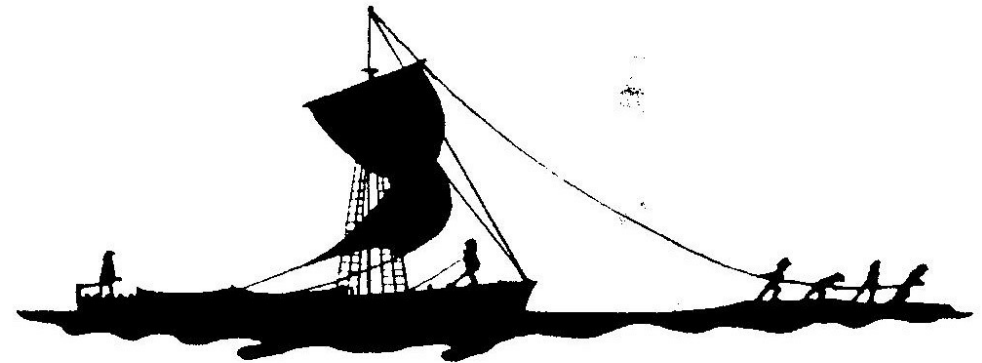


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LLANTHONY LOG



Newsletter of the Friends of the
National Waterways Museum

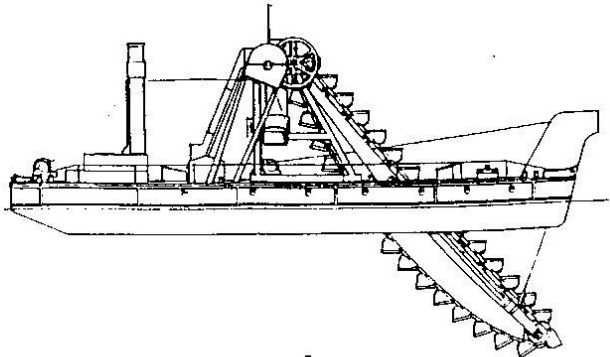
ISSUE NO. 14 - SEPTEMBER 1991

Diary Dates

- Oct 5-6 Friends helping at Lifting and Shifting Weekend. A profusion of cranes, boats, railway wagons, vintage vehicles and models all over the car park and around the Museum. Admission free for Friends who show their membership card.
- Oct 15 Working Boats in the '50s and '60s. An illustrated talk by Richard Courtenay Lord in the Museum Schools Room at 7.30.
- Nov 12 The Gloucester and Sharpness Breach by John Weston of British Waterways. An IWA meeting at the Tewkesbury Marina Yacht Club starting at 7.30.
- Dec 17 Forest Life - the River Severn. Melville Watts shows his award winning film in the Museum Schools Room at 7.30. Punch and mince pies should be available.
- Jan 14 IWA Video Evening at the Tewkesbury Marina Yacht Club starting at 7.30.
- Feb 8 Members Evening. A chance for Friends to share waterways reminiscences and slides/videos etc in the Museum Schools Room at 7.30. To offer a contribution, contact Doris Toller on Glo.424272.

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.



Museum Wins Major Award

The Museum has won the award for Best Industrial and Social History Museum in the 1991 Museum of the Year Awards. Run by National Heritage since 1971, these are the premier museum awards nationally, and this year they were sponsored by British Gas. Following the award, curator Tony Conder wrote to chairman Hugh Conway-Jones acknowledging the contribution made by the Friends:

"No museum can win an award without a considerable amount of hard work from its staff, contractors and many others. We owe a lot of our success to the constant help in all its forms which the Friends give to the Museum, whether it be digging mud or chipping paint, fund raising or simply telling an acquaintance what a good place it is. This is not the place to list all the Friends' activities, but they do reach into every area of the Museum, and without your support we wouldn't be half the institution we are. In accepting the award, we did so on behalf of the Museum, its staff and the volunteers."

Friends Help at Action Evenings

The Museum was open until 9.30pm on six evenings during the summer - primarily for organised parties but some individuals came along too. The response varied from over a hundred people on one evening to virtually none on another.

Richard Trelfa acted as a host on all the evenings, and he was helped by Charlie Wallace, Nicola Sparrow, Ruth Rowley and William Rowley. Others had offered to help, but the numbers expected did not warrant calling them in. Trevor Hill or Charles Silvey ran the Fielding engine on each occasion, whilst Terry Dellbridge and Alan Morgan operated Kennet on the busiest evening. The Museum's blacksmith was working in the smithy every evening and David McDougall tried wood-firing the steam crane when he was on duty.

The role of the host is limited while visitors are going round inside the Museum as there is plenty of information provided, but the hosts were particularly valuable in guiding visitors to the activities that were laid on for them to see and in talking about the outside exhibits that are not so well labelled. Arrangements for next year will be reviewed in the light of this year's experience.

