

## *Diary*

**Starting Jan 1 - 100 Years** of the Manchester Ship Canal - a small display at the Museum

**Jan 18 - The North Oxford Canal.** An illustrated talk by Rex Gibson. An IWA meeting at the Tewkesbury Marina Yacht Club at 7.30.

**Jan 21 to Feb 11 - The River Exhibition** - a special exhibition at the Museum of life on the River Severn.

**Feb 15 - Cider Technology** Past and Present. An illustrated talk by Geoff Warren and an opportunity for tasting. An IWA meeting at the Tewkesbury Marina Yacht Club at 7.30.

**Feb 22 - The New Canal Age.** An illustrated talk by Roger Butler, British Waterways Strategic Planning Manager, showing how old buildings and structures are being put to new uses. In the Museum Schools Room at 7.30.

**Mar 8 - Steam Boats.** An illustrated talk by Graham Powell. An IWA meeting at the Tewkesbury Marina Yacht Club at 7.30.

**Apr 2 to 4 - Easter Craft Show** at the Museum - demonstrations, items for sale and a chance to talk to experts in various crafts.


**Apr 17 - Boat and Watersports Jumble** in the Museum car park. For further details, see inside page.

**Apr 26 - Friends AGM** followed by - **Legless in Gloucester**  
- Richard Trelfa talking about how Shopmobility enables disabled people to visit the docks. In the Museum Schools Room at 7.30.

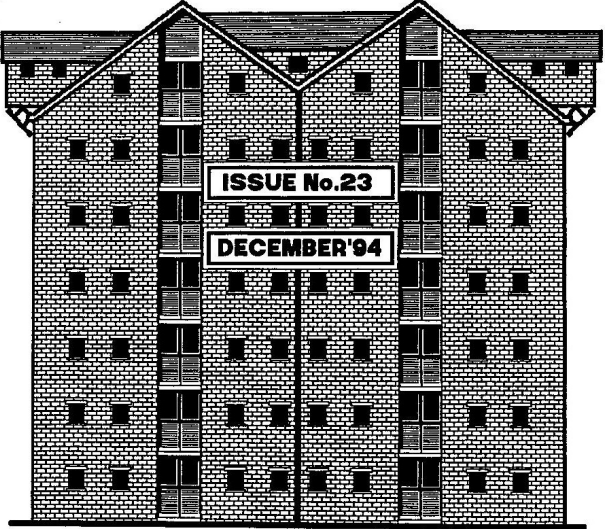
**May 8 - Spring Engine Rally** at the Museum - clear the carbon out of your pipes with a visit to this stationary engine day.

For evening meetings, car access to the Museum is from Southgate St. Non-members are welcome.

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



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Newsletter of the Friends of the  
National Waterways Museum

The "Friends" is Registered Charity No. 800282



## CONTACTS

**Chairman & Peter Wallace** Glo. 524686  
**Crafts** 16c Grosvenor Rd, Gloucester, GL2 0SA

**Secretary & Hugh Conway-Jones** Glo. 619679  
**Research** 1 Grovelands, Gloucester, GL4 7JF

**Treasurer** Charlie Wallace Glo. 304267  
7 Breinton Way, Longlevens, Gloucester  
GL2 0BB

**Membership Doris Toller** Glo. 424272  
**Secretary** 5 Hemmingsdale Rd, Gloucester, GL2 6HN

**Helpers** Les Dalton Glo 617236  
4 Conway Rd, Gloucester, GL3 3PL

**Meetings** William Rowley Glo. 415300  
4 Sandstar Close, Langlevens,  
Gloucester GL2 0NR

**Fielding** Trevor Hill Glo. 525578  
**Engine** 154 Cheltenham Rd, Gloucester, GL2 0JR

**Kennet** Alan Morgan Glo. 307699  
29 Bloomfield Rd, Gloucester, GL1 5BL

**Newsletter** Alan Garnett, Glo. 303489  
**Editor,** 16 Honeythorn Close, Hempsted,  
**Dredger** Gloucester, GL2 6LU  
**& Shirts**

**Restoration** David McDougall (work) Glo. 307009  
Nat.Wat.Mus., Docks, Gloucester, GL1 2EH

**Steam** Alan Conder Dean 844384  
**Crane** 12 Bathurst Park Rd, Lydney, GL15 5HG

**Talks** Peter Thompson Glo. 520442  
**Service** 43 Forest View Rd, Gloucester, GL4 0BY

**Newsletter** Richard Trelfa Glo. 304116  
**Production** 23 Honeythorn Close, Hempsted, Gloucester, GL2 6LU

## EDITORIAL

Time passes all too quickly. Here we are at the end of another year, but one which has been quite satisfactory both for the Museum and the Friends. The Museum attendances, though a little down on 1992 have nevertheless been better than for many museums in the current economic climate. The Friends' membership also remains reasonably constant, with new recruits helping to replace those who leave for one reason or another.

Restoration work on such items as the fireless loco and the dredger have continued satisfactorily with the assistance of those Friends who form the regular 'gangs' on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays, and useful help from the Friends has also been forthcoming at 'Event' weekends. Two excellent new handles for the semi-rotary fuel pumps, one on the dredger and one on Kennet, have been made by Les Drewery. I know that all this voluntary work is much appreciated by the Museum. There is real hope that the dredger's main engine will be ready for steaming, (but not driving the bucket chain) by Spring 1994, following which attention can be turned to the remaining outstanding work.

