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Autumn 2020

# The Wharfinger

HEREFORDSHIRE & GLOUCESTERSHIRE CANAL TRUST



145  
EDITION

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It does feel that I have spent more time at my desk recently than when I was working full time. This includes running the AGM from my desk - thank you to all who attended, and please find the minutes of the meeting within this edition of the Wharfinger.

At the AGM a number of items came up, amongst them Mill Barn was asked about. Please read more about this further on in this edition of the Wharfinger. I would like to thank Andy Fowler for pulling together many ideas about the choices we have; Debbie Barber for pulling other ideas together; and the people of the Lock Keepers, the residents' and Model Boat Club representative and Sailing4Disabled for giving up their time for discussions so we can move forward at getting a permanent building in place at Over.

Thank you to all those who have emailed me or sent me letters via the more traditional approach. I have tried to answer several of these questions in this edition. We are also looking at other ways of improving communication about the great work all the volunteers are doing. You will see a number of items around Malswick within this edition. The team are doing great work towards submitting a planning application for restoring over 600 metres of canal. (656yds in old money).

Now the Covid 19 restrictions are lifting somewhat, I hope you have all managed to deal with the restrictions well and are able to get out a bit more. I fondly remember catching the cheques (in a bag!) dropped down by Janet from her balcony whilst she was self-isolating. The money from the Grand Holiday Draw tickets needed to be banked.

You might just have a chance to buy more tickets from Janet or via the web site. Details of the changes to the draw location can be found on page 36.

As you can see from this edition there is a lot going on - Mill Barn reawakening, Malswick planning and many others that all require people. Please help us by chatting with family, friends and neighbours about the canal and see if anybody can help with the work in restoring the canal.

We have a diverse set of skills required...

- Accounting for supporting managing the canals income,
- Builders for getting the canal restored,
- Conservationists for helping with dealing with the environment of the canal.

.... and the list of jobs goes on.

Please contact me if you have someone interested and we can restore the canal together.

*Ralph Barber*

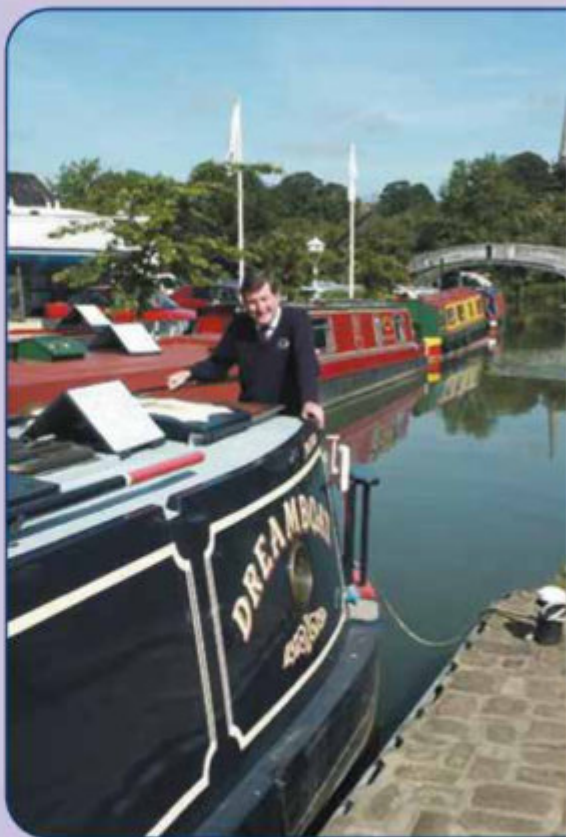
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# Minutes of the Trust's Annual Meeting



7.30 pm Thursday 18th June

Meeting held via Zoom

**Welcome.**

Ralph Barber, Chairman, welcomed all to the virtual AGM – virtual in technology only as the material covered was all real. He gave details of how the meeting would proceed, how to ask questions and how voting would be done.

**Apologies:**

None

**2019 AGM Minutes:**

No questions. Ed Helps proposed acceptance. Approved by majority.

**Chairman's remarks:**

As the written report could be found on the web site Ralph highlighted and expanded on some parts rather than just read it out verbatim.

"What a year. At the beginning of the year we had some changes to the board and I would like to thank the previous board members, Roger Holmes who left the board early in the year and John Kilpatrick who left us in the later part of 2019.

Thank you to the current board members for continuing the work of the Trust -

Philip, our Treasurer, has done a great job of getting the accounts completed, enabling us to get a brief statement in the Wharfinger and then on the web site in full.

Thank you to Vaughan who was chairman for most of the last financial year and has stepped down due to personal reasons.

Nigel as our longest standing Trustee helping with membership and giving talks to many interested groups.

Eamonn and Ed who bring their business inputs to the Trust. They are both very much involved in the relationship with the new tenants at the Lock Keepers, which is developing. As with all of us, their business has been affected by the Coronavirus restrictions. Ed has also taken on the role of H&S Trustee

Debbie working with the promotion of the Trust on Twitter, Facebook and the web site.

Tony who with his past in the house building industry has helped us continue to develop the sites, health and safety, as well as working with the volunteers on site.

---

I have not enough time to mention everyone, but we do have many opportunities for people to get involved.

We have had a number of new volunteers join the Herefordshire sites this last year, more across the whole canal corridor will be very welcome. But it is not just on-site work at a canal side site that is important – it includes the promotion work that is done attending stands at shows (which unfortunately this year have all been cancelled to date); dealing with questions requires some knowledge of the canal and a computer to reply to emails; looking at planning applications to check nothing is built on the protected canal corridor; helping with the office at Malswick and many other tasks that will help restore the canal.

A Strategy review was started and remains ongoing. This has brought together a number of groups looking at sections of the canal. A team in Hereford are looking at the start of the canal and discussions with the local council on a number of sites in Hereford city and further afield in Herefordshire are ongoing.

An engineering team has looked at the major crossing of a road in Newent. After many discussions an inclined plane solution is now under development with the track going through the original station. The railway line was originally built on the old canal – thus we now bring a mixture of different heritage to the restoration.

A team at Over are looking at the development of the site working with the local residents and the new lessee of the Wharf House The site will be more multi functional for the Canal Trust, the Model Boaters and Sailing4Disabled who already use the site, and seeing if the site can be developed further for other water users.

Lots of work occurring with Neighbourhood Plans that are under development in Dymock and Newent, attending their open days and involvement in their steering groups. Further engagement with the councils to continue the work from the past of protecting the route with local plans as they get updated.

What a year with the very warm summer and then flooding over the winter.

A big thank you to all our volunteers, doing the stands, keeping the water way clear, ensuring the welfare of volunteers is looked after and while all these involve people on site.