Dredger Restoration Turning a Corner

Tony Conder surveys the past year and looks to the future.

Ever since the fateful phone call telling me the dredger had sunk, getting it going again has been a major priority. A working No.4 is such a key element in a visit to the Museum and such an enjoyable experience that it could not be allowed to disappear.

It was only once the early work of salvage and cleaning had been completed that we could be sure what needed to be done. An early major decision was that the dredger would not just be cleaned up and put back into service anyhow, but that a thorough job would be done to give the engine and fittings many more year's life, even if it took a little longer.

A major problem is that suppliers who had spares 'on the shelf' in 1925 are now few and far between. The skills of steam engine and boiler repair are also in short supply. So each job takes two or three times as long as it once might. One of David McDougall's major headaches is staying ahead of factory closures. All too often, the story is 'You should have been here last week'. Where there was once a supplier of steam fittings, there is now a pile of rubble and two skips.

A lot of the early work did not involve much money - just hours of loving care from staff and volunteers. Over last winter, as damaged engine parts were exposed and rotten timbers discovered, a budget was put together. This led to the Friends appeal and the major fund-raising effort of the boat jumble. Now that money is beginning to be spent.

Two firms have worked on the boiler, rebuilding worn areas and then grinding down the welds, to bring strength back. This has often been a difficult job because of restricted working spaces. Lagging has also been purchased ready for wrapping up the boiler when its steam test is complete.

In the early days of the operation, several hundred pounds went on hiring pumps and washers for mud removal. Now much more money is going into buying tools which will be used not only on the present job but also on future restoration of other items and on the continuing maintenance of No.4. Other jobs already paid for include repairs to cylinders, new engine fittings, pipework and renewal of electrical circuits.

Later this year, there will be major bills on welding, replacing the broken mast and making good some of the slight pulls and bends inflicted by rolling 150 tons of metal! Also, the installation of new cabin woodwork will signal the start of major domestic refurbishment.

After a year's patient work on dismantling and cleaning, No.4 is poised ready for the big jobs which will see her back in steam for 1992. Already bits are going back on, and the feeling is that a corner has been turned. The hours of labour provided free by the regular volunteers and the work parties, coupled with the major effort on fund-raising by the Friends, are paying off. The long wait will be worthwhile, but there is at least one more fund-raising job to do - to provide for the party on the day No.4 is recommissioned!

Dredger Fund Continues to Grow

A further £500 has been added to the dredger fund during the last three months. This has mainly been derived from the trips run with Kennet and the guided walks reported elsewhere, with additional contributions coming from talks given to other societies.

Volunteers in Museums

Hugh Conway-Jones, Tony Conder and Dr Alan Robertson, chairman of the Committee of Management of the Museum Trust, attended the launch of a new book entitled *Volunteers in Museums and Heritage Organisations*. Sponsored by the government's Office of Arts and Libraries, the book is the result of a wide-ranging study of existing arrangements for volunteers, and examples of good practices are highlighted. The publication marks a formal recognition of the growing status of volunteers in the Museum world.

Unfortunately, the occasion was marred by the appalling acoustics of the venue and the tendency of speakers to spend too long saying what a good museum they had instead of generalising their experiences with volunteers for the benefit of others. Nevertheless, the book itself appears to be well researched, and the findings are being studied to derive benefits for the Museum and the Friends.

Tug Joins Museum Fleet

The motor tug Severn Progress has become the latest addition to the Museum's collection of historic craft. Originally named Progress, the prefix Severn was added later to conform to the general naming policy adopted by her owners, the Severn and Canal Carrying Company based in Gloucester. She was built at Bristol in 1931 by Charles Hill and Sons as a copy of the tug Enterprise built the previous year by Watsons of Gainsborough. Severn and Canal already had three steam tugs for towing barges and longboats on the River Severn, but traffic was increasing and motor tugs were preferred because they were expected to be more economical.

A typical trip was to leave Gloucester early one morning, towing whatever loaded barges and longboats needed to go up river, stay overnight at Worcester and then return with empty boats the following day. Sometimes it was necessary to go all the way up to Stourport, but it was still expected that the tug would return on the second day. The usual cargoes for the barges were corn, timber and petroleum, and the longboats carried corn, metals, chocolate crumb and a wide range of general cargoes that had come on the steamers arriving at Bristol and Avonmouth.

After the War, the Severn and Canal Carrying Company sold up, and Severn Progress passed over to the fore-runners of British Waterways. She continued towing barges on the River Severn until this traffic came to an end in the late 1960s. In recent years, she has worked with maintenance boats on the Kennet and Avon Canal, although she returned to Gloucester occasionally for maintenance. Now she is no longer needed by British Waterways, and so she has joined the Museum's collection.

