

CUTTINGS



the journal
of the
shropshire union
canal society
june 2010



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CUTTINGS



the journal of the
shropshire union
canal society

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Chairman's jottings

I must begin with the sad news that Gordon Roberts, a former Chairman of the Society, died on 20th April. Gordon and his wife Barbara, who died in 2008, spent their married life in Welshpool and became part of the Society during the protests against the proposed bypass in the late 1960s. Gordon was also Chairman of the Society's erstwhile Montgomery Branch. Their commitment was total — Welshpool rallies, opening ceremonies, dinghy dawdles — you name it, Gordon and Barbara would be there organising and helping. A full tribute to Gordon will appear in the August *CUTTINGS*.

Before Easter I was contacted by Hiroko Togo, who makes documentary films for Japanese television. She had just begun research for a two hour film about the British canals, in which she hopes to concentrate mainly on wildlife and history. The upshot, after several long telephone conversations, was that Hiroko and her cameraman Andrew (who does a lot of work for the BBC Wildlife Unit in Bristol) visited us at home for further fact finding and then made extended visits to the National Waterways Museum at Ellesmere Port.

The *Buy a Barrow of Boulders* appeal continues to attract contributions, and volunteers have been attending some of this season's events with a replica navy's barrow (filled, of course, with boulders and concrete blocks), a model showing the way the lining is constructed, and the Society's display boards. At Easter four volunteers took the display to the National Waterways Museum at Ellesmere Port, where a lot of people showed interest in the Society's efforts. Then over the weekend of 23rd to 25th April other volunteers took the display to the Corwen/ Patriot Gala on the Llangollen Railway. Talking to people in this way is undoubtedly a useful exercise, as it draws attention not only to the *Buy a Barrow of Boulders* appeal, but also to the Montgomery restoration as a whole and to the Society's enhancement work on the rest of the Shropshire Union system.

And if you haven't already booked for the twentyfifth Dinghy Dawdle, there's still time. Just visit www.shropshireunion.org.uk to download a booking form or email Terry Wain at waincl@aol.com. Naturally we anticipate a glorious summer's day!

Terry O'Brien



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Membership news

We all extend a warm welcome to:

Mr G Woodruff of Shrewsbury
Mr and Mrs Dearman of Stockport
Mr and Mrs Shears of Keighley, West Yorkshire (Life Members)
Mr and Mrs Yates of Wem
Mr P Jervis of Stalybridge
Mr J Robertson of Congleton
Mrs B Trueman of Buckley, Flintshire
Mr I Davies of Chirk

The Society has produced a new publicity and membership leaflet — would anyone like some of these up to date leaflets to keep at home or on the boat? We are always looking out for new members to swell our ranks and keep the Society alive and vibrant! Please let me know if you would like a small pack — I have plenty of copies looking for a good home.

Please also check that I have your details recorded correctly — a quick glance at the envelope this copy of *CUTTINGS* arrived in will confirm whether all is well.

You can contact me about this and any other membership matter at 28 Millfield Drive, Market Drayton TF9 1HS, telephone 01630 656525 or email sucsmemsec@btinternet.com.

Ian Hendley

DONATED GOODS FOR SALE

**Hewlett Packard printer cartridges: HP98A
New — just £30 each**

The cartridges can be collected from Little Neston in South Wirral. Postage/delivery will be charged at cost.

**For more information please ring Paul Mills
on 0151 336 1049 or mobile 07761 739439**

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Stamps et cetera!

We achieved our £1,000 target in the last financial year! A cheque from my dealer for £65 brought our final total to £1,015.54 — a great effort by everyone. Well done! And now it's time to start all over again...

I've had lots of postcards, masses of Australian stamps from the Australian Canal Society, and lots of coins and so on. I don't have all that many British stamps at the moment, but I have a big box of worldwide stamps collected in the 1970s waiting to be sorted.

Can I make a plea for anyone travelling by car between Milton Keynes and the Nantwich area to get in touch, please. There are boxes of stamps waiting to come to me from the Waterway Recovery Group Stamp Bank in Milton Keynes. Do please let me know if you are able to help by bringing a few boxes for me.

A special thank you this time to:

J Barnett
J Blakeman
M Bremner
D Brown
P & E Buck
N Dodd
S Foote
A Hayes
J Hulme
D Jones

L & A Jones
A Lindop
C Magner
J Maiden
J Massey
M Meachin
I Owen
D Price
R Tennison
J Webber

Anonymous x 2
The Australian Canal Society
Ellesmere Town Council
The Scottish Rock Garden Club
Trafalgar Cleaning
Waterway Recovery Group North West
Wolverhampton Boat Club

Pat Wilson

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**Please send stamps, postcards, coins, banknotes,
phone cards and cigarette cards to:**

**Pat Wilson
Rin Cop, Nantwich Road, Wardle,
Near Nantwich, Cheshire CW5 6BE
(Telephone 01270 528296)**

Continuous fundraising

The Society has three methods of continuous fundraising. The totals to date are:

Collecting boxes	£220.00
Recycling (inkjet cartridges, mobile 'phones etc)	£84.00
Stamps, postcards, coins etc	£78.50

The Society wishes to thank everyone who contributes to the success of these fundraising activities.

