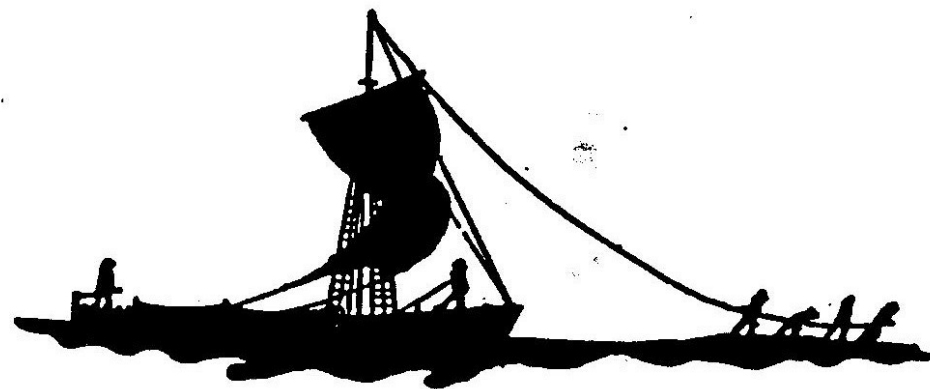


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All views expressed in Llanthony Log are those of the Editor and individual contributors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the Friends of the National Waterways Museum.

LLANTHONY LOG



Newsletter of the Friends of the National Waterways Museum

ISSUE NO. 10 - SEPTEMBER 1990

Diary Dates

- Oct 7 Teach-in on Rag Rugs. Instruction for beginners with materials provided. Museum Schools Room at 2pm.
- Oct 19 Restoration of the Rochdale Canal. An IWA talk by Brian Holden of the Rochdale Canal Society. Museum Schools Room at 7.30.
- Nov 22 Recovery of the Dredger. ~~NOTE CHANGE OF TOPIC.~~ An illustrated talk by Des Fforde who led the Museum team working on the rescue. Museum Schools Room at 7.30. Please bring a contribution to the restoration appeal fund. (See later page.)
- Dec 18 The MAD Christmas Light and Sound Spectacular. An audio-visual presentation by the award winning MAD team who made the video of the Feilding engine. The presentation will include a sequence on the Severn bore and will involve audience participation. Museum Schools Room at 7.30.
- Jan 15 IWA Video Evening presented by Graham Ettles at the Tewkesbury Marina Yacht Club stating at 7.30.
- Feb 14 The Tame Valley Canal - Birmingham's First Bypass. DEFERRED FROM NOV 22. John Foley describes the major engineering works on this canal and the traffic which passed along it. Museum Schools Room at 7.30.
- Feb 20 Severn Navigation by Dr Barrie Trinder of the Ironbridge Institute. A B&G Archaeological Society meeting at the Post Graduate Medical Centre, Gloucester Royal Hospital, Great Western Rd at 7.30. Admission charge.
- Apr 16 Severn Scrapbook. The ever popular Fred Rowbotham returns with more slides and stories. Museum Schools Room at 7.30
- May 21 Friends AGM followed by more vintage films from the Museum's collection. Museum Schools Room at 7.30.

For evening meetings, car access to the Museum is from Southgate St. Non-members are welcome. Raffles will be held to raise money for the Dredger Restoration Fund.

Friends are welcome at the Inland Waterways Association meetings which are held at the Tewkesbury Marina Yacht Club, off the Bredon Road B4080, on the left, 250 yards north of the junction with the A38.

Canal Breach Repaired in Four Weeks

A massive repair operation was carried out by British Waterways engineers following a breach in the Gloucester and Sharpness Canal near to Parkend Bridge. Late in the evening of June 14, the bridge-keeper was taking his dog for a walk when he noted a heavy flow from a culvert passing under the canal and he saw a whirlpool in the centre of the canal. He quickly raised the alarm, and the stop gates at Parkend Bridge and at Saul Junction were closed to limit loss of water from the rest of the canal. Some attempts were also made to block off the leak by dropping bales of straw etc into the whirlpool, but these were not successful.

On the following day, the water level in the two-mile stretch between the stop gates was well down, and a start was made on building a coffer dam across the canal so the section containing the breach could be drained completely. Also pipelines and pumps were set up to pump water past this section to keep some flow along the rest of the canal which provides part of the water supply for Bristol.

Unfortunately, it was found that the stop gates installed earlier in the year were leaking, and huge clay dams had to be dumped into the canal to relieve pressure on the gates. This eventually allowed the section of canal around the breach to be drained completely, and then engineers could get in and see what had happened.

They found that the breach was due to the failure of an original wooden culvert under the canal that was five feet in diameter and built like a barrel with elm planks held in place by external metal hoops. They quickly devised a repair procedure using a glass-reinforced plastic tube inside the culvert and surrounding this with an epoxy grout. While the repair was being carried out, they also checked on other culverts under the canal, and they improved the fitting of the stop gates in case they were ever needed again.

The work made such good progress that by July 10 water was being let into the dry section again. Then the clay dams were removed, the stop gates were swung back and the canal was fully reopened to traffic on July 16. The repair operation involved a large amount of plant and long hours of work for those involved, and British Waterways and their contractors are to be congratulated for completing the whole exercise in a remarkably short time.

