

The other 2 however, sport wooden underframes pierced with iron components and strengthening plates. Wooden wagons are less robust than their metal counterparts, but were cheaper to

build and repair in an age when timber and carpenters' labour were both inexpensive and plentiful.

Sadly, though, this is no longer the case and the all-wooden Midland Railway pair will

need a great deal of work for full restoration. Even in their present state, however, they provoke thought and like all of the Museum's wagons, will repay closer examination.

DIARY

Apr 8 - Boat and Watersports Jumble in the Museum car park between 10am and 5pm.

Apr 9 - The Anderton Lift. An illustrated talk by William Rowley in the Museum Schools Room starting at 7.30.

Apr 28 - Friends Open Evening. A chance to hear about Friends activities and meet the organisers. Gather in the Museum car park at 7pm for a pre-meeting trip down the canal on Queen Boadicea II. For further details, see page 12.

May 3-4 - Friends demonstrating at the Museum Crafts Weekend. For further details, contact Peter Wallace on Gloucester 24686.

May 2-4 - Ship Shape and Gloucester Fashion. A British Waterways open weekend at Gloucester's dry docks, with displays.

May 5 - The Chief Executioner Speaks! (or I've got a little list to starboard) by Frances Hart, IWA Chief Executive. An IWA meeting in the Museum Schools Room starting at 7.30.

May 10 - Small Engine Rally. Sponsored by Poeton Ltd.

May 16-17 - Friends helping at the Museum Horses Weekend. For further details, contact Pauline Hill on Glo.25578.

May 19 - Friends AGM in the Museum Schools Room at 7.30 followed by a challenge to identify unusual objects from the Museum's collection.

May 23-5 - Friends staffing Museum stand at the National Trailboat Rally at Taunton. For help required, see page 9.

May 24-5 - Herefordshire and Gloucestershire Canal Society's open weekend at Monkhide.

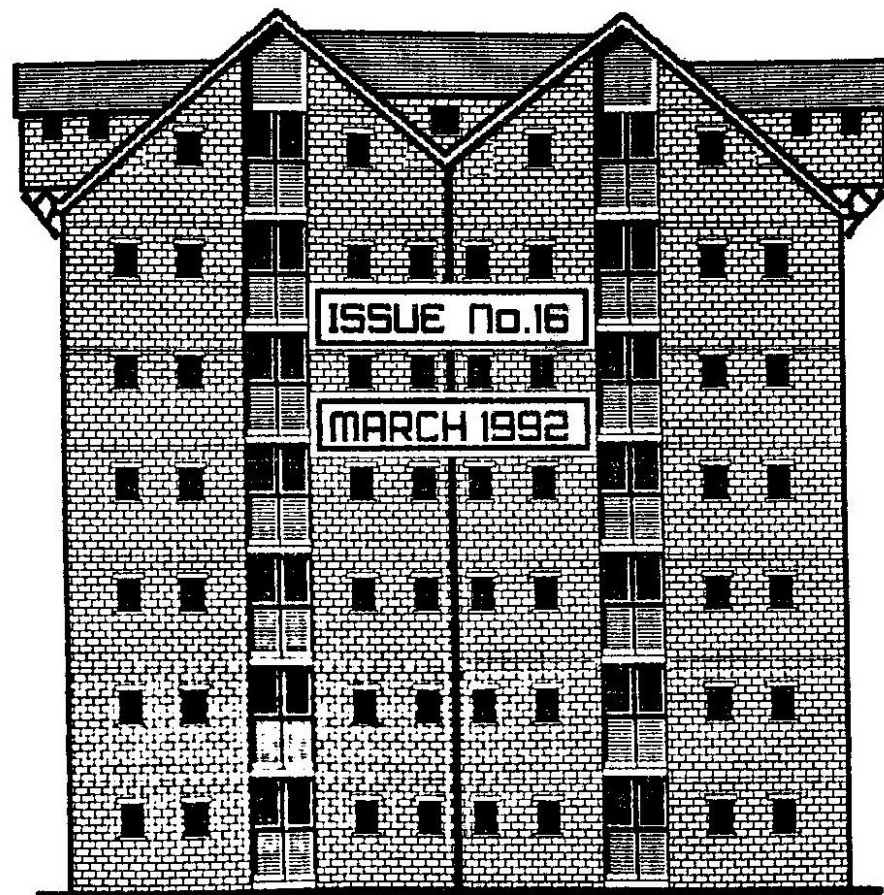
Jun 20-1 - Friends helping at the Museum's Tugs Weekend. For further details, contact Alan Morgan on Glo.307699.