I have just been notified that our recycling collection programmes are now charging for all consignments, and minimum values apply. This makes a significant difference, so in future would everyone please channel all items to me so that I can send bulk consignments. Items for recycling (inkjet cartridges, mobile 'phones and so on) can be brought to any Society event or passed to any Society officer.

Similarly, items for resale (stamps, postcards, coins and so on) can also be brought to any Society event or passed to any Society officer.

I must stress that whilst most cartridges can be recycled, this does not unfortunately apply to Epson cartridges. Neither of the recycling collection programmes used by the Society will accept Epson.

Paul Mills



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Email address richardpotter@fortimber.demon.co.uk**



The Spring Enhancement Work Party

This year the Spring Enhancement Work Party took place over a long weekend from Thursday 25th March to Sunday 28th March. The volunteers concentrated their efforts on a stretch of the Shropshire Union Main Line at Nantwich, between Marsh Lane Bridge (Bridge 90) and Henhull Bridge (Bridge 95). The object of the work party was to refurbish or replace existing furniture, signs and so on along that stretch of canal.

On Thursday six volunteers met at Barbridge to load tools and equipment into the workboat *Whiston*, kindly loaned by British Waterways. By Friday morning volunteer numbers had risen to ten, and *Whiston* was at the wharf at Nantwich ready to load the materials which had been supplied by British Waterways. Meanwhile some of the volunteers had already started removing the furniture from the picnic site and digging out the bases ready for new concrete. Friday afternoon saw the first two new bases installed and the furniture replaced, with the addition of barbecue stands.

On Saturday morning further volunteers arrived, including three new enthusiasts. Anne Lindop was in charge of welfare, and the volunteers were spread out along the two mile long stretch. Progress was good — a new disabled access picnic table and barbecue stand were installed and the milepost at Bridge 92 was removed and reset. Forty signs were removed and replaced with new, and all the other signs were repainted.

By Sunday we were ahead of ourselves, so it was decided to get the equipment back to Barbridge whilst a small team finished off painting furniture and the milepost.

In all, the volunteers put in an impressive 232.75 manhours. If you have internet access you may like to go to www.shropshireunion.org.uk to see photographs of the work.

The Society wishes to thank Cheshire East Council for a financial contribution and British Waterways North Wales & Borders Waterway for materials and the loan of *Whiston*.

Paul Mills



The Talbot Inn, Market Drayton

Find us on the Newcastle Road, next to bridge 62.

Pop in for a good home-cooked meal and a pint of some of the finest cask-conditioned ale around. The set menu is £5.95 for two courses, £6.95 for three. Our excellent Sunday lunch is £5.95, and Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays are steak and curry nights with lots of special deals.

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Our family entrance is at the rear of the pub, and under 16s can stay until 9.00 pm.

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If you have any enquiries, please ring us on 01630 654989.

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Shop selling books and maps, canalia, gifts

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Additional enhancement works

Christleton

On 7th April four volunteers met at the Cheshire Cat in Christleton to refurbish the visitor moorings on the adjacent towpath.

Years ago, before a neighbouring footbridge was removed in the 1980s, this area had been part of Dean's Marina and the old fixed rings were still *in situ*. Having cleared the undergrowth, the volunteers removed the old rings and replaced them with twelve new ones.

This is a popular stopping point for passing boats, and is also the seasonal base for the Wirral Narrowboat Trust.

Wrenbury

Grateful thanks to Mike Johnson and Yvonne Crane, who spent over sixty manhours installing additional rings at the visitor moorings between the Wrenbury lift bridges. The improvements at Wrenbury started last year and are now complete, giving greater flexibility for moorers.

Paul Mills

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**This game is new but has been opened.
It has never been played with, and most of the
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from Bridge 85 on
the Shropshire Union
Canal. Tie up near
Hack Green Locks.

A unique and exciting day out for all the family
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Restore Pickering's Canal!

Pickering's Canal was the private canal which ran from the end of the basin at Trevor — you can still see the bridge — north-east for half a mile before curving round to the south for a further three-eighths of a mile, following the contour on the hillside.

Exuperius Pickering was an entrepreneur with interests in various industries and a thriving business supplying coal to as far away as Newtown and Whitchurch. Actually, there were at least two men of this name, presumably father and son, and it is not always clear which was responsible for any particular project. Exuperius Pickering senior with Edward Rowland patented a flotation canal lift which was trialed in 1796 at a (now unknown) location in the Ruabon area; it worked successfully but was not thought robust enough for daily use by boaters. Either he or his son was responsible for the building of the Chain Bridge in 1817 (not 1814 as is usually stated).