Nevertheless, many canal users had their plans disrupted by the canal closure - none more so than the owners of the tall ship Kaskelot that was in dry dock at Gloucester and couldn't get away to fulfill a

contract in Ireland. Shipping was also held up briefly at Sharpness until pumps were installed to top up the dock level and allow use of the lock again. Unfortunately this meant salt water got into the canal, and there was concern that it would affect the drinking water supply for Bristol. So once the breach was repaired, the silt discharge pump at Purton was used to extract the salty water which had formed a layer near the bottom of the canal.

Doing It the Hard Way

Unable to bring his converted lifeboat up the canal from Sharpness following the breach at Parkend, Doug Griffey decided to come up the river route to Gloucester. As a former Severn pilot, Doug knew the power of the tides in the estuary and he used them to his advantage. Before attempting the trip, he spent three days surveying the river from vantage points on the shore, making sketches of where the channel was and talking to local fishermen. He also noted that there was a lot of timber obstructing the weir at Llanthony, and so he decided he would follow the west channel and go over Maisemore Weir. While carrying out this survey, his boat was moored in the dock at Bullo Pill, which has recently been cleared of mud, and he waited there until a really high tide was due.

When conditions were just right, Doug set off from Bullo Pill on the evening tide, and he was soon whistling up the channel towards Gloucester on the powerful current. He knew he must not get to the weir before the peak of the tide, and when he found he was ahead of schedule, he had to turn round and stem the current for a time before proceeding. Navigation became more difficult as darkness fell, and it was so dark from Minsterworth onwards that there was no way of telling where he was until he went round a bend and saw the floodlit tower of Gloucester cathedral across the fields.

Approaching the bridges at Over, Doug was blinded by the street lights on the main road, and so he couldn't see the railway bridge until he was right up to it. Nevertheless, he managed to avoid the pier in the middle of the river, but he did get a surprise when his CB aerial scraped the underside of the bridge. After passing through the Over bridges, he was back into darkness again, and he went under Maisemore bridge without even realising it. Then he passed over Maisemore weir without any trouble, turned right at the Upper Parting and came back down the East Channel to tie up on Gloucester Quay around midnight. He spent the night moored by the Quay and locked into the docks the following morning. Good for you, Doug, but an exploit not to be copied by inexperienced boaters.

Second Sinking for Stean Dredger

At 2.30am on Friday 15 June, the Museum's steam dredger rolled over and sank to the bottom of the dock. She had been moored in her usual place beside the Museum quay, and a passing security guard heard the mooring ropes snap and witnessed the tragedy. The reason for the accident is believed to be connected with the drop in water level in the dock following the breach in the canal near to Parkend Bridge a few hours earlier.

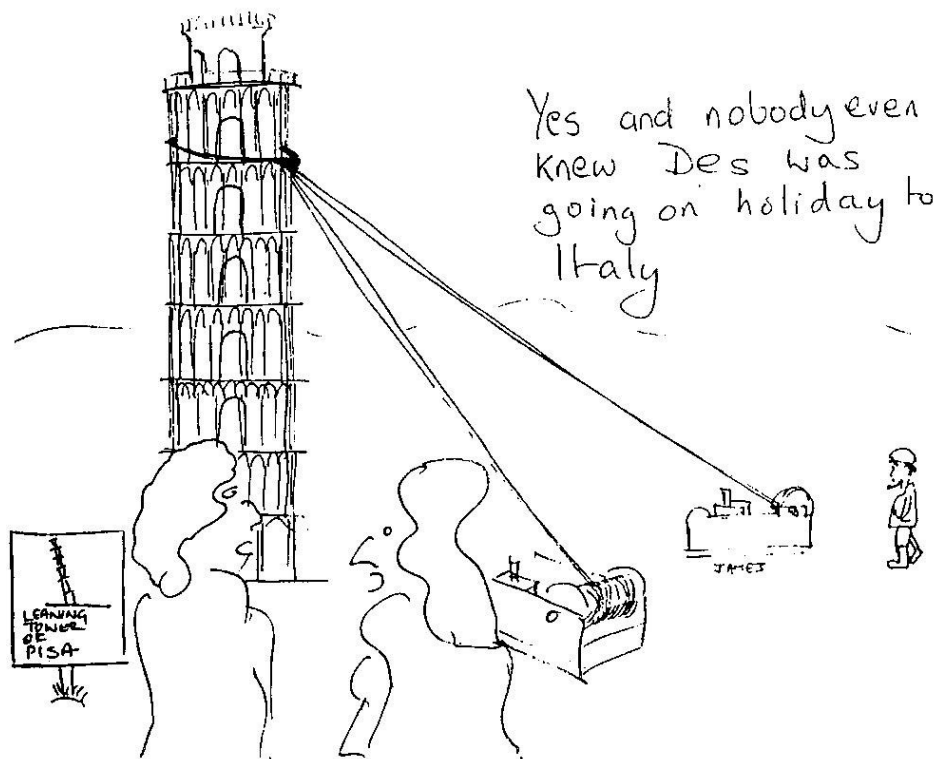
Museum staff were immediately called in and were confronted with a sorry sight. All that could be seen of the dredger was one side of the hull - the bucket tower and other parts of the superstructure were completely under water. Once the initial shock had worn off, plans started to be made for raising the dredger. British Waterways were given the primary responsibility as they had much of the plant required and the diving expertise, and Des Fforde co-ordinated operations on site.