Jul 4-5 - Gloucester Gathering - boats, crafts, trade stands and activities at the Docks, organised by IWA and BW.

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 Inland Waterways Association meetings. Tewkesbury Marina Yacht Club is off the Bredon Road B4080, on the left, 250 yards north of the junction with the A38.

LLANTHONY LOG



Newsletter of the Friends of the National Waterways Museum

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NEW EDITOR

FOR LOG

As some readers may know, Philip Conway-Jones, who has been Editor of our quarterly Newsletter since its first issue in June 1988, has now relinquished this job due to other full-time commitments. Although Philip's Editorship is not going to be an easy one to follow, Alan Garnett has agreed to take over as from this issue, with assistance from Richard Trelfa. The new Editor wishes therefore, to express on behalf of all the Friends his grateful thanks to Philip for his excellent work since that first issue together with best wishes to him in his future activities.

This issue also sees changes in the cover and layout of Llanthony Log which it is hoped will meet with your approval. My thanks go to Richard Trelfa for his advice and practical help in this respect.

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.

DREDGER RESTORATION PROGRESS REPORT

Alan Garnett reports on the continuing work of Volunteers supervised by Dave McDougall & Des Fforde.

The new Diesel engine, kindly donated by Lister-Petter, for the boiler forced draught fan drive has been successfully commissioned, and the controlled start pulley on the fan electric drive is also back in service after some further problems were encountered.

As far as the main engine is concerned, the condenser and air pump components have been thoroughly cleaned, as have the steam pistons. The flat steel securing strips for the blued steel cladding around the exterior of both cylinders have been removed where possible, burnished to a bright finish and replaced in position using new securing screws as necessary. Those which resisted removal were carefully cleaned in situ. The engine bedplate and frames have been chipped and repainted with primer.

With the help of a British Waterways mobile crane, the top section of each belt drive protective guard was lifted off and the belts manually pulled round to give access to the fasteners which were then parted. This allowed the belts to be lowered into the engine room, coiled up and lifted out by crane through the large

hatch over the front of the boiler, as also were the belt drive pulleys which had previously been removed from the engine. The top guards were washed free of mud, and as much of the remaining mud as possible was cleared from the belt trunking. The top guards were then replaced in position for weather protection.

After a successful check for rotational freedom of several of the accessible bucket chain link guide rollers, it was assumed that all the rollers were likely to be free. It was therefore attempted to check the freedom of movement of the whole bucket chain by pulling it with a (hired-in) 5 ton Tirfor hand winch. This unfortunately proved unsuccessful, possibly due to caked mud in the casing surrounding the lower part of the large gearwheel of the bucket drive train. The bucket ladder has subsequently been lowered by use of its steam winch, to maintain stability of the dredger, as many fairly heavy components have now been temporarily removed from the engine room, i.e. below the water line. Cleaning of as much of the accessible parts as possible of the bucket ladder proceeds.

A start has been made in recording the dimensions of the rather excessive number of shims, particularly thin ones, found during dismantling the various bearings of the engine. It is Dave McDougall's intention to reinstate the bearings with a reduced number of thicker shims where possible.

PETER THE HORSE and P.C. PLOD

Jane Savery relates their Adventure with perhaps some help from Peter! (Kindly typed out for them by Pauline Hill).

The telephone rang at 1 am. "Hello, this is Gloucester Police. We have rung the Museum Keyholder,

I soon realised that Peter had absconded from his field and was apparently now at the back of Bearlands Police Station surrounded by the contents of what looked like 100 black rubbish bags. He had amused himself by turning



Dave McDougall, but as the problem involves Peter the Horse, he advised contacting you as he says that no one other than Jane can handle him."

over every bag and dustbin he could find and picking through the contents. The Duty Officer was concerned that he might get bored with the bins and move on to the nearby parked cars.

Peter the Horse continued -

They needed the horse moved NOW! My reply was "I am not driving out on my own in thick fog at 1.30 am. Can't it wait until 6 o'clock?" The Police decided that this was not on (no doubt thinking of the damage that Peter could cause in that time), so they would send out a squad car. My Mum panicked and said "Don't get into the car unless you are sure it is a Police car".