Some time in the 1810s the Pickerings came to be the occupiers of the Plas Kynaston estate, a rich source of minerals. In 1820 the Ellesmere Canal Company gave Exuperius Pickering junior permission to make a canal from Trevor Basin to the site of his projected new colliery near to Plas Kynaston Hall. However, it seems most likely that what was actually built was the virtually straight canal — the 'old shaft' of a former coal mine is marked on the 1873 Ordnance Survey map at my suggested terminus. Pickering could use his canal free of charge, but if others used it instead of the Canal Company's tramroad, compensation equivalent to the lost revenue had to be paid. This would have been a significant matter for the Plas Kynaston Foundry, at that time still owned by William Hazledine, which lay close to the canal and also near the tramroad which passed behind the foundry, a little higher up the hill. Thus if the foundry used the canal in preference to the tramroad it would pay more but avoid the necessity for transhipment at Trevor Basin.

In 1825 the Canal Company agreed to a further extension of Pickering's canal. The exact wording of the minute implies it was to be extended by 1,700 to 1,800 yards but the map evidence is that it was extended to that length. [This is the section shown hatched to the right of the plan.] A later minute implies that the extension may not have been completed until 1829 or 1830. The maps consulted do not show a winding hole,

so the boats were probably pulled backwards to where the canal widened at the bend.

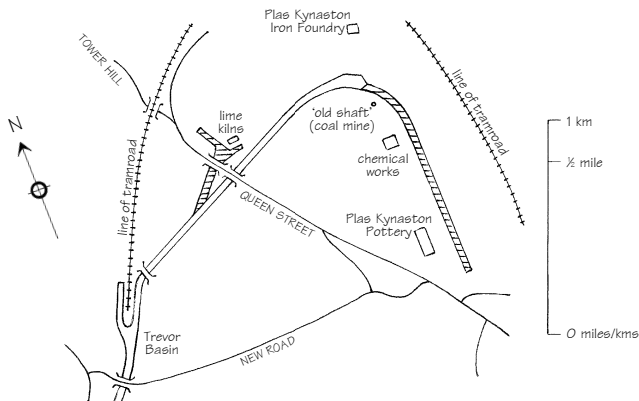
At some time a spur was built north of the canal to some limekilns. [This is shown hatched to the left of the plan.] The 1820 agreement refers to the possibility of a lime works, so Pickering obviously had it in mind at that time. He leased limestone quarries at Llanymynech in 1825, and a directory of 1835 records him as a lime-burner as well as a coal proprietor. He also owned an ironworks which was situated just to the west of the first bridge going from Trevor towards Llangollen; as this was not built until 1823, it could not have provided the metalwork for the Chain Bridge.

Records have not survived concerning the actual usage of the canal. Nevertheless it seems reasonable to suppose that as well as Pickering's own operations it was used by the Plas Kynaston Foundry, the brickworks and some other Cefn Mawr industries. It was certainly used by the Plas Kynaston Chemical Works, founded in 1867 by the German chemist, Robert Graesser, to extract paraffin oil and wax from shale, a waste product of the local collieries. After cheap oil started coming from America he developed processes to distil phenols and cresols from coal tar acids. Both the raw materials and the finished products were transported by canal. The plant was successively expanded, its products including dyes and an ingredient for making explosives.

Robert Graesser died in 1911 and his son took over. After the First World War Monsanto, the American chemical firm, bought a half share in the works. The product range expanded to include saccharin, vanillin and aspirin, and phenol-based synthetic resins were developed. The Graesser link ceased in 1928; from 1934 the plant operated under the Monsanto name. Expansion continued, and the site was increased by the purchase of the former Plas Kynaston Foundry. At its peak over 2,000 people were employed. Rubber-processing additives were developed in the 1950s; towards the end of the 20th century these became the main products produced. In 1994 the rubber chemicals businesses of Monsanto and Akzo Nobel were combined with the formation of a new company, Flexsys; this later became a subsidiary of Solutia Inc, a divestiture from Monsanto. Closure of the Cefn Mawr site was announced in 2008; production ceased in 2010.

The site owned by Flexsys is huge, comprising virtually all the land





Pickering's Canal and the Flexsys site, based on the 1873 Ordnance Survey map. In order to make it easier to identify the locations on the ground, modern roads have been superimposed.

contained within the loop of the former tramroad, including some of the farmland to the south of the former factory. It is arguably the most important vacant site in north-east Wales but it will not be easy to redevelop because of chemical contamination and because the levels of the land have been significantly altered by excavation and fill. The site lies within the 'buffer zone' of the Pontcysyllte Aqueduct & Canal World Heritage Site because it is the back-drop to this internationally important asset, being highly visible from across the valley. Indeed, it is possible that part of the site will be used for a car park and visitor centre for the aqueduct. It is therefore essential that everything which is created is of a high quality, sensitive to the site's historical importance and visibility.

