

LLANTHONY LOG

ISSUE 125

Autumn 2019

Newsletter of the Friends of the Gloucester Waterways Museum



The former Dock Company directors' inspection launch *Sabrina* returned to the G & S Canal on 17 May and is now based at Saul Junction. Built in 1870 by local engineering company Fielding & Platt, she was used by the Company's engineer when visiting Sharpness to oversee the construction of the New Dock and by the directors for annual inspections of the canal and for pleasure trips) until 1942.

For more details, see

<https://www.gloucesterdocks.me.uk/vessels/slsabrina.htm>.

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FRIENDS
of the
NATIONAL
WATERWAYS
MUSEUM



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Please send copy for the Autumn edition of Llanthony Log
before November 20th.

Thank you!

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Cover picture by H. Conway-Jones

The Friends' website: www.friendsofgwm.co.uk



Chairman's Report

Another summer is over and it's time to reflect on what we did. The weather was disappointing, albeit Cambridge recorded the highest temperature since records began. It was short lived though for since that date in July it appeared to rain most days!

That didn't deter us from enjoying our planned events. Only one event was rained off. The day of the planned walk around Alney Island started with torrential rain, which showed no sign of stopping before our walk. Thus, it was necessary to cancel at short notice but you will be pleased to hear that this event will be re-scheduled for next year.

Elsewhere in Llanthony Log you will read reports of this summer's successful events. These didn't just happen, someone had to plan them and take the worry onboard of making sure everyone was informed and happy with the event. My sincere thanks to committee member Pat Harper for thinking of places to visit and putting a lot of hard work into planning each visit.

I know Pat is already thinking of where to go next year but she still requires your help. Do you have any ideas of where we could go? If the event is some way away how do we travel? Anywhere over a distance of twenty miles requires that we all travel together in a mini-bus. That in itself causes problems, so we need your ideas on this matter.

Your committee have been concerned this year about the state of certain outside exhibits at the Museum: the historic narrowboat Northwich and the steam dredger in particular. Why have they been allowed to get into this state without someone in authority doing something about it? Harsh words but that is how frustrated we feel and I know from talking to other members that the feeling is mutual amongst the membership.

This was discussed at a recent committee meeting with management and promises were made to rectify the situation. In my time as Chairman of

the Friends we have raised money, first to refurbish the boiler of S.N.D. No 4, with the help of Lottery money and secondly donating money towards Northwich for a feasibility study on how best to renovate her. Our money doesn't come easy, indeed in our current climate it is difficult to raise much needed funds. In years past we ran the annual Boat Jumble, which raised large sums of money for the Museum, sadly that is no longer possible to do.

I sincerely hope that in my next newsletter I will have some positive news about those two exhibits.

Chris Witts

Friends Events – Summer 2019

Visit to SARA at Sharpness



Friends grouped astern of the new lifeboat 'Pride of Sharpness'.



A SARA lifeboat speeds away on the murky Severn.

We were privileged to be invited to the Severn Area Rescue Association (SARA) lifeboat station at Sharpness on Sunday 7th July to view their brand-new lifeboat. Sharpness is one of four SARA stations, covering both the Severn Estuary and River Severn, the most dangerous river in Britain.

The new lifeboat 'Pride of Sharpness' was especially designed for the treacherous waters of the Severn with the latest equipment onboard. SARA is the 2nd largest lifeboat organisation in Britain, obviously the RNLI being the first. At the end of our visit we were able to view the launch of their other lifeboats as they prepared for a routine exercise on the Severn.

Following this interesting visit, which included seeing two lifeboats being launched and at action out in the river, the Friends visited the nearby Salmon Inn for a superb Sunday roast lunch.

Visit to Sharpness Docks

Soon we were back at Sharpness for a guided tour of the port area on Sunday 21st July. Dr Ray Wilson, eminent historian on the port, acted as our guide by first walking us down to Sharpness 'Old Dock'. Here we saw the original end of the Gloucester & Sharpness Canal, which remained in use until the opening of the 'New Dock'.

Next it was down to the Pier Head, the entrance from the Severn into Sharpness Docks, via the large basin and lock. Ray explained how the ships make the difficult manoeuvre into the port. We then had a pleasant walk to the main dock basin where we were lucky to see a couple of ships berthed awaiting to unload their cargoes.

We retired to the Salmon Inn, where again we all enjoyed a superb lunch.



Friends gathered at the 'Pier Head' to hear Dr Ray Wilson explain the workings of the port.