William Rowley has asked me to mention that when talking to Vanessa Wiggins at BW Customer Services, she asked if any Friends would be interested in going on the mailing list to have 'Canals 200 Update' sent to them direct, free of charge. Anyone who has 'Newways' will have the update as it is included in the mailing. The Canals 200 Campaign will continue into 1994. William has a limited number of copies of the Nov/Dec. 1993 Update. The appropriate BW address is: Customer Services, British Waterways, Willow Grange, Church Road, Watford, Herts. WD1 3QA. Tel: 0923 226422.

Finally, I wish all Friends and Staff of the Museum the Compliments of the Season and a Happy and Successful New Year.

A.L.G.

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## CROSS WORDS IN THE EVENING

by Doris Toller.

*This is a diary of events during a holiday spent by the author in the company of Alan and Betty Conder, all three of whom had met at Fort Augustus with Tony, Angela, Katie and Caroline Conder who had travelled south from Ullapool for a week on a hired cruiser on the Caledonian Canal. Ed.*

**FRIDAY** 20th. August 1993: We met at roughly the appointed time and went to the local pub for lunch before Betty and Angela visited the butcher and the baker. Tony tried to get the keys out of his locked car, and the rest of us explored Fort Augustus while we waited for the boat to be ready. With the help of the local policeman, Tony got his car open; we all transferred our luggage to the boat, listened to advice from the yard manager

and were away by 4.30pm. I can remember five pieces of advice:

- 1st. The lock-keepers do all the work - an occasional cup of coffee keeps them sweet,
- 2nd. Wave to the lady at Moy Bridge - the only woman employee on the Canal,
- 3rd. Don't spend the night at the foot of Fort Augustus locks if you object to being disturbed every 15 minutes by the Abbey bells,
- 4th. Always go below when you pass under a bridge,
- 5th. If you need a pumpout, get it done at Fort Augustus where it is cheapest.

Having been well briefed, we set off for Kytra, the first lock westwards, where we intended to moor for the night. However, the gates opened before us, and not wishing to ignore the lock-keeper's kind intention, we pressed on to the next lock, Culloch, fortunately arriving after the lock-keeper had gone off duty. I should explain that on the Caledonian Canal, mooring is at permitted points, usually at a pontoon; try to moor anywhere else along the bank and the boat will probably ground.

**SATURDAY:** Cold, but fine and clear as we continued westwards towards Banavie and the flight of locks known as Neptune's Staircase. As we went along, we admired the views, misnamed several mountains "Ben Nevis" and looked for potential stopping places for our more leisurely return. The rise at Culloch Lock took us into Loch Oich (the highest part of the Canal). Loch Oich is joined to Loch Lochy by man-made Laggan Avenue where we watched for the eagles mentioned on our chart. There was no more sign of them than of the shop ("with off-licence and tea room") that we were promised at Laggan Locks. "That was shut years ago" said the lock-keeper, but he gave us no news of the eagles.

We went through the length of Loch Lochy and, keeping the red markers on our starboard side and the lighthouse to port, avoided the Hydro-Electric scheme that our chart told us was dangerous to enter. We were now on the most westward man-made part of the Canal and, having waved to the lady at Moy Bridge (see Friday:2), we enjoyed the glorious views to Banavie with the background of really truly Ben Nevis. Neptune's Staircase was our western limit so we moored at the top and walked down beside the flight. Betty, Alan and Tony decided to walk on to the sea lock at Corpach and their energy was rewarded when they found Puffer VIC 32 there and were taken down three steep ladders to her engine room. Alan came back waxing lyrical about her boiler.

The evening was spent in a way that was a pattern for most evenings of the week; various people took the cruiser's rubber dinghy out - it was awful to get into and even worse to get out of but lovely to row about in, provided one had a generous application of midge repellent. Then to a magnificent meal cooked by Betty who did wonders with a stove that was either too hot or lukewarm. After a grand clear-up (and living alone, I had forgotten how many dishes seven people can make dirty) we got down to the serious business of the day; Crosswords. Sorry if you envisaged fisticuffs from the title, but our cross words were of the Daily Telegraph variety, joined later by the Scotsman as I insisted on a little local colour.

**SUNDAY:** A glorious, clear cold day with magnificent reflections as we turned back from Banavie aiming to moor at Invergarry on Loch Oich. Katie trailed a spinner behind the boat, but the hoped-for trout would not bite and we had to make do with haggis for

lunch. Deer on the skyline caused some excitement, but the eagles were still missing in Laggan Avenue. A stop at the Great Glen Water Park gave Katie and Caroline a chance to swim in a very small pool, while the usual group of intrepid walkers set off for the shop at the "Well of the Seven Heads". This said our invaluable chart is a monument to the death of seven clansmen whose heads were washed in the well before being presented to the clan chief.

The evening mooring at Invergarry was magnificent. As well as our usual rowing, eating and crosswords, we wandered in the grounds of the Castle Hotel, visited the ruins of the old castle, watched the buzzards which were nesting in it and had some light relief watching somebody else's cruiser being towed off the rocks on the other side of the loch.

