailing yacht which fits into a car boot, ideal for just turning up, setting the rig to the conditions and competing against one another around the buoys. All good fun and keeps the men out of harms way!

This quarter's highlight was inviting the Gloucester Branch of The World Ship Society to a boating evening at Over Basin. Wednesday July 7th saw club members spit and polish the cabin and 'clean' the water! The evening was overcast with a good breeze; ideal for yachting. Twenty plus of our club members

welcomed the dozen WSS to a hands-on evening of boating. Club members instructing the guests who sailed various models. Cabin cruisers and Pete's model narrowboat drew admiration as did the fishing craft. Yachts drew the attention of some of the lady guests who were fascinated by the challenge of harnessing the power of the wind.

The re-appearance of the 'Dinner Ladies' (two Sandra's and Jean) kept tea, coffee and cakes flowing to the delight of all. The onset of dusk brought the conclusion to what was an entertaining evening.

A fascinating new craft is Bob Hinton's "Alvis Stalwart". Bob's model is built to a scale of 1/9th. Construction is mainly wood with metal running gear. The water drive is through two electric water jets. The road drive is on all six wheels. *[If only the Model Boat Club could build a 1/1 scale version we would crack the aquatic weed challenge – no more clogged propellers! – Ed.]* ♦♦ TT

Photos: Ted Tedaldi



A fascinating new craft is Bob Hinton's "Alvis Stalwart" that can travel on land as well as on water.



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The Diaries of Stephen Ballard

Researched and written by Caroline Jones

PART SIX

Stephen Ballard
(1804 - 1890)

In the previous instalment of these articles, based on the Ballard Collection held at Herefordshire Record Office, we looked at the celebrations and ceremony surrounding the opening of the Herefordshire and Gloucestershire Canal to Withington in 1844. What happened after Withington? In this sixth instalment we will look at the completion of the canal to Hereford - and what Stephen Ballard did with his life after that momentous day ...

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.

The diaries pick up the story on March 26th 1844 when Stephen records that he rode in the first market boat from Withington to Ledbury. At this time he was living at Withington working on the canal to Hereford. In April he records that the purchase of land in Hereford has been agreed for the construction of warehouses and that on April 15th "Money is now offered in great abundance for completing the canal to Hereford..." So all was looking well, and he writes that as fast as they can get the land they are building the canal. Something we strive to do now of course!

The next entry is surprisingly not until January 20th 1845 when he is still at Withington but is now designing a bridge for the Dean Forest Railway to cross the Severn



Back Row from left: Mr. Woodcock, A. Ballard, J. Hughes. Front Row from left: Messrs. G. B. Ballard, Messrs. G. Hall, Messrs. G. Hall.
The engineering team on the Hereford & Worcester Railway under Brassey and Ballard in 1861.

at Over. He completes his design by late January and receives a letter from Mr Price advising him to turn to railway engineering. Stephen seems to take no notice of this advice noting in February that the canal company tried out a new iron ice boat, this he reports "answers uncommonly well, breaking up ice 2" thick with only a weak old horse..."!! It worked well enough to send the first load of coal to Holmer Lane Wharf that month.

His interest is engaged in railways again, this time in the proposed Hereford & Monmouth Railway, he inspects its line at the end of February while preparing to oppose it on behalf of the Canal Company to the Board of Trade. Work on the canal meanwhile is progressing well, Stephen reports that 63 yards of the Hereford tunnel, presumably that at Aylestone, were completed in 2 weeks. Despite all this positive news in early 1845 he admits to



Photos: Caroline Jones, Herefordshire Record Office

Stephen Ballard surveying works at Colwall Tunnel on the Hereford & Worcester Railway (Stephen is the man standing on the platform on the right halfway up the embankment).

being "rather depressed" in March, being concerned about poor trade on the canal and uncertainty about what he will do when the canal is completed. At this time he begins looking at other offers of work and his brother Phillip agrees to manage the Canal should he find "some other situation". His own health also seems to be suffering with frequent references to bad headaches.

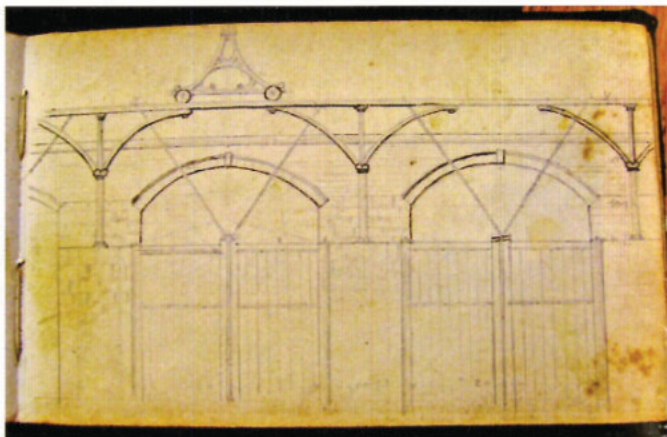
In early March 1845 a meeting of the Canal Company resolved to send a deputation to the Great Western Railway Co to ask them to buy the canal. Finances were very difficult as trade on the canal was not good, so much so that later that month many of the men working on the tunnel were laid off. Stephen is fully aware that there is little to do to complete the canal but that the new railways are threatening from all directions. In April he undertook to go to work in Norfolk while looking after the canal, the canal was opened to Hereford on May 22nd, there were no fanfares and little ceremony, Stephen left immediately after the water was let in and caught a train to London.

