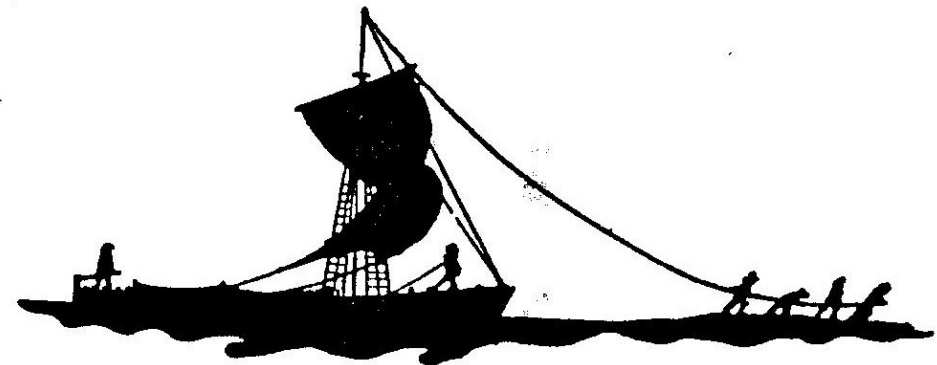


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*All views expressed in Llanthony Log are those of the Editor and individual contributors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the Friends of the National Waterways Museum.*

# LLANTHONY LOG



## Newsletter of the Friends of the National Waterways Museum

ISSUE NO.6 - SEPTEMBER 1989.

## Diary Dates

- Oct 14-15 Working Parties at Purton to dig mud out of the Museum's concrete barge. (For details, see centre pages)
- Oct 17 The Severn Navigation. An illustrated talk by Fred Rowbotham, former Engineer of the Severn River Authority, in the Museum Schools Room starting at 7.30. An encore to the entertaining talk Fred gave us in the spring.
- Nov 14 Canals as Nature Reserves. An illustrated talk by Bob Warren at the Tewkesbury Marina Yacht Club starting at 7.30. (IWA)
- Dec 19 A pre-Christmas meeting in the Museum Schools Room starting at 7.30 to enjoy waterways films followed by coffee and mince pies.
- Jan 16 Canal Books. An illustrated talk by Mark Baldwin at the Tewkesbury Marina Yacht Club starting at 7.30. (IWA)

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

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.

## Special Exhibitions at the Museum

- Oct 21-22 Railway Modellers Weekend. A variety of railway layouts will be on display with some including waterways as well.
- Oct 21-  
Nov 30 Severn Valley Railway. A photographic exhibition of this marvellous restoration project.
- Nov 25-  
Jan 6 Age of the Seaside Pleasure Steamer. An exhibition from the South West Museums Service.

## Roll Up for Level Three

Level Three, quite literally, adds a new and exciting dimension to the Museum. Months of planning and hard work have gone into this, the largest and final display floor, which was opened by the Mayor of Gloucester on July 21st.

The displays invite visitors to become involved in the workings of canals - from the drawing board, through the construction stage, and on to operation and maintenance. Adults and children alike are almost guaranteed to take great delight in a host of working exhibits, which include working model bridges and a micro-chip controlled map showing the build-up of the canal system 200 years ago. Computer video systems challenge visitors to try their hands at planning the route of a canal through difficult terrain, working a narrow boat through a lock without sinking it, and steering a 70 foot narrow boat without hitting the bank!

Other videos illustrate the boatmen's way of life and engineering structures in use, while further archive film gives an interesting presentation on the northern 'Tom Pudding' barges to accompany a superb model. A number of old canal divers helmets provide an interesting underwater experience, complete with live fish and the sound of a canal diver reporting on his inspection. Sound effects, including the familiar noise of a Bolinder engine, and clever lighting arrangements create a realistic canalside atmosphere, leaving visitors oblivious to the fact they are on the third floor of a Victorian warehouse.

Special attention has been paid to the needs of handicapped people, with full access for wheelchairs. Most exhibits are at low levels and many items can be touched, with the requirements of blind people having been carefully thought of.