After two more phone calls to tell us that P.C.Plod had got lost somewhere down the lane. (these town Bobbies are only used to proper roads and streetlights), a blue light eventually loomed out of the fog, and well wrapped up against the icy cold I climbed into the car and we sped off to Bearlands. Just as we arrived, a radio message (only half comprehensible to a mere horsewoman) sent us spinning off in the opposite direction. "Are you a nervous passenger?" P.C.Plod asks me. "That depends on the driver" I replied, as we chased an unseen car up Commercial Rd. into Southgate St. at what seemed like 120 mph. and turning right at St.Michael's Tower, around, over or through the bollards, benches and phone boxes in pedestrianised Eastgate St. By now I had my eyes tightly shut and was gripping the seat as we sped into Barton St. praying that nothing would pull out on the left. Red lights and speed limits mean nothing when a Sierra Cosworth is in pursuit of

someone who may have committed a crime. We finally screeched to a halt at the Finlay Rd. Garage along with two more Police cars. The car we had chased was searched but no 'loot' discovered so the suspect driver had obviously not done a 'job' that night. He then flicked his fingers in the old defiant Harvey Smith sign and sped off.

We returned to Bearlands much more sedately, my legs like quivering jelly, to find my dear little horse, hocks deep in black bags, left-over takeaways, fag packets and chicken carcasses, whinneying his greeting as if it was 8.15 am. instead of 2.15 am. I could not be cross with him when he was so pleased to see me.

With no head collar, I had to utilise whatever I could find. With a piece of baler twine, (wonderfully useful stuff) around his neck, he calmly follows me back to his field, sweet as a nut. Who said he is difficult to handle? Another Policeman escorts us on this journey and drives me home. I was thankful that he was not a Traffic Cop and returned at a sensible speed.

I eventually fell into bed at 3.15 am. shaken more by the car chase than sorting out Peter Horse. Perhaps he thought that I needed some excitement, I wonder what the fellow who had the job of cleaning up the Police Station yard next morning had to say!

MAINTENANCE VESSELS ON THE SEVERN

Reminiscences of F.W. Rowbotham

Former Engineer of the Severn River Authority

The Severn Catchment Board was formed under the 1930 Land Drainage Act to deal with land drainage and flood prevention. Later it became the Severn River Board when we were given the added duty of pollution prevention, and then it became the Severn River Authority when it became our job to make sure the waterworks had supplies of reasonably pure water.

For seawall, flood bank and outfall maintenance work, we often had to use boats to gain access or to bring in materials. Some time contractors used their own vessels, particularly to bring stone round from the Wye, but we also had several of our own longboats. Most of them were towed by a launch, but the Venus had its own motor. At Minsterworth, I built a tip for loading stone into a longboat. The stone

came from various quarries in the Forest, and the Venus took it to wherever it was needed.

One day in 1948, the crankshaft of the Venus broke while she was carrying stone to reinforce the banks of the Severn at Minsterworth. She had to be got back to the docks for repair, but there was no possible means of getting a boat down there capable of towing her up. Then I remembered in the old days being fascinated by the firefloat Salamander, which had water jets pointing slightly outwards on each of her four quarters just above the water line. The supply to the jets could be so controlled that by bringing different ones into use, either together or singly, she could move forwards, backwards, sideways or even turn in her own

length.

In our workshop in the docks, we had a war-surplus fire pump, and I took it to Minsterworth and lashed it on to an improvised deck on the Venus. The suction hose was dropped over the side, and two delivery hoses were taken to the stern and lashed one on each side pointing aft. The engine was started and the jets turned on, and after a successful trial run, I brought her up to Gloucester on the next suitable tide, coming over Llanthony Wier and into the docks. She aroused quite a lot of curiosity and amusement as she cruised from the lock over to our workshop under jet propulsion!

In 1963, we had the motor vessel Riparian specially built, and then we no longer used the longboats. The Riparian was much larger than a longboat,

Cont -

Reminiscences continued -

and the river level had to be just right to come over Llanthony Wier and still get under the bridge just upstream. I had to lower the mast and have the wheelhouse stripped down, and on a rising tide, I waited until the water was level with a white mark I had painted on a nearby landing stage. Then I could go forward knowing that I six inches under my keel and six inches headroom under the bridge.