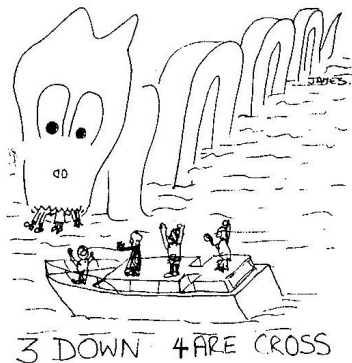
**MONDAY:** Wet. The aim was to get to Foyers on Loch Ness. As we went back through Culloch Lock we had to wait for other boats to catch up, so remembering Friday:1, we invited very wet lock-keeper Mr. Price on board for a cup of coffee. We told him how much we admired the garden round the lock and showed him the plants that Tony and Angela had bought at Inverewe. "That's up north, isn't it?" he said. We got to Fort Augustus in time to profit from Friday:5 before joining the queue to go down the five locks into Loch Ness. These locks open directly into each other and the trick is to pull the boats through. I was standing by the stern rope while Alan was at the bow. The lock-keeper came up to me and said "Change ends". When we had done this he added "The bow is easier!" A lunch stop at the foot of the locks let us hear the Abbey bells strike the quarters (see Friday:3), before we went on down a choppy Loch Ness.

We got to Foyers where we planned to see the waterfalls, and found the surface of the Loch somewhat disturbed and the wind blowing strongly. Two local men who were casting off their boats advised us not to stay. Our chart said (in red letters) "DO NOT MOOR unless in calm conditions", so we crossed over to Drumnadrochit in Urquhart Bay. As we moored here we were greeted by a friendly spaniel who insisted on shaking hands. Later, Betty and I discovered a notice which said "DANGER - GUARD DOG LOOSE". I can only suppose that the dog couldn't read. Another evening of eating, rowing and crosswords while we watched the ruins of Castle Urquhart beside a loch strangely devoid of monsters.

**TUESDAY:** It was all or nothing for us. If we couldn't see the monster, no one wanted to go to the Monster Exhibition. Instead we took the boat across the bay to Castle Urquhart to the strains of a lone piper welcoming the coaches on the roadside above. We shared the castle with Italians and Japanese before going back across the loch to Inverfarigaig. Here there was no pontoon but some old railway lines were good for mooring at - and for using as a trampoline - as Tony demonstrated. A short walk inland took us to an interesting forestry exhibition and waterfall before we continued along Loch Ness, through small Loch Dochfour to Dochgarroch Lock, our mooring for the night.

It was interesting to see a fishing boat from Kirkcaldy heading home from the Irish Sea and to realise that the Canal still has a commercial use. Crosswords in the evening.

**WEDNESDAY:** The skipper called a meeting of the crew and we all decided to give Invergarry a miss as we wanted to see Loch Ness again. This meant that we should aim to spend the night beyond Fort Augustus locks. Fine rain and mist curtailed the views as we turned back up Loch Ness, but did not prevent us from seeing a small boat which seemed in distress. Motionless in the middle of Loch Ness, with life-jacketed figures jumping around the deck she was in need of rescue. Tony altered course, Betty wondered how we could accommodate six extra people and Alan stood in the bows with a rope - but did they thank us? No, all we got was a cussing for being so stupid as to approach a boat when she was working. Had we nearly run down a diver, had we scared Nessie when about to take the bait?



We shall never know. We shifted as fast as we could, which wasn't very fast; it took us ten minutes to do the measured mile.

This day we did stop at Foyers and clambered through wet and steep woods to the shops and waterfall. We made the last ascent of the day at the Fort Augustus locks and moored at Kytra Lock. A beautiful setting this, a river with rapids the other side of the towpath and highland cattle in rough ground beyond the lock. No eagles but we were invaded by chaffinches who made it quite plain that they intended to be fed.

**THURSDAY:** A lovely day for weather so we made the most of our last day. "Och, it's you again" said Mr. Price at Culloch. After a visit to the Well of the Seven Heads for the sake of those who had missed it on Sunday, we went back to Invergarry Castle. The buzzards were mewing and circling overhead, a pair of swans and their cygnets came to say "Hello", the sun shone, the dinghy was launched and Angela, Katie and Caroline swam in the loch. But all idyllic afternoons have to come to an end and we had to get back through Culloch (Yes, it's us again, Mr. Price) and Kytra Locks before they closed at 6pm. It was exciting to see the Puffer VIC 32 and the tall ship EYE OF THE WIND (in Gloucester Docks as I write this), hurrying in the opposite direction for the same reason.

So to packing and cleaning ready for an early start in the morning. But we still had our crosswords that evening!

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- 6 -

## PLANS FOR THE 1994 BOAT JUMBLE

*a report by Tony Conder*

Plans for the Boat Jumble are going ahead. The date will be Sunday the 17th. April, so as not to clash with anyone else. Publicity has started and we have our first bookings of space. Please can all Friends help the cause by advertising the Jumble to friends and especially letting local boat clubs, angling societies and watersports centres know that it is on. Posters are available from Doreen Davies if you can display them.

We will be looking for lots of ticket sellers nearer the date.

Peter Thompson has offered to help with the organisation of car parking and will be calling for help and in particular, communications equipment. If Friends are proficient with carrier pigeons or smoke signals, please let Peter know - failing that, electronic communication equipment would do.

Site organisation before and on the day will be with Alan Drinkwater - anyone willing to help him should contact Tony Conder at the Museum or Alan direct. We need people to lay out the site and help marshal the stall holders on Saturday and Sunday. A Saturday only job would be putting up barriers and fences.

See you on the 17th. April if not before.

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## VISIT TO ELLESMERE PORT

*A report by Hugh Conway-Jones*

A joint party of Friends and Museum staff much enjoyed a visit to the Boat Museum at Ellesmere Port in November. We had the place virtually to ourselves as the museum was not open to the general public that day, and the only other visitors were a small group of schoolboys.