## Victorian Letterbox Outside the Museum

A replica of a hexagonal Penfold pillar box has been set up just outside the Museum entrance. This style of box, which bears Queen Victoria's coat of arms, is only installed in conservation areas and places of special historical interest. It was brought into service on 4th July to coincide with the issue of four stamps commemorating aspects of industrial archaeology, including the Pontcysyllte aqueduct, and first day covers were franked with a special National Waterways Museum hand frank.

### Friends Help with Level 3

Many of the Friends have helped the Museum staff in the final stages of preparing the new displays on Level 3. The Museum employed contractors to provide the basic structures, but Museum staff were responsible for finishing off most of the details, and this is where the Friends were able to help.

Ray Swan made up special components for the Cromford Canal spoon dredger and for the steering interactive exhibit, and he used special cutting gear to shorten the spindles on the paddle gear from Whitminster Weir. Ray Swan and Trevor Hill together spent several evenings in the run up to the opening helping to put up various old notice boards and other exhibits, and Trevor also helped to put up the numbered plates used to label some of the panels. These came from a set of Oxford Canal bridge plates which could have been removed when the bridges were renumbered after the straightening work of the 1830s.

Doris Toller and Betty Conder did a lot of work cleaning up exhibits such as the steering wheel from a Trent barge and the brasswork in the replica cabin of the butty Cylgate. The original Cylgate belonged to a No 1 boatman, Alfred Hone, based at Banbury on the Oxford Canal, and the replica was originally made for the Canal Exhibition Centre at Shardlow which has now closed. The most difficult brasswork to clean was the oil lamp which was in a filthy condition when rescued from a pile of odds and ends at Tooley's boatyard at Banbury. Doris also made the rag rug on the floor of the cabin, and other Friends contributions include crochet work by Mary Megan and the boatwoman's bonnet, skirt and pinafore by Rosemary Conway-Jones.

Another exhibit worked on by Friends was a section of a lifting bridge from the Oxford Canal. The Museum had an example of a cast iron geared pivot from such a bridge, and John White, Alan Russell and Keith Varney helped to cut out the huge balk of timber that represents one of the bridge beams. (These three have also completed the restoration of the Henderson mobile crane from the Caledonian Canal, which is now looking as good as new outside the Blacksmiths Shop.)

Although Level 3 is now effectively finished, there is still much restoration work to be done, and more volunteers are always welcome. If you can help, please contact David McDougall at the Museum or make your interest known at one of our meetings.

### Barque Model Restored for Level Three

*Peter Wallace has painstakingly restored the model of a barque named "Rose of Cullen" that is now on display on Level 3. Here he describes the work involved in the restoration, including the treatment of the sails which were carved from solid wood.*

This model of a three masted barque came from the old school room at Bussage near Stroud. It was given to the Museum by Mrs. Harvard of Burleigh View, Bussage, with a note that it belonged to her father, Mr. Hurdle. It appears to have been made by a sailor, possibly one of the crew, in the late 19th or early 20th century.

The hull is carved from solid pine with fine sections, and the spars and sails are also carved from pine. When presented to the Museum it was in a tattered state and had been sprayed with white paint. The first task was to remove the paint gently from specimen areas to find out the original finish to the model. This revealed that the decks were a deep red, (faded to pink) in the same paint as the underwater hull. Below the boot-topping, the hull red had faded to an identical pink. The sails had been left as bare wood, as had the spars.

The next step was to remove all sails, spars and rigging and to strip the nineteen sails back to bare wood finish, a job which took a month of delicate work on the often wafer thin wood. The masts had been built in "fiddled" sections with scotch glue as adhesive. If paint stripper had been used on them it is likely that much damage would have resulted. Instead, it was decided to paint them in a neutral brown. The bowsprit was repaired by dowelling it together with a cocktail stick, and a new rudder was made to replace the missing one. The hull was repainted in satin-black, leaving original decoration where possible, and the repaint graded down to nil near the water-line in order to blend the model into its base (which we did not attempt to restore).

In re-rigging, black linen thread was used for standing rigging and grey cord for running rigging. The model had additional rigging in white cotton when it came to the museum, but this was omitted in the restoration as it was not intended by the maker (unless he added it at a later date, perhaps).

The biggest visual decision to make was whether to paint the decks in gloss red, as originally, or fade gloss paint down to a pink as on the

hull just below the waterline, or to use a matt paint to blend with the rest of the vessel. Our decision was to use the original deep red, but with a matt finish which would show the model as originally conceived and not obtrude against other surfaces.

