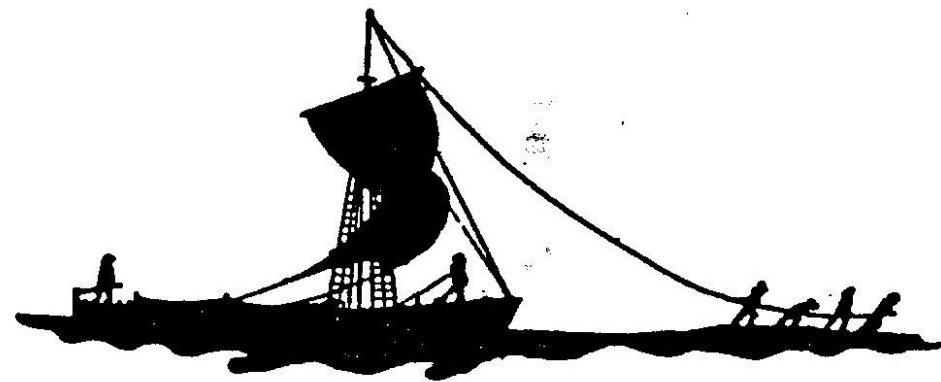


Contacts

Chairman & Research	Hugh Conway-Jones 1 Grovelands, Gloucester, GL4 7JF.	010. 619679
Secretary & Publicity	Janet Illingworth-Cooper 2a Oxford St, Gloucester, GL1 3EQ.	(work) 010. 504294
Treasurer	Les Dalton 4 Conway Rd, Gloucester, GL3 3PL.	010. 617236
Crafts	Peter Wallace 16c Grosvenor Rd, Gloucester, GL2 0SA	010. 24686
Dredger Training	Alan Conder 12 Bathurst Park Rd, Lydney, GL15 5HG.	Dean 844384
Dredger Drivers	Alan Barnett 16 Honeythorne Close, Gloucester, GL2 6LU.	010. 303489
Fielding Engine	Trevor Hill 154 Cheltenham Rd, Gloucester, GL2 0JR.	010. 25578
Helpers and Hosts	Richard Trelfa 23 Honeythorne Close, Gloucester, GL2 6LU.	010. 304116
Meetings and Weekday Rota	Doris Toller 5 Henningsdale Rd, Gloucester, GL2 6HN.	010. 424272
Membership Secretary	Marian Palmer 17 The Firs, Heathville Rd, Gloucester, GL1 3EW.	010. 20885
Newsletter Editor	Philip Conway-Jones 1 Grovelands, Gloucester, GL4 7JF.	010. 619679
Restoration	David McDougall Nat. Wat. Mus., Docks, Gloucester, GL1 2EH.	(work) 010. 307009
Talks Service	Peter Thompson 43 Forest View Rd, Gloucester, GL4 0BY.	010 20442

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. 9 - JUNE 1990.

Diary Dates

- Jul 15 IWA coach and boat trip to the Basingstoke and Kennet and Avon Canals. For further details contact Gordon Lowthian on Glo. 730227.
- Jul 21-2 Friends helping with the Cranes Weekend at the Museum. For help required, see later page.
- Aug 25-7 Friends helping with the National Waterways Festival. For help required, see later page.
- Aug 28 Mikron Theatre Co at the Museum at 7.30. For details, see later page.
- Sep 1 Closing date for entries to the photographic competition. (For details see insert)
- Sep 18 How We Saved the Barge. David McDougall tells the story of the resurrection of the concrete barge and Chris Witts shows it on video. Museum Schools Room at 7.30.
- Oct 7 Teach-in on Rag Rugs. Instruction for beginners with materials provided in the Museum Schools Room at 2pm.
- Oct 19 Restoration of the Rochdale Canal. An IWA talk by Brian Holden of the Rochdale Canal Society. Museum Schools Room at 7.30.
- Nov 22 The Tame Valley Canal - Birmingham's First Bypass. John Foley describes the major engineering works on this canal and the traffic which passed along it. Museum Schools Room at 7.30.
- Dec 18 The MAD Christmas Light and Sound Spectacular. An audio-visual presentation by the award winning MAD team, including a sequence on the Severn bore, and involving audience participation. Museum Schools Room at 7.30.

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

Appeal for Barge Photographs

David McDougall is looking for more photographs of the work involved in the recovery of the concrete barge for use in the talk he is giving to the Friends in September. If you have any slides or prints you would be willing to lend, please let David see them.