Pickering's Canal is buried within the site. The only easily visible remains are the bridge at the entrance from Trevor Basin and about a six yard length of original stone copings which can be seen close to the road which crosses the site. (The road is quite modern, but it follows a straightened version of the line of the old lane from Trevor past the Mill Inn to Cefn Mawr.) Deep within the site there are the bricked-up remains of one side of another stone bridge.



It is not known when a boat last travelled loaded on Pickering's Canal. According to the 1938 Ordnance Survey map it was then still in water for its full length, though not necessarily usable. One of the reasons why the Llangollen Canal stayed open despite being formally closed by Act of Parliament in 1944 was because it was supplying water to the Monsanto works for cooling purposes.

I believe the canal should be reopened, at least as far as the bend. I'm not advocating this for boating reasons, as few boaters would have a reason for cruising to the end, but for the attractive environmental asset that would be created. I expect the development to be a mixture of industrial, commercial and residential, with the residential part most likely to be at the eastern end, closest to the community of Cefn Mawr. A well-designed water-facing layout is said to increase property prices by up to 18%, which would help compensate for the loss of building land and the additional constraints in the layout. The appearance of the industrial area would be 'softened', particularly if the canal were to be tree-lined.

Continuation of the canal beyond the bend [into the hatched area on the plan] would be desirable, though it would need a winding hole at the end. This would have economic benefits by bringing visiting boats close to the shops, pubs and cafés of Cefn Mawr. If this part of the canal is not reinstated, its former existence should be respected as a feature of the layout, even if that merely means that the line becomes a footpath or cycleway.

Reopening the canal could bring one great benefit to the main World Heritage Site: it would enable the Anglo-Welsh hire base to be relocated, perhaps to the area of land by the entrance to the former branch to the limekilns. Anglo-Welsh would gain a secure site. The area they currently occupy at Trevor Basin would be opened to general visitors. Boaters would have much more room to moor. Indeed, the place to moor would become obvious — at present a boater coming off the aqueduct may not realise that they will find some moorings if they thread their way between the hire boats and go under the footbridge. I suspect that most boaters turn left towards Llangollen without realising they have the option of stopping to have a proper look at the aqueduct and to go to the interpretation centre.

The next couple of years give an opportunity which will never be repeated. It is essential that the decision-makers do what is right to



create an asset everybody can be proud of, and not merely do what gives the biggest financial profit.

Peter Brown

Author's note:

I am a member of the Pontcysyllte Aqueduct & Canal World Heritage Site Steering Group, but this article gives my personal views which are not necessarily shared by any other member of the Steering Group. Particular thanks are given to Howard Paddock who willingly shared his great knowledge of the area, but all speculative inferences are mine.

Editor's note:

The consultants' brief for the redevelopment of the Flexsys site will be finalised in the next few months. If you have any thoughts on the matter, and in particular the restoration of Pickerings' Canal, please let Peter Brown know. You can ring him on 01630 652567 or email p@peter-quita.demon.co.uk.

DONATED GOODS FOR SALE

New goods

All-in-one waterproof suits (green PVC), sizes M, L, XL	£10.00
Safety boots, UK size 11	£12.00
Safety wellington boots, UK sizes 7, 9, 11	£10.00
Gloves (blue PVC, Arco range 100)	£ 0.50
Gauntlet gloves (brown PVC, Arco range 200)	£ 0.75
Rubber aprons (heavy quality)	£ 4.00
Visionaid Lens Cleaning Station	£ 3.00
40mm Sterling brass padlocks	£ 4.00
25 litre white plastic drums	£ 3.50

Secondhand goods

Propeller 17" x 12"	£25.00
Brass banded chimney 28" high x 6" diameter base	£20.00
Brass banded chimney 12" high x 6" diameter base	£15.00

*All items can be collected from Little Neston in South Wirral.
Postage/delivery will be charged at cost.*

**For more information please ring Paul Mills
on 0151 336 1049 or mobile 07761 739439**



The Ellesmere Boat Rally

10th, 11th & 12th September 2010

PROGRAMME

Friday 10th September

*A concert in the marquee from 7 pm to 9 pm
featuring the Porthywaen Silver Band (tickets £6.00)
followed at 9.30 pm by Fabulous Fireworks
and Illuminated Boats*

Saturday 11th September

*Saturday Morning Market in the marquee 8.30 am - 1.30 pm
There will be water taxis throughout the day, and a
wide variety of stalls in the field and on the towpath
Hog Roast in the marquee from 6.00 pm
followed by entertainment with Die Idleburghers
(tickets £12.00)*

Sunday 12th September

*Fun Dog Show in the marquee at 10.30 am
followed by Awards Ceremony at 12.30 pm
Water taxis and stalls continue from Saturday*

Application forms and tickets are now available.