The total time taken was 120 hours, during which much admiration was felt for the original craftsman as his techniques became revealed, and much pondering on how he would have tackled the restoration himself. The number one priority was to try to preserve the character of the model and give it life for the next hundred years, by which time the deep red gloss will have faded to pink! Whilst there is no evidence the Rose of Cullen ever came to Gloucester, the model represents the larger vessels that graced the dock and could be correctly described as "tall ships."



The Gloucester-based *Citizen* newspaper took great interest in an appeal for stuffed bats to hang in the full-size replica of a canal tunnel, which visitors can step into. This hit the headlines at the same time as the 'Batman' film publicity, and provided the paper's cartoonist with food for thought!

## Dredging Demonstrations Provide Added Interest

Volunteer dredger drivers have worked hard again this summer to show visitors the buckets turning on the No 4 steam dredger, and an extra activity this year has been some full dredging demonstrations on the first Sunday of each month.

For these demonstrations, the dredger was moved round into the Barge Arm, and breast wires were laid out to each side so that it could be winched out into the middle. Standing by the bucket winch, Des Fforde pulled the lever to sound the bell in the engine room, and as the driver started the buckets turning, Des lowered them down to begin dredging. Soon the spectators had a good view of mud being brought up and tipped down the chute, although as no hopper barge was available, the mud just fell back into the water. After a time, Des raised the buckets and signalled to the driver to stop the engine, and the dredger was winched back to the quayside to allow all the spectators to go on board and inspect the equipment.

After this exercise had been repeated a few times, not surprisingly it was found that the buckets were not bringing up much mud from the centre of the Barge Arm, and there was concern that so much mud was being shifted to the side that it might prevent the dredger returning to its berth! So for subsequent operations the dredging was carried out towards the farther side of the Barge Arm, moving along a bit to find fresh mud when necessary.

These demonstrations have generated a lot of interest, and when the visitors come on board afterwards, they ask a lot of questions. New trainee dredger drivers are always welcome, and any volunteers should contact Alan Conder on Dean 44384 or Des Fforde at the Museum.

## Ten Cents at the Museum

A colourful addition to the vessels moored in the Barge Arm adjoining the Museum is the tug *Kennet* which has been adapted to look like one of the stars of the childrens television series *Tugs*. Originally built in 1931 by James Pollock Sons and Co of London, she has a 4 cylinder Crossley diesel engine and was used for many years by the Thames Conservancy. With the addition of a funnel and a large wheel-house, she has been made to look like *Ten Cents*, a wise and experienced member of Captain Star's fleet, who's adventures have delighted children through television and books.

## The Opening of Museum Level Zero

by Richard Trelfa

I am now able to deliver the steam dredger talk with my brain in the off position. So the other day I had begun to say "The dredger was built in Holland in 1925 and...", when I was woken by an eight year old voice which said "Excuse me, but, how long is it?". I looked down and saw the owner had a four page questionnaire on a clip board. "Where did you get that from?" I asked. "My headmaster has been here before and I shall have to know the answers when I get back", was the reply. Then I had to wake up and put my brain in gear. As a result I resolved to produce a display, based on the sort of questions we are asked, to which we could direct similar young interviewers with the offer "If what you want is not there, try me." Hopefully this would test their ability to read and digest information and to stimulate projects and questions which promote the development of understanding rather than just testing our endurance.

I shared the germ of the idea with all who were around at the time and then produced eight display boards for the dredger galley which I stuck them up the day after the Mayor opened Level Three. Then it occurred to me that, after opening the highest level in the Museum, we now had a display in the basement, hence the Level Zero, and that it could be "opened". For this I stretched a piece of parcel tape across the top of the companion way and borrowed the Museum's scissors. The next problem was to obtain a celebrity to cut the tape. I have an ex-Brown Owl for a wife and both my daughters are Queen's Guides, so I knew one thing for certain: this event could lead to a badge for a Guide. Over the address system I asked for a Guide to come to the dredger for the next bucket run after which there would be a special event.