Special Events at the Museum

- July 1 Gloucester Rail Day. Paintings and prints by a group of well-known railway artists will be on show and for sale.
- July 20 Sky Show 90. (Not based at the Museum.) A spectacular show of fireworks and laser light preceded by an evening of live music, entertainment, childrens fairground and events on the water.
- July 21-2 Cranes Weekend. A gathering of steam, diesel, electric and hand cranes on land and water. Sponsored by B.E.T. Plant Services.
- Aug 4-19 Embroidery. An exhibition of work by the Guild of Embroiderers on the theme of Water.
- Aug 11-12 Horses. A gathering of working and shire horses, including the famous Whitbread shires, pony and trap rides and demonstrations of saddlery, horse brasses and the farriers craft. Sponsored by West Midlands Farmers.
- Aug 18 Embroidery Workshop. Experts from the Guild of Embroiderers will be on hand for this one day workshop.
- Aug 21-31 Waterway Images. An exhibition of the work of Harry Arnold showing the waterways today and as they were.
- Aug 25-27 Members of the International Guild of Knot Tyers will be demonstrating their craft and talking to visitors.
- Sep 1-2 Third Annual Modellers Weekend. Static steam engines, fairground models, road vehicles and model boats.
- Oct 20-28 Second Annual Railway Modellers Exhibition. A delightful collection of railway model layouts from Gloucester and the West Midlands.

New Chairman of Trust

Dr Alan Robertson has been appointed chairman of the Council of Management of the National Waterways Museum Trust. He succeeds Sally Oppenheim Barnes who resigned because of pressure of other duties. Dr Robertson was a member of the Board of British Waterways for seven years and subsequently Vice Chairman of BW from 1983 until he retired last year.

Concrete Barge Rescued from Purton

Based on information provided by David McDougall, Des Ffonde and Friends who worked on the project.

Hard work by Museum staff and Friends culminated in a successful relaunching of a concrete barge from the Severn foreshore at Purton on the high tide of 28 March. The barge had been dumped there in the 1960s, with her bow up the bank and three holes in the stern to ensure she didn't float away. During 1989, several working parties had cleared out most of the mud that had accumulated inside, but there was still a lot to do when Museum staff started the final phase of the operation in early March.

The biggest question about the whole project was whether the barge would stick to the mud she had rested on for so many years and not refloat when the time came. The plan therefore was to get out as much of the remaining mud as possible and to hose round the outside and partly underneath to reduce stiction.

The first task was to remove the mud that had been washed back into the hold during the winter. Arrangements were made for the Dursley fire brigade to bring along a pump and some hoses, and as the new mud was still fairly soft, they soon had it sluiced out through the holes in the stern. They also began the process of washing mud away from the outside.

Another early task was to prepare for repairing the holes in the hull. The concrete was chipped away around a hole to get a clean surface and expose lengths of uncorroded reinforcing bars, and a new mesh of bars was welded into place by Ray Swan. Also Museum staff inserted metal pegs into the ribs on either side of the hole and prepared shuttering on the outside of the hull and across the inside of the ribs. Then concrete was poured into the cavity, vibrated and allowed to set.

While the holes were being repaired, the remaining hard mud in the hold was bucketed out and a start was made on clearing the back cabin. Also during this period, work was going on to make the top of the barge waterproof in case stiction from the mud under the hull delayed the stern lifting on the high spring tide.

On the Saturday before the hoped for launch, a working party of Friends dug more mud out along the sides and sluiced it away with a high pressure hose, and a lot of mud was removed from under the bow to ensure the bow would not remain stuck when and if the stern lifted. During this work, it was found that the barge was resting on the remains of a wooden trow that must have been dumped on the same bank many years earlier.

When a second working party of Friends arrived on Sunday morning, to everyone's delight it was obvious that the stern of the barge had moved slightly, indicating that it must have just lifted on the night tide. Three wire cables had previously been laid out to fixed points on the shore as a precaution, and now two more were added as it was clear they would be needed. With the knowledge that stiction would not be a problem after all, there was no more need to clear round the outside, and the working party spent the day bucketing most of the remaining mud out of the aft cabin. This was a difficult and filthy task, but it was made easier by the feeling that it was all worthwhile. In the next two days, Museum staff completed the preparations by removing the last of the mud and hanging tyres round the outside to act as fenders.

On the morning of the launch, there was quite a crowd of onlookers, including retired Waterways men and local villagers as well as those who had helped with the mud clearing. As the top of the tide approached, the tug Freight Mover came up from Sharpness, and the SARA rescue boat and Doug Griffey's ex-lifeboat were also in attendance. Near to the top of the tide, Tony Conder broke a bottle across the bow of the barge, and to the cheers of the onlookers, the tug started to take the barge in tow. Most of the spectators then dispersed, but two who had watched the proceedings from the vantage point of the adjacent concrete barge found they were surrounded by water, and they had to wait there until the tide receded a bit!

Out in deep water, the tug released the tow rope and made fast alongside as it was known that the empty barge would be difficult to steer on a long rope. At first it was difficult for the tug to make progress against the last of the flood, but once the tide turned, the two vessels were soon swinging round Sharpness Point and into the dock entrance. The tide was so high that it didn't take long to lock up into the dock, and the barge was taken round to tie up near the newly established Repair Yard.