The salvage team was able to draw on the information recorded when the dredger sank once before - due to ice damage during a very cold spell in January 1963. As on the previous occasion, three strong brackets were welded on to the side of the dredger to act as anchor points and guides for wire cables that would be used to right her. At the same time, mud was cleared away from close to the quayside to form a level shelf on which the upright dredger would sit.

The cables needed to pass right round the hull, but this was not easy as the diver found that silt had accumulated around the dredger because a lot of muddy water had been pumped into the dock from the river. The new dredger cleared some of the silt where it could reach, and pumps were used to suck out more silt close to the submerged superstructure until it was clear enough for the diver to get the cables underneath. Three powerful winches were set up on the Museum quayside, requiring much disruption of the paving to install proper anchor points, and the cables from around the hull were connected to the winches. Once all these cables were set up, a huge salvage barge was brought in to give a vertical lift to the submerged superstructure, and very carefully the dredger was rolled back into the upright position.

When the dredger was upright, divers were sent down to seal all the holes, and the water inside was slowly extracted using a floating silt discharge pump and an impressive array of pumps on the quayside. Once afloat, the dredger was towed across to the dry dock for initial cleaning and inspection, and then she was brought back to her usual position beside the Museum quay.

Initial indications are that the damage is not as bad as had been feared, although further inspections may reveal more problems. The boiler appears to have survived, and it does not seem that the boiler water has been contaminated. The bucket chain is intact, although one side of the ladder hoist has come off the drum leaving the ladder and buckets hanging at an unsightly angle. It therefore seems that the main work to be done is to clear out all of the remaining mud, clean up the working parts and repaint inside and out. While some of this can be done by Museum staff and Friends, it is certain that specialist help will also be required and an appeal is being planned to raise the necessary money.



Pay and Display for Museum Car Park

For parking in the Museum car park, it is now necessary to pay and display as it has become part of the area administered by the Gloucester Docks Trading Co. The minimum charge is 30p for two hours rising to £1.20 for six hours. This applies to all users of the car park, including Friends, unless you are on Museum business. If you are visiting to carry out scheduled duties on behalf of the Museum, apply at the entry desk for a pass when you arrive and park in the staff area of the car park.

Dredger Appeal Group Seeks Ideas for Fund Raising

A Dredger Appeal Group has been set up to co-ordinate Friends efforts in raising money for the full restoration of the No 4 steam dredger. The Group comprises some members of the main committee and other Friends who have come forward with specific ideas and offers of help. More volunteers and ideas for fund raising would be welcome.

It is expected that insurance money will pay for the cost of the salvage operation, but more money will be needed to get the dredger back into working order and to make sure she doesn't roll over again. When there is good information available on what needs to be done and how much it is likely to cost, approaches will be made to organisations and individuals who should be sympathetic, with a special appeal being sent out to all Friends.

In the meantime, some fund-raising activities have already been organised and others are being planned. Arrangements are being made to run the tug Kennet more often, to have raffles at Friends meetings, to have a Friends stall occasionally at the Museum and to run a boat jumble in the spring. Offers of prizes for the raffles should be made to Pauline Hill on Gloucester 25578. If anyone has any further ideas for fund-raising or is willing to help in any way, please contact Hugh Conway-Jones on Gloucester 619679.

Dredger Restoration Fund Exceeds £1000

Although a formal appeal has yet to be launched, over £1000 has already been donated to the Dredger Restoration Fund. A public collection prior to the fireworks display in July raised £183, a symbolic 'repainting of the dredger' in August raised £175 and a cheque for £200 has been received from Edinburgh Woolen Mill for use of photographs on display in their new shop. Also the Museum has put in £672 raised from collecting boxes and from operating the tug Kennet.

Dredger Talk to Launch Appeal

To mark the formal launch of an appeal for funds to restore the dredger, Des Fforde will give a talk about the recovery operation on Thursday 22 November in the Schools Room starting at 7.30. Des worked long hours with the salvage team, and he will describe what was done, the setbacks involved and the further work that is still needed. Various ways of contributing to the Dredger Restoration Fund will be available that evening, so please bring a friend along and give generously.

Friends Work 'Like Crazy' at Cranes Weekend

A large contingent of Friends was busy at the Museum during the Cranes Weekend in July which was sponsored by BET Plant Services. The Museum's own cranes were supplemented by modern examples, and many were operating.

With the dredger out of action, some of the regular drivers have turned their hand to operating the Museum's steam crane this summer, and several new volunteers also had a go over the weekend. The crane was built by Balmforth's at Rodley near Leeds in the 1890s, and it is similar to those once used for handling cargoes on canal wharfs and docks all over the country. To demonstrate this role, the crane was used to lift a load out of the canal boat Oak and swing it round into a railway wagon on the quayside. Later the operation was reversed for a different set of onlookers. All this gave plenty of opportunities to try out the recently fitted steam whistle donated by the Friends.