When the crowd had gathered on the quay, I asked if they had heard my message and if there was a Guide present. A ten year old almost put up her hand, but not quite. So I asked for a volunteer to blow the whistle. No doubt about it now, up went her hand. Whilst hooting I asked if she was a Guide. "I've just passed out of the 23rd Gloucester Brownie Pack in Tuffley and in September and I hope to join the St. George's Guide Troup, so I'm not really a Guide yet." I noted the assurance with which this was delivered and we returned to the group. I warbled on with my talk until I came to the next point at which I ask for a volunteer. This is a challenge to see if s/he can move the 150 tonnes of S.N.D. No.4. During school term, classes of eight year old boys usually volunteer to a lad, but it was now holiday time and only one hand went up; the Brownie stepped forward again.

We sat on the quayside together and pushed with our feet. S.N.D. No.4 co-operated and moved a foot to the end of her mooring rope. So then I told the group that this shows why canals came to be built, i.e. it is easier to move large loads on water than it is on land. Then I said I would run the buckets and that the special event would take place after. Back on deck I mentioned the display in the galley and then introduced Joni, our Brownie, and related her involvement in the Guide movement. I was able to say that one of Britain's Strongest Men had recently pulled a 200 tonne Thames sailing barge along the North Quay for charity. Thus, in moving S.N.D. No.4, Joni may have qualified as Britain's Strongest Brownie in front of their very eyes. She stepped forward with grace and authority and cut the tape. I knew I had a real Celebrity. So did the crowd, and we all applauded.

### Down to Earth at the Work Camps

Getting down to earth is what it's all about for enthusiasts on the Hereford and Gloucester Canal Society's work camps. Volunteers are expected from all parts of the country over the next few months for a series of weekends on the derelict waterway.

Weekend camps, beginning on Friday evenings and ending on Sunday afternoons, cost between £5 and £6 for food, with free accommodation in village halls near the canal.

The next weekend, from September 29 - October 1, will attempt to locate stone steps leading from the tunnel cottage at Ashpurton, down a steep bank and into the cutting. It is planned to clear the other end of the tunnel between December 29 and January 1.

Friends interested in taking part on the following dates should contact Laurie Lavender, 24 Ambleside, Radipole, Weymouth (0305-772432):

September 29 - October 1,  
November 10 - November 12,  
December 29 - January 1, (1990)  
February 23 - February 25,  
April 12 - April 16 (Easter long weekend.)  
June 15 - June 17 (preparation for Camp Week in July.)

A whole week camp is being organised for July 21 - 29. The expected cost is approximately £18 or £19.

## Walkers Surprise

Friends who joined Ian Parsons visit to Sharpness and Purton enjoyed a delightful walk in ideal conditions with a surprise at the end of it. While the party was gathering, four motor cruisers left the tidal basin to go down the channel before high water, and the strength of the incoming tide was evident as they left the protection of the south pier and met the full force of the current still rushing up the channel. A little later a yacht came in and locked up into the main dock.

Ian explained about the origin of the old and new docks at Sharpness and the specially built housing needed for the employees of the Dock Company. We walked along the quay, noting various foreign ships, and at the top end of the dock, we watched both low and high level bridges open to let the yacht go on up the canal to Gloucester. The low level bridge is now motorised, but we saw that the high level bridge still has to be operated by a man working a capstan on the rotating section.

A short walk took us to the old tidal basin, where canoeists were enjoying themselves, but it was sad to see the harbour masters house deserted and boarded up. Walking on past the marina, Ian pointed out where new housing developments are planned which would destroy a pleasant wooded area. Further along the towpath, we saw the remains of a coal tip, several barges dumped to prevent bank erosion and some stonework of the old Severn railway bridge. Then opposite the former timber pond, we scrambled down the bank to inspect the graveyard of old sailing vessels and to look for the concrete barge due to be recovered by the Museum.