A big thank you to those who work remotely – Nick Dymott with our new website released this year. Thank you to the readers of the Wharfinger, the feedback of the changes that have occurred to the Wharfinger have been welcomed.

Thanks again to Nick Dymott who has taken over getting the layout correct, whilst I will still be chasing people for those articles. Thank you to you all who have contributed articles. If you have something you would like to have in the Wharfinger, please contact me.

We have also updated Facebook and Twitter. If you have not passed on your email addresses, please do so and we can then get an electronic newsletter to you all. Most of you have replied, but a few still to do so.



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Janet Moults has done a great job of managing the selling of the Grand Holiday Draw tickets. Please contact her if you want some more or you can purchase them from the web site. Debbie and I have collected the cheques during lock down, well thrown to us from Janet's balcony and got them to the bank, over £1100 so far."

While Ralph was speaking some slides were shown of volunteers at work – at shows and on sites.

There was a pause for any questions – Paul Brown said he had a couple, one on the risks to the charity and one on objectives and activities but he would email them in as not urgent.

### **Financial Statement and accounts for the year ending 28th February 2020.**

Accounts, financial statement, and report were available to all before the meeting and links to them sent out again in the invitation to the AGM.

Thank you to Philip, who has done a great job in getting the papers through the processes required to enable us to have this AGM tonight.

### **Questions on Accounts**

Roger Holmes said he had responded to the Mill Barn appeal and gave a donation - four to five years ago. Not seen any movement on project, is it still going ahead, is it going ahead in the same way, does he have any say in the project and funds?

Ralph Barber responded – also had a written question of similar nature from Caroline Jones. He confirmed that with the change of roles in trustees and additional work last year, Mill Barn had slipped down the list. But after the January strategy meeting and other input Mill Barn is now back on agenda. With the easing of lock-down plans have been shared, discussions and meetings taken place. The current thinking is not to have such a large building as originally planned, but to go for a single storey building, approx. size of two containers with fully accessible facilities for welfare, situated towards the back of the site at Over. Also need to engage with other site users, Sailing4Disabled, Model boat group. Plus need to discuss with the planning authority, especially regarding flooding assessment. The original Mill Barn project did not obtain planning permission.

Timeline? Hope to have made enough progress with ideas to report in the next Wharfinger when can ask other members for suggestions – not just those attending this AGM. Also, to approach original donors to ask if they wish their funds to be transferred to the new project or refunded e.g.

Roger – gave his money to a project, now aggrieved that the project has not been delivered. May request for return of donation.

Ralph replied – also disappointed that the project has not been delivered.

Caroline Jones – speaking as a long-term donor, also disappointed but not aggrieved that

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project not yet completed. More than happy for her donation to remain and go to new Mill Barn. Knows all the work that has to be done even though is no longer a trustee. Has been a lot going on – keep up the good work.

Paul Brown – Loan for £65k mentioned in Wharfinger. Philip Marshall said yes it appears in the canal trust accounts in loans and overdrafts.

Donations and legacies – one of amounts entered in wrong place.

Further queries but he will email.

### **Appointment of Independent Examiner**

Philip Marshall proposed that the Independent Examiner for all the Trust Accounts should continue to be Griffiths Marshall, based in Gloucester.

Majority voted for appointment. One against.

Roger Holmes raised a point of order which was resolved.

### **Election of Trustees**

Ralph then passed the position of chair to Ed Helps for voting of new trustees, commenting that it was a pity no new names have been put forward. Trustees standing down by rotation this year Ralph Barber and Philip Marshall.

Votes to reappoint

Ralph Barber majority approval; Philip Marshall majority approval

Ralph took control over meeting.

### **Written questions.**

Report in Wharfinger about tenants leaving one of the Llanthony Cottages with rent owing. Correct – no current information on his whereabouts. Kept deposit, although not enough to cover all rent due. Property now refreshed and up to date with the regulations. New tenants already in. A volunteer is calling in on site almost weekly.

£7403 expenditure – seeking donations, grants and legacies? This is actually the cost of printing and dispatching the Wharfinger – and yes, would be best to have had this as its title. Should not in future be described as a fundraising tool.

### **Other Questions -**

Gillian Chowns – Llanthony tenants – how far in arrears when they left? Philip advised approx. 8 months owing.

Gillian – was surprised to hear that it had got that far, although appreciating work done by volunteers, eight months was a long time. Philip confirmed we now have someone helping

out on a regular basis so hopefully such an occurrence won't happen again.

Caroline Jones – as a landlord herself could the trust not take out insurance for any loss of rent? Not much to add to general landlord insurance. Ralph confirmed would take this up with our new insurance brokers.

Paul Brown – had sent in a written query. Said still waiting for a reply to his email – Ralph advised said that he replied yesterday.

### **Completed first virtual AGM.**

If you haven't done so we would like to have permission to use email addresses for communication.

Thanks to Ed for the use of his Zoom meeting.

Gordon - would like to congratulate the Chairman for dressing appropriately for the meeting (H&G T shirt).

Ralph thanked everyone for attending and looked forward to seeing everyone down at the canal at some point.

41 members registered for the AGM.

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There have been various plans put forward over the years to rebuild Mill Barn at Over. The most recent in 2015 raised a goodly sum of money from an appeal to our members (all safe in restricted funds – see below). Last year the Board decided that such a large building was not required and to re-evaluate what was needed.

As you will have seen in the AGM minutes (which I am sure you have all read avidly) Mill Barn is firmly back on the agenda. We have now consulted with all Over users – our own Over volunteers, Sailing4Disabled, Gloucester & District Model Boat Club and local residents' representative and with our tenants at The Lock Keepers. The minimum requirements are a welfare block on site with accessible toilets, meeting room and general kitchen facilities. After discussion we have decided to go with a bigger footprint for the meeting room to make it a usable space for letting out for other groups in the future. One toilet will also have a fully accessible shower wet room. Discussions are ongoing about how much storage space is required.

At the time of going to press we don't have any illustrations or plans to share with you. We have further meetings and discussions in the calendar over the next month or so to move this forward and to get all relevant documentation together before going to planning.

And our appeal money from 2015? – once we have the plans/drawings etc. we will share these. We will be contacting previous donors to ask if they are willing for the money they donated to go to this new project. We still have full details of those who wanted dedications. If in the meantime you know you donated at the time and are happy for us to use the money for our new Mill Barn, then please drop us a line to [fundraising@h-g-canal.org.uk](mailto:fundraising@h-g-canal.org.uk)

*Debbie Barber*

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## History Note



Mike Handford has donated two volumes of Stephen Ballard's diary to the Gloucestershire Archives. The Archives already hold items for safe keeping belonging to H&G – notably items relating to the original building of the canal, maps, plans, committee, land, share and railway related documents.