The Museum's Rapier diesel-electric crane was also in action loading crates on and off a vintage lorry, and Friends were on hand to guide the loads and keep visitors clear. The Henderson Crane, restored by Friends, was slewed occasionally, but this was not used for lifting as it does not yet have a certificate. Other Friends were talking to the public, making badges for sale and ensuring that each visitor was wearing a hard hat in the operational area.

As well as the Museum's cranes, there were several others brought in for the weekend. BET Plant Services had a 20 ton Kato hydraulic truck-mounted crane in the car park, and nearby was a huge three-boom articulated access platform. From the latter, some Friends managed to get unique views of the docks at a level above the roof of Llanthony Warehouse.

In the Barge Arm, British Waterways had their self-propelled floating crane Gloucester open for inspection. Capable of lifting twelve tons, it had recently been helping with repairs to the stop gates at Saul Junction. While at the Museum, it gave a lift to the Tardebigge wharf crane so that washers could be fitted under the pivot to stop the bottom of the crane fouling the quayside.

Further interest was provided by a fantastic collection of model cranes on show in the Schools Room and a construction kit with which children of all ages could build their own cranes. It was disappointing that more visitors did not come, no doubt preferring a visit to the coast on such a hot day.

Pegthorne Treasures Revealed

By Philip Conway-Jones

Thousands of people must have passed Pegthorne Hole, a lie-by and winding hole on the Gloucester and Sharpness Canal between Parkend Bridge and the Junction, but few knew what lay hidden in its murky depths. And the secret could have remained undiscovered had it not been for the breach in June which left this section almost dry. My father had heard that old boats had been dumped there, and walking along the towpath the first evening after the breach, we could see various hulks that were now left high and dry. In the fading light we could just make out the bow of a horse boat, and a further exploration was instantly planned!

On reporting the matter to David McDougall, he expressed interest in recovering items for the Museum collection and for possible use by the people restoring the trow Spry at Ironbridge. So one Sunday towards the end of June, having obtained permission from British Waterways, he led a small working party comprising Dick and Ann Trelfa, Peter Wallace, Hugh Conway-Jones and myself.

We met at Saul Junction and made our way along the canal bank on the opposite side to the towpath, complete with wheelbarrow and spade. We arrived at Pegthorne Hole after walking about a mile, and the first interesting sight was the remains of a bridge keeper's shelter. The swing bridge has long disappeared, but the brick-built hut still has an old cast iron fireplace.

The vast expanse of silt at Pegthorne Hole looked very dangerous and we did not walk on it, apart from at the edges, where it was relatively dry and there was always something to hang on to in an emergency! We estimated that at least seven boats had been laid up there, although some were virtual skeletons after years of rotting. As well as the horse boat, there was a lighter, three mud flats and two other vessels that had probably been used for maintenance purposes.

We were primarily interested in the horse boat and the lighter, and it was lucky that these were fairly near the side and quite dry. Close-up, they looked fascinating, even though they were considerably decayed. The bow of the horse boat was most impressive because it had retained much of its shape, and protruding from the deck was a timberhead characteristic of Severn and Canal horseboats. The lighter must have been laid up much earlier than any of the other boats because it was in the worst state. All that was visible of the hull was the keelson and many collapsed ribs, with the rudder lying flat in the mud.

After photographs were taken, our next task was to recover the winch from the bow of the lighter. The deck to which it was originally fixed had collapsed, so the winch was resting on the bottom of the boat. The wooden barrel of the winch was considerably decayed but the ratchet mechanism was complete. It took two people to carry the remains to the edge of the canal, and a group effort to hoist it on to the bank! We also collected some smaller items that were easier to carry.

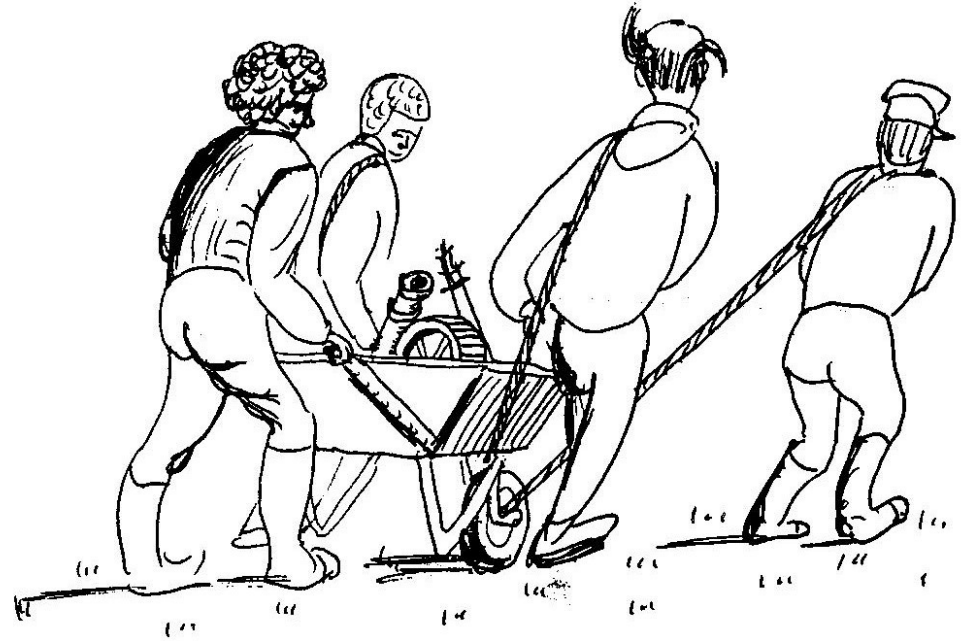
The lighter also had two bilge pumps; one at the bow and another at the stern. David decided to salvage the one at the bow as it split into two parts and was less cumbersome than the stern pump. Quite by chance we also found the plunger and handle just protruding a couple of inches from the mud, and we now have a complete pump. Lifting these items was not easy and it was a case of "all hands to the pumps" to shift them.