Paddling on Katakonus

Most of the Friends who set off to meet at Ryeford on the Stroudwater Canal on Wednesday 14th August didn't have a clue what they were letting themselves in for! Why? All due to that new word 'Katakanus'.

To put it simply we were going to enjoy an afternoon paddling along the canal in what is crudely, two canoes connected together. Wearing lifejackets and after we had been given the usual safety talk, off we paddled along the canal towards Stonehouse.

Some of the Friends, rather than paddle a Katakana, chose to sit aboard the electric powered 'Wheelyboat' and enjoy a silent and leisurely 2mph cruise on the canal.



Moored to the bank enjoying a picnic.

Although the weather was not at its best, we all enjoyed the peaceful surroundings and the opportunity to view nature from the water. We turned to head back then soon pulled over to the bank and moored whilst Jan and her volunteers produced boxes of hot drinks and cake. What a wonderful and most welcome feast! It was a truly enjoyable afternoon and our thanks to the volunteers of the Cotswold Canals Trust for hosting the event.

Chris Witts

Thames and Severn Canal Completed Two Hundred Years Ago

For the September 1989 issue of *Llanthony Log* Hugh Conway-Jones prepared the following article:

The *Gentleman's Magazine* reported on the 19 November 1789: "This day was affected the greatest object of internal navigation in this kingdom. The Severn was united to the Thames, by an intermediate canal, ascending by Stroud, through the vale of Chalford, to the height of 343 feet, by 28 locks; there entering a tunnel through the hill of Saperton, for the length of two miles and three furlongs, and descending 134 feet, by 14 locks, it joined the Thames near Lechlade.

"A boat, with the union flag at her mast-head, passed laden for the first time to St John's Bridge, below Lechlade, in the presence of great numbers of people, who were assembled on the occasion; and who answered a salute of twelve pieces of cannon from Buscott Park with loud huzzas. A dinner was given at five of the principal inns in Lechlade, and the day ended with the ringing of bells, a bonfire and a ball. With respect to the internal commerce of the kingdom, and the security of communication in time of war, this junction of the Thames and Severn must be attended with the most beneficial consequences, as even stores from the Baltic, and provisions from Ireland, may reach the capital, and the ports at the mouth of the Thames, in safety. And all the heavy articles from the mines and foundries in the heart of Wales, and the counties contiguous to the Severn, may find a secure and certain conveyance to the capital.

"In short, this undertaking is worthy of a great commercial nation, and does great credit to the exertion of the individuals who have promoted and completed a work of such magnitude, at an expense of near two hundred thousand pounds.

"An arched tunnel, carried through the bowels of the mountain near two miles and a half long, and 15 feet wide, at a level of 250 feet below its

summit, is a work worthy of admiration; and the locks ascending from Stroud, and descending from the summit, are executed in a manner deserving great commendation."

The completion of the canal within seven years of the authorising Act was indeed a magnificent achievement, particularly as it involved the construction of such a huge tunnel. Harecastle on the Trent and Mersey was the only long tunnel built in England, and that was for narrow boats, so it was a courageous decision to go for a broad tunnel. The subsequent difficulties of operating the canal are well known, but these should not diminish our admiration for the great works completed 200 years ago.

Robert Whitworth's Kempsford to Abingdon Canal Plan 1784

When I came across Robert Whitworth's 1784 plan of the Stroudwater and Thames and Severn Canals in the Gloucester Archives (D1180/10/25) while digitizing maps for the Stroudwater Navigation Archive Charity I was amazed to find that he had also surveyed and proposed an extension from Kempsford to Abingdon to overcome the difficulties of navigating the flash locks on the Upper Thames. I thought I better find out more about the man who was making these proposals, and turned to Jim Shead's excellent website on the Chronology of Canal development (<http://www.jim-shead.com/waterways/Chronology-index.php>). What I found there amazed me. It seems that Whitworth was responsible for surveying nearly every canal proposal in the south of England during the Canal Mania, and in building many of the canals in the north of England.

Robert Whitworth is first recorded as working on canals in 1766, when he surveyed from the Calder & Hebble at Cooper Bridge to Kings Mill, Huddersfield for the Huddersfield Broad Canal.

In 1767 James Brindley was asked to do a survey for the Stockton & Darlington Canal Project and sent Robert Whitworth to do the survey. In

1769, Brindley having checked his survey, a joint report was issued proposing a 26 mile 7 furlong canal for 25 ton narrowboats.