For the journey up the canal the next day, the barge was put on a short bridle behind the tug, and a mud-hopper half full of water was tied on behind to stop her wandering too far. The tow made good progress and reached Gloucester at lunchtime, being greeted by Museum staff and Friends who sounded the whistle of the steam dredger and a weird hooter from the Museum's collection. It was a fitting climax to a remarkable enterprise.

One result of the publicity surrounding the rescue was that the Museum received a report that one of the very much larger concrete barges built beside the canal during the first world war is now being used as

the headquarters of a sailing club in a Norwegian fjord. If anyone is due to be visiting Norway and would be willing to check on this, please contact David McDougall.



Donations

The Treasurer is pleased to acknowledge donations received from the following during the period 28 Nov 1989 to 31 May 1990:

Barber, P.H. & W.E.	Mann, C.J.
Brind, C.M.	Mardling, R.W. & S.J.
Coombs, P.E. & V.B.	Marsden, A. & S.M.H.
Davis, E.J. & P.M.	Neill, D.B.
Deaves, G.B. & Z.E.	Neil, D.G.
Ewan, R.D.	Randles, T.R. & H.R.
Field, D.A.J.	Shepherd, M.J. & R.A.
Flisher, R.A. & F.	Shilton, D.F.
Green, A.R.	Shooter, R.A. & J.
Harness, E.G.	Stacey, C.
Jeffery, A.C.	Stoddart-Stones, G. & R.C.
Jones, C.R. & S.	Tandy, M.G. & D.C.
King, S.J.	Trivess, J.E. & J.C.
Leighfield, H.D.	Wallace, C.A. & M.R.
Lockwood, H. M.	Wilks, R.D. & L.

At the AGM

At the AGM in May, the Chairman thanked the previous Committee for their hard work throughout the year, and he particularly mentioned Paul Garwood and Ian Parsons who are standing down. Two new members were elected in their place; Marian Palmer who has already been doing the job of Membership Secretary for the last year, and Richard Trelfa who will be organising the hosts and helpers at the Museum. Alan Garnett will be co-opted to represent the dredger drivers who contribute so much to the Museum.

The other main item concerned an increase in the subscription for family membership. The Museum has recently increased the admission charge for a family by £1 to £7, and as the Friends subscription provides free entry to the Museum, it was reluctantly agreed that the subscription should also go up by £1 to £11 from 1 October. Although the Museum's standard admission charge has also gone up a little, it was agreed that the Friends individual membership could be held at £6.

In the discussion following the meeting, it was suggested that families should be given two membership cards to avoid any difficulties when husband and wife visit the Museum separately. Arrangements will be made for this when future renewals are processed, and in the meantime the Membership Secretary will provide a second card on request.

Curator Comments on Increased Admission Charges

The Museum has recently increased its admission charges to take account of inflation and other rises in costs. As an independent organisation, it is required to break even on its income from visitors. Tony Conder said 'The greater the economic independence of the Museum, the more it can choose its own projects and developments. No organisation likes to increase prices, but we reckon the Museum is still excellent value when compared against other leisure activities.'

Canal Boat Records on the Computer

Good progress is being made with entering information from the Gloucester canal boat registers on to the Museum's computer, but there is a lot more to do and more volunteers would be welcome. The process is essentially typing, with no previous experience of computers required. The best time for doing the work is a Wednesday afternoon, and anyone who can help should contact Hugh Conway-Jones on Gloucester 619679.

Judges for Friends Photo Competition

Repeat details of the rules and prizes for our photo competition are enclosed with this issue of Llanthony Log. The panel of judges will comprise Museum curator Tony Conder, waterways manager Brian Rogers and photographer Jack Farley. Brian Rogers was British Waterways Acting Area Engineer at Wigan before his current appointment as Regional Manager (South West) covering the River Severn, the Sharpness Canal, the Kennet and Avon Canal and canals in Somerset and South Wales. Jack Farley recently retired as a school master and is now a freelance professional photographer. He is a Fellow of the Royal Photographic Society and has been President of Gloucester Camera Club for about 18 years.

Sue Goes to Kettering

Sue Bleach, who has been David McDougall's assistant for the last year, left the Museum staff in May to take up a job in Kettering. Sue has been much involved in setting up databases on the computer to record all the Museum's equipment, artefacts and photographs etc, and she has been very helpful to the Friends in guiding those who have been entering canal boat records on to the computer. She has also occasionally had to stand in for David in supervising the volunteers involved in cleaning and restoring exhibits.

Sue will be taking up the post of Assistant Museum and Gallery Manager at the Manor House Museum and Alfred East Art Gallery in Kettering. This municipal museum has recently been re-established in a Georgian house near the Library, and Sue will initially be involved in setting up new displays of geology and archaeology. Do pop in and see her if you are in that area.