We were welcomed initially by director Tony Hirst, who briefly outlined the main features of the museum and introduced key members of his staff. We then divided up into small groups to explore the site, meeting up with many of their staff and volunteer helpers on the way round. Some of us were fortunate to be shown round by Di Skillbeck, Chairman of their Friends organisation, whose comments added enormously to the enjoyment of what we were seeing.

The site is full of interest with basins on two levels, locks linking the Shropshire Union Canal with the Manchester Ship Canal and some buildings dating from the 1790s. The Upper Basin is full of canal boats - some in beautiful condition while others illustrating what can happen to wooden boats if they are not given frequent attention. On the quayside by the newly built workshops, we spotted the motor boat Pine (sister to our Museum's MB Oak) that was having a new steel bottom welded on. We also saw the privately owned motor boat Radiant that was used until recently as a workboat in the Gloucester area and the hull of the steam dredger Perseverance that we had watched

- 7 -

operating when the Friends visited the Basingstoke Canal a few years ago.

A sight of the diesel tug Worcester, that used to work through the tunnels on the Worcester and Birmingham Canal, reminded me of some recently discovered information about its origin that I was able to pass on to engineering manager Jim McKeown. It was generally thought that the tug was built by Abdela and Mitchell Ltd. at Brimscombe, but research by Tony Langford has shown that it was built at the firm's yard at Queensferry on the Dee.

The indoor exhibits appear rather dwarfed in the huge expanse of the Island Warehouse, but Joe Skinner's horse-boat Friendship forms a fine centrepiece. One item to catch our eye was a huge two-handled mallet intended to be used by two men for driving in fence posts - it would have been interesting to see this in action.

In the Upper Pumphouse are four steam driven pumping engines once used to power the hydraulic cranes and capstans around the dock complex. Three have been restored and are in steam on occasions, but unfortunately they were not working for us as they were drained down for the winter. We fared better in the newly opened Power Hall, where over twenty engines of various sizes were on display, and several were being demonstrated by the volunteers who had restored them.

We were surprised to learn that there are two groups of volunteers at the Boat Museum. One is the body known as the North Western Museum of Inland Navigation (NWMIN) who were originally responsible for getting the museum established but now have no official role in running it. In recent years, the museum has also found it necessary to recruit their own voluntary helpers who are known as Associates. We were assured that the two groups got on well together. We were also told that experienced volunteers were given considerable authority over the day-to-day work of restoration on their allocated project.

In the Blacksmith's Forge, we watched the resident blacksmith making miniature lucky horseshoes. Nearby, some of us found our way into the museum's archive collection, where documents and photographs are stored under controlled conditions. There is also a good reference library with excellent access facilities for researchers.

In the middle of the afternoon, it was time for us all to make our way down to the Lower Basin to go on board the trip boat. We did a brief circuit of the Lower Basin, viewing the larger vessels moored there, and then we went up through the locks which were worked by NWMIN members "helped" by some of the visiting schoolboys.

Finally, there was time for a cup of tea and a last look round before it was time to join the coach for our journey home. Hopefully, similar joint staff and Friends visits can be arranged in the future.

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## LIFTING AND SHIFTING EVENT 1993

*Pauline Hill relates her experiences of the weekend.*

October 2nd, dawned dry and not too cold. We arrived at the Museum at about 8.30am, to find engines already being placed under the covered areas of the car park. There were also some fairground rides being assembled. Jane was preparing to fetch Peter (the Museum's Shire Horse) from his field. Very soon Samson arrived to do rides and join the parades around the Docks. As this was not a horses only weekend, there were only Peter, Samson and James present. The Museum's steam crane was being prepared for the many demonstrations it was to perform during the weekend.

With the help of Barbara and Betty, I began to put together the sandwiches and cut up the cake ready for lunchtime. We had a near disaster when the ironing board being used as a makeshift table suddenly collapsed and threw 2 tubs of rolls on to the floor. Luckily only a few came into contact with the floor itself, so we were able to salvage the majority of them. Very soon the exhibitors began popping in for cups of tea and coffee. The crane was lifting and the railway wagons were shifting. Jane organised the horses and they made a trip around the block. The Docks were very empty for a Saturday. Where did the people of Gloucester go we wondered? Perhaps there was something else on that we did not know about.

The exhibitors came in for their lunch, and were very grateful for their rolls and cake and we heard many comments of "We always get well looked after at the Docks."

After lunch, I left the exhibitors and helpers to help themselves to tea and coffee and went to join Jane for a horse ride. We went around the Docks, out into Commercial Road along to Llanthony Road and back in through the Black Gate. For the whole way round, James almost had his head inside the Museum cart, but this may have been due to his having only one eye. Anyway he was happy enough despite this handicap. There were very few people about so the attendance for Lifting and Shifting were a little down on the equivalent Saturday last year. Although the weather stayed dry, the fairground appeared not to be doing much trade. The Fielding engine was running for most of the day.

After a couple more round-the-block trips, Jane decided it was time to settle Peter down for the night. He was put in the cartshed with Samson as despite the difference in size they are the best of pals. The visitors to the cars, engines, cranes and wagons began to disappear and we all packed up and headed for home to recharge our batteries ready for the next day and hopefully many more visitors.