The Severn Commission was the navigation authority, and they had two general purpose work boats used for towing their dredger, working on locks, carrying supplies and transporting men to jobs at isolated parts of the river. The Jubilee was their main boat, and they also had the Bee which was smaller and older.

SECOND TURNTABLE PROGRESS

The installation of the second railway turntable on the quay at the corner of the Main Dock and the Barge Arm was of course, delayed when the excavation of its accommodation pit exposed a drain pipe nearer the surface than was acceptable. This has now been rectified and the concrete base constructed. The cast iron side plates and turntable support rails, including the central pivot, are in position and 'Metalock' stitching repairs to a cracked plate have been completed. The remaining work mainly comprises lifting in the rotating 'spider', positioning

the table with its railway track rails and wheel stops, fitting timber decking and all necessary painting at each stage. Dave McDougall is aiming for completion of the restoration by Easter, after which the normal outside access to the Museum's floating exhibits in the Barge Arm can be reinstated.

DOCKS REDEVELOPMENT PLAN

the Civic Trust's view.

The proposals which were submitted to the City Council for Outline Planning Consent in December 1991, were discussed recently by the Trust's Civic Design Group. This followed an earlier meeting at which the proposals were tabled and explained by Mr. David Scott, the City Planning and Technical Services Officer. The Trust's observations can be conveniently divided into three sections, dealing with aspects of the proposals which are considered acceptable, those which are considered unacceptable and matters which require further consideration.

As the full report is rather too extensive for the Newsletter, the following is a

Docks Redevelopment continued-
summary of the salient points of the above three aspects, which it is hoped will be of interest.

1. ACCEPTABLE FEATURES.

These are:-

1.1. The development of the site between Southgate St. and Victoria Dock with several buildings rather than the single building indicated earlier, thus allowing for varied architectural treatment, including differing sizes with pitched roofs. It will also give provision for a greater number of pedestrian access routes into the Docks.

1.2. Main parking areas for Southgate St. development to be at basement levels, not roof levels, but means of access needs to be fully worked out.

1.3. Kimbrose Way corner part of Southgate St. development to follow curve of historic street line.

1.4. The intention to include residential development.

2. UNACCEPTABLE FEATURES.

Those not considered acceptable are:-

2.1. In the Southgate St. Docks Entrance Area. Loss of Weighbridge House, loss of cottages and the recently restored wall and tramway plaque which would also affect the proposals for a permanent tramway wagon display. The

proposed store and adjacent service yard would obscure the 19th. century dock buildings and the feeling of entering a historic dockyard totally lost.

2.2. Car Park. Effect of proposals on access to Museum complex from the east. As the Llanthony Rd. entrance does not appear on the plans, the Trust would expect the existing gates and re-used Georgian railings to be retained. The proposed vehicular access from Llanthony Rd. apparently omits provision for coaches and suggestions for the permanent car park could cause increased congestion due to proximity of Spa Rd. traffic lights.

2.3. Bridge across Barge Arm. This would be objectionable if it prevents vessel access to the end of the Arm as at present, and the existing walkway around the three sides should be retained.

2.4. The proposals for the Victoria Dock pontoon bridge are considered to be totally inappropriate, and the housing at the side of the this dock requires further thought. The need for trees on the north end of Victoria Dock is questionable, as they would obscure the views from the Regimental Museum area and the Waterways Museum side.

Docks Redevelopment Plans cont-

3. Other Matters of Concern.

3.1. Office buildings in Southgate St. should have different eaves levels to match the rise in street level.

3.2. More housing is preferred.

3.3. Surroundings of Biddle and Shipton warehouses should be simple, not 'tarted up.'

3.4. Consideration might be given to employing several smaller developers, within an overall comprehensive scheme, to achieve more architectural interest.

Since producing the foregoing report, it is understood that the City Council has now given outline approval to the plans. According to the newspaper report, this takes into account at least some of the objections noted above, but detailed proposals have yet to be agreed.