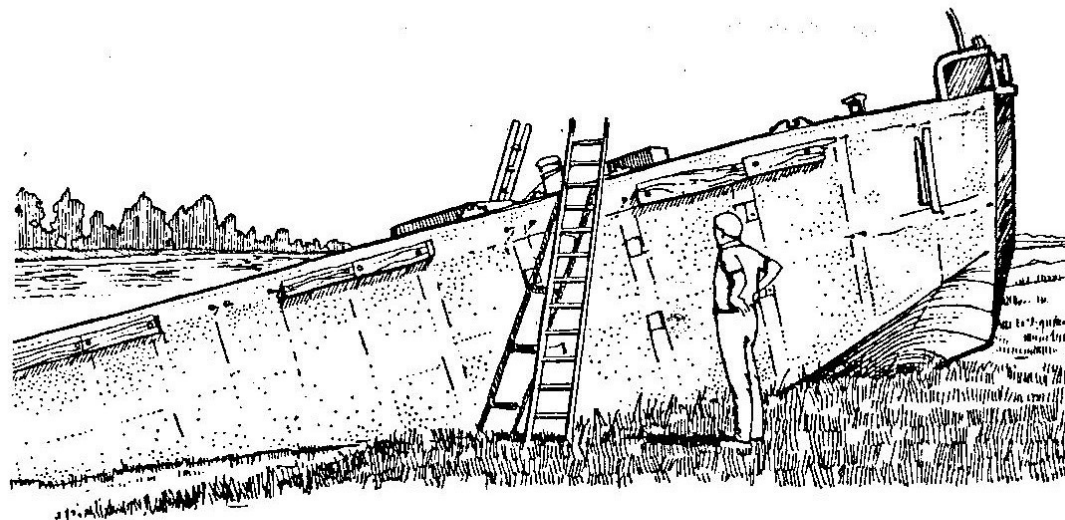
We found a barge with a ladder leaning up against it, and on climbing the ladder, we were surprised to find Tony Conder, David McDougall, Des Fforde and members of Tony's family hard at work inside. They were digging out sections of the mud, trying to assess what should be the next step. None of the walkers took up the invitation to join in the mud shovelling, preferring instead to make for the nearby pub - after all, it was lunchtime!

AHC-J.

## Mud Slingers Wanted

Working parties are being organised for the weekend of 14-15 October to help clear mud out of the Museum's concrete barge at Purton. When the barge was dumped to protect the river bank, three holes were made near the stern to let the water in, and over the years a large quantity of mud accumulated inside. Much of this was cleared out by Museum staff and contractors in the spring, but more remains to be done. High tide will be about 8am and 9am on the two selected days, and the water entering the

barge will soften the mud and make it easier to dig. As the tide does not stay high for long, it should be possible to start work by one hour after high water, and volunteers are asked to arrive around 10 o'clock if possible, although those who can only manage an afternoon are also welcome.



The concrete barge - By Phil Moss

The mud is 18 inches to two feet deep in several compartments separated by the concrete ribs which run across the bottom of the barge. The plan is to dig out each compartment in turn, washing away the mud with high pressure hoses. Jobs will be rotated so that digging and hosing sessions will be interspersed with rest periods. Volunteers should wear old clothes and wellingtons and preferably bring their own spades. The site can be reached by turning left immediately after crossing Purton Lower Bridge over the Gloucester and Sharpness Canal, and cars can be parked about 500 yards down the towpath. There are two pubs nearby, but the choice of food is limited so you are recommended to bring your own. Those intending to come should notify Hugh Conway-Jones on Gloucester 619679 to confirm arrangements.

Although the weekend is likely to be the main chance for Friends involvement, work will continue during the following week, and anyone who can help then will also be welcome.

What Comes In Must Go Out!

By Peter Collins

Often as I start the water pumps in Gloucester Docks, the sight of a mass of water apparently pouring out of the dock wall will prompt an enquiry as to its origin from passers-by or boaters moored for the night. One such prompted this short article about the supply of water to the Gloucester & Sharpness Ship Canal.

Perhaps we should start by looking at why we need a water supply at all - surely the thing is full of water and that's it. Since water control takes one man full time, three or four more in times of flood and about ten per cent of my time in controlling it, maybe there is more to it than meets the eye.

The ship canal is some 25 km long, on average 30 metres wide and 5.5 metres deep (about 8 metres in Sharpness Docks) and it contains ... well, you work it out, remembering that the underwater section is trapizoidal. Water is lost from the canal due to evaporation, lockage and water sales. Depending on the height of the tide and fresh water levels in the River Severn, Gloucester lock can use up to 1.5 megalitres at a time while Sharpness can consume 9 ml. If the lock and tidal basin are used together for a large ship, a staggering 54.5 ml can be used in the space of two hours. It may be easier to visualise that as taking 2½ inches off the canal level. When you add this to the millions of litres sold for water supply, much of it for drinking water in Bristol, it can be appreciated that the top-up capacity has to be considerable.