In 1768 Robert Whitworth and Samuel Simcock worked as James Brindley's assistants on the Old Main Line (BCN) and Whitworth then did a survey for the English & Bristol Channels Ship Canal after James Brindley, for whom he was an assistant, was asked by a group of Taunton men to survey a line for an inter-channel canal. He also did most of the field work for John Longbotham's plan for the Leeds & Liverpool Canal before he produced a survey showing alternative lines from The Coventry Canal to Hillmorton, the shorter one, from Gosford Green, being $15\frac{3}{4}$ miles on one level. Compare this with the $26\frac{1}{2}$ mile of the winding northern section of the Oxford Canal that was actually built between these points.

In 1769 Robert Whitworth looked at a proposal for a canal from the Parrett near Langport to Seaton, but not connecting to the sea there as part of the English & Bristol Channels Canals project. He also surveyed a line for the Taunton & Uphill Canal under James Brindley's supervision and produced routes from Topsham on the Exe or from Exeter past Cullompton or Tiverton to Wellington and Taunton. The Tone Navigation was to be used to take craft to Burrow Bridge and from there a second canal would go past Bridgwater, Glastonbury, Wells and Axbridge to Uphill near Weston-Super-Mare.

In 1769 Robert Whitworth was also sent by Brindley to check the line surveyed by John Eyes and Richard Melling on the Leeds and Liverpool Canal and found that there was an error of 35 feet in the height of the Burnley embankment. He was also asked to check James Brindley's review of a survey for a new line of the Yorkshire section of the canal proposed by members of the Lancashire committee.

In 1770 Robert Whitworth made a survey for the Andover Canal down the Anton and Test valleys to Redbridge at the mouth of the Test near Southampton. He estimated £28,982 for a narrow canal and £31,654 for a broad.

By 1771 he had done the survey for the Reading - Monkey Island Canal project and now supported the Bill before parliament. He thought a 120-ton barge would take 6 hours to travel the canal from Reading to Monkey Island for a toll of $\frac{1}{2}$ d per mile. He claimed it sometimes took 3 hours to pass one flash lock on the Thames. Also in 1771 James Brindley was approached to do the survey for the Lancaster Canal but it was carried out by Robert Whitworth. He put forward a plan for a line from the Leeds & Liverpool at near Ecclestone crossing the Ribble below Penwortham Bridge then west towards Kirkham before turning north then east to Barton. The canal then continued north to Lancaster where it crossed the Lune just below Skerton Bridge. The long $54\frac{1}{2}$ mile pound ended with a rise of 86 feet at Tewitfield before another level pound covered the last 18 miles to Kendal. The committee asked him to find an easier crossing of the Lune and he proposed a higher line locking up 24 feet from the Ribble, a shorter loop towards Kirkham but an additional loop up the Lune to Halton where a shorter aqueduct was needed. This reduced the rise at Tewitfield to 62 feet and the whole rise was around $\frac{1}{2}$ mile longer.

In 1773 Robert Whitworth was asked by the City of London to survey a line for a canal from Moorfields to Waltham Abbey and from Moorfields to Marylebone. The line he proposed followed in part the same line as the Regent's Canal was to take, particularly in the curve to Islington but was to pass under the Pentonville Road and over the New River near Sadler's Wells.

In 1775 a meeting approved his survey for the Stourbridge Canal. His line ran from Stourton on the Staffordshire & Worcestershire Canal to Stourbridge. From Wordsley Junction at Stourbridge there was a branch to the Fens on Pensnett Chase where there was to be a reservoir. From Lays Junction on the Fens branch a line ran to Black Delph to join the Dudley Canal.

In 1777 Robert Whitworth proposed a canal from Ledbury to Gloucester (the future Hereford & Gloucester Canal) and a canal from Hereford through Leominster and Pensax to Stourport (the future Leominster Canal).

In 1779 he and Samuel Simcock surveyed the line for the Oxford Canal extension from Banbury to Oxford. On the 16 November 1779 he was asked prepare a plan for a navigation from Bishop Stortford to Cambridge and in 1780 reported a route along the Stort valley to near Elsenham then across the watershed into the Granta (Cam) valley to Cambridge.

In 1781 Robert Whitworth completed his survey for a canal, 31 miles and 3 furlongs in length, from Ashby Woulds through Market Bosworth and Hinckley to the Coventry canal at Griff. He estimated the cost of the Ashby de la Zouch Canal as £46,396.

In 1782 Whitworth surveyed two possible routes for the Thames & Severn Canal, one from the Stroudwater Navigation up the Golden Valley past Cirencester to the Thames, the other from higher up the Severn to the Coln valley on to the Thames at Lechlade. He found the first route was shorter, cheaper and better supplied with water. He estimated the cost as £127,916 for a 12 foot barge canal, large enough for Thames barges but not for Severn trows.