**Please direct all enquiries to Paul Mills on 0151 336 1049
or mobile 07761 739439**

*Please note that mooring spaces are somewhat limited,
but there is space for tents, caravans, and small motor homes.
Spaces are still available for towpath stalls, Saturday
morning market stalls and field stalls.*



WIN A FOOTPLATE PASS on the Llangollen Railway

*One of our former work party volunteers,
who is now with the Llangollen Railway, has very kindly
arranged the donation of a footplate pass to aid fundraising.*

***If you would like to ride on the footplate of one of the
steam engines on the Llangollen Railway, or if you
would like to nominate a loved one or friend to do so,
you are invited to place a sealed bid.***

***This is a very special opportunity, as footplate
passes are not generally available.***

Either post your bid to Paul Mills, 71 Greenfields Drive, Little Neston, South Wirral CH64 0UL to arrive by 31st August 2010

or deliver it by hand to *NB Exelbee* at the Ellesmere Rally by noon on Saturday 11th September 2010. Please remember to include your contact telephone number and your email address if you have one, and mark the front of your envelope "RAILWAY".

The successful bid will be announced on Saturday 11th September 2010 at the Hog Roast at the Ellesmere Rally, and the successful bidder will be notified by telephone or email.

Please note:

- The successful bidder (or nominated person) must be over eighteen years of age and physically fit, and must telephone the railway office in advance to book their trip (details are with the pass).
- There is a reserve price of £30, but please bid generously as all proceeds go to aid fundraising.

The Shropshire Union Canal Society is very grateful to the officers and trustees of the Llangollen Railway for the donation of this prize as a contribution to its fundraising efforts for the Ellesmere Rally.

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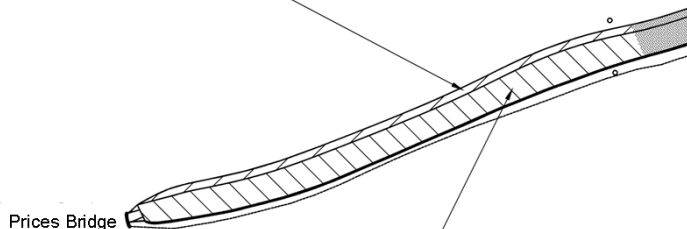
BUY A BARROW OF BOULDERS

SO FAR 3610 BARROWS OF BOULDERS

The area shown as being covered by blocks and boulders has risen to almost 35% of the estimated total. (Please remember when studying the plan that the channel width varies along its length.) This figure includes the amount of gift aid we can expect to receive. The other assumption, made from the start, has been the cost of the blocks, which are shown at 55 pence each. A tender exercise has already begun to ascertain whether we can better that price.

PLEASE KEEP BUYING!

Area to be covered by boulders



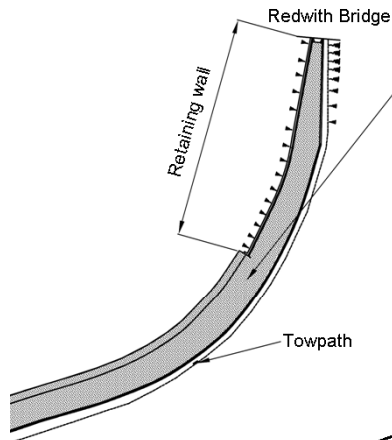
Area to be covered by blocks



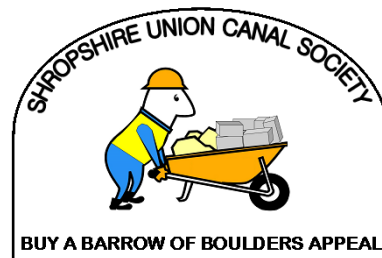
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OF BOULDERS

HAVE BEEN SOLD, RAISING £18,050!



The amount of money contributed to date is sufficient to cover the cost of blocks and boulders for this area.



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BUY A BARROW OF BOULDERS

***The Society is very grateful to everyone
who has contributed to the appeal.***

***All of the following contributed during the period
from 1st March to 30th April 2010:***

Andrew Alderson (IchronLtd)
J C Bainbridge
Jean Barnett & David Lewis
Alan & Sheila Beattie
R Bielby
Mr & Mrs Bielby
John Blakeman
Christopher J Blyth
Dr P L Bowen-Walker
George Boyle
Eddie Buck
Ray Buss
Ian Campbell
M A Carrington
R D Claydon
 Sylvia Cottle
Bob Derricott
Chris & Linda Drewery
Steve Dugdale
Haidee Edwards
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P Featherstone
Gary Gray
Stephen Grayland
John Hallowell
Mr & Mrs Hardie
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D V Harvey
Graham Hibberd
Peter & Fran Holland

Anthony & Gretchen Kenny
Brian Knibbs
Angela Laws
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Nick Titlow
Ian & Trish Waters
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**There were over twenty other contributors
who asked to remain anonymous.**

***We still need many more blocks and boulders,
so please continue to spread the word!***



*If organisations such as boat clubs, canoe clubs and ramblers
would like to help, we will be delighted to hear from you.*

*You can download donation forms from the Society's
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A lockkeeper's life

Working as a volunteer lockkeeper's assistant on the Grindley Brook staircase, I have seen some really funny incidents and also some potentially dangerous ones. Let's begin with some of the funny ones!

