

Volunteering

(you don't need to get dirty – unless you want to...)

INTERESTING CHALLENGE

Are any members interested in taking up the challenge to investigate the possibility of operating a trip boat business on behalf of the trust.

Do you think you could develop a successful, profitable enterprise where the ground work has been prepared?

Contact *Alistair Price* for more information email: aprice@sncanal.org.uk
Telephone: 01743 242609

Getting involved is a great way to meet people and to make new friends. We do need volunteers to join our workparties but there are lots of other things you can do to lend a hand. Volunteering is fun and there are many different ways you could help the canal trust. Here are some of them:

Help man our exhibition stand. Over the summer we take our stand to all sorts of rallies and events in Shropshire and Staffordshire. We always need help to man the stand and to talk to interested visitors. Training is given and you won't be abandoned on your own!

WANTED - The SNCT is forming a marketing group to co-ordinate the various ways that we communicate with people. If you have a background in marketing, PR, journalism or social media and feel that you can help, please contact *John Myers* at editor@sncanal.org.uk

Are you good with paperwork? We always need help with applying for grants.

Apart from these examples there are plenty of other jobs that we need help with including things like updating our website and our Facebook pages, taking minutes, fundraising, scrap metal recycling, stamp collecting, proof reading and event planning

Regular Work Parties

Come along and get some fresh air and exercise and perhaps learn new skills. You don't even have to be a member to take part in one of our work parties.

Our regular work parties take place on three Saturdays each month:

Newport: Every 1st Saturday of the month, 10.00am - 4.00pm.

Wappenshall: Every 3rd Saturday of the month, 10.00am - 4.00pm.

Shrewsbury: Every last Saturday of the month, 10.00am - 4.00pm.

If you want to find out more or to enquire about how you can help, then email volunteer@sncanal.org.uk with your details and what you are interested in doing or take a look at the Volunteering page on our website.

www.sncanal.org.uk

S&N News - Issue 63/4 2016

S&N News



The quarterly newsletter of the
Shrewsbury and Newport Canals Trust

Issue 63/4 2016



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SNCT is a Registered Charity, no. 1088706 and a Registered Company, limited by guarantee, no. 4075920

COPY FOR S&N NEWS

S&N News is published four times each year in February, May, August and November. The copy deadline is first of the previous month i.e.

first January, first April, first July and first October.

COPY WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED AFTER THESE DATES

send your copy to the editor

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The Editor reserves the right to edit copy supplied to the newsletter

www.sncanal.org.uk

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Shrewsbury and Newport Canals Trust



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Working to restore the canals in partnership with The Norbury to Newport Canal Restoration CIC

The views expressed by contributors to S&N News do not necessarily represent the views or policies of The Shrewsbury and Newport Canals Trust



notes from the chair

It hardly seems five minutes since I last sat down to write my last report, but here we are heading into autumn. So much has been done in the last few months it is difficult to know where to start.

The WRGies returned from 13th to 27th August and, as you may be aware, this is the first time we have had them for a 2 week camp. The first week's group was led by *Nigel Lee* and the second week was led by *Bob Crow*, both of whom have worked with us before. Great progress was made at both Forton and at Meretown Lock, the latter now having a curved access ramp added to one side of the wooden bridge. We also repaired/replaced the CRT service road outside the Junction Inn at Norbury and re-profiled and re-seeded the grass area from the road down towards the canal. In all some 30 tonnes of material were used. This work was carried out during two of the hottest days this year and our thanks go to *Alison Frizzell* of the Junction Inn for keeping us fed and watered. Although SNCT volunteers worked some 345 hours during the fortnight, I have to say that support from other members was sadly lacking. We were even found wanting on the cake front but thanks to those members who did bring some. The WRGies and SNCT volunteers thrive on cake!

Himalayan Balsam Bashes have been held at both Newport and Wappenshall in the hope of evicting this invasive species of plant. It has a very pretty flower but wreaks havoc once it starts its invasion – each plant is capable of producing 800 seeds so the more we manage to dispose of the better.

The Wappenshall Wharf Open Day was held in early September on what must have been one of the wettest days we have seen for some time. Despite this, attendance was good and we raised over £400.

Finally – the IWA Raffle 2016/17. Last year we came second, only being beaten by the WRG van appeal. Enclosed with this magazine are a couple of books of tickets for the next raffle. After her success last time, *Gwyneth Munroe* has kindly agreed to organise it again for the SNCT. If you want more books of tickets then contact her at gwyn_chris@yahoo.co.uk or telephone **07983168993**. Gwyneth will also be collecting all the raffle book stubs to send back to the IWA.

Important

Last year some people did not realise that they need to put SNCT in the “Nominate A Project” box so can everyone please make sure that they fill in this box so that SNCT gets the benefit.