There was also a pump in the bows of the horse boat, but we decided to leave it behind because we already had enough weight for the wheelbarrow as it was! David McDougall pointed out that it would be possible to trace the name of the horse boat if we found its B.C.N. plate. But after digging for a while inside the boat at the front of the hold (which brought back memories of digging out the concrete barge), we abandoned the search.

We tried to load all our finds into the wheelbarrow, but they weighed several hundredweight in total and we couldn't wheel the barrow over the uneven ground. It was clear we would have to leave some of the heavier items behind to be collected by boat when the canal was repaired and open. So a treasure map was drawn and the largest parts of the pump and winch were secretly hidden in bankside undergrowth.

Before leaving, we had a look at the rusting hull of a rivetted boat which had been dumped on the side of the winding hole and was almost engulfed by undergrowth. It once had an engine, but it seemed too small to be a tug, and its origin is a mystery. Someone joked that perhaps it had been left there with the intention of later recovery like our own treasure!

It was hard work pushing what we had decided to carry away with us in the wheelbarrow, and we soon paused for a much-needed break while Ann Trelfa saved the day by providing thirst-quenching light refreshments. Then four of us muscled in to push, pull and stabilise the wheelbarrow over the rough canal bank, under a pump discharge pipe and over a stile. Eventually we returned to the Junction and loaded our finds into David's car for the journey back to the Museum.



Return to Pegthorne - a postscript by Hugh Conway-Jones

To collect the treasure hidden by the first working party, Bernard Hales agreed we could make use of his restored BCN lug Enterprise. This was visiting the Museum during the summer, and it is ideally suited to carrying heavy items as it has a large flat deck near the bow. After the canal had been refilled, David McDougall decided he would like the second pump from the lighter after all, but as this was now six feet under water it was a difficult challenge. Fortunately we remembered roughly where the pump was lying, and Bernard quickly located it with his magnet. Getting it on board was not so easy, but eventually we achieved it with the help of a strong rake and a length of rope. Then we went ashore to find the other items of treasure, which were still where we had hidden them, and we carefully loaded them on board Enterprise too. At this stage, we felt we deserved a refreshing cup of coffee, and then we enjoyed a delightful trip bringing the whole load back to Gloucester.

The First Quarter Million

The Museum welcomed its 250,000th visitor in July. Richard and Annette Cooke from Brierley were presented with a hand-painted stool to mark the occasion.

John Pinkerton and Perseverance

A visit report by Hugh Conway-Jones



Friends joined Museum staff on a very successful trip to see various parts of the Basingstoke Canal in early June. The canal was constructed in the 1790s to boost agricultural trade in central Hampshire, and it was later used to carry materials for the construction of the London and South Western Railway and the military camp at Aldershot. After the second world war, the canal became semi-derelict, but restoration started in the 1970s and is now nearing completion.

The coach dropped us first at Colt Hill, once a commercial wharf on the outskirts of Odiham. There we boarded the Surrey and Hampshire Canal Society's trip boat John Pinkerton and set off to explore the western end of the canal. Passing leisurely along the winding waterway, we enjoyed spotting many varieties of birds, fish and wildflowers. We also noted the difficulty the steerer had in negotiating some of the bends as this section had been restored some years previously and was in need of dredging again. At the North Wanborough Lift Bridge, a brief stop was necessary to let two of the crew go ashore to raise the bridge for us, and shortly afterwards we tied up near to King John's Castle, the ruins of a royal hunting lodge. From there we walked up to the entrance to Greywell Tunnel, famous for its bats, where a plaque said the portal had been restored in 1975. This required crossing an aqueduct over the River Whitewater, a wide stream which was only two feet below the canal level.

In the afternoon, the coach took us on to Fleet to see the Canal Society's steam dredger Perseverance at work. This was built in 1934 for the Grand Union Canal Company, and it worked on the Kennet and Avon Canal in the 1960s. At one end, it has a Grafton steam crane with a steam operated grab, and at the other end it has a locomotive type boiler which is started up on coal but mainly burns wood. In 1974, it was put into the Basingstoke Canal at Colt Hill, and operated by volunteers at weekends, it has cleared ten miles of canal, moving forward its own length in a day if all goes well.