The archives are held at Alvin Street, close to the centre of Gloucester and are run by Gloucestershire County Council. Recently the archives have been re-branded as the Gloucestershire Heritage Hub.

The hub has been closed due to Covid but from Tuesday 4th August it is Good to Go. You can make an appointment to go in and view documents – having booked which documents you wish to see. Go to <https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/archives/plan-your-visit/covid-recovery/> for full information.

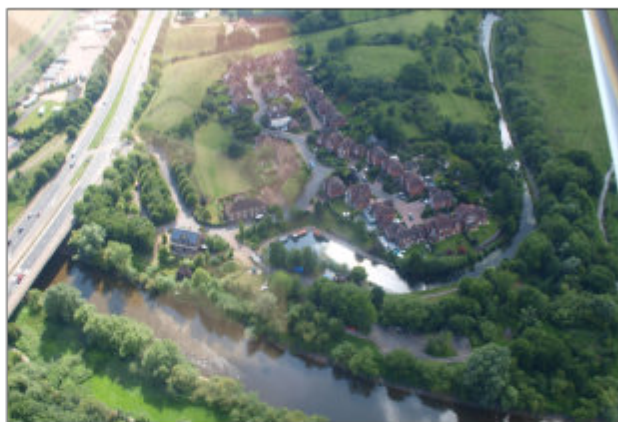
*Debbie Barber*

*Ralph Barber takes to the air...*

Thank you to John Hamer (an Over resident) for the opportunity to join him on a flight in a small two-seater plane when he flew along the length of the canal. The smallest plane I have been in, no tea or coffee served or any business class seats that fold flat.

So, after take-off the first camera I took along failed after a few pictures so then I used my phone. Fortunately, I had replaced my phone recently. I was still trying to get used to all the fancy features so I soon forgot about the small size of the plane and just hoped the pictures would come out. Judge for yourself.

Someone recently asked how much canal do we have that is navigable?



In Gloucestershire, around 500 metres at Over and Vineyard Hill as shown above. I will talk about Herefordshire in another edition of the Wharfinger.



The next part of the canal is the Malswick Project - 600 metres creating a 1.2 km circular walk with improved habitat for wildlife. See the item about nature in Malswick on page 28.

As previously mentioned in earlier Wharfingers the Malswick Project started back in 2017. To the left is a view of the Malswick site - from the hedge line (mid picture on the left) going away from the camera (to top of picture) following the curved part of the hedge line.

The development of a relationship with the landowner, to then support the transfer of land to the trust after building of bridges – actual and metaphorical.



The next area of work underway is at Newent Station. The Newent bypass comes in on the right and the fire station is just out of picture above it.

Our station site is on the tree line going across the picture right to left.

The Inclined plane would be in the tree line and crossing the road - just out of picture to the right.



The return part of the trip gave a chance for a further view, this time looking from the north of Newent.

The fire station is just by the queue of traffic and the tree line again hides the planned Inclined Plane.





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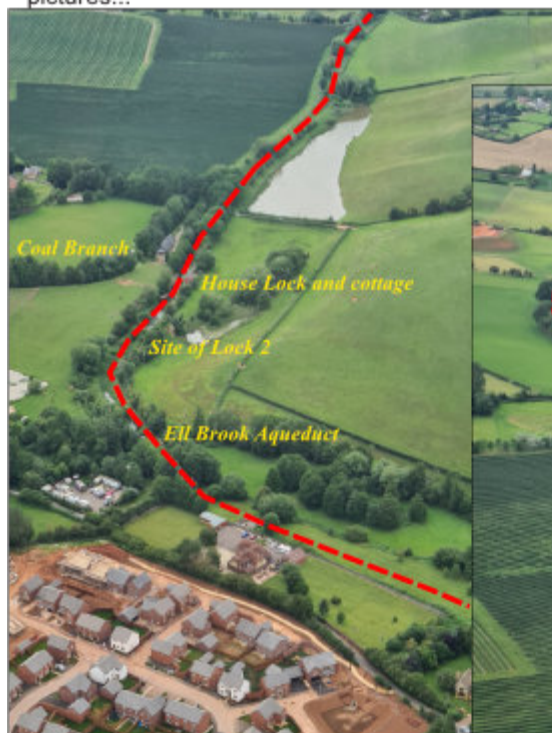
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From Newent continuing north is Oxenhall.

The canal crosses Ell Brook Aqueduct, passes through the site of Lock 2 (now in early stages of being restored, and then the partially restored House Lock before heading north to Oxenhall Tunnel, along the line of trees in the next pictures...



...to be continued.



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Things have been moving at Malswick House, albeit slowly. We have a tenant, Marius with his wife Bianca, who are currently operating a burger bar in front of the pub. They are now also renting the flat above the pub and the pub kitchen because the demand that they have for food is sometimes too much for the limited facilities within the burger van. We are pursuing the possibility that Marius will take on the whole pub in the autumn (subject to the necessary regulatory requirements). At present Marius and Bianca are operating well and we hope that their success continues.

Meantime the Malswick volunteers have been undertaking all sorts of activities to improve the conditions in and around the pub. The yard at the back has been tidied and the wood store extended to accommodate in the dry the wood that is expected to sell during the winter. It is now three bays and at least a third full, with more wood to be split. More mature wood should be brought from the East Woodland to supplement the stock of wood.

One exciting development is that the pub sign that was commissioned some years ago and has been languishing in the yard cluttering up the place has just been put in position in the socket installed in about 2017.

The sign picture was created by Janice Lyall and looks wonderful, with an imagined flight of locks at Malswick, and Wilf Jones at the helm of a narrowboat. Many thanks to Phil Boughton of Newent Skips who moved the sign from the yard and lifted it into place

*Philip Marshall*

## Sam - The Over Swan

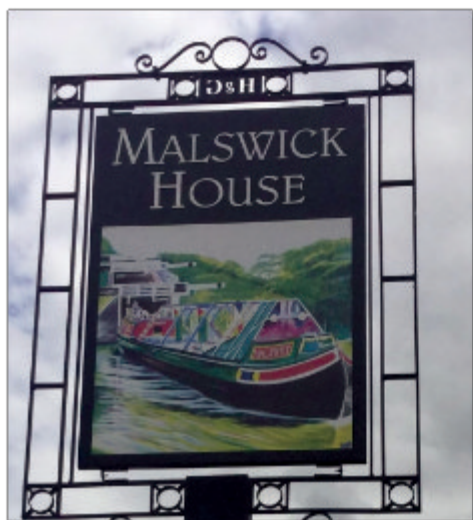
After the brutal killing of Sadie, the resident female swan, Sam her partner was left devastated. Not only did he lose his lifetime companion of some seven years, but he also lost nine eggs that had just two weeks to their hatching.