Progress originally had a 200 horse-power Kromhout engine which required heating with a blow-lamp to get it hot before starting. In later years this was replaced by a Lister air-cooled diesel that starts with the push of a button. Also in the early days, the steering position was an open well, so the crew had to get a simple shelter fixed up to give them some protection from the weather. Now she has a proper wheelhouse. She has recently been given a thorough overhaul by the Repair Yard at Sharpness and is in good mechanical condition. However, her paintwork is well worn, and there are some other matters that will need a bit of attention before she looks her best again. She is not suitable for taking passengers, but she will be a means of moving the Museum's other craft around, and it is hoped she will occasionally be used in conjunction with the barge Sabrina to give craft handling demonstrations.

Steering Simulator Working at Last

Visitors to the Museum are now able to have a go at the computer controlled steering simulator on Level 3 that didn't work when it was originally installed two years ago. The idea is to try your hand at steering a full-length narrowboat around a couple of bends. You can elect to have some help initially and then you can try it on your own. An indicator pops-up every now and again to tell you how you are getting on, and if you really get it wrong you end up hitting the bank.

The Friends have agreed to contribute £1000 towards the cost of getting this working, but we have not yet been asked to hand over any money as work is still continuing on another part of the contract - to provide a portable version of the lock operation simulator that can be taken around to shows.

Appeals for this project are being combined with subscription reminders, and the Treasurer is pleased to acknowledge donations received from the following:

Bailey A D	Howard E A
Barton A K & D E	Illingworth-Cooper J
Beesley R J & R D	King S J
Blackaby P G & E	Minogue M & M A
Caudwell S P	Mitchell D C & B E
Collins P H	O'Connell G R & L
Conder A G & E M	Parsons I M
Conway-Jones A H & J R	Perkins C C
Cresswell D J	Pinnock D C
Danks S G	Radford D E
Daw D A W & P A	Reddick K J & G L
Dellbridge D K	Rees P G
Dowling A R & B G	Rowley W E & R
Foster W H & J E	Simmons J R & S
Garnett A L	Skinner J H A & M
Gibb W F	Starkey T J & J
Greene J & B M	Tomlinson K M
Hancock S & J K	Whitehouse W A
Hammond J E	Wilks R D & L
Hatton I	Williams P V & B M
Hazell M J & D M	Woolley S E C
Hopkins K E S	

What The Ladies Get Up To!

Betty Conder describes the ladies role in the dredger restoration.

When Doris and I had finished our stint painting Oak's and Northwich's cloths last summer, the containers had been installed on the quay alongside the dredger for us to work in, and Jim Simmonds, Alan Garnett, Reg Price and others began to bring out everything which could be detached from the dredger's interior. All through last winter, on Tuesdays and Thursdays, we cleaned and dismantled, painted and polished, derusted and burnished a seemingly endless collection of miscellaneous machinery. Every piece is labelled and has its accompanying documentation, but we seldom understand the function of any of them, although we marvel at the inventiveness of their designers. We just do what we are told to do. After three or four years this comes naturally. Alan Conder, Mike Pullion and others, work at the other end of the container on more technically demanding tasks.

Some jobs are boring, such as wire brushing rods to remove rust and burnishing them, or scraping filth and paint off awkwardly shaped pieces of metal. For the most part we relish the challenge of restoring something unrecognisable to glory. With carborundum rubbers and Autosol, we have transformed miles of blackened and encrusted copper piping to gleaming perfection. There should be a commercial application for the tenacious properties of Severn mud. Every pipe has needed an enema. In the depth of winter, the mud had to be thaved before it would shift. For the really large exhaust pipes we had to borrow Alan Russell's drain rods, and former-nurse Doris supervised the disgusting operation.

We enjoy using chipping hammers when we can wrest them or steal them from the turntable gang, and acres of flaking paint and rust must have been noisily detached from incomprehensible lumps of metal.