Fig 1: Proposed Kempsford to Abingdon extension to Thames & Severn Canal 1784

During 1783, in his role as consultant engineer for the Thames & Severn Canal, Robert Whitworth and Christopher Chambers, a shareholder of the canal and of the Stroudwater canal as well as being a Thames Commissioner, enquired what improvements the commissioners intended to make to the navigation between Lechlade and Pangbourne. In 1784 Robert Whitworth surveyed a $22\frac{3}{4}$ mile line from Kempsford on the Thames & Severn Canal to Abingdon to by-pass $45\frac{3}{4}$ miles of difficult river navigation. He also worked with Thomas Dadford Snr on the Coventry Canal.

In 1784 Robert Whitworth also surveyed a new line for the Gloucester & Berkeley canal. At this time the proposed canal was called the Gloucester Canal.

In 1785 Robert Whitworth did a survey for the Oakham Canal from Melton Mowbray to run west of Stapleford, through Leesthorpe and Ashwell to Oakham. William Jessop has been commissioned to do this survey but Whitworth carried out the work. In the same year Whitworth became Chief Engineer on the Forth & Clyde Canal.

In 1788 Whitworth was employed by George Dempster of Dunnichen to survey a line for a canal from Arbroath to within 2 miles of Forfar that he estimated would cost £17,788.

In 1789 Whitworth surveyed the unfinished Bo'ness canal and reported that £17,763 was required to complete it. He then surveyed the unfinished Leeds and Liverpool canal and reported that £17,763 was required to complete it and finally he surveyed the River Wye for the trustees and put forward two plans for improving navigation on the river and building cuts in different sections of the Wye. The costs were estimated at £27,000 and £48,000. He also found time to do a survey of the Andover Canal for their petition for a Bill.

In 1789 he was still working on the Forth & Clyde Canal. His constant supervision of work on the nearly completed Kelvin Aqueduct was praised by Patrick Colquhoun, the canal's agent, in a letter to

shareholders. Having a few months earlier received for comment the surveys of the Kennet & Avon Canal by Samuel Weston, Samuel Simcock and James Barnes he reported favouring a line through Hungerford, Marlborough and Calne, subject to the water supplies being satisfactory.

In 1790 Robert Whitworth became Engineer of the Leeds and Liverpool Canal, where his son William acted as his assistant. By the end of the year the official opening of the Forth & Clyde Canal took place and the *Scots Magazine* reported "In the course of the voyage from Glasgow to Bowling Bay, the track-boat passed along that stupendous bridge, the great aqueduct over the Kelvin, 400ft in length, exhibiting to the spectators in the valley below the singular and new object of a vessel navigating 70ft over their heads - a feature of this work which gives it a pre-eminence over everything of a similar nature in Europe, and does infinite honour to the professional skill of that able engineer Robert Whitworth Esq, under whose direction the whole of this great work has been completed in a very masterly manner".

In 1791 Robert Whitworth was asked to estimate for the Herefordshire & Gloucester canal on a reduced scale but was too busy to come. He also turned down a request to survey the Rochdale Canal.

In 1792 Robert Whitworth surveyed the line of a proposed a route for the Great Western Canal from Topsham on the Exe estuary up the Clyst valley (with a short branch to the Exeter Road near Sowton) past Clyst Hydon up the Culm valley by Cullompton (served by another short branch) then south of Sampford Peverall where there was a branch to Tiverton. The canal continued past Runnington, north of Wellington, to Bradford and the River at Taunton about half a mile above the Tone Bridge. Water was to be supplied by a feeder from Culmstock and two reservoirs beyond and two more reservoirs north of Burlescombe. The estimated cost was £166,724 including £22,229 for the Cullompton and Tiverton branches.

In 1793 Robert Whitworth supported a plan for a Bristol - Thames Head Canal as it had a better water supply than the Bristol - Cirencester Canal project proposed by Robert Mylne and Richard Hall. He also approved the line proposed by George Bentley and Thomas Bolton for the Public Devonshire Canal Project. He was asked to resurvey the line for the Gloucester and Sharpness canal but was too busy. He and William Jessop reported on the on the state of the River Trent navigation and recommended improvements in preparation for a new navigation Act.

In 1793 Robert Whitworth and Robert Mylne were appointed joint engineers to the Monkey Island - Isleworth canal project. Whitworth also reported on his survey for the Dorset & Somerset Canal and suggested a 37 mile route from the proposed Kennet & Avon Canal at Freshford to Stalbridge. This would cost £100,000 and had good water supplies. From Stalbridge the line south could either go past Blandford at an estimated cost of £83,000 for 33 miles of canal, or by Wareham, which was £91,000 for 30 miles and had difficulties with water supply.