For the first few days Sam spent most of his time oblivious to his surroundings, tucking his head into his wings and floating wherever the wind would take him. He then spent a lot of time sitting on the tugboat Bosley with two little resident ducks for company and slept most of his days away.



It was heart breaking to watch him, but with time and lots of TLC from his human friends he has improved immensely. He now seems more content not to wander off from the canal and gets lots of attention from people walking by. Hopefully, he will stay a little longer, and who knows, maybe one day he will return with a lovely new partner.

*Monica Hamer*



*The new pub sign at Malswick House*



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# H&G Canal Company Mortgage Agreements



When the Canal was constructed from Ledbury to Hereford from 1839 to 1845, it was financed by raising £50,000 by mortgage and the issue of 2,250 £20 share certificates. One of our original, active members and canal scripophile James Dunn owns a H. & G. Canal Company Mortgage Agreement.

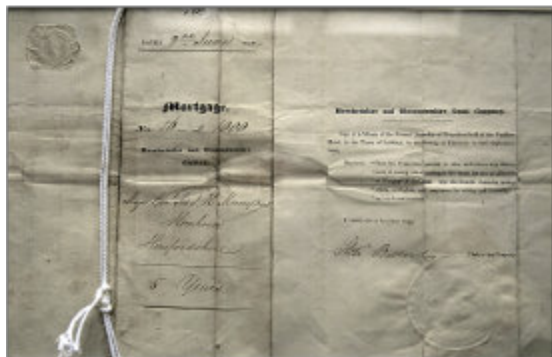
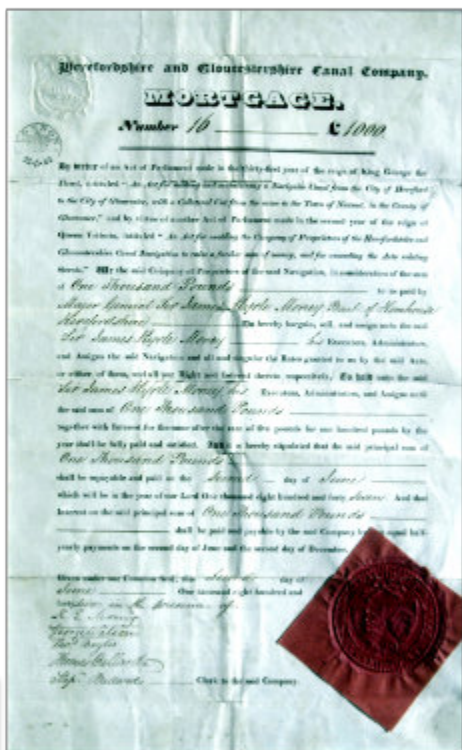
In 1838, Stephen Ballard considered the canal could be completed for £76,000.

James's Mortgage Number 16, is for £1,000 and was agreed between Major General Sir James Kyrle Money Bart. of Homme House, Herefordshire, and is signed on behalf of the Canal Company by George Watson, Thomas Baylis, Thomas Ballard and Stephen Ballard, and is dated the 2nd June 1842.

As I studied the document, I believed this mortgage agreement was entered into because, as construction progressed, it became apparent that expenditure was running in excess of what had been anticipated. Stephen Ballard, as Company Clerk, had the foresight to realise additional funds had to be raised if the canal was to be completed to Hereford. Dick Skeet agrees with my judgement.

James Kyrle Money was born in 1775 and served in the British Army; he was made an ensign in 1793, a major in 1804, lieutenant-colonel in 1811, colonel in 1825 and major-general in 1838. In 1808 he succeeded to his father's estate at Homme House, Much Marcle. In 1809 he married Caroline Anne Taylor, the daughter of Robert Taylor of London, but the marriage was childless.

The accompanying images are by courtesy of Michael Potts



In 1838 he was created a Baronet. He died in June, 1843, a year after he had agreed this mortgage agreement and the house and estate passed to his brother William.

Nigel C. Jefferies



## Peter Fawkes, stone mason 1812 - 1854



When long-standing member Gwen Moore of Abergavenny renewed her membership in July, she included a letter explaining why she was interested in the canal and had joined the Trust. As a result of researching her family history, she had discovered that her great, great, grandfather Peter Fawkes, had worked with Stephen Ballard, building the canal from Ledbury to Hereford. After completion of the canal, he had followed him to East Anglia and later to Holland.



Peter Fawkes was born in 1812 at Eastcombe, Gloucestershire. When he was 14 in 1826, he was probably apprenticed to a stone mason, since this was the age when apprenticeships were entered into. In 1834 the year after completion of his seven year apprenticeship, Peter married Eliza King. By 1841 Peter had relocated to Ledbury and was working for Stephen Ballard; the five locks which enabled the canal to reach the town were completed in the same year.

Presumably Peter's wife and their five children were living in the locality. In 1842 Stephen Ballard was living in Tunnel House, but in 1843 Peter and Eliza had moved to Tunnel House, (Gwen wonders how they managed to keep the children safe, since the sides of the cutting approaching the southern portal of Ashperton Tunnel are very steep).

The canal reached Withington in February 1844 and its opening was cause of celebration. In 1845 Stephen Ballard and the Fawkes family were living in Withington, and on 22nd May 1845 the canal was completed to Hereford. Bick\* relates that on the same day Ballard left for King's Lynn, for a new appointment, draining the Fens. Some of his workers, including Peter Fawkes, accompanied him. After about two years they had all moved to the Peterborough area, where Stephen Ballard was working for Thomas Brassey on the Great Northern Railway.

In 1854 Stephen Ballard married Maria Bird and he then spent two years in Holland, working on the Dutch Rhenish Railway between Utrecht and Rotterdam.

Peter Fawkes was killed in 1854 by a horrific accident; the horse he was riding reared up in fright at the sound of a steam engine and he was thrown from the horse and



decapitated by the train! In the same year Ballard recorded in his diary the ages of the nine Fawkes children who now ranged from 19 to 3 years. Aware of Ballard's character, Gwen considers it is possible he was considering some financial provision for them.

Gwen and her cousin Janet, who were born in south-east London, can find no record of a death certificate and wonders if any reader, perhaps with connections in Holland, can shed any more light on Peter's death, in particular exactly where the accident occurred.