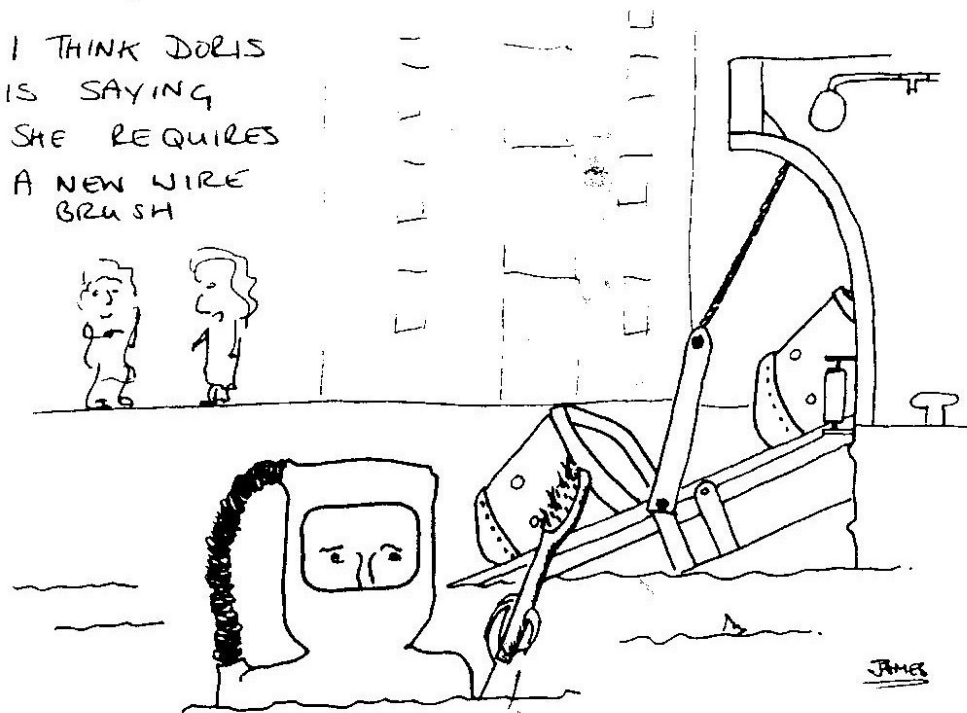
As soon as the weather allowed this year, we removed ourselves and our work from the airless confines of the container, and now we sit alongside the dredger and watch the world wag past. We have been joined by Mildred Branley, whose sister, Hilda Lockwood, cares for the canal bank and its denizens on Level Three. Mildred seems to be just as enthusiastic about getting dirty as we are, and mud, oil, grease, rust, verdigris and old paint are just a challenge to be overcome.

Now the supply of lumps of metal is drying up and, indeed, the task of re-installing them has begun. The pieces we are now working with are

so huge and heavy that we have to find a Man or even Men to heave them about for us. We'd rather not, and the men aren't too keen either, though always gentlemanly.

Apart from enjoying each others' company, we have the privilege of talking to people from all over the world and the pleasure of the interest of children. Every so often our consciences prompt us to clean all the engines in the propulsion room and to give Northwich a good turn out. Mildred has also worked on the steam crane, and it is an awesome spectacle to see her standing on a chair on the platform cleaning its upper reaches. We wonder what long term project Dave McDougall has for us this coming winter. Will we be incarcerated in the bowels of the dredger continuing the restoration work?

I THINK DORIS
IS SAYING
SHE REQUIRES
A NEW WIRE
BRUSH



Tramroad Plaque Unveiled

A plaque has been unveiled in the docks to commemorate the early nineteenth century horse-operated railway that carried coal and stone etc between Gloucester and Cheltenham. The plaque has been fixed to the pier of a bricked-up gateway, near the Southgate Street entrance to the docks, through which the tramroad used to pass.

What The Men Get Up To!

Alan Conder describes the wide range of ongoing restoration work.

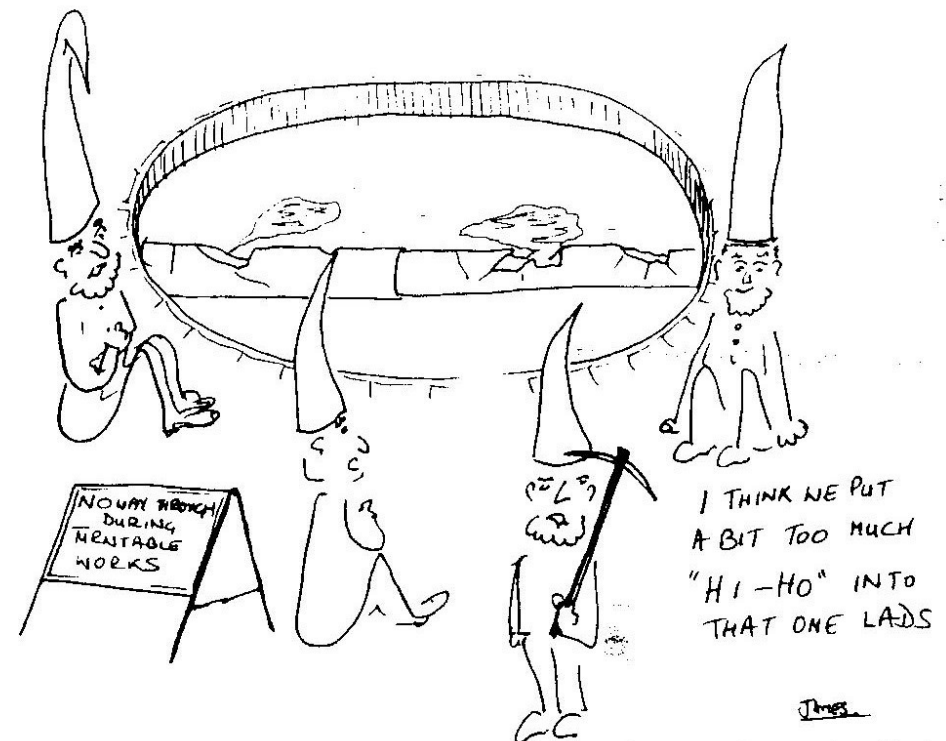
The Tuesday and Thursday gang are regulars, some more so than others, none in the first flush of youth, and all work under the direction of Dave McDougall assisted by Des Fforde. Betty Conder's account of the dredger restoration work by the ladies understates the part that they have played, and Friends are invited to visit the container on the quayside to see the extent of their achievements. The fellows, meanwhile, have been stripping valves down to their component parts, cleaning them internally (oh! that mud!) and then reassembling and repacking them ready for the Boiler Inspector. During August, the studs have been extracted from the valve seatings on the boiler, and re-studding has commenced.