Some people are very strange for as soon as the barriers were removed for packing up, we had to guard the gate into the Museum yard because Joe Public seemed to have the impression that it is a public place with free access. Some became very indignant when told that the Museum was closed and if they wish to see it they must return the next day and pay.

Sunday dawned dry again, so what happened to the weather forecast? It was wrong again, thank goodness. The engine covers were removed and new arrivals

settled into place. The crane was fired up and once more we set to filling rolls for approximately 200 hungry exhibitors and helpers and cut up enough cake to last throughout the day. A reception for the unveiling of the figurehead from the former Sharpness-based training ship *Vindicatrix* involved filling more rolls. By 1 pm. we were running out of supplies so I went around the local shops and purchased enough to get us by.

The horses again paraded with no mishaps, except for the hassle of having to find the owner of a car parked in the way just over the swing bridge by the shopping centre. Even though it was a nice Sunday afternoon, the people were just not around. The attendance was better than on the Saturday, but still down on last year.

With the food cleared away I joined Jane for a ride or two, once having to hold Peter while Jane sorted out something. He is quite good with me though much better behaved for my 13 year old daughter Helen. The trouble is that he knows that I am a soft touch and just a little unsure of him. After finishing for the day, he returned to the cartshed while Jane tidied up. Samson nearly broke his harness trying to get to Peter before he was properly unhitched. Jane had been telling some children to stand further away because of sudden moves like this. When Samson charged, cart and all towards Peter, it proved her point very well. These horses are unpredictable and must be treated with respect.

Jane decided to ride Peter to his field and after having spent the previous night in the cartshed, he could not get to his green field quickly enough and we left him munching the grass and preparing for a nice roll around.

Back at the Museum, packing up was proceeding and everyone was saying goodbye to old and new friends and all said "See you next year".

I would like to thank Barbara and Betty for helping me with the food. We made an efficient team, but then we have had a lot of practice one way and another. With being in the kitchen preparing this food for much of the weekend, I may well have missed some unusual, amusing or even annoying occurrences, the stuff of which these weekends are made. If I did, perhaps some reader who did witness any might like to contribute to Llanthony Log for our interest and amusement.

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## FRIENDS HELP

### AT THE 1993 LIFTING & SHIFTING WEEKEND

*Les Dalton reports.*

The Friends were very much in evidence at the Lifting and Shifting Weekend on 2nd. and 3rd. October. They were employed selling tickets at the gate, keeping an eye on the perimeter fence for interlopers, making sure that the horses and carts and motor vehicles were able to come and go as they wished, answering queries and generally making themselves useful.

Thanks are due to Lawrence Arnall, Mildred Bramley, Joyce Bristow, Les

- 10 -

Dalton, Alan and Beryl Drinkwater, Ann Green, Paul Hamer, Denise Hazell, Michael and Margaret Hookham, Hilda Lockwood, Sue Mills, John Shellawell, Nicola Sparrow, Phyl Tover, Oswald and Jean Willis and Michael Wilson.

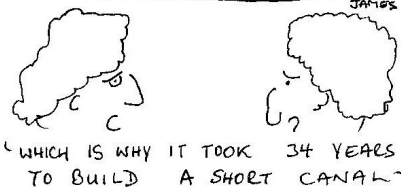
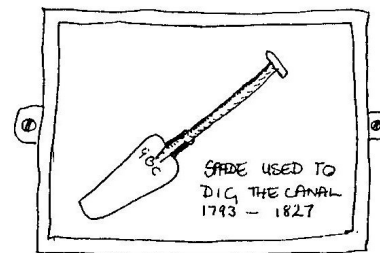
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## A Graft for the Museum

*By Hugh Conway-Jones*

"I have a graft if you want one" said a voice on the telephone. When I didn't reply immediately, the voice said "You do know what a graft is, don't you?" I had to admit that I didn't know. The voice then explained that it was a spade with a narrow curved blade of the type often illustrated as being used by navvies - adding that this particular graft was inscribed GBC which had to stand for Gloucester and Berkeley Canal. With my interest now fully aroused, I arranged to go and visit my caller, David Timbrell of Linton near Newent, and this is what he told me.

"After the First World War, my dad was a docks policeman, and he had an unofficial garden beside the old Monk Meadow timber pond. He had a railway coach on his plot, and we children had a lot of fun down there. We used to run across the timber floating in the pond. There were large square barks chained together into rafts that had been towed up from Sharpness. You had to be careful



- 11 -

stepping on them because there were gaps - people used to carry on about us but it was safe enough. To move the timber, men came with a raft of their own and poled what they wanted over to the gantry on the other side of the canal.

"We could always tell when there was a ship or a tug coming up the canal because we could see the water flow out of the entrance to the timber pond and the level would drop. It was the same with the old steamers, the Wave and the Lapwing - it was due to the thrust of the propellers pushing the water back. After the vessel passed, the water came back in again.

"Just up the road was a hut used by Ted Critchley's gang who looked after the Dock Company's railway track. Dad was very friendly with Ted Critchley, and dad used to borrow tools and things from him. But dad died suddenly, and the graft didn't get given back."

David Timbrell has kept the graft in his own garden shed for years, and the handle is now full of worm-holes. Only recently did he spot the inscription on it and realise it might be of interest to someone. I delivered it to the Museum where it is now part of the collection.

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## "WHY OH WYE?"

### Diary of a Novice Boatperson

by Anne Olliver

**Starring:** "Wye", a river class steel butty narrowboat, a new exhibit for the Museum and recently expertly restored by Jim and Dave Mathias at Gailey.