Objections to Railings Overruled

Gloucester City Council has granted planning permission for railings to be erected around Phase 1 of the docks redevelopment, in spite of objections from the Gloucestershire Society for Industrial Archaeology and Gloucester Civic Trust. The local societies accepted that posts and chains are necessary in some places, but they objected to the designs of balustrade being proposed and to their indiscriminate use. The Planning Committee initially deferred a decision, but having been told that balustrading is normal at other dock developments and that the specific designs are supported by English Heritage, they gave the go-ahead.

Regimental Museum Reopens

The Museum of the Gloucestershire Regiment is due to be reopened on 24 June in the refurbished former Custom House. The building has been extensively remodelled to provide an entrance from the docks into what used to be the rear of the building, and additional display areas have been created, some of which will be used to show exhibits associated with the Royal Gloucestershire Hussars.

The museum will trace the history of each of the county regiments from the raising of the Glosters in 1694 to the present day. Curator Christine Beresford says that the aim is to tell the real story of soldiering from the social as well as the regimental standpoint. In addition to uniforms, medals and souvenirs from overseas battles, there will be 'Animatronic' life-size model soldiers, graphics with sound and light, and a cellar full of battle scene mock-ups.

To mark the forthcoming opening, a special reception was held at the museum in April. Crowds gathered to watch a flotilla of army yachts glide into the Victoria Dock and moor in front of the museum. They were on their way right round the coast of Britain and sailed up the River Severn especially to salute the new museum. They were escorted into Victoria Dock by HMS Charger, an inshore patrol craft, and they were greeted by the band and drums of the Gloster's 1st battalion beating the retreat.

The museum is setting up a Friends organisation and is seeking volunteers to act as stewards or help in the shop. We look forward to collaborating with this new venture.

Conservation Area at Sharpness

Pressure from the Gloucestershire Society for Industrial Archaeology has succeeded in getting a Conservation Area established covering the old dock and locks at Sharpness. The old dock was the original entrance of the Gloucester and Berkeley Canal opened in 1827, and the tidal basin and dock masters house are rare survivals in a marvellous setting.

The Society became concerned about the area when they heard of proposals to build houses on the bank overlooking the site, and they felt that such a development would completely destroy the unique character of the old dock. For 18 months, they have been pressing Stroud District Council to declare the area a Conservation Area, and this was eventually agreed to on 29 March. This does not give complete protection against development, but it does make it more difficult.

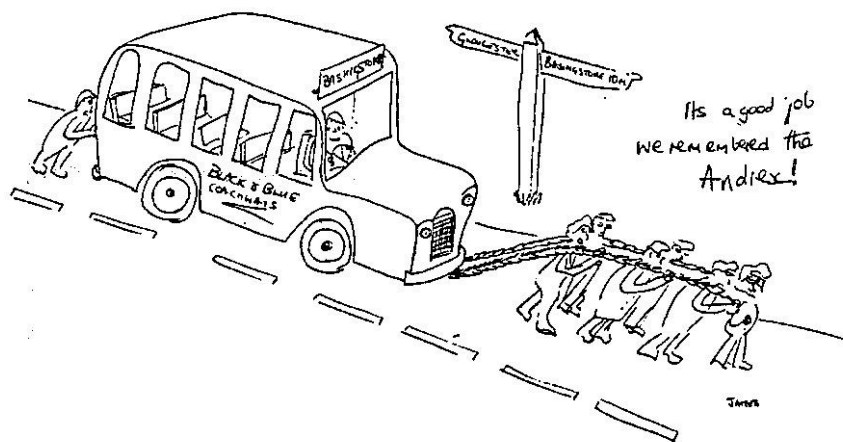
Friends Support the Telethon

Friends were active in organising and promoting events for the ITV fund raising Telethon over the spring bank holiday weekend, and thousands of people came to the docks to join in the fun.

The Andrex Challenge

Wanting to do 'something different' to support Telethon, knot tyers Colin Jones and Robert Jackson decided to make a rope out of toilet paper. Andrex agreed to supply the raw materials, and rope-making machinery was loaned by Stroud Museum. Using experience gained during the Friend's crafts weekend, Colin and Robert set about their challenge in the Schools Room, watched by visitors to the Museum who could hardly believe what was going on.

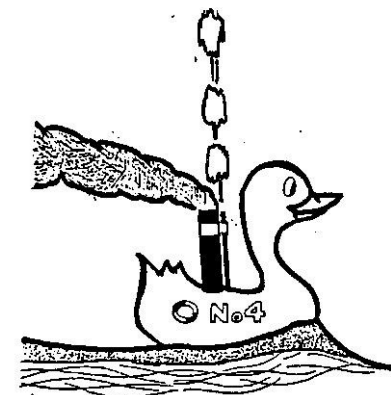
To form the initial yarn, Robert used the Stroud equipment to twist the end of the toilet paper while Colin payed out the roll with one hand and used the other to ensure a uniform twist. When Colin reached the far end of the Schools Room, he tore off the paper and went back to start again, repeating the operation until 63 yarns had been produced. The next stage was to close three yarns together to make a rope, then seven of these were twisted together to make a thicker strand, and three of these strands were twisted together to form the completed cable. The final stage was to splice a dead-eye into each end of the cable, and then it was ready for testing.