In 1794 Robert Whitworth and John Sutcliffe were engaged to do detailed surveys for the Somerset Coal Canal. Whitworth and Robert Mylne attended a meeting of supporters of the Monkey Island - Isleworth canal project that decided that new locks on the Thames would not meet the needs of navigation. It was also agreed that Whitworth and his son Robert would act as joint engineers for the Ashby de la Zouch Canal, he spending three months a year on the canal and his son working full-time.

In 1795 Robert Whitworth was called in to arbitrate between the Glamorganshire Canal Company and their former contractors, the Dadfords and Thomas Sheasby. Of the £17,000 claimed by the company he awarded that only £1,512 should be refunded by the contractors. He was also called in to arbitrate in the disputes between Archibald Millar the resident engineer of the Lancaster Canal and the

contractors John Pinkerton and John Murray. By this time the Herefordshire & Gloucestershire Canal was open as far as Newent, but Whitworth was overextended. Following the appointment of Samuel Fletcher as resident engineer for the Leeds & Liverpool Canal, and in view of his own other commitments, he continued as engineer at half salary. He had time, however, to survey the unfinished Stainforth & Keadby Canal and the unfinished Dearne & Dove Canal, which his son completed in 1804.

By now his sons were taking on major roles in canal projects. In 1795 his son William Whitworth and his father signed the deposited plan for the Wilts & Berks Canal, and William and John Ralph signed the estimate of £103,603 for the $55\frac{1}{4}$ mile main line and £8,350 for the branches. He began construction helped by Robert Whitworth, whether his father or his brother is not known. Robert Whitworth was appointed Engineer of the Herefordshire & Gloucestershire Canal.

Many of these projects were unfinished when he died in 1799, but his sons Robert & William carried on the family tradition of canal building on canals such as the Bristol Junction Canal surveyed by John Rennie following a preliminary survey in 1810 by William Whitworth. Robert Whitworth proposed a St Nicholas Bay Harbour & Canterbury Canal in 1810.

The Wilts & Berks Canal Company sent a letter to the Thames & Severn Company in 1810 saying that William had surveyed a line from near Wootton Bassett to Ewen, above Siddington, on the Thames and Severn summit so joining the two canals. At this time this canal was called the Severn Junction Canal, though it later became known as the North Wilts Canal. He estimated the cost for the 9 mile canal with 12 locks at £52,000 and an extra £1,162 for the basin at Latton Junction.

It was also William Whitworth who recommended Josias Jessop, engineer for the Bristol Harbour Floating Dock, as consulting engineer for the Lydney Canal in 1810.

Martin Bryan



Introducing the Committee

Hans Rackham – Membership Secretary

My teenage years were spent living on the south coast where my father owned a 21-foot ex-naval clinker built tender which had been converted into a cabin cruiser. I say a cruiser but all it had was a cabin added. Its motive power was a two-cylinder petrol/TVO Kelvin engine with a big flywheel. I think I made more use of the boat than my father did, often taking friends out into the Solent to fish and sometimes to visit harbours and creeks on the Isle of Wight. It was great fun.

I was trained in the electronics industry and came to Gloucester with my newly married wife in the mid sixties and subsequently raised two lovely daughters.

During the nineties I volunteered my services to the fledgling Willow Trust who were running a purpose built boat to cater for the disabled community on the Gloucester/Sharpness canal and I became a part time skipper, taking the boat out mostly at weekends.

At the turn of the century I joined the Waterway Museum's tug team, again only being able to help at weekends initially, until I retired in 2007. There were five members in the team who looked after Severn Progress as well as the privately owned tug - Kennett, - which was on permanent loan to the museum until October 2008 when it had to be sold.

When CRT took over from BW, new practises were implemented resulting, unfortunately, in the Tug team disbanding as they were restricted in doing anything on Progress, hence why the old girl is currently looking a bit sorry for herself. The committee have been informed that a conservation plan for all of the museum's outdoor exhibits is in the throes of being ratified. Hooray! At the start of 2018, Committee member Pat Harper twisted my arm to join the Friends committee and it was at the very first meeting I attended when the then Membership Secretary announced he was stepping down at the 2018 AGM.

Forever a glutton for punishment, somehow - I am now the current Membership Secretary.

How did that happen??