Tunnel House, Haywood Lane, Ashperton, was derelict in 1983 when the Society was formed and it was restored by 1986.



*Ashperton Tunnel Cottage seen during restoration and its roof from below.*

*All photographs by courtesy of Michael Potts.*

However, it was not restored by the Society; it was purchased by one of our early members, the late Michael Peach, (an architect who specialised in restoring old buildings) who had the vision to appreciate its potential. On Sunday, 22nd June, 1986, a cast aluminium alloy plaque which I made was unveiled by the author David Bick, Stephen Ballard (the grandson of the Stephen Ballard who constructed the second phase of the canal), and Michael Peach.

On page six of the autumn 1986 of an early edition of *The Hereford Wharfinger*, edited by Mike Potts, there is a photograph of the ceremony. There are pictures of Tunnel House in both Bick's and Dick Skeet's\*\* books.



\* *The Hereford & Gloucester Canal* by David E. Bick

\*\* *Rescued from Obscurity* by Richard Skeet ISBN 978-0-9929441-0-0

*Nigel C. Jefferies*

## Andy Smith RIP



It is with sadness that we have to report the death of Andy Smith. Andy moved from Buckinghamshire to Much Marcle approximately 15 years ago. He designed the metal balcony on the Wharf House which was fabricated by Henry Clark, and this was just one of a number of projects that Andy and Henry worked on together for the trust.

Other projects include work on the weed cutter boat, some internal fittings in the Wharf House, the tractor trailer, the spill-weir railings and the cover for the silt drain. I always looked forward to my meetings with Andy, and although it is an overused phrase, he really was a true gentleman.

*John Pritchard*

## Alder out of the woods at last.



*The good news from Chris Phelps is that Alder is back in action.*

After fixing the battery charging fault which turned out to be a miss-wire, we turned our attention to the very poor starting. The starter motor was hauled off to specialist starter and alternator man Elliot in the Forest of Dean who found the armature shorted out. A new armature was fitted and the repaired unit rushed to Over site just in time for 3 months lock down.

On re emergence from lock down the repaired starter was refitted and in anticipation of a great success the key was turned.....nothing. Despair, the unit was returned to Elliot for retest who assured us there was nothing wrong with it. Stumped. A plea was made to use Renton as a test rig which performed perfectly with the repaired unit so a full set of readings were taken and compared to Alder which were very different.

All the wiring was opened up and an insulation breakdown affecting other circuits was discovered and repaired. Before exposing us to more despair the battery was tested and found over discharged so off to the optimiser in the shed for a week. So on a Wednesday Workday the revived battery was refitted and with trembling anticipation the key was turned and Alder thankfully burst back into life and performed perfectly.

*The photos are of Alder's plush engine room with the trusty Lister and the repaired starter motor making its way back on board.*

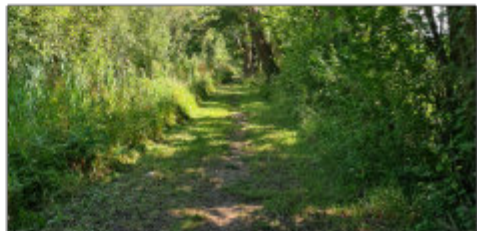
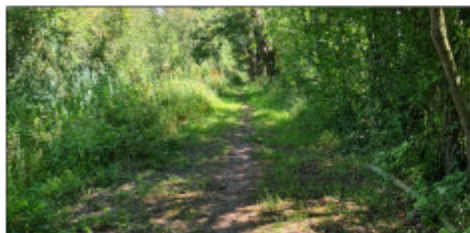


## Kymin East Site Update



Thanks to the team in Malswick for keeping the Grillo operating and Richard for delivering it to Kymin on a bright July day. Then a few hours later, Ralph having cut along the Kymin path a number of times, Richard picked it up again. Thanks all for a job well done.

*Ralph Barber*



*Before and after views.*



Things are just about ticking over at Oxenhall and general maintenance has kept us busy over this Covid period. Several of my volunteers have opted not to return to their voluntary duties for the time being and grass mowing, strimming, hedge trimming and a touch of paint on the tractor is all we could manage. Derek has been able to build one good ride-on Murray mower out of two which were donated to the Trust, so we have managed without the Grillo. We also have two working push mowers from the six which were laying around and given to Chris and Ian at Malswick to attend to - thanks to our mechanics and also for the bricsaw which required their attention. I think the scrap man will do well out of what is left.

A pair of wrens have used the tractor again this year to build a nest and rear some young ones. The nest is tucked into a little shelf just above where the driver sits and probably wouldn't have been noticed if we hadn't seen 2 young ones flapping around in the cab. Luckily it coincided with the period that the tractor was not in use and by the time it came to move it they had all flown away.

A levels survey has now been completed of the old Willows nursery site using the tried and trusted instrument on tripod method. Plans and cross sections have been drawn which will enable David, our quantity surveyor, to calculate the amounts of soil which have to be moved to restore the canal through here. Initial calculations have indicated that a clump of about 6 mature trees which were originally destined to be cut down to make way for the restored canal can now be spared.

The ground between the trees was thickly covered with ivy and stinging nettles so a start was made on clearing this and also cutting off the ivy climbing the trees. A surprise awaited as we cleared and found 16 tall concrete posts buried and tried to move them but they weigh at least 100lbs each so the tractor was called and dragged them all out to be taken to our general storage area not far away. I am sure we shall find a use for them one day.

The rebuild of the wall by the lock is still on hold although we did manage to transport 4 bags of aggregate for the concrete foundations weighing about a ton each, from our compound up the towpath to the working area using the tractor. Two of the bags were from a new supplier and on the 200 yard journey both managed to split the carrying handles and collapse on to the towpath.

One was rescued by placing some strong straps around the load and gently completing the journey but the other was split beyond repair and we had to wheelbarrow the whole load the remainder of the journey! Thank goodness our tractor is now up and working again or we may have had to wheelbarrow the lot. I shall have words to say to our supplier about his bags next time I order something.

*Brian Fox*

## Tales from the Traumatised Workshop Team



*Chris Phelps on a traumatic time for the team but a couple of dragons slain.*

The Yarkhill ride on skeleton was finally reassembled back to a working machine. It was tested on Malswick grass and then with glowing pride loaded onto Richard's trailer and spirited back to Yarkhill to be reunited with its rightful owners.

The following Tuesday Malswick House team session was met with the Ride-on sat on Richards trailer in disgrace, with tales of pops and bangs and sheets of flame. On drive off it was fine but lots of buzzing around revealed its underlying sickness and it did eventually pop and bang on cue. Lots of head scratching and tests found an intermittent coil fail which was renewed and a trial run ended in clouds of black smoke. The duo were distraught.