On the day we were there, Perseverance was being operated by Andrew Stumpf, a former dredging team leader and now a BW manager at Gloucester. He gave us a marvellous demonstration of steam power at work, making no concessions to the age of the plant. As soon as the grab touched the bed of the canal, it snapped shut with a hiss of steam, and a two-ton load of

silt was lifted clear of the water, swung round and dumped into a waiting barge while Perseverance lurched sideways in reaction to the load. This operation was continually repeated, much to the delight of the onlookers.

The dredger can fill five barges in a day, and the Canal Society has three Bantam tugs for taking the barges to a tipping site where the silt is removed by a Priestman Wolf dragline. This long-running operation is now approaching its end, as the dredger is nearing Pond Tail Bridge from the other side of which the County Councils are responsible for the restoration. Perseverance has done a remarkable job, and it would be nice to think it could now move on to the Stroudwater and Thames and Severn Canals.

For our third and last stop, the coach took us near to Pirbright to see the restored Deepcut flight of locks. Here, fourteen locks raise the canal by 100 feet in two miles. Although close to the Guards Depot and other military establishments, the canal itself is in delightful mature woodland, and as we walked down the towpath, we all looked forward to the day when boats would be using the canal once again.

Paramount Steam

By Richard Treifa

Whilst cruising on a narrowboat in the Fens, I noticed the landscape dotted with buildings having the appearance of non-conformist chapels - that is, box shaped with simple pitched roofs and tall windows with rounded arches. I would have remarked on the piety of the locals but then noticed that they all had a ten inch diameter exhaust pipe leading above the roofline. Peering through one of the windows in search of enlightenment, I realised that the buildings are all diesel powered pumping stations transferring the fen water up from level to level. Then we found this inscription dating back to 1842, which was above the entrance to Burnt Fen Pumping Station and is now at the Prickwillow Museum:

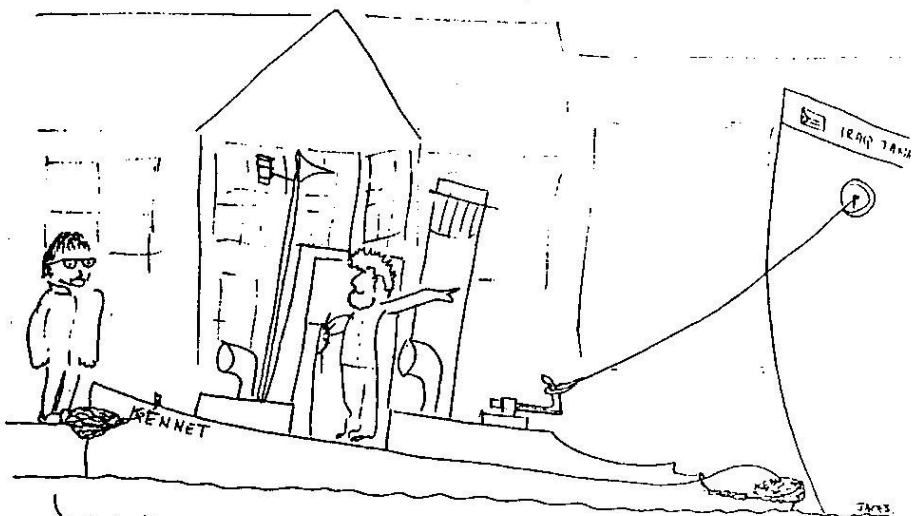
*"In fitness for the urgent hour,
Unlimited, untiring power,
Precision, promptitude, command,
The infant's will, the giant's hand:
Steam, mighty steam ascends the throne,
And reigns Lord Paramount alone."*

So they were chapels once!

Kennet Trips for Tugs Weekend

For the Tugs Weekend in June, Friends helped Museum staff to run trips around the docks on the diesel tug Kennet. This used to work on the Thames, but she is now owned by David Mitton, producer of the children's TV series 'Tugs', and he has converted her to look like one of the tugs in the series. Friends acted as crew on the tug and sold tickets on the quayside, as a steady stream of visitors packed on board and enjoyed leisurely trips around the Main Basin. One of the visitors was blind, and so the Friend on board provided a description of the warehouses and the other boats as the tug went past them.

The two main canal tugs, Stanegarth and Speedwell, were not on display this year as they were stuck on the far side of the canal breach. However, Severn Active and Jubilee, which normally work on the river, were open to visitors, and they did occasional demonstrations. Also present was Severn Iris, now converted to a pleasure craft and two restored narrow canal tugs.



Lock Keeper Retires

John Jones, who has looked after Gloucester Lock for the past 28 years, has retired. During that period, he has seen the steady decline of commercial traffic and a growth in the numbers of pleasure craft with over 5000 passing through the lock last year. Now his job will be taken by Pat Burke who formerly was a lock keeper in the Bristol area.

A Mink of Mystery!

By Alan Drewett

Since early July, a six ton MINK has taken up residence at the Museum. Don't call the R.S.P.C.A. though - it won't bite! Rather than a fur-bearing carnivore, this Mink is the latest covered van to arrive at Llanthony Yard.