Hans Rackham

Boaters' Craft group

Our main summer event this year was to Braunston Historic Boat Festival again in June. We had a very enjoyable time despite the Saturday being the hottest day of the year with us dressed in our costumes in a sweltering marquee. There were many old Narrowboats with their enthusiastic owners and we had the pleasure of being invited on board to see their traditional cabins. We were very excited and surprised to be presented with £200.00 cheque along with the other charities who took part. This was a real bonus to us as we are happy to just be there and have the opportunity to demonstrate our crafts and advertise the Museum. We have been invited to go again next year and hopefully we have enough in our funds from the Craft Guild donation for a 3rd year. We have been busy making more items for the shop to sell including rag rugs ,seat covers, spider web kits, children's rag rug kits, rag rug tools and hessian. The first rag rug cushion sold straight away. We are very pleased how colourful our corner of the shop is for visitors as they go through the entrance door. All of our items and kits are put together and made at home in unrecorded hours by members of the group for sale in the shop. Although the Friends charge the museum a reduced price, to show we are fundraising, that money goes straight back to support the museum.

We are very grateful to the Friends who have recently donated material to the group. Even if some of it is not suitable for our particular needs it is filtered through my ladies to other groups doing different projects. Please remember us when trying to clear your wardrobe spaces especially men's T- shirts as we have another workshop in October.

JILL'S CLEANING GROUP

Things have got a lot more interesting now that we are helping to clean all the display items on the racks on level 2 which is now open to visitors. To handle items that have obviously been used by many families and wondering what stories lie behind them is a real joy. When visitors come

in they love to ask what we know about the various things, and it feels a very relaxed place to talk them. We are soon to have volunteer T-shirts for the group which will make it more obvious to visitors that we are part of the museum. A few of us like to meet as a group on the first Tuesday in the month at the moment but once the holiday season is over we may get a Wednesday group going. It has become a nice social group so give me a call if you are interested in joining us.

Jill Ruiz



Hazel a traditional wooden boat, has been lovingly restored and is now being used to help people suffering from depressive illness.

The BCN Explorer Cruise

The Birmingham Canal Navigation Society (BCNS) is an active society which is eager to encourage boaters to cruise the canals of Birmingham and the Black Country. For many years, they have organised an annual 'Explorer Cruise' which includes parts of the canal system which are under used. In 2019 two of these cruises took place.

The first Explorer Cruise of 2019 began with a gathering of twenty boats on May 31st at Wolverhampton. The crews were introduced to the organiser, Brenda Ward, who then led us to a railway themed pub opposite the old Great Western Low Level station.



Day 1 saw the boats entering the Wyrely & Essington Canal. Conditions here had much changed over the years: much of it was lined with modern housing, lily pads floated at the edges and early purple orchids could be seen growing beside the towpath. At Wednesfield Junction a huge modern development provides shopping and entertainment but there is no trace of the former



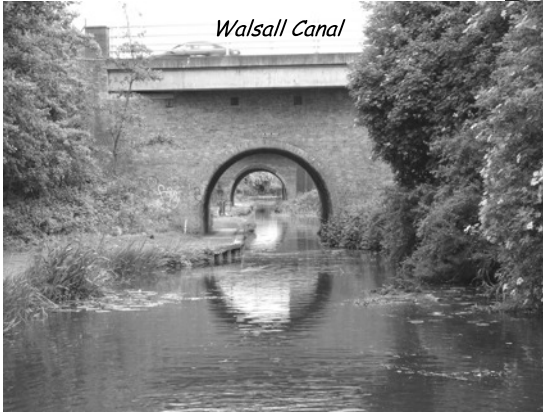
Bentley canal here, except for a short stub by the pub! Further on, at Pelsall Junction the boats steered to the left onto the dead straight Cannock Extension Canal.



Winding (turning) the 20 boats had to take place in limited space by the dry dock followed by an evening meal at a nearby carvery across the A5.

Day 2 dawned fine as as the Wyrely & Essington Canal was regained to pass Catshill and Ogley Junctions to

Boats crammed in at Longwood Boat Club



Walsall Canal

the old coal loading wharf at Anglesey Basin at the foot of the dam for Chasewater resevoir. This was a canal feeder but has not been available since the local authority took over the resevoir as an amenity a few years ago. A walk up onto the dam gave a fine open view of the resevoir.

Returning to Catshill Junction the boats turned south onto the Daw End Branch and moored five abreast at the remote Longwood Boat Club where fish and chips had been pre-ordered, followed by a canal based quiz.