Volunteers are need to staff the Museum stand at the IMA National Trailboat Rally at Taunton over the Spring Bank

Holiday Weekend 23-25 May. The rally is part of the West Country Waterways Festival, and the site will be in French Weir Gardens alongside the River Tone. Travel will be arranged or reasonable expenses paid. The aim is to have three or four people in attendance between 10am and 5pm each day, with a minimum of two on duty, allowing a reasonable amount of time off to look around. David and Kath Avery will open up each morning and brief helpers when they arrive. If there is a chance you can help, please contact Hugh Conway-Jones on 0169679 as soon as possible.

Doug Griffey

d. 23/3/92

after a short illness.

Retired tanker captain and Severn Pilot, he was a staunch supporter of the R.L.N.I. and owner of the converted lifeboat Alaska, often seen in the Docks. He was a Friend of the Museum from the beginning and in all sorts of ways; he was the Museum's first Father Christmas. When the Museum bought QB II he joined the staff to become her first skipper. Friends don't come any bigger.

R.J.T.



SEVERN TROWS

by Tony Haynes

I have read with interest recently about the restoration of the Severn Trow 'Spry'. This work, now nearing completion, has been carried out under the guidance of Alan Williams, Master Shipwright at the Ironbridge Gorge Museum. Built by W.Hurd in Chepstow in 1894, Spry had a long life, ending her days as a floating workshop. Eventually she sunk at her moorings in Worcester's Diglis Basin. She was later raised and in 1983 was taken by road to Ironbridge. Hopefully, one day she will be transported to Worcester to make a river trip down to Gloucester, once more to grace the Docks that have been home port to many of her type.

The Severn Trow has a long history, some say dating back to the days when the Vikings first sailed up the river in the 9th. century. Various alterations of rig and design were to take place over the

centuries. The small up-river Trows, known locally as Barges or Frigates, carried all manner of cargoes to and from the towns, villages and hamlets along the length of the river from Pool Quay to Gloucester and beyond. Many of these little vessels were owned by their masters, others by syndicates of barge builders, inn and shopkeepers, farmers and local merchants, all of whom had an interest in so doing, thereby creating a very important part of this country's industrial and maritime heritage. It was a sad day for the river when the Severn Valley Railway became established in the 1860's, taking away much of the trade created by these craft, so that they had to seek further afield for new trades. Although this led to the evolution of a more seaworthy form of Trow, this is not to say that the river Trows with their open holds, protected by canvas side cloths, did not venture to sea on occasions, but generally they kept within the limits of Cardiff and Barry on the Welsh coast and Bridgwater or Watchet on the English side.

The height of Trow evolution was the larger

Severn Trows continued -
decked Trow, built of staunch timber, such as Oak or Pitch Pine, but still retaining the flat 'D' shaped transom stern that is the most discernible feature of the Trow. Many were converted or 'Boxed' as it was known, that is, decked over, with their bulwarks and hatch coamings built up. As they were flat-bottomed, some carried moveable keels that could be fitted in position under the vessel with chains when required. At the same time, it was usual to change the rig from the single mast with sloop or smack rig to the more favourable ketch rig. This, together with their long bowsprits and massive rudders, became recognised as the seaworthy form of Severn Trow, and as such they made frequent coastal voyages. Carrying salt to the Irish ports was a very busy trade for these decked vessels, whilst trips around Lands End to the English Channel ports and the continent have been recorded, as have passages to Scottish ports with bricks from Bridgwater. Another regular trade was the export of thousands of tons of coal from Lydney and Bullo Pill.

In their heyday, they

were built in their hundreds at many places. The upper Severn building yards were at Bridgnorth, Coalbrookdale, The Bower Yard, Broseley, Benthall, Stourport and Worcester. A few were built at Tewkesbury, many at Gloucester and various places on the Berkeley Canal, and at Chepstow, Bristol, Cardiff and Newport. Bridgwater, on the Somerset coast turned out their own particular type of Trow, a little different from the Severn Trow, having a more modern rig with fixed masts and slightly more raking bows. Many were constructed with fixed keels. They were built with better seagoing qualities in mind to cope with the dreadful conditions that could be met outside the River Parrett. A number of these vessels were wrecked in Bridgwater Bay over, some with the loss of their crews.