**Featuring:** "Eric Bloodaxe", Dave Mathias's half-completed narrowboat tug with a powerful but noisy engine.

**Crew:** Dave Mathias, Graham, Keith (man of many hats) Varney, and Anne Olliver (new Museum Assistant, and, canal novice), with the help of Ron Williams (Stourport-Upton), and Chris Perkins and Bryan Brown (Upton-Museum), and not forgetting Dave McDougall (here, there and everywhere).

**MONDAY** 18th October 1993

Departed Coven: 9.20am

Arrived Greensforge: 7.15pm

It was on the coldest morning in October that I'd ever had the misfortune to be out in when I meekly followed the Keeper of Collections on to the deck of the newly restored "Wye". Outwardly I echoed the appreciative noises as the final touches to the craftsmanship of the cabin were inspected, inwardly thinking "four adults used to live in here?!" As for the 'authentic' tin can of an Elsan - well!

We joined the other crew members at Coven. They had taken Wye down the first short stretch from Gailey Wharf the previous afternoon. This motley bunch consisted of the sober, respectable, father-figure of Mr.Keith Varney and likely

- 12 -

lads Dave and Graham. They appeared not to have suffered too much from the effects of the first evening at the local hostelry and cooked breakfast was still on the agenda.

The frost was still heavy when we set off, and Wye's blue tops, but more like white tops, treacherously icy, but the only way of traversing her length as the gunwale (please note tentative use of nautical terminology - not bad for a beginner?) was almost non-existent. Keith's solution was to crawl, mine to wait, sacrificially I may add, by the freshly lit stove until the sun did its job.

The keeper was waiting for us at our first lock, my first lock, and, indeed, James Brindley's first lock at Compton. Wye was, once again, anxiously inspected for dirt, scratches etc. (Were we not trusted I asked myself?). Luckily neither myself nor Mr.Varney had yet been steering Eric Bloodaxe so it was relatively unscathed.

As the canal professionals worked the lock I watched in some confusion - it's so much easier on the computer. This tactic of 'watching and learning' was a handy one, lasting through a good few locks, then followed by taking up position by Wye's tiller (incidentally next to the, by now, roaring stove). When this eventually wore thin and I could feign ignorance no longer I grasped my windlass and set to - jerkily, slowly and releasing the ratchet thing-a-me-bob with such a clatter that would make any self-respecting lock-keeper or canal professional wince.

After a full day, with not less than 28 locks (well 14 actually, but we did have to do each twice), I was pretty much an expert, though an aching one. No major disasters, thankfully, but a few near misses with taking the chimney off before going under the bridges, and we only just fitted in one lock (Wye is a massive 70ft. long), and the rudder did get stuck at one point, but, all in all, we definitely deserved a small tippie. What luck an inviting inn was so conveniently located next to our moorings!

**TUESDAY** 19 October.

Departed Greensforge: 9.00am

Arrived Stourport: 7.45pm

Not a bad life this - 3 men greeting me with a cooked breakfast, and it was I who slept in the warm (if cramped and unlit) cabin! Will I pay for this later - will I have to bow haul Wye into the locks?

Our start was delayed due to Graham and Dave's efforts to aid a hire boat crew in distress. Problem diagnosis: one very bent rudder. Not much we could do about this so we put them in touch with the hire firm and went on our way. Another ten hour day with no stops for lunch etc., despite Keith's persistent requests, arriving at Stourport well after dark. No more tentative steps across the blue tops today - the crew were merrily tripping back and forth with the greatest of ease, whenever, in fact, the happy hum of a boiling kettle was to be heard. A lovely stretch of the canal this, with the trees turning their beautiful autumn colours and looking their best in the wintery sunshine. We all took our turns at the heavy tiller of E.B. who responded smoothly to my inexperienced but assuredly natural touch. Not so with Mr.Varney however, whose objective seemed to be to cover all the water possible in an attractive zigzag pattern. (I knew we should have taken L-plates with us). There was little mishap, however, though the chimney once again nearly caught us out. The coal we used for Wye's stove seemed particularly sooty and black faces were the price to pay for that human requirement of warmth.

- 13 -

We reached Stourport in the dark and moored just above the basin. Quite good fun boating by the light of the moon. Once again a welcoming hostelry was conveniently situated - useful just for the facilities you understand.

WEDNESDAY 20 October

Departed Stourport: 9.30am

Arrived Upton: 4.00pm

Today I have an accident to report: one washing-up bowl (filthier than the dishes put in it), violently destroyed by one Mr.Keith Varley in a wanton fit of disgust at such slovenly living conditions. This was watched with incredulity by the slob who regularly inhabit Eric Bloodaxe and seek to imitate the uncouth lifestyle of its namesake. A new shining, sparkling replacement was bought.

David and a new crew member for the day, Ron, arrived in time for the breakfast fry-up and Ron quickly took up position at Wye's tiller. Incidentally, Ron was pleasingly armed with enough food and drink to keep me going - very nice of him. Wye was duly inspected for scratches, failed miserably and Mr.Varney rightly blamed for those that were discovered.

The journey down the River Severn was more exposed and pretty chilly with a North-Easterly wind. Desperate measures were called for to keep the crew warm, notably that of the ceremonial uncorking of a whiskey bottle stashed unopened on Eric Bloodaxe for a remarkable two years.