Day 3: A very early start had been planned in order to get twenty boats through the Rushall flight. Volunteers from the BCNS turned up to help, but unfortunately the mile long pound after the first two locks had drained during the night as someone the day before had not completely lowered the paddles at both ends of the third lock. It took a long while to obtain enough water to proceed. Eventually the shallower draughted boats were the first to attempt passage, but the situation improved as more water was supplied. In contrast, the Tame Valley Canal was wide and clear. The M5 junction with M6 could clearly be seen from the aqueduct above. However, the Walsall Canal was strewn with rubbish and weed, requiring several visits down the weed hatches so it was a relief to arrive at the tidy and well appointed town

basin with its new pontoons and a shopping opportunity.

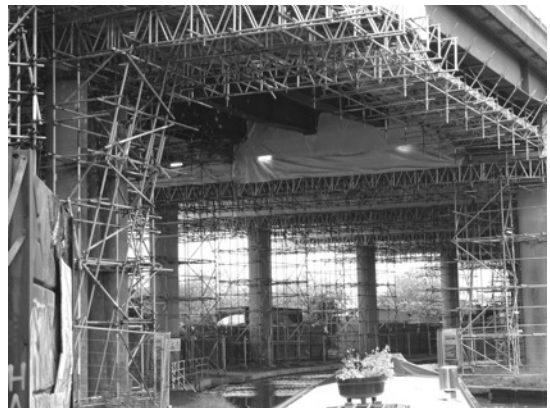
Day 4 involved working up the eight locks from Walsall in cold rain, but ably assisted by BCNS volunteers. A half day cruise back to Wednesfield Junction was followed by a carvery dinner at The Nickelodeon next to the Bentley stub mentioned earlier.



Day 5 started with coffee and a talk from a local Wednesfield councillor in the aforementioned pub. He was keen to promote the canal in his area. A return was made to Horsley Fields Junction, Wolverhampton, then along the Main Line to Deepfields Junction and along the recently cleared and dredged Wednesbury Oak Branch to finish at C&RT's Bradley lockgate workshops. This is one of only two places where lock gates are made in England.

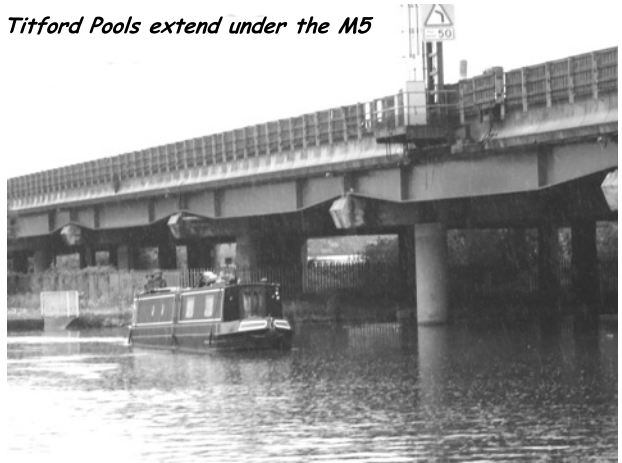


Day 4 offered the chance to look around the Bradley workshops. Here lock gates are manufactured by skilled craftsmen and it was good to meet and talk with the staff and apprentices. In the afternoon a local enthusiast led a walk along the route of the former Bradley Locks Branch which used to join the Walsall Canal at Moorcroft Junction. It is hoped



that this link may one day be restored. The boats then left the branch and continued along the Main Line to Tipton moorings on the Old Main Line and another excellent meal was enjoyed at The Famous Pie Factory.

Titford Pools extend under the M5



Day 7 began with a walk to Tipton library where an illustrated talk on the local

industrial scene was given. By mid day rain had started in earnest as the boats headed for Oldbury Locks Junction, passing below the section of the M5 Oldbury viaduct which is currently under repair. The six locks up to the Titford Canal are known locally as 'The Crow' and lift the canal to its highest level in the Black Country of 511 ft. These were tackled in heavy rain, assisted again by stalwart BCNS volunteers. Evening entertainment, Black Country style (!) was enjoyed by all participants to mark the official end of the cruise. Brenda handed out blue plaques for each boat and was thanked for her splendid organisation.

Day 8: Boaters were offered the chance to attempt a visit to Titford Pools at the end of the Branch. They were advised to go in pairs in case a boat became stuck in the shallows. This was an interesting challenge, rewarded with a special brass plaque. The two pools are adjacent and partly under the M5, but completely hidden from the motorway. The participating boats now dispersed, moving down The Crow locks and away to their various destinations.