The test was to see if the rope would be strong enough to pull a double-decker bus, and strong man David Wilkins was brought in to do the pulling. As word got around that the attempt was going to be made, a large crowd gathered in the Museum car park and a television crew set up their camera to transmit the event live. On the given cue, Dave Wilkins put his massive weight into the pull, and on his second attempt the bus rolled forward to the cheers of the crowd. The rope of toilet paper had taken the strain.

Steam Powered Duck Racing

Richard Trelfa's idea of doing something for Telethon was to get people to sponsor plastic ducks which were carried up in the buckets of the Museum's No 4 steam dredger and tipped out on to a target on the quayside. Experimentation before the weekend showed that it was necessary to place the ducks carefully in the dredger's buckets as a hurried operation could result in some of the ducks falling in the dock. Recovery of strays could be time consuming, and some were picked up by passing boaters while others were seen floating in the dock several days later.



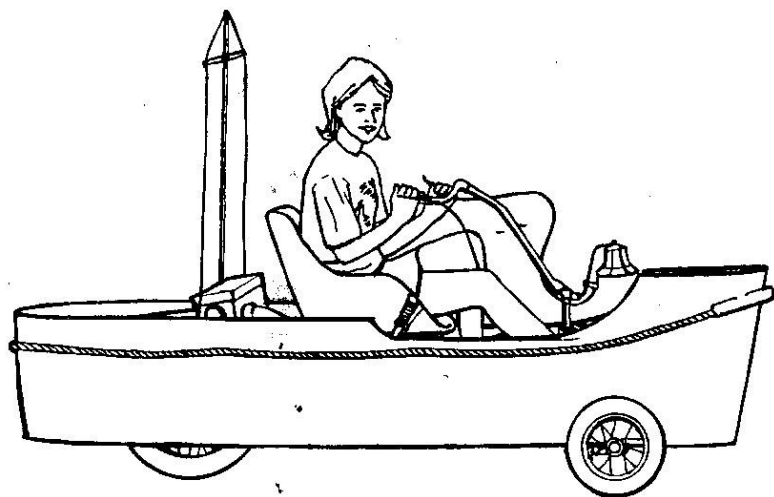
On the day of the Telethon, a rota of Friends manned a stall outside the Museum explaining what it was all about and selling duck numbers. The prize for each race was a duck and a bottle of champagne donated by Clive and Jill Field. When it was time for a race, more Friends loaded the ducks into the buckets of the dredger, and as they were tipped out at the top of the tower, they fell down the chute and on to the target. When all the ducks had passed through the dredger, the one nearest the centre of the target was picked out, and the number on it determined the lucky prize winner. The response of the public was marvellous, and over £500 was raised for Telethon. It was particularly pleasing that the winner of the last race was present to see her duck picked out, and she was able to take her prize home with her. One of the other prize winners turned out to be only three years old, when contacted, his father promised to pass on the duck but was less clear about the champagne!

The Cartathon

Friends also supported the cartathon - a Le Mans style 24-hour cart race around the Victoria Dock for teams of seven pedalers. A cart was designed and made by Ray Swan, largely using bits and pieces he had in

his workshop. The frame was welded up from square section tubes and surrounded by plywood and aluminium panels shaped to represent the hull of a tug. To add to the nautical theme, the cart was fitted with a mast and a miniature bell that could be rung by the steerer, and Colin Jones provided a rope to go right round the hull with a fender at the bow. The two front wheels came from a disabled chair and the single rear wheel from a moped, Trevor Hill provided the pedals, and Ray fitted chains and a gearbox. The steerer sat in the seat of an old chair from the Museum staff-room and controlled his direction using a single steering bar which also carried the brake lever. One feature that needed getting used to was the lack of any free-wheel mechanism, and the steerer had to operate a clutch to go into neutral.

The original intention was to enter a joint Museum and Friends team, but this had to be modified when only the Museum blacksmith volunteered to do the pedalling. Fortunately, British Waterways wanted to enter a team but didn't have a cart, and so a combined team was arranged.



The team members took it in turns to pedal the cart around the Victoria Dock, frequently having difficulty avoiding pedestrians who wandered on to the track. Ray Swan's skills were needed from time to time to carry out running repairs, and he stayed on call throughout the 24 hours of the race, only grabbing a few hours sleep in his Land Rover when he could. One nasty moment was when the cart came to a halt with a nut missing from the crank. In failing light, a search was instigated along the path the cart had taken, and fortunately Heien Hill soon spotted the nut on the ground. Rather worse was when the steerer's foot got caught between the pedal and the frame, and the crank ended up bent. This required heating in the blacksmith's hearth to get it straight, and then the cart was off again to finish with honour.

NOT H.M.S. VICTORY - SOMETHING ELSE

By 'Mud' with acknowledgements to Grahame Farr, R.N.L.I. Archivist.