With renewed vigour we made rapid progress, Wye being let on a 30ft. tow and breasted up at the locks. I was glad I didn't have to manually open those lock gates! Our moorings were at the delightful town of Upton-upon-Severn where the weary crew, never left to rest, were called upon to research the Public Houses once more for the odious task of compiling a Good Pub Guide of the waterways.

THURSDAY 21 October.

Departed Upton:9.00am

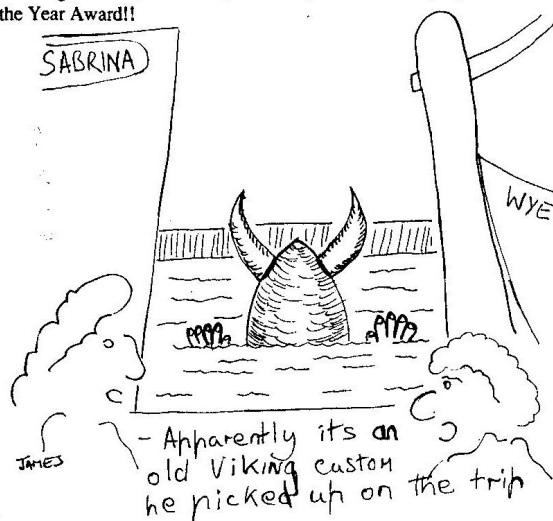
Arrived Gloucester: 1.30pm

The lock-keeper almost caught the crew napping as he arrived very early, at 8.15am. this time with Chris (fruit van) Perkins and Bryan (QB II) Brown, who were disgustingly wide awake and raring to go. As they too came armed with much food they were greeted on board. Poor Keith was in some confusion today - a different hat had been modelled for each day so far - now which of his three should he choose? The day went without mishap. Keith wasn't steering so we made straighter, quicker progress down the river. Wye was in the capable hands of Chris and Bryan who were never seen without a steaming mug of something in one hand, food in the other.

As we neared our destination, timing it to perfection for the lock-keeper at Gloucester we were distressed to hear that the dear man had taken an early lunch! Forced to drop our speed and wait in the nasty current, not unsurprisingly we had a slight confrontation with the bank, unfortunately spoiling Wye's newly cleaned and polished paintwork.

2.00pm. Firm ground of the Museum at last - home and dry (or so we thought). The crowds had dispersed and we were gathering our things together when there was an enormous splash. Keith had decided that he really must test the water of the

Barge Arm. Enough has been said on this already I feel. What people will do to get a Gnome of the Year Award!!



## MRS. DRYSDALE

She is a charming woman with the best of manners, tastefully dressed, quiet but clean, expressive if a little wooden.

After many years hanging around different ships and sea ports, for the pleasure of sailors, she has come to rest at the Museum.

No, not a new member of staff, but the figurehead of the Vindicatrix, the long time Merchant Training Ship at Sharpness.

Thanks to heroic work by Roy Derham, the figurehead was rescued and restored using money raised from the "Vindi Boys". The Vindicatrix Association have loaned her to the Museum, where a fuller history of the vessel and the figurehead is on display - an unusual addition to a waterways museum. She is situated in the Museum entrance area, and was formally unveiled by Roy Derham on the Sunday morning of the Lifting & Shifting Weekend - 3rd.October

Tony Conder.

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## "TOOEARLIES"

*Provided by Bryan Brown, a crew member of the Museum's Leisure Cruise Boat Queen Boadicea II, and one of the Friends' younger members - Ed.*

Being on Queen Boadicea II can be a very funny experience, especially with the older generation (60+).

It's great to hear that they don't call themselves OAP's or Senior Citizens, but instead they call themselves Grumps, Wrinklies, Antiques and Children and other 'I under 5'.

Some don't like being called anything but 'Adults, Thank you'. (at this stage you think, "When do I duck?" or "Next customer please").

The best one I ever heard, was on a weekday. As I was collecting the fares I came to a group of three. The man, or leader with the money, said "One Adult and two Tooearlies, please". He looked at me and said "Haven't you heard that one yet? "No", I replied, thinking they are as bad as the kids, making words up. So he told me about "Tooearlies". He was visiting a museum up north and asked the lady behind the desk for One Adult and two OAP's. She replied "Don't you mean Tooearlies? He looked strangely at her and said that he had been told that people up north were stranger than in the south. So she told him that the OAP's get a free bus pass when they are 60 years old, but they are not allowed to use them before 10 o'clock. So when the 10 o'clock bus comes to the stop they get on and say to the bus conductor

"Are we too early?"

I hope this won't offend any OAP's. Perhaps there will be some more funny experiences for a later Llanthony Log.

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## Prince Charles' Visit

### The Official Opening

*In previous issues of Llanthony Log, there have been some articles on the pre-opening activities at the Museum. Betty Conder has now provided a contribution on her memories of the Official Opening Day - 5th August 1988 - which I believe will be of interest to our readers. - Editor.*

I know nothing about the long preparations which must have preceded the Prince of Wales' visit. My part was to burnish copper and brass and polish desks and to groom the replica horse in the Propulsion Room.

Like everyone else involved, I was vetted for security and issued with a pass. Tony gave me the choice of joining the "Chain Gang", dressed in my best or being discovered working on a restoration project, clad in my more usual boiler suit (although

- 16 -

clean for once). I chose to work with Dave McDougall's then assistant, Linda, on the Widdop Engine in the well of the staircase outside the Propulsion Room.