The canal is built above the tidal Severn, much of it on an embankment. Natural water feed comes from the Cotswold Hills and to a lesser degree, from the river valley. Chief among these feeds are the rivers Frome and Can. The former is by far the larger and is the only one over which we can exert some control. It feeds into the main canal via the last few hundred metres of the Stroudwater Canal at Saul Junction. During the winter, these two small rivers and the other four streams which feed in (Sudbrook, Tuffley, Daniels and Shorn brooks) supply more than is needed and we have to evict the surplus.

The summer story is quite different with the feeds giving about one quarter of the requirement. Since the early days a supplementary feed has existed in the form of pumping capacity at Gloucester. In 1944 an earlier installation was replaced by a Gwynns electric pump of 1.2 metre diameter, lifting water some four metres from the Severn (about 50 metres away) at a nominal rate of 2.8 million gallons per hour. 1963 saw the installation of a similar pump to the north of the dry docks, but with a nominal capacity of 3.4 mgh.

In theory, this means we can put about 30 mm per hour onto the canal level, assuming there is no abstraction at the time. Assumptions are of course dangerous things and my statement does not allow for the biggest pump related problem - the River Severn's famous silt. During the neap tide cycle the tide does not rise over the river weirs at Llanthony and Maisemore but on Springs it does and brings with it considerable amounts of estuarial silt. In practical terms this means on tides in excess of 7.4 metres at Sharpness. Thus we have to avoid pumping at Gloucester from about 2 hours to 7 hours ebb otherwise we impound great quantities of mud in the dock. Even with careful monitoring it is impossible to avoid some impounding and for this reason my dredging unit has to remove 20,000 - 50,000 tonnes of mud most winters.

The amount of pumping varies from day to day depending on the time of year, height and time of the tide, requirements of Bristol Waterworks and the amount of rainfall together with the amount of ship movement at Sharpness and to a lesser degree, movement through Gloucester lock. Usually it is rare to pump between the New Year and Easter which is when we do our pump overhauls. At the other end of the scale, in a dry summer during the neap tides, the equivalent of 18 - 24 hours pumping on one unit is needed and it is not unusual for both to run together for 8 or 10 hours.

Winter time does bring a different story with usually an excess of water and a need for flood control to stop overtopping of the banks and flooding in surrounding villages (it did happen in 1966). If heavy rain is forecast we reduce the flow in at Whitminster from the R. Frome and perhaps run some water out of the canal. Should the rain be excessive either locally or over the hills the supply from the Frome is turned out completely and the extra water which we have to receive from the other streams is run off at Gloucester and Sharpness locks and through sluices at Saul.

This control of the water within tight limits is essential for the reasons stated before, and operationally. The normal variation is plus or minus 50 mm although short excursions outside this can be tolerated at times. To assist in keeping a check on flows, levels and pumps a monitoring system linked to a computer was installed about two years ago. It measures and records pump state, canal water level at three locations, flow in the feeders and tidal/met. details at Sharpness every 15 minutes with a printout in the office hourly. The system, known affectionately as Fred, does have one nasty little trick up its electronic sleeve, however. It has a built-in alarm system which is linked to the telephone and will keep ringing round a series of five numbers if an alarm state exists until one of us acknowledges its existence. The first number on its list is nine and it has to be admitted that Fred can be called other things at 3 or 4 in the morning!

## Summer Cruising on the Shroppie

By Josephine Jeremiah,

It seems to me that one of the most appealing aspects of travelling on the inland waterways is meeting a variety of interesting people, many of whom live afloat throughout the year. The highlights of this summer's cruise along the Shropshire Union Canal were long and short conversations that I had with boaters along the way.

At Market Drayton, I noticed an eye-catching narrow boat from Tardebigge. It wasn't long before I was engaged in conversation with the owner who kindly let me have a peep inside his boat. (There is nothing some boaters, including me, like more than studying the interior of someone else's boat!) A traditional cabin was at the back, with stove and table cupboard, and the design had been reversed for the front cabin. Both were crammed with lace plates, photographs and decorations, and the result was quite out of the ordinary and very pleasing to the eye.