The life-boat the "Always Ready" was built in 1933 from the legacy of Mrs. Elizabeth Boldron-Browne, of Scarborough, at a cost of £3,187. You will have noticed her in Gloucester Docks because of her very low freeboard; a design feature necessary to enable persons in the water to be hauled aboard.

The new boat was of the 'Liverpool' class, 35ft 6in. long by 10ft. beam, with a gross tonnage of 9 and a net of 6. She was built by John Samuel White & Co. at Cowes to be the first motor driven life-boat to be stationed at Runswick in Yorkshire. Before she was officially named, her second service call was to the salvage vessel 'Disperser' in February 1934. The vessel in distress had only one seaman on board, who because he was lame, did not want to jump into the life-boat. The life-boat Coxswain, Robert Patton, saw the man's difficulty and jumped out of the boat to assist him. Although he grasped the man, the two craft were swept apart. The vessels were washed together again almost immediately and the Coxswain was badly crushed before the two men could be hauled to safety. Robert Patton was taken to hospital but died nine days later.

On the 20th September the Princess Royal named the new life-boat "The Robert Patton - The Always Ready". The Coxswain's widow received his posthumous award of the R.N.L.I.'s Gold Medal from the Prince of Wales.

The lifeboat's service consisted mainly of standing by the local fishing fleet when they returned to port in bad weather. Seventeen lives were saved by the time she retired in 1954. She was then converted to a pilot cutter and was eventually bought by the Amalgamated Gloucester Pilots who stationed her at Portishead in 1957. She retired from that post in 1974 having completed 8,373 duties, including the saving of lives and small craft. For example, two apprentices, named Higgs and Morgan, saved a boy stranded on the rocks in Walton Bay. Higgs put the bow of the boat on the rocks while Morgan dived overboard, swam to the boy and attached a rope to him so that he could be hauled to safety.

When the R.N.L.I. discharges a life-boat her name has to be changed. The traditional name of the Gloucester Pilot cutters was "Alaska". So the Robert Patton - The Always Ready, was renamed. She is now cared for by the National Waterways Museum's Sunday Santa last year, Doug Griffey. In the Museum foyer is a small model life-boat with a slot in the top; for the crews of the R.N.L.I. and the boats that are "Always Ready".

The Spry at Ironbridge

Hugh Conway-Jones reports progress on the restoration of the last Severn trow.

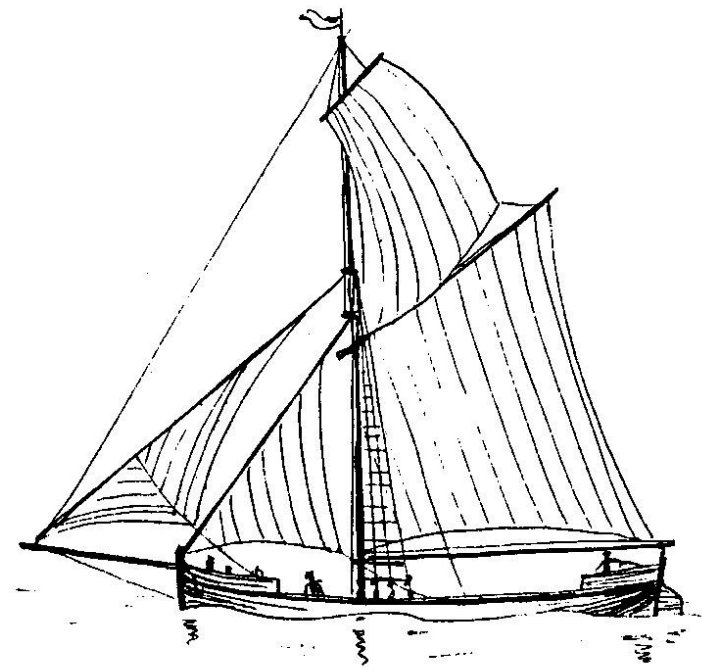
Peter Wallace, David McDougall and I went to the Blists Hill site of the Ironbridge Gorge Museum to see how they are getting on with the restoration of the trow Spry. The vessel is not normally open to the public, but Peter had arranged for us to be shown round by Paul Turner, assistant to Alan Williams the shipwright in charge.

Spry was built at Chepstow in 1894, and she was owned for many years by William Davis, a local stone merchant who supplied stone to Gloucester, Bristol, Avonmouth and Newport. In the 1930s, she was owned by Jacob Rice and Sons and used as a dumb barge carrying wheat from Avonmouth to Reynolds Mill at Gloucester. After the war, she became a floating workshop at Worcester until eventually she was recognised as the last Severn trow and was transferred to Ironbridge for restoration.