The poor tractor's carb was stripped, checked, and found a little bit out. Ian reset everything back to makers spec, and ran the engine up - this time all OK. Richard then mowed most of Oxenhall trouble free and with elation returned the resurrected machine back to Yarkhill. A big sigh of relief.



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# Malswick Update

No more virtual tea breaks (we hope); Robin, Phillip and Robert are enjoying a 3D (socially distanced) one.



Slow worms have featured extensively at the Malswick site this summer as we have been preparing a protected environment for them on part of the canal path. It came as a pleasant surprise to find these two under a piece of chipboard near our tool store.

The slow-worm is neither a worm nor a snake, but is, in fact, a legless lizard - its identity is given away by its abilities to shed its tail and blink with its eyelids, although you have to look very carefully to see evidence of this on the photograph.



**Please note that the site will not be open to the general public until canal restoration has been formally completed.**

*Alan McBride*

The saplings that Tony Sellwood planted are doing well thanks to his careful watering during this year's early dry spell. He's looking forward to planting them out amongst the hedging that will run alongside the canal.



Before constructing the reptile barrier, it was decided to carry out some fencing repairs: is Steve Delacourt looking for slow worms or the hammer he dropped?





### *Andy Fowler on returning to normality*

It is undoubtedly everyone's wish to return to normality as soon as possible. The problem, of course, is that nobody really knows just what normality will mean in the times to come. The best that we can do is to try and carry on from where we left off in March, within the limitations applicable at the time and see where we get to.

During the period from March to the beginning of June, the canal and the site was watched over by one of our local residents, who in addition to alerting us about a number of issues that arose, also carried out a significant amount of grass cutting around the edge of the basin. We are extremely grateful for this.

However, the remainder of the site was left largely to its own devices and with the weather that we had - particularly around Easter, nature made the most of it. The grass grew - the weed in the canal grew - the reeds in the canal grew - the brambles and nettles along the towpath grew - and the Himalayan Balsam began to grow. There was no doubt where immediate priorities lay when work could resume.

Our return to normality therefore began very tentatively on June 3rd with just four volunteers. Apart from the requirements for maintaining distance, in order to comply with all the regulations in force at the time many other aspects of what had previously been "normal" needed to be changed. Cleaning procedures, signing-in procedure, the use of tools and with our site hut/canteen being strictly "off limits", everything needed to be tried out to see how feasible a return to the new normal would be. So we limited our first work day to just the four.

Thankfully, the few little problems that we found could be addressed quite easily and a more complete return took place the following week. There is no doubt that some volunteers were "champing at the bit" to get back to work after weeks of lock down.

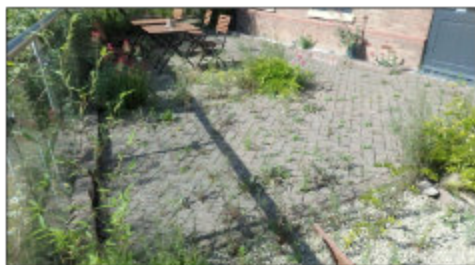


On the first day back, as soon as the initial formalities had been completed, Malcolm had the tractor out of the container, checked over, refuelled and was off into the long grass before you could blink.

By the time I could get the camera out of the car, Malcolm was away - which is why we only have a picture of the back of him disappearing down the site!

Since then, work on the site has concentrated mainly on getting the growth under control and in helping to prepare the outside areas of The Lock Keepers for its re-opening in July - see pics overleaf.

The new sort of normal is slowly beginning to evolve.



### **Water levels**

With a prolonged spell of very dry weather during May, the water level in the canal had dropped to the lowest I have seen it. Normally, we pump water from the river Leaddon into the canal to maintain the level. However, having moved the pump and the suction pipe away from the river prior to lock-down, when the river was in flood, the first task was to return the pump and re-connect the pipes.

This was achieved with relatively little trouble - although maintaining social distancing made it a bit more tricky - and some water has subsequently been pumped. Unfortunately though, the weather that resulted in the canal being low also resulted in the river Leaddon being very low, so finding water to pump is proving to be a little bit tricky as well.

Welcome to the new normal.

### **Vineyard Hill**

As reported in the previous edition of *The Wharfinger*, a series of pegs placed down the hillside were to be monitored, to check if any further slippage of the hill into the canal was taking place.

Two sets of measurements have been taken and despite some fairly extremes of both rain and heat, the initial findings indicate that the hillside remains stable at present. Options for how best to deal with the restricted section of canal may now be considered.

The major problem with this section is now the amount of weed that has grown unchecked during recent months. An attempt to try our boat Alder a couple of weeks ago came to a halt after about 50 yards, with the boat unable to go ahead or astern. With no weed hatch fitted on Alder, ropes thrown onto the towpath and the boat hauled backwards by hand was the only way to get the boat back to her berth.

Dealing with the steady growth of reeds along this section is a problem, for which the best answer to date is the "Reed Razer" shown being used.

This is proving to be a fairly slow but effective tool for cutting off reeds, but is not nearly as successful in



removing the various types of weed that have choked the waterway. How to deal with the problem of weeds is the subject of considerable scratching of heads at the moment.

Welcome to the new normal.

## **Heritage Boats**

### **Alder**

The starter motor on Alder has been an ongoing bother for a very considerable time. Thanks to the efforts of Chris and his contacts in the trade, the problem has now been tracked down and resolved. Thanks to Chris for his persistence. Having finally got the engine running after many months, a short run up the canal was attempted - which did not go too well as mentioned in the previous section.

### **Susan - E**

Our electric boat has also had problems over recent months and thanks to some work by Peter Thompson, a fault in the bilge pump float switch was found to be the cause of the batteries being discharged. All now seems to be in order with Susan-E

### **Mr Maysey**

Work on this was halted in March and is only just resuming, with work on the hull as the first priority. Work on the rebuild of the cabin will commence when the hull is complete.

### **Renton and Bosley**

These are both in working order and waiting for the canal to be in a suitable state to run them.

### **Future Projects**

Planning work concerning the replacement and re-positioning of the storage containers and welfare facilities is continuing in conjunction with the proposals for a new Mill Barn.

Maybe this is the new normal.

*Andy Fowler*



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## Nature Item - Protected species at Malswick



*More on the slow worms at Malswick from Tony Sellwood*

As part of our submission for Planning Permission we are obliged to commission ecological surveys to identify any protected species on our site and to advise us on the appropriate mitigation measures necessary to carry out the canal restoration without harm to the environment.