Brimscombe and Bourne on the Stroudwater Canal had Trow and Barge building yards, the Trow 'Palace' being built at Brimscombe by William Close in 1827, and was one of the last Trows to carry cargo under sail. She was still trading in the 1940's. She, like many others, had long lives, 100 years or more being not

Severn Trows continued - uncommon. Some people attribute this to the many thousands of tons of salt carried by these rugged old craft, thereby preserving the timbers. I would like to think that the skill of the buiders and the care given to these vessels by their Masters and crews also played a part in their longevity.

After the war, the surviving Trows were earning a living as motor barges or lighters. Many people will remember vessels like 'Water Witch' & 'Wasp', 'Willie' & 'George', 'Yarra' & 'Safety', 'Ripple' & 'Effort', 'Jonadab' & 'Hannah'. I was fortunate enough to hitch a lift on 'Hannah' in 1958 from Avonmouth to Sharpness under tow from the tug 'Addie'. The 'Fanny Jane', built in Bridgwater in 1858 and the 'Emperor' built at Chepstow in 1906 were also used as Motor Barges at this time, although these two ships were not true Trows, as they had counter sterns.

Alas there came a time when these veterans were no longer of any use, and some were broken up. Others were towed to Purton and Lydney on the bank of the river, to act as

breakwaters against the Severn's relentless tides. All that now remains, apart from 'Spry' are a few rotting hulks to remind us of the Severn's contribution to our maritime past.

FRIENDS' OPEN EVENING

If you would like to learn more about the voluntary activities undertaken by the Friends or if you would just like a friendly evening out, do come along to the Open Evening on 28 April. Gather in the Museum car park by 7.00pm. for a short trip down the canal on Queen Boadicea II, or meet in the Museum Schools Room at 7.30pm. Topics to be covered will include acting as a host to visiting parties, restoring and operating exhibits, research, crafts, helping with special events and publicising the Museum at shows. This will be an opportunity for new and established Friends to learn about helping the Museum and to meet the organisers and Museum staff. Whether you are willing to join in or prefer watching, you will be welcome.

THE FRIENDS A.G.M. 19th May

7.30pm in the Museum
Schools Room

AGENDA

1. Minutes of the last AGM.
2. Report from the Committee (see opposite).
3. Annual accounts.
4. Election of Officers and Members of the Committee.
5. Appointment of Auditor.
6. Annual subscription rates.

After the formal business, which should be very brief, there will be an opportunity to raise comments on how things have gone over the past year and to put forward ideas for the future. Particularly welcome will be any suggestions for speakers or visits and any offers to organise new activities.

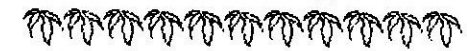
AND AFTER THE A.G.M.

A DAVE McDOUGALL

CHALLENGE!

GUESS THE OBJECT

After the AGM, David McDougall will challenge us all to identify some of the more unusual objects from the Museum's collection. If you have any waterways-related objects that could be included, please contact David at the Museum at least a week before the meeting.



Report of the Committee for 1992

During the year, membership fell slightly to 290, of which about three-quarters were family members. Publicity to attract new members is being organised.

Restoration of the dredger and associated fund-raising have been major activities during the year. Groups of volunteers have worked

Committee 1992 Report cont.

in all weathers to dismantle, clean and protect the working parts and to clean and repaint the structure. The boiler was brought back into steam in October. A very successful boat and watersports jumble in April raised over £5000 towards the dredger fund and drew appreciative comments both from the public and the traders. A similar sum has come from a wide range of other fund-raising events and from direct donations.

The restoration volunteers have also completed the refurbishment of a railway fruit van and made good progress with the installation of a second turntable.

Volunteers have regularly operated the vintage tug Kennet, taking passengers around the docks and raising money for the dredger fund. Others have worked the Museum's steam crane on special occasions, and members of the Engine Preservation Society continue to operate the

Fielding Engine.

Friends joined in the Museum's crafts weekend at Easter, acted as hosts for visiting parties on the action evenings and provided assistance during special weekend events at the Museum. Guided tours of the docks were arranged in conjunction with Gloucester Civic Trust.

Friends helped to publicise the Museum by providing staff for stands at the London and Birmingham Boat Shows and at the IWA National Waterways Festival at Windmill End.

A varied programme of winter evening meetings was very well supported. A large amount of information on vessels registered at Gloucester has been entered on a database on the Museum's computer. The quarterly newsletter has included a mixture of news, notices of future events and interesting articles written by Friends.