The woodwork was found to be in poor condition, and so the restoration has really been a process of rebuilding. The first stage was to replace all the frames using the original planking as a mold, and then the old planks were replaced to produce a faithful replica of the original vessel. The frames were made from oak donated by the Forestry Commission and local landowners, and the shipwright selected suitable pieces from which to cut the required shapes. The planks were sawn from larch and had to be steamed in the traditional way before being clamped into place and then nailed to the frames.

Like all trows, she has a flat bottom with round bilges over most of her length, but she has remarkably fine lines towards the stern to reduce drag in the water. One piece of wood that has been retained is the original cross beam to which the mast was fixed and on which is carved the official number and the registered tonnage. This has been reused as the middle beam as it was felt important to have new timber for the mast beam. The pine keelson has also been reused as it had been fitted in the vessel relatively recently and is still in good condition.

One problem for the restorers is to finalise how the rebuilt vessel should be rigged, as there are no photographs of the original in her sailing days. To try to help, David McDougall handed over a photograph from the Museum's collection showing a very similar vessel with her sails set near the Black Bridge at Gloucester. At the same time, Peter Wallace collected a set of plans of the Spry's hull so he can make a model of her.



More recently, June Knipe also visited Blists Hill for a rather special occasion. June's father, Len Sharp, was the last skipper of the Spry, and she was invited to the renaming ceremony. After a speech by the Chairman of the Upper Severn Navigation Trust, the vessel's owners, June and her sister pulled back a curtain to reveal the name 'Spry Gloster' written in gold letters on a black background. It was a proud moment for June, who remembered many trips on the old Spry going to Avonmouth with her father during the school holidays.

Mikron Theatre Company at the Museum

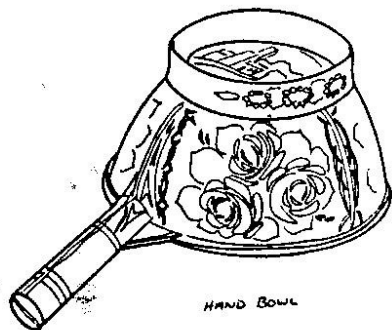
For the nineteenth year, Mikron is touring the inland waterways on board their traditional narrowboat Tyseley. They stop off at canal and riverside pubs, clubs, museums and community centres, and they will be performing at our Museum on Tuesday 28 August at 7.30. This year's show, Free for All, is described as an environmentally friendly musical taking a humorous look at the conflicts on our waterways today. Who are the true conservationists? Is recreation a dirty word? Who are the environmental vandals? Does nature stand a chance? Should the boats be banned? Although the issues are serious, you can also be sure of good entertainment. Admission is free but a donation is expected on the way out.

CRAFTS WEEKEND

A report by Peter Wallace.

Our weekend proved to be one of great entertainment and achievement for both the visitors to the Museum and the participants in a diversity of crafts. Starting with Beauty, our ladies in the forms of Pat Tinnis, Janet Illingworth-Cooper, Rosemary Conway-Jones and Jo Jeremiah demonstrated the arts of belt embroidery, bonnet making and rag-rugging. In a different medium, David Mansfield exhibited wood carving and sculpture which were a delight to the eye.

The intricate skill of a professional model maker was demonstrated by Alan Butcher working on the construction of a bridge with each individual brick cut and coloured into the walls. Examples of his finished dioramas were displayed, with a torch available to examine the details inside the houses included in the scene.



When Ian Jeremiah arrived in costume to demonstrate 'roses and castles' painting, he appeared to have gained two inches in height. The reason lay at his feet, encased in clog-boots recently acquired in Yorkshire. These are the genuine article of the old boatman.

My own contribution was the skeleton start of a model of the trow "Spry", with the first plank held in place by man's most useful invention - the clothes peg! Many hen-pecked males pointed out to their spouses that was proof of what they were designed for; holding strips of wood together whilst glueing! I was also restoring a model of an Essex fishing boat that I had made 25 years ago. It had taken a battering since then and one visitor was convinced that it had been made "by an old man" in the 19th century. I decided to go along with this thought, and we spent several minutes considering what he was like! I then asked a few more visitors how they visualised the original model maker, and it was always "an old man". I wonder why?

This leads me to a man in his prime, pitting muscular strength against the power of steam. Out on the water, our Chairman ploughed a lonely wake sculling the Museum dinghy in time honoured method "over the stern". Having mastered the technique, he challenged the winch operator on the dredger to a duel. "Alas poor Hugh, I knew him well!"

The Titanic achievement of the weekend must be awarded to our knot tying friends Colin Jones and Robert Jackson from Birmingham. With the utmost delicacy, they first twisted a cord on their rope-making machine from a roll of flimsy toilet tissue. After making seven such cords, they twisted them into a rope. Having made three such ropes, they then twisted them together to form a rope of one-and-a-half inch diameter which looked and felt fit to tow the Cutty Sark. Congratulations on this unique achievement!

My thanks to all who took part and helped to make the Museum live.

The next crafts event is a Friend's rag rug making session in the Museum Schools Room on Sunday 7 October starting at 2pm. Materials and instruction will be provided - come along and try it for yourself.