We arrived at the Museum very early to pass through the security check. The crowds were already gathering outside. We whiled away the time watching the police divers working in the dock and making the acquaintance of the sniffer dogs, a cuddly collection of spaniels with affectionate natures.

Linda and I stationed ourselves by our engine, and, to provide verisimilitude, polished copper pipes vigorously. Linda, a self-possessed young lady of considerable talent, who has since set up and now runs the Trowbridge Museum, was surprisingly nervous and dithery which I found endearing in an era when the young were supposed to be iconoclasts.

We had a long wait and I wondered how my son was getting on with his future King and how proud his grandparents would have been. Meanwhile a battery of television, radio and newspaper men gathered at the foot of the stairs and quizzed us as to our status.

At last the Prince and the entourage clumped down the stairs and Tony presented us and the battery of cameras clicked. I tried to efface myself, since Linda was a valuable member of the Museum team, but she was more or less struck dumb. I couldn't shake hands because mine were covered in metal polish. However, the Prince (since Tony had introduced me as "My Mum"), accused me - in the nicest possible way, of being a 'plant'. So we had a brisk but polite exchange about my position as a volunteer and Linda recovered herself. I was left with the impression of an attractive lively man with a real interest in people and a great sense of humour.

When the Royal Party swept on, we moved out into the sunlit yard. I saw the Prince disappear down the dredger engine room steps, later to reappear up the crews' quarters companion way, so I knew that Alan had met him too. The Prince crossed the quay to the office front door where he had spotted Bet, Win and Dot, our excellent cleaning staff who are still with us. They were not expecting to be introduced and obviously enjoyed their chat.

Alan joined me and, as the Prince passed, he gave us a wave and called "I hadn't realised this was such a family affair." Later, when Tony's daughters were presented, he told them that he had just seen their grandparents.

After the Prince had unveiled the plaque on the Schools Room outer wall, he plunged into the crowd to talk to people, especially Elsie Hedge, the former Mayor, who had helped so much to make the Museum a reality. So much for all that security checking.

My last memory of that part of the day is of my little grandson Daniel, jumping up and down shouting "Hurrah!, Hurrah!," with a Union Jack wagging up and down in his little hand.

Suddenly the visit was over. The car swept out through the cheering crowds with a Buckby can on the back window ledge and we all began to come down to earth. I changed for the subsequent party and was told that I looked much better than I had in my boiler suit. I put that down to jealousy from one of the ladies in large hats in

- 17 -

the reception line. She hadn't enjoyed a jolly little argument with her Monarch's successor.

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## Timber Lighters and Tankers Reminiscences of F W Rowbotham

Former Engineer of the Severn River Authority

There were timber lighters on the Gloucester and Sharpness Canal that were owned by Mousell, Chadborn, & G T Beard, and the bigger ones carried up to 250 tons. Timber is a light cargo, so not only was the hull of the lighter filled, but timber was stacked up solidly eight or ten feet above deck level. This meant that a man steering at the tiller on the after deck wouldn't have been able to see where he was going, and this was overcome by forming a platform at about half height at the back end of the huge load using planks from the cargo. The helmsman stood on the platform so he could see over the top, and he had an extra long tiller reaching from the rudder head right up to the platform. Even so he only had a distant view, so there had to be a man on the forward end of the cargo giving him directions when it came to passing through bridges or entering locks.

Some of the timber was discharged at the timber yards beside the canal at Gloucester, and other lighters were towed through the docks, out into the Severn and up to Worcester. Some timber from there was taken in longboats up the Worcester and Birmingham Canal.

In later years, the tanker barges used to speed up and down the river because the crews were on trip money, and a few extra knots made all the difference between whether they would catch the tide at Sharpness or not. They put up a wave almost like the bore, and they undoubtedly did an enormous amount of damage to the banks. Some of the smaller ones, like the Regent boats, would try to race each other in the Long Reach from the Upper Parting to Ashleworth. They all had the same engines, so it just depended on who could find the slackest water.

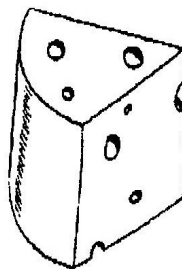
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### Leisure Learning Courses at the Museum

Jan 22	Boat Modelling I	Apr 24	Dredger Driving
Feb 6	Blacksmithing	May 14	A Day with Peter the Horse
Feb 12-3	Fender Making	May 15	Tug Driving (fender bending?)
Mar 5	Boat Modelling II	May 22	Steam Crane Operation
Mar 12	Blacksmithing		

For further details, contact Doreen Davies at the Museum.

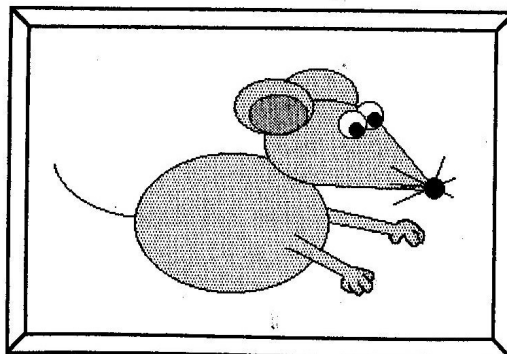
- 18 -



## CHEESE REWARD!

for information  
leading to the  
return of

# MISSING



Museum Rats  
brown, bright eyes, with tails  
(must be stuffed)

by order  
D.O.S.E

(Director of Stuffed Exhibits)

"Mud"