

The Hereford Wharfinger

This is the third newsletter since the beginning of our Society and we are shortly to enter our second year. News of the first years progress and the aims for the forthcoming year will be discussed at the Annual General Meeting in April. I hope many of you will be able to attend to offer your views, criticisms and practical help where appropriate.

The first stage of the working party project is almost finished and will need further resources including fund raising campaigns to assist in its completion. Progress has been recorded photographically at all stages and I suspect the results will be available soon in a film show.

I look forward to seeing you at the forthcoming Canal Society events.

Janet White
Editor

Committee

Robin Andrews Philip Ashurst
Kenneth Cook James Dunn
Nigel Jeffries Richard Morley
Janet White John Startin
Peter Woodfield Michael Potts
Will Frecknall Peter Price

Membership Secretary: James Dunn,
Old Deanery House, Castle Street,
Hereford.

Secretary: Mr N Jeffries, 19,
Wilcroft Park, Bartestree,
Hereford. Tel: 850661

Obituary

It was with great sadness that we learned of the sudden death of Frank Frecknall.

We, in the Herefordshire and Gloucestershire Canal Society have good reason to be grateful to Frank. When our Society first started it was largely as a result of his drive and enthusiasm. As the Chairman of the Standing Committee he succeeded in bringing together members of diverse outlooks and interests, and creating a united and above all friendly group. Our Inaugural Meeting he masterminded and its success was a tribute to the effort he had put in. With the formation of the Society Frank insisted on relinquishing the post of Chairman, as he felt that this should be held by someone on the spot - although in fact his involvement in his subsequent post of Vice-Chairman was every bit as much as if he were Hereford - based. His enthusiasm remained undiminished, not only in the committee room but also in his wellingtons in the mud of the canal. At the time of his death he was working on a canal guide, the aim of which was "to direct the reader to remains of the canal which can be seen from Public Rights of Way"

The future of waterways, and of the Herefordshire and Gloucestershire Canal in particular, were ever close to Frank's heart. Only days before his death he voiced a thought that few of us have had the courage to express, when he said that the time must eventually come when we will state our aim to be restoration of the entire canal. Perhaps an impossible dream - but who knows what the future with its greatly increased time for leisure pursuits holds?

Frank's lively wit and good - natured humour, above all his unceasing enthusiasm for canals, will be sadly missed. But we shall also miss Frank as a friend. And perhaps the greatest act of friendship we can perform is to continue what he has started, and see it grow and flourish.

To Joyce and Will we offer our deepest sympathy.

NEW USES FOR THE CANAL AT WITHINGTON

In those remote, bygone days, before the emergence of the Hereford and Gloucester Canal Society, the plight of residents suffering from frequent flooding at Withington Marsh, was brought to the attention of the engineers of the River Lugg Internal Drainage Board at Hereford.

Initial investigations indicated that the most practical way of overcoming the problem was a massive excavation of the local stream (a branch of the Little Lugg known as Kymin Brook). This would prove expensive and entail the destruction of many trees and much wild habitat.

However these are the days of "Lateral thinking" and many alternative methods should be explored. It was during such an examination that I found, to my delight, that the strip of land marked on the Ordnance Survey map as a bog, was, in fact a deep depression with potential use as an overspill channel.

Further enquiries showed that the owner had, in fact, cleared the lower part of the canal for use as an irrigation reservoir, and last December I obtained three cross sections of the cleared length, using my old canoe as a survey ship and ice breaker. It was found that the profile was dished in section, having a top water width of about eight metres and a maximum depth of 1.4 metres.

Further studies showed that the local topography was such that, in times of flood, the swollen waters of the Kymin Brook could be diverted into the old canal, which would then act as a pre-formed flood channel taking the waters safely past the most flood-prone properties before returning the main flow to the lowest, enlarged, reach of the Kymin Brook.

By the time this note is published, it is expected that this work will be complete. Although this section of the canal is in private ownership and hence, cannot be readily visited, Hereford and Gloucester Canal Society members will probably be gratified to know that, due to the irrigation requirements of the owner, and the flood relief needs of the local community, the 1 km length of canal between Withington Marsh and Lock Cottage is likely to be maintained in pristine condition for many years to come.