Volunteers Needed

Helpers are needed for the Cranes Weekend in July and for the Museum tent on the National Waterways Festival site in August.

For the Cranes Weekend at the Museum on 21-2 July, as well as the cranes normally on site, it is expected that the working exhibits will include a Rapier diesel hydraulic crane, a British Waterways floating crane and a big modern crane supplied by Grayston White and Sparrow. The static displays will include a shearlegs, a Leeds and Liverpool electric crane and an engine crane from Bulls Bridge. The idea is to have a rota of helpers covering the whole weekend who will be demonstrating or just talking to visitors. Anyone interested in operating the steam crane would be particularly welcome. If you can help for a few hours, please contact Hugh Conway-Jones on Gloucester 619679.

The Museum will be having a tent on the Oxlease during the National Waterways Festival over the August Bank Holiday Weekend, and Friends have been invited to help staff it. This will be a good way of publicising the Friends as well as the Museum, and we hope to recruit many new members. If anyone can help for a few hours, please contact Janet Illingworth-Cooper on Gloucester 504294 during working hours.

Countdown to the Festival

Planning for the IWA National Waterways Festival is entering its final phase with only two months to go before the great event over the August bank holiday weekend. Almost 600 boats have now booked places, and future applicants will have to go on a reserve list as a limit is being applied because of restrictions on space. Arriving boats will be sure of a welcome as marshalls will be manning the riverside Quay to assist boats into Gloucester Lock. Loops of rope will extend along much of the quay wall for boaters to tie on to while waiting for the lock to empty, and the marshalls will have additional ropes for use if boats have any difficulty getting alongside the wall.

Most of the boats will be allocated mooring places three or four abreast along the canal and in Monk Meadow Dock. They will not go beyond Hempsted Bridge as a rowing regatta is being held there the same weekend. For those moored near to the docks, there will be land access along the canal bank, but for those further away, access will only be through adjoining properties and on to the Bristol Road. A water bus service is therefore being arranged during the weekend to help boaters get to and from the festival site. Other services being provided for the boaters include a lavender boat for emptying toilets, information about shopping and eating in Gloucester, a daily newsletter giving details about what is going on and a special programme of entertainments.

Many of the boaters will be entering the competitions which are a feature of the festival. Awards will be made to the boat travelling the furthest distance to the festival, the best turned out working boat, the best narrow beam pleasure boat and the best amateur fitted out boat. Other awards include the best galley, the best cake cooked and decorated during the festival and the best log of the voyage produced by a child. On Sunday evening, many of the boats will be decorated with lights to take part in a special cruise, and there will be an award for the best.

The main land-based activities will be on Castle Meads, just across the river from the docks. Huge marquees will be laid out in intersecting avenues with many smaller tents and open air displays as well. The applications for trade space have exceeded all expectations, and extra provisions have had to be made. Bookings are also coming in well for the craft and charity stalls, and many canal societies and IWA branches will be represented. One tent will feature British Waterways, another will provide a venue for the Mikron and Day Star theatre groups and a third will be for showing waterways films. The National Waterways Museum will also have a tent, and Friends are needed to help staff it.



As well as the waterways related activities, there will also be a dog agility show. The area originally allocated for this turned out to have some rare species of plants which could not be mown, but another area has been found that should serve just as well. Further attractions include a tent featuring Gloucester's twin towns, a series of outdoor entertainments in a special arena, a small fun-fair for children and a wide range of bar and catering facilities.

Visitors arriving by car will be directed to a free car park on the Oxlease from a turning off the A40 just over Westgate Bridge, and there will be a large caravan park nearby. The main entrance to the festival site will be through some arches underneath the railway line which runs across the meadows. A second gate will allow visitors to leave the site and cross the footbridge over the river to reach the docks. Here, pride of place is being given to the trade boats which will line the west side of the Main Basin and fill the two graving docks. On the other side of the basin, Waterways for Youth will provide opportunities for young people to learn about activities such as rowing, canoeing, windsurfing, fishing, traditional painting, canal restoration and the waterways heritage. In the Barge Arm will be boats specially adapted for the disabled, and there will be opportunities for disabled people to get afloat. Nearby, the trip boat Heather Spray will be running trips down the canal to view the moored boats.

An event like this requires an enormous amount of organisation and hard work, most of it being done by volunteers with help from British Waterways and Gloucester City Council. In the weeks before and after the event, the Waterways Recovery Group of the IWA are running canal camps which will bring volunteers from all over the country to help with the work involved in setting up the site and tidying up afterwards. Many other local volunteers will be joining in over the weekend to help with all the activities going on. The response to previous appeals has been extraordinarily good, and most of the main tasks are now allocated, but more volunteers are always welcome, particularly for selling tickets and programmes. If you can offer some time, please contact John Cook on Bristol 730129 or Hugh Conway-Jones on Gloucester 619679.