The dredger aside, much, much more happens on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Firstly, there is the Anvil Chorus - Alan Russell, Keith Varney, Ian Parsons and John Clayton - hitting bits of the second turntable with chipping hammers before coating them (and themselves) with primer and paint or excavating the pit into which the turntable will go. They were discovered earlier this summer sitting dangling their feet into the pit contemplating a broken drain pipe (down which, from time to time, a little dirty water passed) like garden gnomes round a leaking and fast emptying paddling pool. They are also responsible for the repairs to the fruit van, a mobile pump and various other pieces of Museum property.

John White is to be found in the depths of the workshop repairing engines - usually peering at seized pistons, worn gears, stripped splines and immovable bolts. He has been heard to remark, in his inimitable way, that it was a pity the thing was built in the first place so that he wouldn't have to mend it.

Meanwhile, Noel Michelli has been working on the electrics on the dredger, the Rapier crane and a tractor that shares a stable with Peter the horse. Peter has been known to take an insistent interest in the wiring of the tractor, much to Noel's inconvenience.

Chris Perkins, who is restoring his own G.W.R. fruit van on the quay, is a fount of information on rolling stock and is a valued public relations man where visitors are concerned. When resplendent in his London Underground guard's outfit, complete with watch chain, whistle, flags and lamp, he is an inspiring sight.



Recently, Nuclear Electric, which is supporting the restoration of the fireless locomotive, sent a photographer to record progress. Dave McDougall, Alan Russell, Chris Perkins and Alan Conder proceeded to the sackworks, where, with the aid of a scaffold pole attached to a Stilson wrench (and with much puffing and grunting) studs were extracted from the pressure valve seating. A most appalling shade of pink undercoat was also applied to the buffer beam.

From time to time, in the best "Boyhood of Raleigh" manner, Alan Conder can be found sitting on the capstan on the quay splicing ropes. QBII has been supplied with new mooring ropes and, thanks to Les Drury who turned the wooden toggles on his lathe, with new spliced thongs for attaching the lifebelts.

The steam crane has been steamed several times and has proved a good crowd puller. Anglia TV included the crane in operation for their "Anything Goes" programme, screened on 8 August. The crane will also feature in one of the "Rosie and Jin" children's programmes on Channel 3 in September - for this we had to sign a statement to the effect that we didn't mind appearing with puppets. The operations were conducted by Alan Conder with Mike Pullon, Keith Varney and Alan Garnett. All this provides good publicity for the Museum.

Tugs and more Tugs!

By Philip Conway-Jones

June proved to be very busy for the Friends' tug crews who seemed to be on the water more often than off. At the beginning of the month, the vintage motor tug Kennet was 'chartered' to provide weekend trips for the Severnside Festival at Frampton-on-Severn. Terry Dellbridge and Alan Morgan took her down the canal on the first weekend and ran trips between two bridges near Frampton. They received a soaking in the process, and the prolonged heavy rain certainly had an impact on business as few people ventured down to the canal. On the second weekend Alan Barnett and myself took her along the same stretch and found the weather much improved, although due to a couple of mechanical problems we were unable to cope with the sudden deluge of passengers who arrived at 'going home' time. All proceeds from both weekends went to the dredger appeal.

The next day a handful of Friends joined by Tony Condar enjoyed a trip on the steam tug Mayflower down the Severn from Worcester to Gloucester - a fitting prelude to the forthcoming tugs weekend. We travelled up courtesy of British Rail and made our way to Diglis where a crowd of excited children watched us depart. It was the first time in forty years that Mayflower had ventured so far up river.