Richard Morley

EVENTS

8 th February Skittles evening at the Antelope, Barton Road, Hereford. Event starts at 7.30 pm. All are welcome. Please bring your friends.

7 th March Members Slide Evening and Waterways Film Show at Hereford Cathedral School, Castle Street, Hereford. Please bring your slides of canal history, boating holidays etc and help contribute to the slides evening. Also, we have two film to show. The first film is called "The Maritime Link" It is about British waterways freight services and the three hundred and forty miles of commercial waterways which connect the Severn, Thames, Mersey and Humber. The second film is called "Waterways - Our Heritage" It is a history of canals and their uses for cruising, angling, walking, nature study and other recreational pursuits.
If you want to show some slides could you please contact Mike Potts, the Society's photographer before the slide show to help with arrangements. Tel:56372

11 th April Annual General Meeting to be held at Hereford Cathedral School, Castle Street, Hereford at 7.30 pm.

Brief Agenda

- 1) Address by President.
- 2) Election of Officers.
- 3) Chairman's Report.
- 4) Secretary's Report.
- 5) Treasurers Report.
- 6) Matters arising.
- 7) Programme for the year - Statement of objectives.
- 8) Any other business.

Mid May Annual Dinner at the Graftonbury Hotel, Grafton Lane, off Ross Road, Hereford. As usual, all events open to non members. Bring friends or family with you.

June Outing to Stoke Bruerne Waterways Museum in Northants. The museum stands beside the Grand Union Canal in the heart of peaceful countryside. There are an interesting range of exhibits contained in an old grain warehouse, designed to give an insight into the way of life of two centuries of working boatmen and their families. Additional attractions are the Museum Shop, Blisworth Tunnel, canalside walks, a boat - weighing machine and the choice of several boat trips.

REMEMBER: Working parties still in operation on the last Sunday of every month. We need your support. For details contact Robin Andrews. Tel: 268854

Herefordshire and Gloucestershire Canal Navigation

Share Certificate No. 116

Last year I acquired a share certificate in the original Canal Navigation Company. Members may like to read the information below which I have gleaned from Hereford City Record Office and The National Library of Wales, about the original owner.

This share certificate was originally owned by one Samuel Carless, mercer, of the city of Hereford.

Samuel was the eldest son of the Reverend Joseph and Mrs. Ann Carless and was born at Kerry near Newtown, Montgomery, in the year 1761. His baptism is recorded in the Kerry parish register on the 8th October 1761. Samuel had three brothers, Thomas, Walter and Joseph and two sisters, Dorothy who died a spinster and Christianna, who married a Doctor Thomas Griffiths of the city of Bristol.

At some time the Reverend Carless and his family moved to the Hereford area and at the time of his death he was living in the parish of Morton Canon, a village about ten miles north-west of Hereford.

At the time of the purchase of this share certificate Samuel is described as a mercer, a dealer in textile fabrics, especially silks and other costly material. Later, in partnership with a man called Holloway, Samuel developed an interest in banking. According to Piggott's Directory of Herefordshire, he appears to have resided at Castle Street, Hereford, at least from 1830 until his death in 1851, the year of the Great Exhibition in London. In the 1851 census Samuel is described as aged 89, unmarried and a retired banker.

He died on the 8th May 1851 and his death is recorded thus in the "Hereford Journal" of Wednesday 14th May 1851.

"May 8, at his residence, in Castle-street, in his 90th year, Samuel Carless, Esq., formerly of the firm of Carless and Holloway, bankers, Hereford. The deceased was one of the oldest and most respected inhabitants of this city."

I think it would be very useful to compile a list of the remaining share certificates. It would confirm the number that exist as well as indicating the type of people who invested in the company and where they lived. Consequently I would be grateful if members would forward details of share certificates they own or know to exist. Incidentally, David Bick does not recall having seen one of the second issue of share certificates, issued as a result of the 1839 Act to enable completion of the canal.

N.C. Jefferies - Secretary.