I'm afraid I chatted so much that afternoon that we never did catch up with our travelling companions, old friends whom we had met by chance at a lock the previous day and who were hoping to have our company along the Llangollen Canal. If we had caught up then I might have missed another interesting encounter. This was at Audien, where the proprietor of the canal shop gave me the opportunity to look at some rare books on canals. We moored the boat and I was able to feast my eyes for half a day, oblivious to the hustle and bustle happening around me on the canal.

Nantwich was the place where I fell into conversation with a former boatman who told me about his life on a barge on the Kellogs run from Liverpool to Manchester in the 1950s. He mentioned how he had later picked up an old wooden narrow boat to live on for just £60!

All the way along the Shroppie we met up with acquaintances, some of whom we hadn't seen for a number of years. At Tyrley Locks, we passed some boats from Saltford on the Bristol Avon. They come up in convoy under the Severn Bridge each year, but they assured me that this was the last time as hopefully the Kennet and Avon Canal will be open next year.

Many people find the Shroppie fascinating, with its deep wooded cuttings, pleasant country views and pretty canalside villages. I particularly liked the 17 mile lock-free stretch from Wheaton Aston almost to Market Drayton because I could sit and relax at the front of the boat and appreciate the delightful surroundings.

There were a large number of boats travelling on this canal, perhaps because of the water shortage on the southern canals, or perhaps because it is so attractive. Whatever the reason, it certainly was very busy, especially at the locks, where there were long delays. This, however, can add to the charm of a canal trip, that is if you are not in too much of a hurry! There are plenty of people to chat with at a flight of locks and plenty of canal information to be gleaned.

## Severn Tugs Attract Visitors

The Severn Tug Weekend in June created a lot of interest, and Friends were on hand to help the proceedings along. The present British Waterways tugs *Stanegarth*, *Speedwell* and *Severn Active* were open for inspection and took part in barge handling demonstrations and tug-of-war competitions. The 130-year-old steam tug *Mayflower* was a star attraction, taking visitors on trips down the canal and providing a fine sight for the many photographers. Also present were the former Dock Company tug *Severn Iris*, now converted to a pleasure craft and based at Stourport, and several smaller tugs from the inland canals.

Bill Sparkes had his models on display in the Schools Room and working on the the Barge Arm, and Tim Vale had arranged the loan of a superb tug model for display also. During the weekend, the Museum organised a re-union lunch for past and present tugmen, and a few Friends attended to make contacts that will be followed up to provide information about past adventures and mishaps. One 80-year-old skipper was so enjoying his conversations that he did not notice that his unfinished lunch had been tidied up until he found it was gone. He didn't seem to mind though, and a little later, the same thing happened to his unfinished drink!

The publicity surrounding the weekend prompted a delightful letter from a 71-year-old lady from Chepstow who remembers as a child helping to open the swing bridge at Purton to let the tugs through. She also describes the joy of going on her grandfather's tug, *Resolute*, from Sharpness down to Portishead on the early morning tide, having sea pie made on a smoky stove in the engine room, and then returning with a load of trows from Avonmouth to Sharpness loaded with grain. Memories like these deserve to be recorded, and anyone willing to help should contact Hugh Conway-Jones on Gloucester 619679.

## Docks Development Update

Rebuilding of the Britannia Warehouse is now well under way following the fire which destroyed the original building in 1987. The reconstruction is part of Pearce Developments' £50 million scheme which will provide a mixture of retail, leisure and office facilities on the eastern side of the docks. The building is being constructed around a steel frame with the exterior skin formed by original bricks salvaged from the fire. From the outside, it will look very like its predecessor, with Welsh slates on the roof and reconstituted stone window lintels and sills, but inside it will contain six floors of modern office accommodation, complete with computer trunking, lifts and central heating.



Janet Illingworth-Cooper has been in touch with Pearce Developments to establish the timescales for their work. The Britannia Warehouse offices are expected to be ready for occupation by the end of 1989. By that time, the pub/restaurant facing the Main Basin is due to open, and the adjoining shopping area to be known as Merchants Quay should be in use by Easter 1990. Work has started on clearing out Reynolds and Vinings Warehouses near the Mariner's Chapel, and these are scheduled to have shops on the ground floor and offices above by the end of 1990. The new shops facing Southgate Street will follow about a year later.