Paddle Steamer's Annual call at Sharpness 17th May

Although of course P.S. Waverley is too large to visit Gloucester, and during her working life was operated by the London & North Eastern Railway Co. on the Clyde, for Summer cruises and Winter ferry duties, she has now become a regular visitor to the Severn Estuary during her Summer cruise programme around the coasts of Britain under the auspices of the Paddle Steamer Preservation Society.

WAVERLEY, the oldest operational sea-going paddle steamer in the world, will make her annual call at Sharpness on Sunday 17th. May 1992. She will sail for Clevedon and Ilfracombe at 9.00am. staying at Ilfracombe long enough to give a couple of hours there. The return journey will be to Clevedon arriving at 8.30pm. A coach will then transport passengers to Sharpness to arrive at about 10.00pm.

She was built by A.& J. Inglis of Pointhouse, Glasgow

for the LNER., launched on 2nd. October 1946 and completed in 1947, to replace the paddle steamer of the same name which was sunk at Dunkirk in 1940. With a gross tonnage of 693, she is 235'-5" long, 30'-2" beam (57'-3" over the paddles) and has a draught of 6'-3". Originally coal-fired due to post-war shortage of equipment, she was converted to oil-firing in 1957, and her 2100 IHP. triple expansion diagonal engine gives a service speed of 14 knots.

WAVERLEY is of striking appearance with 2 funnels (new in 1961 and 1962, and a little out of alignment with each other), and 2 masts, she has changed very little externally since she was built.

For anyone interested in the aforementioned trip, the price of tickets is not yet known, but as on previous occasions, will be obtainable from Les Dalton (Gloucester 617236) or Les Tibbetts (Cheltenham 672415), both of the Gloucester Branch of the World Ship Society.

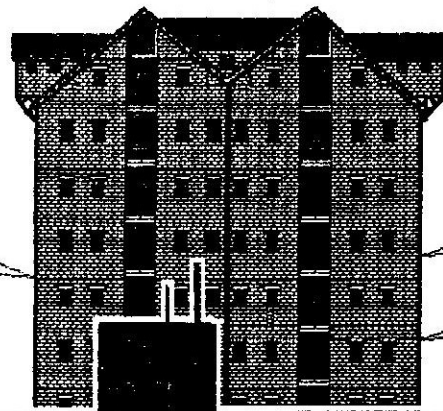
The Diary is on the
Back page

SHIPS IN THE DOCKS

There have been comments in the local press recently concerning the lack of interesting ships, particularly tall ships, in the Docks. One suggestion made is that some, at least, of the Exeter Maritime Museum

from the Museum's standpoint under review. He suggests that the return of historic ships to the City docks is dependent upon the ability of British Waterways, Pearce Construction and the City Council to work together on such a project.

Mike Coates, Development Surveyor at Llanthony Warehouse has recently said that British Waterways have made a firm



What the
!*£!
is that?

Well it's
not made of
wood..

..and it's
only slightly
radioactive!

U.S.S.R.S. LENIN

by "Mud" from "James"

collection should be relocated here when that Museum closes. However, it is important that any such vessels should be relevant to the character and former commercial use of the inland Port of Gloucester and its connecting waterways, but the Exeter ships are unlikely to meet this requirement. The National Waterways Museum Curator, Tony Conder agrees that the press comments are not necessarily unhelpful, and has the situation,

commitment that the dry docks should remain as working facilities, and that there will be tall-masted vessels there this Summer, as a number of exciting craft are due in for survey, repair and refitting.

The authorities are known to be looking for suitable vessels all around the coasts of Britain. Nevertheless, finding and funding suitable vessels with a viable future could still be some time ahead.

DONATIONS

The Treasurer is pleased to acknowledge the following donations received between September 1991 and March 1992:

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POWER TO QB II

Peter Evans has managed to obtain from British Waterways, as now surplus to their requirements, an unused 3½ kW. 230 volt Lister air cooled diesel-alternator, complete with starting and control switchboard. for use on QB II. Two active members of The Friends, Ray Swan and Noel Michelli, have recently been much involved with the installation of the set in the engine room, and the wiring up of the equipment, which includes its

own starter battery, chargeable from the alternator via a rectifier. This now enables the use of such items as a fan heater, microwave oven and soup heater in the Saloon of the trip boat. The control equipment includes an automatic change-over contactor, so the Museum intend fitting a connection on the boat to allow the use of a 230 volt shore supply when at the quayside.