EXPLORING NEWENT

On Sunday 11 th September 1983 approximately 20 members and friends met in Newent Market Square at 11a.m. on a rather cheerless blustery morning. David Bick led us off through the churchyard, after a short introduction to the town and its buildings towards the lake which belonged to Newent Court, (now a modern housing estate). where we were to see our first section of the canal. There is a length here approximately 200 yds which would be very attractive if cleared. Unfortunately David says the pudding has been destroyed and many trees have grown up through it anyway. This is an area developed by Barratts but the rough land including the lake and the canal has been given back to Newent. There could be a very pleasant amenity here for the town if the money was forthcoming. We saw a culvert under the canal which takes away any excess water from the lake diverting it into the brook. This part of the canal was built in 1724. The history of the lake is rather obscure but it could be late Saxon.

We then progressed to the site of Newent Wharf which is behind the fire-station. Boats could turn here in the basin part of which is still visible. It is very overgrown with nettles and buddleias and overlooked by the railway line (disused of course) about 15 feet above. On the opposite side of the road stands the wharf keeper's house and next to it a former pub which still has its name painted on the front--- The Anchor ??

We then made a little deviation past the railway bridging point to look at Furnace House and the site of the 17th Century Ironworks where traces of charcoal are still being dug up. It was probably stored in a fascinating building dated about 1640 still in amazing condition.

At 12.45 we adjourned to the King's Arms for lunch where the children expended much pent up energy on the swing, slide and round-a-bout. We then retraced our steps slightly and turned towards the site of Newent station. The railway embankment was built over the canal at this point but it soon reappears on the other side. Also of great interest to us, on our left we passed a ladder and fence factory which at one time made lock gates! Soon after this railway and canal diverged, the railway going further west and the canal turning north, leaving us quite a wealth of artefacts to explore and hopefully preserve.

The canal bed still crosses the Ell Brook by a substantial aquaduct which is pierced by a square hole so that any water collecting in the canal channel falls into the brook below. (Could there have been a bung?) We walked to the next two locks and