The topless lady

This happened a few years ago when the staircase was not always manned on a Sunday. It's a warm day, with a young couple ascending the locks. The lady is doing the winding (as usual), wearing a pair of shorts and a bikini top. She's filling the middle lock and, finding the paddle heavy, she gives it a yank. Her bikini top flies off. Four or five fishermen walking towards the lock give a loud cheer. The lady drops her windlass and dives into the boat like a rabbit down a rabbit hole. The man on the boat is laughing his head off. The helpful lockkeeper's assistant (yours truly) picks up the windlass and bikini top and hands them to the man on the boat who says, "You know, she won't show her face now until we get to the other side of Ellesmere." "Well," say I, "she has probably showed enough for today."

Certified?

Normally we work one on the top lock and one on the bottom. The one on the top sets the locks for uphill, and the one on the bottom sets for downhill. There is a lady coming up the locks. The lockkeeper must have mentioned that I was a volunteer as the lady says, "You're a volunteer, are you?" "Yes, for my sins," I say. I think she intends to ask if I am authorised by British Waterways, but what she actually says is, "Have you been certified?" So I say that many people have told me that I should be, and she goes away with a rather puzzled look on her face.

Filling the lock

A lady wants to come down the locks. The top lock is *empty*. The lady pushes hard on the balance beam in an attempt to push back twenty miles of water. "You won't open it that way, love," I say. The lady says, "Oh, silly me. I'm pushing the wrong way, aren't I?" She goes to the other side of the beam and starts pushing again.



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Bathtime

Mum, dad, son and daughter stand by the paddle on the top lock. The son, round about fifteen years old, stands right on the edge of the stonework looking down at the water. Mum asks, "Who's for an ice cream, then?" The son says "Yes," spins around, and plops straight into the water. The rest of the family stands there laughing as the lockkeeper's assistant offers a hand to pull him out. The family continues laughing.

Dressing up

We've had quite a few dressing up occasions over the years, including a fully dressed crew of Vikings and a boatload of Al Capone lookalikes!

One day a young lady with a windlass comes clip clipping up the towpath in high heels. Mal was the lockkeeper on that occasion, and he and I are sitting by the top lock on a bench. Mal gets up, always happy to help a young lady, and then sits down again. "What's up?" say I. "Look again," says he. "She's got an adam's apple."

Another day a man comes up the towpath dressed like an old Australian trapper, complete with a large brimmed hat with dangling corks. He asks whether he can put his two donkeys (which he says are pulling his boat) into the adjacent field overnight. He seems very serious and keeps a very straight face, but we eventually realise that it's a wind up...

Setting locks

Obviously to go uphill the locks must be set with the top and middle locks full and the bottom lock empty. On one occasion a boat had just gone up, and so they were all full. A man empties the bottom lock in order to go up, but then decides to empty the top and middle locks as well. When we tell him that the top and middle lock must remain full his response is, "Don't be daft! You can't get a boat into a lock without emptying it first." Understanding the way he's thinking, I ask him where he's going to get the water from to fill the bottom lock if the other two are empty. After a bit of head scratching he lets us do it our way.

In the old days, when the staircase wasn't always manned on a Sunday and there were no notices about how to set the locks, many strange things happened.

For example, a boat goes up, leaving all the locks full. Then a boat goes down, leaving the locks as they are. The result — an almighty flood. People sitting on the wall by the bottom lock eating their ice creams panic as the wall of water heads for them! This still happens from time to time when the locks are unmanned.

In another example, a boat goes up and the bottom gate paddle is not completely shut, so the level is slowly dropping. The boat enters the middle lock and grounds two thirds of the way in. The stern of the boat is still in the bottom lock, where the level continues to drop. A man on the bank says, "Give it some stick!" without noticing that the propeller is completely out of the water.

On another occasion, a helpful person tells boaters going down to empty the bottom and middle lock first. They take this literally, so the middle lock is completely empty. The boat goes down in the top lock and settles on the bottom, and so the man on the bank decides to open the top paddle in an attempt to drown the poor fellow at the helm!

Another time there is an old hire boat with wheel controls (rather than Morse control) which is apparently stuck trying to enter the bottom lock to go up. The engine is revving, and two young lads are pulling on ropes. I know there is plenty of water so I think it may be a fender or some other item jammed down the side of the boat. However both sides are clear, and then I notice that there is no jet of water at the back of the boat. "Is it in gear?" I ask. "Of course it is," says the steerer, and then twiddles the wheel and finds that it is not. His mates say that he will never be allowed to forget his error!