In London he met with a Mr James Walker, then President of the Institution of Civil Engineers, and came to an agreement to work on the Great Middle Drain of the Bedford level of the Cambridgeshire fens, this he proposed to undertake by building sluices at St Germans near Kings Lynn. This work was very involved as it required the designing and building of ditches, sluices, bridges and embankments, it kept him very busy and he lived at St Germans while the work was going on. Today at St Germans is the biggest pumping station in Norfolk protecting over 22,000 homes from flooding. Around this time Stephen was also designing docks for Gloucester in that July and attending Canal Company meetings in Ledbury with his brother Phillip. As if he didn't have enough to do!

In September that year he met with a Mr E L Williams in London regarding the "purchase of the Canal for a railroad", after the meeting the Welsh Midland Railway Company offered £140,000 for the canal but the committee wanted £150,000 so refused the offer. Other offers of work included one

by a Mr Brunel (!) to engage Stephen, he was however "not inclined to go to him for less than £800 a year". However he did make the decision to leave the Middle Levels and in November sent notice to his employers Walker & Burgess that he would be leaving as resident engineer in 3 months time as his salary was not high enough and the contractors were "behaved very badly". Towards the end of 1845 Stephen was in very low spirits, his mother was ill, he was not getting on well with his contractors at all and he was missing the company and friends he'd had working on the canal. Christmas that year was "the dullest Xmas day I ever spent..."

Work progressed on the sluices for the Middle Level drainage scheme in 1846, problems with failing dams allowing the tide into the workings hampered matters and Stephen was still working from St Germans by spring 1847 when he moved to "Lynn" presumably Kings Lynn. The drainage scheme was more or less complete when Stephen was approached by an eminent engineer of the day, Mr Thomas Brassey, to take on the construction of a railway across the Fens between Peterborough and Huntingdon for the Great Northern Railway Co. By July that year he was again very busy working on the railway and his diary entries mention headaches less. The railway took extraordinary engineering as the Fens at that time were in reality a peat bog in places 22 ft deep and unable to bear the weight of a man let alone a steam locomotive! Stephen showed his engineering capabilities and managed to build the railway very satisfactorily. By spring 1848 he was again low, feeling a need for more social company but was happy that his contract to build the railway had paid well, having made little provision for retirement. He noted in April that "I shall get a good fortune that will keep



Sketch of sluices from Stephen's notebooks.

me without further trouble for the remainder of my life".

Entries in the diaries become very sporadic after spring 1848, there not being another entry until November 1851 by when the Fens railway was successfully completed, he was looking at the Panama Canal, new docks at Cardiff, the Monmouthshire Railway and Hereford County bridges! In July 1852 he went to Ireland to work on a drainage scheme and in May 1853 he went to Holland to work under Mr Brassey again on the Dutch Renish Railway; his successes in the Fens and the Middle Levels were bringing him work as well as fortune. Back in Britain, in the 1860s, Stephen and Thomas Brassey built the Evesham and Redditch Railway, the Hereford & Worcester Railway and the Midland London & Bedford Railway from Bedford to St Pancras. The last entry in his diaries indicates the death of Mr Thomas Brassey from cancer in 1871. It is interesting to note that by then Stephen Ballard was the oldest member of the Institution of Civil Engineers.

Having come to the end of Stephen Ballard's diary entries the next (penultimate) article on his papers will look at some of the other things he was involved in, including the vessels he designed, works he undertook with his brothers and the various works he undertook in what became his home, the Malverns.