Setting off proved to be a problem as she was slightly aground at the stern, but a trip boat helped to pull us into the channel and then it was plain sailing. Mayflower made good progress, especially in the deep stretches where she was able to proceed at Full Ahead with her fine lines creating hardly a ripple in the water. There was much of interest to see along the river, including a former Severn and Canal motorboat, a couple of ex-'Caggy' Stevens day boats from Birmingham and several fine pre-war cabin cruisers.

Cameras clicked away both on board and on passing pleasure craft as keen photographers seized a chance to record the nostalgic occasion. Mayflower was quite a sight because the Coventry coal which was being used to fire the boiler produced very thick black smoke. Andy King of Bristol Industrial Museum explained that it was becoming increasingly difficult to get hold of good steam coal. Soon we were passing under the bridge at Upton-upon-Severn and approaching Tewkesbury. Upper Lode Lock was ready and waiting for us, and thanks to the smooth operation it was only a matter of minutes before we were off towards Gloucester.

The timing of the whole trip had been crucial because we had to be at the Parting at high tide in order to take advantage of an extra few inches of water under our keel. The navigable channel was shallow at the Parting, in spite of some scouring by Severn Active and Speedwell the previous week, and at times we bounced rather unnervingly along the bottom and heeled to one side. Watching British Waterways tug skipper Alan Garness at the wheel enabled us to appreciate the combined skills and knowledge required to handle a tug in these difficult circumstances. We were told that Mayflower had a knife-edged keel which made it much harder to manoeuvre her once she had cut into the mud. It was important to keep her moving, but not too fast or she would drop her keel even lower. Such problems only added to the excitement for the passengers!

A small crowd had gathered at Gloucester Lock to see us into the basin, and our day-long trip ended when we tied up at the East Quay, where Mayflower was replenished with coal.

A couple of days later, members of the public were able to board Mayflower which was moored in the company of five other tugs for the Museum's tugs weekend. Unfortunately due to heavy silting around the Museum quay, she could not operate trips because it was impossible to manoeuvre her in the shallow water.

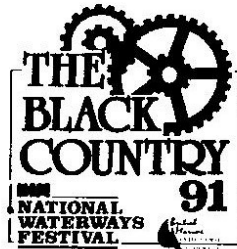
Other craft on display over the weekend included the narrow tug James Loader, British Waterways tug Speedwell, ex-Admiralty tug Influence, Kennet and Severn Progress, which had recently joined the Museum fleet. Progress was run occasionally around the basin and up to Monkmeadow Dock. The inclement conditions on Sunday were cheered up when David McDougall lit the stove on board - perhaps fooling the odd passer-by into thinking she was steam powered! Friends also operated the Kennet in aid of the dredger appeal, and she was called upon on Saturday to transport the City Mayor from Monkmeadow Dock to the Main Basin to open the IWA small boat gathering that was taking place the same weekend.

The highlight for a number of Friends came at the end of the weekend when it was time to move David Mitton's massive tug Influence back to her moorings at Monkmeadow. The job was carried out under the supervision of Des Fforde, with Influence being towed stern first by Kennet and manoeuvred by Progress, which also acted as the brakes. The rain-soaked operation was quite hair raising at times but ended successfully as Influence glided gracefully into the quay with hardly a bump. She has since been sold and taken away.

Friends Staff Museum Stand at Festival

A report by Hugh Conway-Jones

The Museum wanted to have a presence at the IWA National Waterways Festival near Dudley but couldn't spare the staff time to be there all weekend, so the Friends were asked to help. Dave and Kath Avery, who took their boat to the Festival, volunteered to provide continuity, and other Friends went up just for a day.



Clare Caldicott of the Museum staff set up a simple but effective display of photographs, canal-ware and items from the shop, and there was a range of leaflets for us to give out. The boatwoman's bonnet and the painted water cans were particularly admired, and we could have sold the dredger T-shirt and the teddy bear several times.

We had a corner site near the entrance to the marquee, so people could easily walk by, but a good proportion showed some interest and then we gave out a leaflet or two and sometimes started chatting. Some of those we talked to were canal enthusiasts who had already been to the Museum, and all spoke well of it. Others had visited the docks or seen them on television, but many had little knowledge of the Museum or the docks. When people expressed some interest, we explained what there was to see at Gloucester and hopefully stimulated them enough to make a visit. We only had one difficult customer who was intent on criticising everything to do with waterways, and eventually he had to be encouraged to move on.

The stand was visited by David Ingman, Chairman of British Waterways, on Sunday and by David Stevenson, Chairman of the IWA on Monday. We were also pleased to see many familiar faces from Gloucester and to meet a few new Friends.