The first use in service of this installation together with the

Saloon equipment mentioned above, occurred on 'The Icicle Cruise' of QB II to Sharpness and back on Saturday 22 February. The trip was well named as there was a very cold wind blowing, but the 20 or so passengers and crew who joined the cruise thoroughly enjoyed it. The excellent hot snacks which were made available by the use of the new electrical supply were very welcome.

The Museum propose operating one such day trip a month during the Summer, alternating either to Sharpness or Tewkesbury. 17

Although the phrase "Railway Preservation" conjures up images of the glistening giants of steam, the two basic components of a railway—the track and the wagon—both originated from canals. Long before locomotives were invented, horse powered railways 'fed' the waiting narrowboats with the products of mines and quarries that were inaccessible to waterways themselves. As such, it is only right that the National Waterways Museum should include railway wagons among its exhibits, and the current fleet of seven have a fascinating story of their own to tell.

They initially look very similar, each one being an open type with a body built up from five longitudinal wooden planks. Together though, they represent a century of service and reflect the changing demands of Britain's railways. Descended from the crude "Chauldron"

wagons of the 18th Century, the role of the "Five Plank Open" was originally to carry manufactured goods such as sawn timber, barrels and machinery. This basic design was produced by all the major railway

THE WAGONS

ROLE

by

Alan Drewett

companies and became a common sight in freight trains from the 1880's onward.

In Victorian times, grease was used to lubricate the axle bearings, although by the 20th Century, it was found that oil axleboxes reduced the rolling resistance of wagons and made trains easier to

pull. This was especially true in cold weather, but easier starting also made it harder to stop. The newer wagons could not be parked with just wooden scotches to secure them either and this hastened the development of efficient brakes.

At first these were hand operated devices, although by 1900 the technology existed to brake an entire train from the engine driver's cab, using systems based on pneumatic pressure. Both air and vacuum brakes had been developed for passenger coaches, but these were operated by railway companies themselves. Most open wagons were owned by private companies who were loath to spend money on cams and pressure cylinders for their rolling stock.

Due to this, the classic British "unfitted" goods train remained the mainstay of railway freight movement well into the 1950's, but limited to a maximum speed of

Role on -

45 mph. and reliant on the engine and guard's van for braking power. It is only in the last 30 years or so that signs have disappeared from the tops of gradients advising crews to "pin down the brakes" before proceeding.

Indeed the last wooden-bodied short wheelbase open wagons with vacuum brakes only yielded to more modern air braked vehicles in February 1988. Two of these now stand as "gate guardians" in the Museum car park, having been rescued from a scrap merchant at Sharpness. Although built in the late 1950's, they conform to a much older Great Western design which contrasts sharply with the computer coded letters still stencilled on their sides. As might be deduced from their dusty condition, these "OOV's" were used to transport dried Cornish china clay. To keep the cargo dry, each wagon was equipped with a rail over which a tarpaulin

could be slung, and small hooks were provided at the base of the body for tying down the tarpaulin. Such covering was once common on most open wagons to protect their contents from dirt and moisture, but like the practice of despatching each loaded truck to its destination through a maze of different marshalling yards, it was uneconomic and costly in manpower.

Nowadays, most of B.R.'s freight travels in single cargo "block" trains which shuttle constantly between supplier and consignee. These are composed of wagons designed for and dedicated to one particular product. China clay, for example, now arrives at ports, potteries and paperworks in covered coil-suspended hopper wagons which discharge from the bottom. The wooden leaf-sprung "clayhods" in contrast, had to be physically tipped up on end to be emptied.

More enigmatic are the two wagons currently parked alongside the Barge Arm. Despite being of Great Western origin, little is known about their activities beyond the last 20 years which were spent storing lengths of timber at Sharpness Docks. During this time, their central falling doors were removed to make loading and unloading easier. Although they now boast a smart grey livery with the initials of the Docks applied to them, the exact nature of their original markings is unknown. Any pictures of them in action at Sharpness would be welcome at the Museum!

Further memories of Victorian railway practice are evoked by the 3 unrestored wagons at present stored in the Severn Road compound. These are also without doors and the one nearest the Antiques Centre has a steel chassis like the Llanthony Yard examples.

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