Numbered 93045, it was built at Swindon in 1913 by the Great Western Railway Company. Costing about £110 brand new, it was the 44th vehicle built to Diagram V16 in a production run lasting from 1912 to 1923. Constructed on a 9 ft wheelbase, the 16 ft long body could carry a 10 ton load - notably less than similar wagons built after World War One. Although built with self-contained buffers and modern-type ventilators, 93045 has some rather antiquated features. The hourglass-shaped base plates of the coupling hooks were superseded by oblong or hexagonal designs after 1930, and the grey painted van has Mark III Dean-Churchward brakes. First used in 1902, Dean-Churchward brakes were difficult to fit with vacuum cylinders and were replaced on new wagons by Morton brakes after 1939. The latter were operated by levers as opposed to rotary handles.

MINK was the G.W.R. telegraphic code for a range of covered vans, each successive variant being given a suffix letter. MINK F for example was a 30 ton bogie vehicle, although there is some uncertainty about the description of 93045. It is either a straightforward MINK or a MINK A, but historical sources clash on whether vacuum braking (which it lacks) or ventilation type defines the difference.

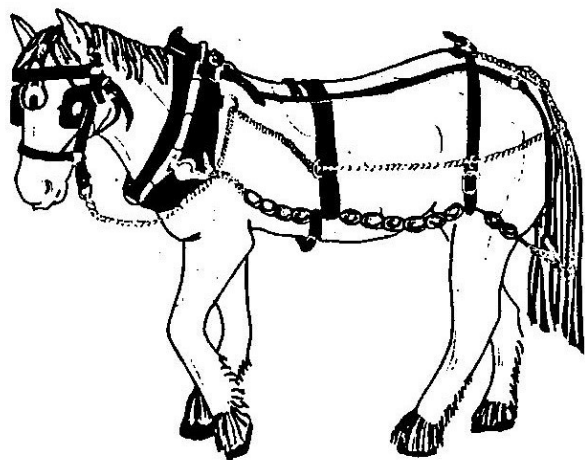
Mystery also shrouds the working life of 93045. The new owner, Mr Chris Perkins, knows that it was overhauled in Swindon in July 1956 and that its axlebox oilpads were checked in 1960, but no-one can remember when it arrived in Gloucester. For many years, though, it was parked in a siding opposite the old Gloucester Foundry with a MINK B and a MINK G which have also now been preserved.

During the latter part of its life, 93045 has had one of its four original doors replaced with a plywood fitting and has gained the British Rail internal user number 064722. Its last appearance on B.R. metals was at Rail Day on July 1.

I would like to thank Mr Perkins for his help in preparing this article, and any fresh information that readers might have about 93045 would be most welcome.

Horses Pull in the Crowds

The evocative sights and sounds of horse-drawn traffic brought crowds of visitors to the Museum over the weekend of 11 - 12 August, which was sponsored by West Midlands Farmers. People started arriving on Saturday morning before the horses, but it wasn't long before the stars arrived, and they were soon being prepared for the first of many parades around the docks. The magnificent Whitbread team of shire horses was present throughout the weekend, and they were joined on Sunday by the Courage shires. Other horses pulled restored farm wagons, and a Welsh cobb gave pony and trap rides. Further interest was provided by demonstrations of harnessing and blacksmithing.



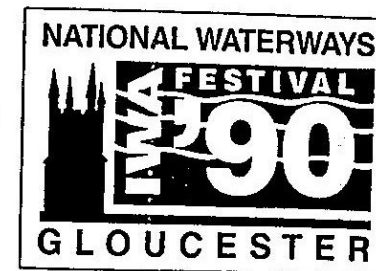
Peter, the Museum's own shire horse must have wondered what was going on when he saw so many of his cousins, but he took it all in good spirit and carried on giving rides to children in his usual cart. A few Friends were on hand, and they were kept busy helping with refreshments for the minders and opening and closing the gates to let the horses in and out of the Museum yard.

Merchants Quay Shops Open

Several shops have opened in the new development known as Merchants Quay beside the Main Basin. The Edinburgh Wollen Mill store was opened by Magnus Magnusson who arrived on board the British Waterways tug Speedwell. Pizza Piazza has quickly become a popular eating place with fine views over the water. Other shops sell glass and pottery, fossils and gem stones, needlecraft kits and accessories, childrens clothes and newspapers and magazines.

The National Waterways Festival

A personal report by Hugh Conway-Jones



The superb Festival organised by the Inland Waterways Association over the August bank holiday weekend attracted 500 boats, 300 caravans, 245 traders and approximately 35,000 visitors. It was such a huge event that it is not possible to do it justice in a few words, so all I can do is to mention briefly some of the memories that I will cherish for a long time to come.

One highlight for me was to see all the boats coming down the river and mooring by the Quay while waiting to get into Gloucester Lock. At times it seemed that there was a never-ending succession coming around the bend at the head of the Quay, and at the peak there were more than a dozen marshalls on the Quay taking ropes. There was a wide variety of privately owned narrow boats, often in immaculate condition, and there were many restored working boats, some of which took a bit of stopping when going downstream with the current. Almost all the crews accepted the ensuing wait for the lock with good humour, and at quieter times there was an opportunity to chat with the visitors and make them feel welcome.