Another boat, this time with Morse control, enters the top lock to go down, not realising that due to a cable fault the boat is stuck in forward gear. When it does not respond to what he thinks is reverse, the steerer gives it full throttle. Boy, did it hit those mitre gates! It's a good job they're built to last!

Ken Thompson

*Ken Thompson will share more anecdotes with us
in future issues of CUTTINGS.*



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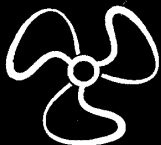
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At the Rainbow's End...

Many readers will be familiar with *Rainbow's End*, one of the narrowboats operated by the Wirral Community Narrowboat Trust. *Rainbow's End* is now twentyfour years old and a decision was taken to retire her, replacing her with a new boat aptly named *Pot of Gold*.

The Wirral Community Narrowboat Trust was founded in 1984 and is a registered charity run entirely by volunteers. The Trust operates two purpose-built canal boats, *Michael Hayes* and *Pot of Gold*, providing day trips and residential breaks for senior citizens, youth groups and disabled people. Many people return year after year to benefit from the peaceful tranquillity of the canals, the countryside and the wildlife.

Both boats can carry twelve passengers and have wheelchair ramps and lifts, flush toilets, central heating, and full cooking facilities. *Pot of Gold* also has a shower. The Trust provides the boats with a skipper and crew. All the skippers and crew have CRB accreditation, first aid training and fire fighting training. The Trust has over eighty volunteers, who spend many thousands of hours each year maintaining and crewing the boats.

The Trust carries about three thousand people a year in its boats, and welcomes enquiries from schools, nursing homes, youth groups and community groups. It asks for a donation of £100 for a full day out for twelve people (including carers), or £80 for a half day out.

Pot of Gold was officially named by Dame Lorna Muirhead MBE, Lord Lieutenant of Merseyside, during a ceremony at the National Waterways Museum at Ellesmere Port on 24th April 2010.

And you may still see *Rainbow's End* out and about — she was sold to one of the Trust's members and has been refitted as a liveaboard.

If you would like to find out more about the Wirral Community Narrowboat Trust please visit their website at www.wirralnarrowboats.com, or ring their office on 0151 357 1783 between 10.00 am and 12 noon, Monday to Friday.

Catherine O'Brien



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Dining in company: a concise history of the Annual Dinner

This was going to be such an easy thing to write — a quick flick through old copies of *CUTTINGS* to ascertain times and places and sundry amusing anecdotes about the Dinners of the past...

But no — nothing's ever simple! I'm not even sure where and when the first Dinner was, although I suspect it was in January 1983 at the Tern Hill Hall Hotel in Market Drayton. If we accept that was the case, then we can say that the first eight dinners were at the Tern Hill Hall Hotel, followed by the ninth at the Deerstalker Hotel in Wem. Then there were three at the Cellar Restaurant in Ellesmere, two at the Cedars Hotel in Nantwich, and one at the Crown Hotel, also in Nantwich. Then there were three at the Navigation Inn in Maesbury Marsh, followed by three at the Redbrook Hunting Lodge in Whitchurch. Then everything comes full circle and the next seven are back at the Tern Hill Hall Hotel.

Up to now, the Dinner has been held jointly by the Inland Waterways Association Shrewsbury District & North Wales Branch and the Shropshire Union Canal Society. It is proposed that future Dinners will include the Friends of the Montgomery Canal — this seems a very natural progression, and it's a pity no-one thought of it earlier.

Another proposed change (which affects only the Society) is that the Annual General Meeting will be held on a different date to the Dinner. Historically the Annual General Meeting tended to be held a week or so prior to the Dinner. The 1996 Annual General Meeting was the first to be followed by the Dinner, perhaps by way of an experiment, but this was not repeated until 2000. But the Society's last ten Annual General Meetings (2000 to 2009) have been followed by the Dinner, and it's time for a change.

So this year things will be different! Nothing has yet been decided, and of course decisions about the Dinner will be made in conjunction with members of the Inland Waterways Association and the Friends. So watch this space...

Catherine O'Brien



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A holiday diary from 1939

I thought it would be appropriate to donate the enclosed holiday diary from 1939 to your Society. It was amongst other items left in a lock-up garage we rented to the diary's writer's son, also named Arthur Boden, who sadly died last year with no known relatives.

As I am also a narrow boat owner (Preston Brook) I found the diary fascinating and sincerely hope your Society will find the same.

Mike Foster

Editor's note:

The diary takes the form of a beautifully presented photograph album, evidently compiled as a gift from Arthur Boden to his sisters-in-law. The first page is inscribed, in beautiful calligraphy, "To my dear sisters-in-law, Adeline Florence and Catherine Hirkness, in memory of a very happy holiday, from your affectionate brother-in-law Arthur H Boden — Christmas 1939". The next page describes the route — from Christleton to St Martins, from Saturday 26th August to Saturday 2nd September 1939, on the motor cruisers *Betty* and *Joyce*. The following page has a map, and then there is page after page of black and white photographs captioned in the same beautiful calligraphy.