Saturday afternoon was particularly busy as the nearby stand run by the Black Country Development Corporation was giving away paper hats and helium-filled balloons, and this brought many people into our marquee. Unfortunately, the supply of helium ran out by the end of the afternoon, and then we watched breathlessly as an intrepid youngster stood on her father's shoulders to recover a few stray balloons which had drifted up to the roof.

By working in shifts, there was time to look around the site as well as help on the stand. The marquees were arranged in three groups close to the junction of the Dudley No 2 Line and the later cut leading to the southern end of Netherton Tunnel. The whole area has been affected by mining subsidence and is very undulating, so it was an interesting site to walk around, with the added bonus that the trade show was in close proximity to the boats. However, some of the many paths and bridges were very crowded much of the time, and it was often difficult to make progress. It was also difficult for the trip boats to get around as the mooring of boats on both sides of the canal meant that there was not room to pass in places, and the arrival of the lavender boat brought everything to a standstill.

There was the usual varied programme of entertainments, including live theatre, bands, puppets, buskers and live broadcasts going out on BBC Radio 2. Also featured were vintage engines, steam organs and a dog show, while for the children there were donkey rides and performances by Rosie and Jim, the TV Rag Dolls.

At the end of each day, Dave and Kath Avery came along to the stand to pick up any messages that needed to be passed on to the next day's helpers. This involved them in no small effort as they had a good half hour's walk through the crowds from where their boat was moored. Then for the helpers from Gloucester, it was back to the car for the trip down the motorway.

Photo Competition Judges Announced

We're now pleased to announce the judges for the Friends' 1991 Photo Competition. As curator of the Museum, Tony Conder has agreed to judge again this year and to provide the venue for the actual judging. Both of the other judges are certainly well qualified for the task; they are the professional photographer Chris Wits of Gloucester and Cheltenham's Graham Ettles, chairman of the Gloucestershire Branch of the Inland Waterways Association and a keen amateur photographer.

Janet Illingworth-Cooper is pleased to report that entries for the competition have already started to come in - but there is still plenty of time to submit yours by the November 1st deadline. If you've mislaid the entry form which came with the June issue of Llanthony Log, contact Janet at 2a Oxford St, Gloucester or through the Museum and she will be happy to send you another copy.

Walks Raise Money for Dredger Restoration

The three walks led by Hugh Conway-Jones on Sunday afternoons during August were very well attended, including good support from Friends. The walks were part of a larger programme arranged by British Waterways to draw attention to the Gloucester and Sharpness Canal and the many interesting things to be seen along its banks.

Hugh's first walk was around Gloucester docks, where he talked about the interesting vessels to be seen and the new developments that are taking place as well as describing the history of the buildings and waterspace. Outside the North Warehouse, he arranged for members of the party to ring the Atlas Bell, which was once used to tell the dockers the starting and finishing times for work.

The next walk was to see the junction of the Sharpness and the Stroudwater Canals at Saul. Starting at Fretherne Bridge, Frampton-on-Severn, Hugh talked about the large Cadbury's factory there and the role that canal transport played in bringing in the raw materials and sending on the crude chocolate to Bournville for refining. At the junction, which should really be called the cross, the party heard about the construction of the new lock on the Stroudwater in 1826 to bring the level up to that of the Sharpness Canal. It was good to see the area is now being landscaped again after all the upheavals last year during repairs to the canal breach, but will it ever recapture the delightfully timeless atmosphere that used to exist there?

The large party just managed to squeeze across the footbridge to get a view of the dry dock in the boatyard at the junction. Here Hugh explained that the dock had been built across the corner with gates at each end so that the steam dredger normally used on the big canal could pass through the dock when necessary and so get round the corner into the smaller canal.

Then it was on up the towpath of the Stroudwater Canal and across a field to see the site of Whitminster Mill. Here a crane had been constructed in the middle of the eighteenth century to transfer cargoes between boats above and below the mill weir as part of an early but abortive attempt to make the River Frome navigable. A final stop was made to catch a glimpse of the present sluice at Whitminster which controls the amount of water from the Frome that passes along the Stroudwater to feed the Sharpness Canal.

The final walk was around the old and new docks at Sharpness. Learning from the success of the earlier walks, Hugh had arranged for Ray Wilson, Secretary of the Gloucestershire Society for Industrial Archaeology, to be on hand, and he acted as a second guide. The start of the walk had been timed to coincide with high tide, and early arrivals saw a number of pleasure craft locking up.

The parties approached the old dock through the former Sharpness Pleasure Grounds and had magnificent views of the Severn estuary and the old entrance and tidal basin. A stop was made at the entrance gates to hear of the difficulties of getting vessels in and out and to notice the deplorable condition of the Dock Masters house. Further along, there were views of the remains of the Severn Railway Bridge, and the guides pointed out the masonry of the coal tip where Forest of Dean coal brought over the bridge was tipped from railway wagons into ship's holds.