Another highlight was to see so much activity in the Main Basin during the weekend of the Festival itself. Rowing boats, canoes, motor boats and colourful sailing boats were moving around all the time, allowing young people to experience the fun of life afloat. Mingling with all this without apparent difficulties were two trip boats and the steam tug Mayflower, which were taking people down the canal, the Museum's motor tug Kennet which was doing trips around the basin and the occasional pleasure craft passing though. I hope there will be many more days in future when such activities will be taking place, both for the enjoyment of those participating and of those watching.

A third highlight was to go down the canal and see all the festival boats moored three and four abreast between Llanthony and Hempsted Bridges. Normally this stretch of canal is not very attractive, but the scene was transformed by the colourful boats, many decked out with flags for the occasion. Some had additional decorations which seemed puzzling at first, but all became clear on Sunday evening when 25 boats took part in a cruise for illuminated boats - some having elaborate representations of local themes such as Llanthony Warehouse, a Gloucester Gladiator or a double Gloucester cheese (with mice)! British Waterways are to be congratulated for arranging access almost all the way down the east bank

of the canal for the weekend - I hope one day this will become a permanent footpath for all to enjoy.

I didn't myself have much time to look around the festival site itself, but what I saw I liked, and I know that others found it full of interest and entertainment. Judging from comments I have heard from boaters and from members of the public, the Festival was a tremendous success, and thanks are due to the large numbers of volunteers who so willingly responded to appeals for help. The Festival has publicised Gloucester as an interesting place to go on the waterways network, and it has opened the eyes of local people to the wide range of activities that can be enjoyed on our inland waterways.

Willow Trust Boat on Show

One of the special boats on show at the National Waterways Festival was Spirit of Freedom, which was commissioned by the Willow Trust to provide day trips for disabled and seriously ill people. The boat is 70 ft long, 10 ft 6 inches wide and can seat 32 people. When fully fitted out, it will have two hydraulic lifts, two disabled toilets, a shower, full central heating and resuscitation equipment. The Willow Trust was formed in 1989 by Jeremy Hope after hearing a radio programme about the therapeutic benefits of boats for the disabled. With a first donation of £5 and British Waterways approval, a boat was ordered.

Among the donations received at the Festival were cheques of £2,000 from Marks & Spencer and £500 from Wimpey Construction. On August 25, the Mayor of Gloucester visited the boat as the Willow Trust is his special charity for the year. Although Spirit of Freedom has to return to Liverpool for the fitting out of the interior, it is hoped that she will be back on the water before too long. The aim is to provide free day trips on the Gloucester and Sharpness Canal for around 4,500 people every year. More donations are still urgently required and should be sent to Jeremy Hope, Tir-Nan-Og, Court Lane, Newent, GL18 1AR, Tel (0531) 822482.

Adopt a Hotel

Friends are being asked to help distribute Museum publicity leaflets to hotels, libraries and other establishments in their locality. The Museum will provide a stock of leaflets, and all that is required is to call occasionally at your adopted establishments and see that they still have a supply on display. If you can help in this way, particularly faraway Friends, please contact Clare Caldicott at the Museum.

Friends Welcome Festival Visitors

As thousands of visitors came to Gloucester for the National Waterways Festival over the August bank holiday weekend, Friends were on hand to welcome those who came to the Museum. Some were operating the steam crane, which was demonstrating the transfer of cargoes between the motor boat Oak and a railway wagon. Some were running the Fielding engine for much of the weekend, although this had to be shut down occasionally because it was so hot.

Other Friends crewed the motor tug Kennet, ferrying visitors across the dock to and from the Festival site or making circular tours around the Main Basin. From time to time, Kennet had to go to the aid of the steam tug Mayflower which stuck on the mud in the bottom of the basin while trying to turn round. On Monday evening, Kennet did a trip down the canal, helping to sell copies of the local paper to the moored boats, and David Mills donated the proceeds to the dredger appeal.

Two rather special visitors to the Museum were the restored working boats President and Sculptor. The former Fellows Morton and Clayton steamer President is normally based at the Black Country Museum, and the ex Grand Union Star Class motor Sculptor had come from Stoke Bruerne by a roundabout route sponsored by the Farnhouse Cheese Bureau. Both made early morning cruises down the canal past all the Festival boats, with the newly repainted horse boat Northwich breasted up with President on one occasion, and Friends were to be seen on board 'helping'.

Outside the Museum, Alan Drinkwater invited visitors to 'repaint the dredger'. He had an outline of the dredger marked out on a huge board, and for 20p a go people painted in small squares with the appropriate colours. Over two days, the whole dredger was painted in, and Alan raised £175 for the restoration fund.

On the Festival site, Friends joined Museum staff on a stand designed to publicise the Museum and the Friends, and to draw attention to the dredger restoration appeal. With so many regular helpers busy with other duties, it was good to welcome some new faces joining in this activity.

Tourist Information at the Museum

A new tourist information point has been established in the foyer of the Museum. Staffed by Civic Trust volunteers, it is open seven days a week during normal opening hours.