On behalf of the Society I should like to thank Mr Foster most sincerely for donating the diary, and hope that it will be possible to put extracts from it on the Society's website in the not too distant future.

Catherine O'Brien

Tim Bobbin

Way back in 1971, Mr Harry Wrigley commissioned the building and fitting out of the first *Tim Bobbin* by Shropshire Union Cruisers Limited at Norbury Junction. She was a forty foot Frobisher with a Lister SR3, and

the total cost was £4,500!

Although I never knew Mr Wrigley, his great friend Bob Swann told me that Harry was a keen member of the Shropshire Union Canal Society. Harry and Bob enjoyed many boating holidays together until Harry sadly passed away in 1983, whereupon Bob invited me, through a mutual good friend Nick Crowther, to form a three-way partnership and buy *Tim Bobbin*, which we did for £6,000.

There may be boaters who remember Harry and *Tim Bobbin*, which may still be afloat — we would love to know!

Kit Smailes

Editor's note:

If anyone remembers Harry and the first *Tim Bobbin*, or her current whereabouts if she is still afloat, please write to me at 45 Windsor Drive, Market Drayton TF9 1RL or telephone 01630 657453, and I will pass on any information to Mr Smailes.

Mr Smailes has very kindly donated a substantial amount of material to the Society's Archive, and on behalf of the Society I should like to say a sincere 'thank you'.

Catherine O'Brien



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Dates for your diary

- 5-6 June** **Montgomery Work Party** — please contact Mike Friend on 01948 880723 or mobile 07909 912611 for more information.
- 13 June** **Twentyfifth Anniversary Montgomery Meander & Dinghy Dawdle** from Berriew to Welshpool, with a picnic stop at Belan Locks. Please visit www.shropshireunion.org.uk to download a booking form or email Terry Wain at waincil@aol.com.
- 18-20 June** **Middlewich Folk & Boat Festival** — for more information please visit www.midfest.org.uk or ring Kate Fletcher on 01204 844671.
- 26-27 June** **Tom Rolt Centenary Celebration Rally, Chester** — the Chester Branch of the Inland Waterways Association welcomes everyone to their Centenary Rally at Tower Wharf. For more information please visit www.waterways.org.uk.
- 1 July** **Copy date for the August CUTTINGS**
- 3-4 July** **Montgomery Work Party** — please contact Mike Friend on 01948 880723 or mobile 07909 912611 for more information.
- 13 July** **Meeting of the Society's Council** at 7.30 pm at the Stafford Court Hotel, Stafford Street, Market Drayton. All members are welcome. If you are planning to attend, please get in touch with a member of Council beforehand to ensure that the date, time and venue are unchanged.
- 7-8 August** **Montgomery Work Party** — please contact Mike Friend on 01948 880723 or mobile 07909 912611 for more information.
- 26-30 August** **August Bank Holiday Lockwind** at Cholmondeston



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- 1 September** **Copy date for the October CUTTINGS**
- 4-5 September** **Montgomery Work Party** — please contact Mike Friend on 01948 880723 or mobile 07909 912611 for more information.
- 4-5 September** **Maesbury Canal Festival** — an exciting weekend for all the family, with children's activities and lots of crafts. For more information please ring David Aylwin on 01691 830403 or Peter Richards on 01691 831455.
- 10-12 September** **Ellesmere Boat Rally** — please see page sixteen for details. A lot of bookings for boats and stalls have already been received. If you would like to book for the Ellesmere Rally please do so soon, as space is limited. For tickets and for trade and private entries please ring Paul Mills on 0151 336 1049 or mobile 07761 739439.
- 18-19 September** **Whitchurch Waterway Trust Gathering of Boats** on the Whitchurch Arm of the Llangollen Canal. Entry is £12.50 per boat which includes mooring, plaque and competitions. Boater's social evening at Chemistry Farm on the 18th will be a warming meal costing £5.50 per head. Entry forms from Mike Parsonage, Willow Cottage, Horseman's Green, Whitchurch SY13 3DY or telephone (evenings only) 01948 830447 or email wwt@mican.co.uk. For more information visit www.whitchurchwaterway.org.uk.
- 24-26 September** **Autumn Enhancement Work Party** on the Llangollen Canal, working from Trevor. Dates to be confirmed. Details will be in the August *CUTTINGS*. If you are willing to attend, please ring Paul Mills on 0151 336 1049 or mobile 07761 739439.



2-3 October **Montgomery Work Party** — please contact Mike Friend on 01948 880723 or mobile 07909 912611 for more information.

6-7 November **Montgomery Work Party** — please contact Mike Friend on 01948 880723 or mobile 07909 912611 for more information.

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