It had been a fantastic week, both socially and historically. Your scribes had last visited these locations in the 1970's and the whole area has improved greatly since then with trees and houses replacing the many derelict factory sites. There was very little rubbish in the water or on the towpaths (with one exception) although blanket weed has thrived in the cleaner water. To join an Explorer cruise you will need to book with the BCNS many months ahead and be OK with chips and pies!

Patrick & Angela Marks

El Pabellon de la Navegación, Seville

Opened in 2012, on the banks of the Rio Guadalquivir opposite the ancient city of Seville, this museum is dedicated to the seamen who made the fortune of Seville while it controlled the trade between Spain and the Americas.

Soon after Christopher Columbus, who is buried in Seville Cathedral, returned from Hispaniola in 1492, the city of Seville was granted a monopoly on American trade through the foundation of the Casa de la Contracción, a trading company which brought great wealth to the city. Unfortunately the entrance of the river silted up in 1717 and the Casa de la Contracción headquarters were moved to nearby Cadiz.

The museum is split into four sections. The first section uses bi-lingual audiovisual presentations to tell the stories of characters involved in the trade, from cabin boys and sailors to passengers, captains and even an admiral. It tells of the dangers of the crossings, the unsanitary conditions aboard, dramatizes the shipwrecks and even has Admiral Pedro Tello de Guzmán telling us how he defeated Drake at the Battle of San Juan in 1595. Not surprisingly they said nothing of Drake's earlier raid on Cadiz, or his role in destroying the Spanish Armada.

The second section of the museum consists of models of boats that crossed the Atlantic, from the tiny carrack *Santa Maria* used by Columbus to the 32,000 ton Cunard liner *Maurentania*, which held the blue ribbon for the fastest crossing of the Atlantic from 1909 to 1929.



There is even a model of a futuristic car transporter due to be launched in 2020 in Japan which is solar-produced hydrogen powered. The third section uses cartoons to illustrate life on board for children. Wall sized displays are used to show the effects of turning a steering wheel, turning a capstan, hauling on ropes and loading cargo. Unfortunately I couldn't find how to switch these displays to English, and could not follow the increasingly irate Spanish instructions issued by the cartoon characters bemoaning my incompetence from the walls. The fourth section contains interactive screens showing maps that allow you to explore the growth of Seville from the time of Columbus to the modern day. There were also models of various types of unusual marine vessels.

Included in the entrance fee, which was only €3.50 for pensioners , there could, at predefined times, be a trip up the tower built by Schindler Lifts to get a view of the river and city. As we had already seen the city from the Torre del Oro, the old river watchtower, and the famous Moorish minaret Giralda in the city centre, we did not wait the 30 minute till the first lift of the afternoon.

Martin Bryan



Tony Jones' camping boat 'COMET' taking Gloucestershire Girl Guides near Netherton in the Black Country on a cold Easter 1977. COMET had previously been restored at Charity Dock. (see page 26) -Eds.

Charity Dock, Coventry Canal

At first sight you would be forgiven for thinking that Charity Dock, on a bend of the Coventry Canal near Bedworth in Warwickshire, is a bit of a dump - and so it is,



but look closer and you will see a fascinating collection of old artifacts like costumed dummies, fairground gallopers, old petrol pumps, and cuddly toys (alas, no fondue sets!). Yet, amongst all the



ephemera there is some serious and excellent boat building and fitting-out taking place. This yard has changed little since your Eds. first came across it in the mid 1970's and we always pass by very slowly...



Friends of Gloucester Waterways Museum
Registered Charity No 800282
Llanthony Warehouse, Docks, Gloucester, GL1
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Friends' 2019-2020 Series of Talks

24 September 2019: A VIDEO RECORD OF MAJOR EVENTS AT THE NATIONAL WATERWAYS MUSEUM , GLOUCESTER

Hans Rackham

22 October 2019: GOING UP COUNTRY -

Tony Conder

26 November 2019: JOHN TALBOT, HEALING'S GRAIN BARGES AND OTHER WORKING BOATS - Martin Bryan

28 January 2020: THE COTSWOLDS NAVY - WHAT'S IN A NAME -

Paul Barnett

25 February 2020: MAKING A LIVING ON THE RIVER SEVERN -

Simon Draper

24 March 2020: A NAVAL OFFICER'S DIARY, HMS DRAKE 1905 - Peter

Covey-Crump

28 April 2020: AGM followed by
OUR OWN BILL SHAKESPEARE, BATHURST AND THE BAND OF
TEWKESBURY BOAT BUILDERS. A NEGLECTED HISTORY - John Dixon

All talks start at 7.30pm in the Museum

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The archives have been moved to Ellesmere Port. Archive enquiries should be made to:-

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