** Denis Lock was about here.*

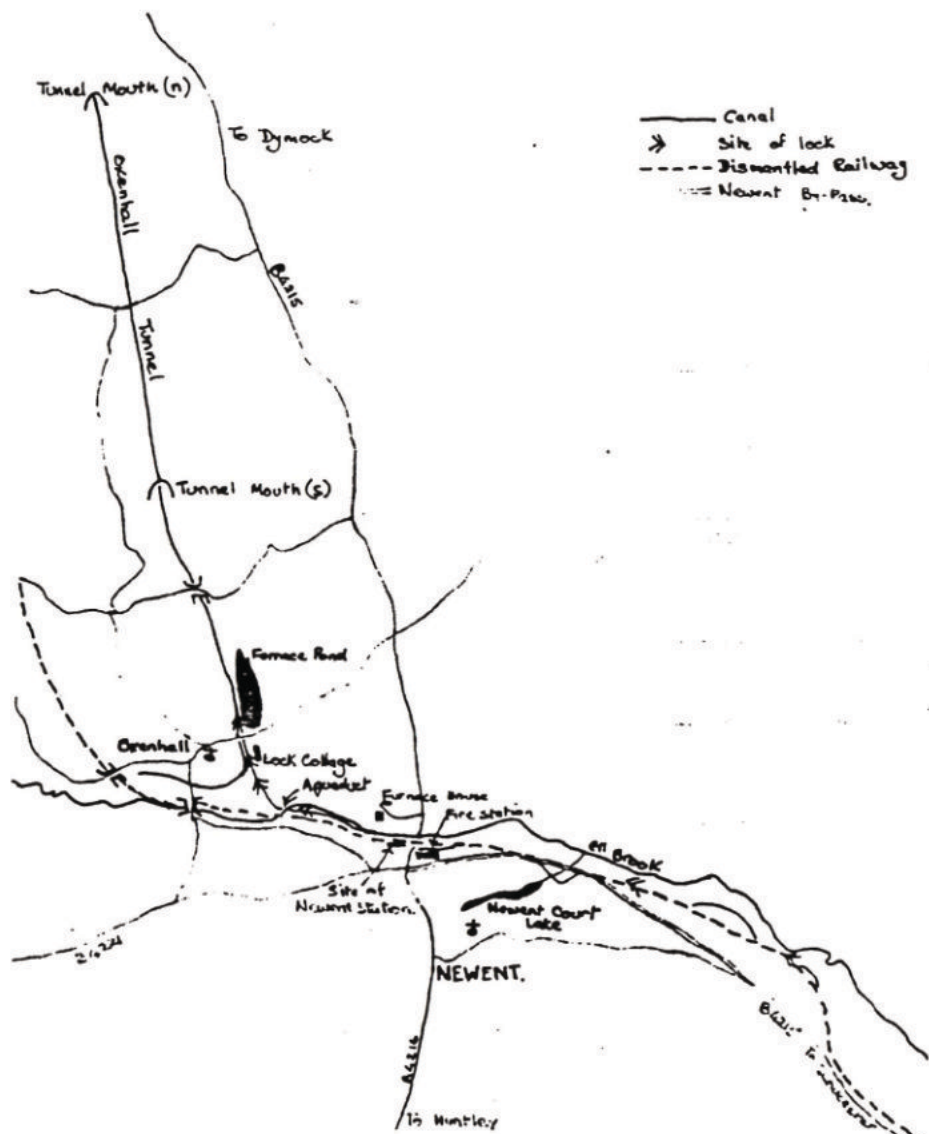


Chart showing canal at Newent and Orenhall and features seen on walk 11.9.1983. Scale approx $2\frac{1}{2}''$ rep 1 mile.

stopped by the Lock Cottage. The second lock (House Lock) has its masonry more or less intact and might make an ideal subject for top-priority restoration as it is the only one left on the canal. The Lock Cottage is apparently a holiday home, and used from time to time. In July 1853 there was a freak storm in the area and water actually rose to the third stair. As the cottage is surrounded on three sides by lower ground the flood must have been horrific. This is probably the most well known part of the canal as the towpath is a public footpath and much used by local walkers. There is a good deal of clearance to be done here though hopefully some of the greenery will die back during the winter months.

Walking on to a lowered bridge we came to the furnace pond which supplied the Ironworks with water via a leat of which there is now no trace. Several types of water birds have taken possession of the pond. (SWANS, COCKS and MOORHENS).

A few yards along the road towards Oxenhall David pointed out the course of the coal branch which went about two miles towards Gorsley. It is about 3 feet above the main line here and locked down just north of the bridge.

We rejoined the main line and noticed that the Ramblers Association have done some towpath clearance along this stretch. There is a thriving Orchard on the west side of the canal. Water leaves the canal into two small ditches along here.

The second bridge we came to is nicely preserved though the capping does need some attention. The blue brick capping came from B.W. Blades of West Bromwich like the bridge at Canon Frome. Down below the litter louts have been busy and bits of car and other metal objects have been abandoned. Some pointing is needed down here and the ivy should be discouraged.

Beyond the bridge we approached the highlight of the tour--Oxenhall tunnel. We had to leave the towpath and walk carefully through a swede field. There is a very slippery approach down to the tunnel and the entrance is thoroughly silted up. Here two of the children managed to gain a bootfull of mud and were lucky not to lose their boots together. The entrance seems very small and Henry Williams description of it in 1873 is quite justified; "looked more like a sewer than anything else". Mr. A. Farrant however thought it "very pretty". The stone faced portal seems in reasonable condition. The tunnel is 2192 yards long, none too straight and has no towpath. There is at least one fall inside. There is a small cave close by the entrance which could have been a stable or shelter for the boatmen. Much clearance needed here!

We scrambled back out of the cutting and retraced our steps to the bridge. As David wanted to show us the coal branch we walked back to Oxenhall Church by road where some of us opted to take tired children home and some had a quick look at features on the coal branch. It was a most enjoyable day out and it gave most of us plenty to mull over. Our task certainly is momentous! Our most grateful thanks, David.

IF YOU HAVE AN ARTICLE FOR WHARFINGER PLEASE SEND IT TO:
JANET WHITE, 19 GRAMPIAN CLOSE, HEREFORD