## Thames and Severn Canal Completed Two Hundred Years Ago

*Hugh Conway-Jones notes an important local anniversary*

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

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

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

"The arched tunnel, carried through the bowels of the mountain near two miles and a half long, and 15 feet wide, at a level 250 feet below its summit, is a work worthy of admiration; and the locks ascending from Stroud, and descending from the summit, are executed in a manner deserving great commendation."

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

Colour Him Brown

by "Mud"

It was a Saturday afternoon in August, and I was looking at Teasels flowering on the bank, an oar's distance away. They are only a pale blue pom-pom for about four days in their lives before becoming the gaunt skeleton of the dried flower arrangement. So I rested on the oars in the still water at the pleasure of being present at this event. I was suddenly reminded that I was not only in Gloucester but also in Hempsted because the Gloucester City football crowd at Meadow Park suddenly shouted a perfectly clear "Rubbish!".

I brought my mind back to Teasels and scanned along a dead branch on the bank. Part of the branch was a slightly redder brown than the rest. Then I noticed that it was watching me. At the paler top were eyes and a beak. The eyes had the look of a hunter. I had always wondered how it is that fish can be silly enough not to see a toffed up bird like the Kingfisher. Now I know. When it is facing and watching its prey, its camouflage is perfect. What is more, I was sitting in the range at which it must be most effective, about three yards. Then I realised that it must have seen me long before I saw it. A fish would not have been so lucky.

The Kingfisher continued to stare. But, then another thought, a Kingfisher would probably freeze on the approach of a predator. With any luck, the camouflage would prove just as effective, and the unknowing predator would pass on, thus saving the Kingfisher from the necessity of flight. In any case, there may not be much point in even a Kingfisher trying to outfly a Sparrowhawk or a Peregrine. I was certainly not going to find the answer that afternoon, so I dipped in the oars and pulled gently away without looking behind. I wanted it to believe that its disguise had been successful.

#### Model Boat Club Based at Museum

The newly formed Gloucester and District Model Boat Club has started using the Barge Arm adjoining the Museum on occasions to demonstrate members radio-controlled boats, including a submarine that can go under water. Other members specialise in intricate scale models that look just like the real thing. For more information, contact the Secretary, Bob Griffin, on Gloucester 503569.

#### Turntables Arrive in Pieces

The components for two turntables have been obtained from underneath the Great Northern Warehouse, just off Deansgate in Manchester. When they have been cleaned up and repainted, the turntables will be installed on the Museum's quay to link up lines around three sides of Llanthony Warehouse. The turning part has a wooden platform mounted on a circular metal frame with ribs linking to a central pivot. The frame is supported on a set of small wheels which run on a track resting on a concrete base and tied into a two feet high ring that lines the hole in which the mechanism sits. The retaining ring is made up of cast sections bolted together. One of these sections is broken, and it will be necessary to replace the bolts at each end of this section by long curved rods which will hold the whole thing together. The turntables are in remarkably good condition considering they were probably made around 1890. The cleaning and repainting will be a job for the Friends to do, and any volunteers should contact David McDougall at the Museum.

#### What Was Wrong with Greenland?

While transcribing the records of voyages of vessels registered at Gloucester, Mary Megan was intrigued by one of the log books. The owners of a brig declared she would ply for trade from Gloucester Docks to anywhere in the northern hemisphere for a period of two years maximum before returning home to Gloucester. She could visit any port or country with cargoes of any description, but there was one embargo - no visits were to be made to Greenland. Can anyone explain why this was?

#### Father Christmas' Food For Thought

Buying Christmas presents year in, year out is no easy task, but a little time spent browsing around the Museum shop could solve quite a few problems. Calendars are among the most useful of gifts. The British Waterways calendar features work from the Guild of Waterways Artists, with scenes by Garth Allen, Brian Collings, Harley Crossley and Alan Firth.

Conserves and chutneys will go down a treat while kitchen slaves will welcome matching aprons and tea towels with open arms! Brass lanterns, plaques and horse brasses can add a touch of nostalgia to the home and complement a range of prints and paperweights on sale. And winter fireside fulfilment can be attained with a drink from one of many waterways and Museum mugs, while warming up in a sweatshirt or jumper from the shop.