Wild Service, part of The Wild Life Trust, have carried out the necessary surveys and have identified a small population of slow worms (also spelled slowworms, or slow-worms), in the small field leading up to the western football club boundary of the site from the stream behind Malswick House.

Slow worms are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act, and must be removed and prevented from re-entering the site before any work can start. This must be carried out when they are active in the Spring to Autumn period as they hibernate in winter. The translocation process can take up to 2 months. Accordingly, we decided to commence the process this summer, so that it would be possible to commence canal works in October, if other factors allow. Starting in July also avoids their mating season, where following a "courtship" lasting up to 10 hours (!) the female eventually produces up to 8 young.

The translocation involves the enclosing of the site with a "newt" fence - see photos - where a polythene barrier supported on stakes with the bottom edge buried in the ground will prevent re-entry of reptiles into the work area. Slow worms like to bask under mats which have been laid out in the field, and then having been caught (we haven't got to that bit yet, and the few we have seen are certainly not slow!) will be removed from the field and encouraged to reside in purpose built refuges well outside the construction site.



Ecologists from Wild Service will inspect the mats daily, and will declare the translocation complete when 5 consecutive daily inspections find no reptiles under the mats, a process which we are told is likely to be completed within 30 days, but could take 60 days. The site team have so far spent 2 days carrying out this part of the project and probably have another 2 days to complete the fencing.



It is rapidly becoming apparent to the team how ecological issues will affect both the programme and the budget for the restoration works.

## Yarkhill Site Update



Maintenance work continues at Yarkhill taking advantage of the good weather. Snowberries had been threatening to close off access to the wild side but new volunteer, Malcolm, has been using his brush-cutter on them to good effect.

*Bob Comba*

## Social Evenings at The Royal Oak



*The latest on these from Janet Moulton*

I am sorry we have had to miss so many Social Evenings with coronavirus following the floods. The Socials have been going for many years, I took over from Ray and Barbara Moses 20 years ago! I think we have only had to cancel a couple of evenings due to weather conditions. We have met at a number of venues, Verzons, Hopton Arms and for many years at The Royal Oak.

I have arranged around 200 speakers – now having to re-visit some subjects as we have a new audience but still some stalwarts who continue to support us. Nigel, Stephen and Gillian follow a long line of MC's and doorkeepers!

We will not be able to hold our September meeting as planned and therefore the Grand Holiday Draw will not take place that evening. New arrangements for the draw have therefore been made - see page 36 for more details. Good luck to all those who have bought tickets.

There may be meetings in October and November, but we are definitely aiming for Dick Skeet's talk in January. Please check the website or ring me on 01432 264366.

*Janet Moulton*

## Canal Walks



H&G Canal Trust has produced a series of walk leaflets which explore various parts of the Herefordshire & Gloucestershire Canal.

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*More details and ordering options available on the website.*

## Logs for Sale Proceeds to Trust Funds

These logs are processed by our volunteers from the clearance work during canal restoration. The sale of them helps to fund the cost of our work restoring the Herefordshire and Gloucestershire Canal.

Logs are available for purchase at £50 per builders dumpy bag.



Malswick site team by email: [malswick@h-g-canal.co.uk](mailto:malswick@h-g-canal.co.uk)

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#### Tuesdays

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Robert Heigham

[malswick@h-g-canal.org.uk](mailto:malswick@h-g-canal.org.uk)

Oxenhall/ Newent Station

Brian Fox 01432 358 628,

[oxenhall@h-g-canal.org.uk](mailto:oxenhall@h-g-canal.org.uk)

#### Wednesdays

Over Basin/Vineyard Hill

Andy Fowler

[overbasin@h-g-canal.org.uk](mailto:overbasin@h-g-canal.org.uk)

#### Thursdays

Yarkhill

Chris High 01568 615 575,

[yarkhill@h-g-canal.org.uk](mailto:yarkhill@h-g-canal.org.uk)

#### Ad Hoc

Hereford Roving Team

John Pritchard 01432 272972,

[hereford@h-g-canal.org.uk](mailto:hereford@h-g-canal.org.uk)

Kymin

Ralph Barber 01432 853 086

[kymin@h-g-canal.org.uk](mailto:kymin@h-g-canal.org.uk)



*David Exell reports...*

### **Gloucester & District Model Boat Club are back!**

After one of the sunniest, pleasantest weather periods that I can remember, totally frustrating as we had to close the sailing down due to the Virus, and could not use the basin at all, we are back!

First the weeds were back, a combination of heavy rain in the winter (remember that!) and sunny spring days, the water weed has had a lovely time growing like mad. We did not know whether to weed or mow the Canal basin.



We used to use a drag chain method pulling an "H" section of heavy chain across the Canal which was very effective but needed gangs of people in close proximity to work together to pull the chain up together with its very heavy load of weed, effective but not safe with the virus around. We have now purchased a cutting saw like a huge hacksaw blade and two people saw there way up and down the canal while others harvest it.



*The photographs show Ted our Chairman with the weed carefully placed along side the new roadway and the "Weeders" working along the brick wall pulling out as much weed as possible.*

It means we can work as a group but not close together. In addition, we have purchased more weed rakes purpose designed for dragging weed out including the stuff cut by the saw. This has proved very effective. At the time of writing halfway through the planned programme, we have removed a lot of weed. We are, of course, weeding blind and no doubt when they started again the following week there were large clumps that we missed but in the end we won, but will have to keep up the weeding for the rest of the summer, John Hamer keeps us at it and does a splendid job supervising.

Following weekend.... Yes, we had missed a lot of weed but by the following Saturday and again three weeks later we had removed most that we had missed.

As a Club we have renewed our suspended liability insurance and we are now ready for our main opening which went ahead as planned on June 30th, numbers are limited to 8 per timed session, two per day, 10am 'til 1am then 2pm until 5, four days a week to comply with our permission to re-open. I am sure this will alter as time goes by, we hope by mid July it should be sailing time as usual.

A bit like Golf and Tennis we will have designated time slots for the moment for virus-safety reasons but being in the open it is very low risk, however we hope onlookers do not crowd round the model boaters. Please keep a safe distance!

The Canal has been very popular with locals walking the Towpath so we will give them something extra to look at and hope a return to normality will soon occur.

Over is a lovely spot and we must all keep the area looking good for everyone who uses it.

While we have to book a time, we will be sailing at Over basin on Tuesday, Thursday, Friday and Sunday morning & afternoons (weather permitting).

You should find somebody sailing between 10.00am and 4.00pm. The Club members will be pleased to talk to you about their models and the Club. (But please keep your distance!)

Members' have models of all descriptions including amphibious craft - yachts are very popular.