◆ CJ

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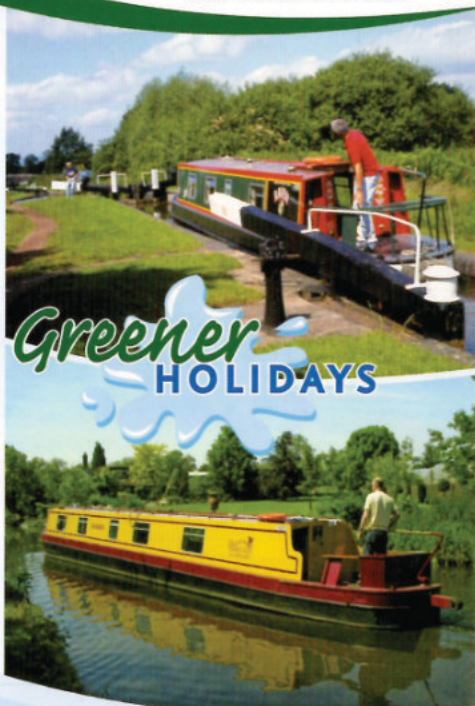
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Not quite THE LAST PAGE

The Wharfinger Advertising Co-ordinator

Following our appeal, arising from the 'retirement' of Colin Dymott, (page 35 of the last edition) for a volunteer to take over the role of Advertising Co-ordinator we are very pleased to welcome **Martyn Hake** to this vital role within **The Wharfinger** team.

Martyn, who lives with his wife near Ross-on-Wye, has previous experience in professional publishing and sales. As his current employment gives him some free time during the weekday daytime, and he has both PC and Mac computers, he is ideally suited to the requirements of the role!

Our repeated thanks to outgoing post-holder Colin Dymott for leaving Martyn with a healthy list of committed advertisers, both locally and nationally, for which we are very grateful. Colin continues with his voluntary role organising our Digital Photo' archive.

◆ CRP

Your
HELP please!

The ongoing restoration of our two heritage boats – **Alder** (at Over Basin) and **Renton** (at The Gloucester Waterways Museum) – *urgently* needs more volunteers. There is plenty of interesting work still to do on both boats – *painting and carpentry skills would be particularly appreciated*. 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!*

◆ CJ

Another Record!

This edition of **The Wharfinger** includes articles from 17 contributors (*welcome to two 'first timers'*) and photographs from 14 sources – *thank you to everyone!* ◆ CRP

Award comes to the H&GCT

Our Treasurer, Liz Connors, has just been awarded **Cargill Meats Europe Volunteer of the Year**, which means a £1,000 donation to a charity of her choice, the charity? – H&GCT of course! At Liz's request we will add it to the land fund.

Liz, herself, receives a voucher to use at Holmer Spa, – very justly deserved.

"So, absolutely great all round!" says Liz.

Well done
LIZ, and
thank you!

Herefordshire Life features H&G Canal

Thanks to liaison by Colin Dymott, **Herefordshire Life**, (which also covers Monmouthshire & Powys) ran a feature in the August issue on the work of the H&G Canal Trust at Yarkhill. It spoke of the green corridor that has been created from a previous 'jungle' and promoted the Yarkhill Open Day.

CoM Officers Re-elected

At the July meeting of the Council of Management the following Officer appointments were made. **Janet Mould** continues as Chairman, as does **Martin Danks** as Vice Chairman, **Liz Connors** as Treasurer & Company Secretary and **Tony Austin-Bailey** as Minutes & Admin Secretary.

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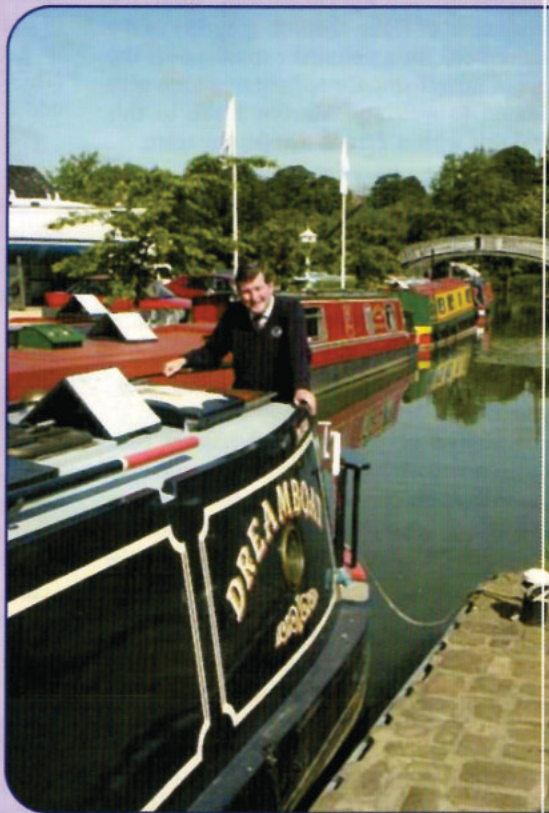
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Want to help?

The Canal Trust is always in need of new volunteers as our activities continue to expand. We can normally find a use for any skill from gardeners to first aiders, brickies to those willing to help with a shovel or pen.

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Contact any of these names TODAY!

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The Wharfinger

The Herefordshire & Gloucestershire Canal

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

The Canal Trust

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

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



= restoration sites suitable for public access.