A climb over the hill provided a fine view of the new dock, opened in 1874 to accommodate the larger sailing ships and steamers then coming to Sharpness. Down on the quayside, the guides spoke about the warehouses that were constructed, the railways which served them and the current uses. Then a stop was made to note the housing provided by the Dock Company, and the walk finished beside the new lock and tidal basin.

Following each walk, donations were invited, and a total of £77 was collected for the Dredger Restoration Fund (plus a smaller sum passed on to Gloucester Civic Trust).

Sharpness Development - An Opportunity or a Threat?

British Waterways has applied for outline planning permission for a major redevelopment around Sharpness old and new docks. The plans now lodged with Stroud District Council show leisure developments near to the high and low level bridges, up-market housing overlooking the present marina and alongside the canal to the north-east and other areas reserved for industry and local affordable housing.

British Waterways point out that the land is currently under-used, and they argue that the redevelopment would create confidence in the future and help to improve the quality of life. Some local residents have welcomed the idea of new investment, but there is a general feeling that the up-market developments are not compatible with the continued operation of a commercial dock. Let the Council know what you think.

Lydney Wreck Solves Puzzle

Excavation of a wreck at Lydney has shed vital information on the way local vessels were constructed early last century. Written records indicate that vessels of this period were of clench or clinker construction with overlapping planks, but when Peter Wallace was trying to interpret an 1804 drawing to make a model, he began to question whether this was the whole story. He argued that a clinker bottom would soon be torn apart by the frequent grounding on the bed of the river, and he suggested that the bottom planks could have been of carvel construction giving a smooth surface.

Peter's attention was drawn to the wreck at Lydney by Alan Williams, the shipwright who is rebuilding the trow Spry at Ironbridge and who independently had had similar doubts on the durability of a clinker bottom on the earlier trows. The wreck was lying about 80 yards upriver from Lydney pier and was half buried in the mud of the river bank. The port side of the hull had collapsed in over the bottom, while the starboard side had fallen outwards towards the river. The stern was completely missing, having been sawn off by a yacht owner who wanted to get access to a mud berth.

In spite of the delapidated condition, it was possible to see that the original keel was an oak plank 12 inches wide and 2 inches thick and that 9 inch wide strakes of pine had been laid flush with it to give a perfectly smooth bottom. These were nailed up to oak frames 5 inches by 4 inches. Originally, there would have been a substantial internal keelson but this was missing. The side planking was of clinker construction, and the transition of carvel into clinker could clearly be seen with half-lap and angled joints near bow and stern.

Later in the vessel's life, an 8 inch square oak keel had been fitted under the original keel, and two layers of carvel planking had been added over the complete boat. The additional fillets added to make the original clinker form flush could clearly be seen. At the bow, there was a good side view of the original and added keel with the knees to support the stem. The original stem followed an upward curve, whereas the later stem was much more vertical.

During August, Alan Williams organised a dig to uncover as much as possible of the vessel and to record it properly. Publicity in the local press brought forward a fair number of volunteers to dig away the mud, and Alan arranged for archaeologists to come along and note the position

of all the timbers and iron fittings. The publicity also brought spectators, and many old folk remembered playing on the foreshore as children or walking down from Lydney with their parents on a Sunday evening. Unfortunately no-one could come up with a name for the vessel, but Alan has not given up hope of tracking this down eventually.

Alan Williams' current interpretation of the wreck is that the vessel was originally built early last century for use on the upper Severn where a light construction was quite adequate. The coming of the railways seriously reduced traffic on the upper river, and it is known that many vessels were sold on to traders working in the estuary. The light vessels really had to be strengthened to cope with the more open water conditions, and the Lydney wreck provides one example of how it was done.

Of course, this interpretation may change when Alan has had more time to study the measured drawings prepared by his team or if more historical information turns up, but the evidence so far clearly supports Peter Wallace's suggestion that clinker side planking could have been combined with a carvel bottom.

This article is based on notes made by Peter Wallace when he inspected the wreck.

Dream Becomes Reality

Jeremy Hope, founder of the Willow Trust, has written to the Friends again thanking us for helping him to turn his dream into a reality. From a £5 donation less than two years ago, the Trust ordered a boat, purpose-built for carrying disabled and terminally ill people on the Gloucester and Sharpness Canal.

The Spirit of Freedom started her first full season on 8 April 1991. Within six weeks, she was fully booked for the whole season and many requests are having to be turned away. With the help of about 40 volunteers, she is operating five days a week and has carried over 1500 passengers so far.

If you would like to experience something very special, Jeremy invites you to join the boat for a day and perhaps help make cups of tea etc. He can be contacted on 0531 822482.