*David Exell*

## Sailing4Disabled / Rowing Pirates



Hello everyone,

We at Sailing4Disabled hope that this very trying time has not been knocking at your door, for those who have had an experience of it our thoughts are with you.

Well, we were slowly getting to be braver and venturing out, but I'm sure with great caution. As for me, the very day that the PM said that the coast was clear, I was told that I would need to shield for the next 3 weeks as your operation date has been fixed for 3rd August!. Grin and bear it is the saying.

News from the canal, the weed had sort of taken over, and our groups are not starting until 2021, so John was free for weed clearing as soon as we can stand, side by side (I know that tune)!

So, Stay Safe, venture out safely, and hide your face.

A gent was stopped going into a supermarket without a face mask on. The security staff said "You can't come in here without a face covering". He replied, "do you know how stupid I look in a face mask!" "No, sir, but I can imagine, as the security staff noticed that he was wearing a suit and crocs!"

*Pete (The Pirate) Bisson*





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STEAK, SEAFOOD  
VEGETARIAN  
SPECIALS BOARD



### OPENING HOURS

Wednesday - Saturday: 9am - 9pm  
Sunday: 10am - 4pm  
Monday Tuesday: Closed

### FIND US AT

2 Broad Street, Newent GL18 1AH  
01452 223608

THE POPULAR OAK INN IS NESTLED IN THE HEART OF THE BEAUTIFUL HEREFORDSHIRE COUNTRYSIDE, NOT FAR FROM THE GLORIOUS MALVERN HILLS, AND OFFERS DELICIOUS FOOD AND FRIENDLY ATMOSPHERE. THIS TRADITIONAL FREE HOUSE ALSO BOASTS FOUR LUXURY EN-SUITE B&B ROOMS.

## THE OAK INN STAPLOW



A COUNTRY INN DATING BACK TO THE 1600'S, THE OAK INN CAN BE FOUND A MERE TWO MILES NORTH OF LEDBURY. THERE ARE TWO COZY BAR AND DINING AREAS WITH LOG FIRES, FLAGSTONE FLOORS AND GLORIOUS OLD OAK BEAMS DECORATED TRADITIONALLY WITH LOCAL HOPS. THE INFORMAL RESTAURANT OFFERS A VARIED MENU SEVEN DAYS A WEEK.

The Oak Inn prides itself on its focus on the freshest locally-sourced ingredients from the highest quality food producers and sustainable fisheries. Three real ales and a guest beer are always available, and they have been in The Good Beer Guide since 2009. The Oak Inn also hosts great live music events (see their website for more details).

All these factors make the atmosphere of the Oak Inn that of a quintessential country inn, where you can dine, relax with a real ale, and, if you wish, settle down for the night in one of their luxurious guest rooms.

DID WE MENTION THEY ARE ALSO SUPER DOG-FRIENDLY? Your furry friends can even eat with you or stay with you overnight in a B&B room.

The Oak Inn  
Staplow HR8 1NP  
01531640954  
[www.oakinnstaplow.co.uk](http://www.oakinnstaplow.co.uk)

## Membership Matters



Have a question on your membership? Contact Nigel, our membership trustee - details on inside back cover - see opposite.

Your personal details – membership status, address, telephone number or email address - anything need amending? Contact Nigel to have the changes updated.

Your membership renewal due date appears on the envelope your Wharfinger has arrived in. Send the payment to Nigel to continue with your membership.

Want to make a single or establish a regular annual payment to the Trust via your bank? The Trust's sort code is 16-21-20 Account number 11600694.

It will help greatly with the admin if you can please mention on the banking paperwork your initials, surname and postcode so we can match against your membership.

Thank you,

Nigel C Jefferies

## Grand Holiday Draw



The September Social evening has been cancelled and therefore the draw for the Draw will not take place that evening. We have checked with Herefordshire Council, the local authority where we register for our gambling license – they confirm that it is acceptable to have the draw on the same day at a different venue.

The draw will therefore take place in the afternoon of 15th September at 16.00 (4pm) in the Chairman's garden, complying with social distancing rules – with independent witnesses.

Good luck to all those who have bought tickets.

## Advertisers supporting The Wharfinger



*As ever, we are grateful for their support, without which publication of  
**The Wharfinger** would not be possible.*

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Red Lion Inn



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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, pen or laptop.

The H&G CT also welcomes offers of gifts of good quality used tools and machinery from those who no longer need or cannot use it.

## Want to Join?

Please support our voluntary work by becoming a Member of the H&GCT. A membership form is available online or from our Membership Secretary.

### H&G CT UK Membership Rates

	Annual	Life
Individual	£10.00	£200.00
Joint/Family	£15.00	£300.00
Senior Citizen	£7.50	£115.00
Joint Senior Citizen	£10.00	£150.00
Corporate	£25.00	£500.00

PLEASE NOTE: All subscriptions and donations are as being made under the Gift Aid scheme unless you state that you do not wish us to do this. Payment made by Standing Order greatly assists us and payment remains under your control. All payments please to: H&G CT, 6 Castle Street, Hereford, HR1 2NL

## Visit our website:

[www.h-g-canal.org.uk](http://www.h-g-canal.org.uk)

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Membership records are computerised. Your entry is available for inspection if you send a SAE to the Membership Secretary. We try to ensure details of talks/events are correct — please verify with the relevant organiser if travelling long distances.

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Our objective is to rebuild the 34 mile Canal linking the centre of Hereford to Gloucester and its connection with the 2,500 mile inland waterway network. We have major restoration sites in each county, together extending to some 4 miles. The intention is to provide a financially sustainable independent Canal which does not require regular financial support from public bodies for its future operation and maintenance.

## The H&G Canal Trust

The Canal Society, formed in 1983, became the Herefordshire & Gloucestershire Canal Trust, a registered charity, in 1992. It has an ordinary and corporate membership approaching 1,400, here and abroad.

## The original Herefordshire & Gloucestershire Canal

Work started in 1792 reaching Ledbury from Gloucester by 1798. In 1827 Steven Ballard was appointed to oversee the Canal's completion, which reached Hereford in 1845; this was one of the last major canal routes completed in Britain. The Canal stretched from the River Severn at Gloucester, via Newent, Dymock and Ledbury to Hereford, using 22 locks and 3 tunnels. It was closed in 1881 to allow construction of the Ledbury-Gloucester railway which in turn closed in 1964.



= Canal Walk leaflet available.



= Restoration sites suitable for public access.

*It should not be assumed that Rights of Way exist.*

*We work on the Canal with the cooperation of land owners and their neighbours.*

*Please help us maintain good relations with them.*



The Queen's Award  
for Voluntary Service

Thank you.