Bernie Jones chairman

SUPPORT GROUP MEETINGS NEWPORT

- **Wednesday 2nd November**
Wednesday 4th January
7.30pm British Legion Club
Audley Road, Newport TF10 7DP
Contact: *John Myers 01785 255263*

TELFORD

- **Saturday 16th December**
2.30pm The Villa Wappenshall
Combined work party & support group Christmas meeting
- **Monday 13th February**
7.30pm The Elephant and Castle
1 High Street, Dawley TF2 9JQ
Contact: *Alan Harding 07944 753009*

SHREWSBURY

- **See website for details**
7.30pm Meole Brace Bowling Club,
Meole Rise, off Upper Road,
Meole Brace, Shrewsbury SY3 9JF
Contact: *Bernie Jones 01743 709601*

Dates for your Diary

Do, please, check the website for updates

- **Thursday 17th November**
SNCT Trustees meeting 7.30pm
Bridge House, Wappenshall TF6 6DE
Members are free to attend but may be requested to leave the room if sensitive subjects are being debated.
- **Saturday 12th November**
Extra work party to clear scrub at Blists Hill Museum.
Watch the website for details
- **Tuesday 6th December 2016**
Shrewsbury Support Group Christmas get together and meal,
The Abbey Hotel, 83 Monkmoor Road, Shrewsbury SY2 5AZ.
7.00pm for 7.30pm. All SNCT members welcome. Three courses £17.49.
Email Derek Taylor on derek.kath@talktalk.net or phone him on 01743 367802 or Mobile 07796274309. Last date for booking is Sunday 20th November 2016.
- **January 2nd 2017**
IWA 4 mile Winter Walk
from Cholmondeston Lock on the Shropshire Union to the Badger Inn at Church Minshull for lunch.
Contact Mike Haig on 07801 415573 or email him at: michael.haig@waterways.org.uk
- **22nd February 2017**
IWA quiz night
Narrowboat Inn, Whittington SY11 4NU.
Meal available from 6.30pm. Prior notice of those wishing to eat would be helpful. *Contact Val Haig at: val.haig@waterways.org.uk*

New Members

We welcome the following new members to the Shrewsbury and Newport Canals Trust

- Janet Christian**, High Offley
- Anne Castellan**, Newport
- Stephen, Helen & Rosemary Lyus**, Wirral
- Aubrey & Brenda Minshall**, Newport
- Jennifer Hill**, Bilston
- Peter & Helen Marshall**, Wheaton Aston
- Derek & June Palmer**, Wheaton Aston
- Keith & Vivien Fenn**, Wrockwardine
- Roger & Ruth Green**, Wheaton Aston
- Sian Morgan**, Newport
- Steve Merchant**, Shrewsbury
- David & Mary Huxley**, Ingleton Yorkshire
- Tony & Helen Kilcoyne**, Wheaton Aston
- Edmund & Christine Supple**, Edgmond
- Lee, Catharine & Alec Moreton**, Shifnal
- Fred & Edna McDermott**, Wheaton Aston
- Alan Bason**, Shrewsbury
- Gavin McKenzie & Jean Watt**, Shrewsbury
- Katrina Gibson**, Shrewsbury
- Anthony Parkes**, Puy L'Eveque, France
- Ian Walker**, Croydon, London
- Bomere Heath WI**, Bomere Heath, Shropshire
- Rea Valley Probus Club**, Pontesbury, Shrewsbury

River trip raises over £700



Last April my son asked me if I fancied canoeing down the River Severn. I don't swim very well and the arthritis in my knees isn't very forgiving so my answer was an emphatic "no chance".

After checking that I didn't have to kneel down I changed my mind and said yes, if I could raise £50 or so for the Wappenshall Appeal it would help a little.

At Wappenshall I mentioned it to *Phil Jones* and he said "I'll do it with you". So Phil and I started badgering friends and workmates for sponsorship. Suffice to say Phil and I achieved a lot more than £50.

The day arrived. Phil and I turned up at Bridgnorth to hear that Bewdley had a regatta on that day and didn't want a load of unskilled canoeists appearing in the middle of it. Our journey was now going to terminate at Arley.

The weather was beautiful, the river quiet, we got in the canoe and off we went. Without too much energy expended we arrived at Hampton Loade just in time for a pint and a sandwich. Forty five minutes stop there and then onwards to Arley. The peace of being on the river is something that everyone should experience, real tranquility.

The work wasn't too hard. And the rewards? A great day was had by all and we raised, in total with Gift Aid, £742.75. Thank you to all who contributed. Now who wants to try it next year?

Alan Boney



As I write this update towards the end of October, the Heritage Lottery Fund grant Round 2 bid is, after a great deal of work, nearing completion to be submitted by the time you are reading this. We have made the case to the HLF for a significant increase to the near £1M already available – providing we raise the all-important match funding. We expect the outcome of our £80,000 grant application to DEFRA for EU funding to be notified to us within the next 3 weeks. This will be critical if we are to secure the HLF uplift. We have also applied to the Wolfson Foundation for the remainder of the match funding required. This is a very wealthy foundation that funded projects in the UK alone to the tune of £48M last year, one of which was the Isambard Kingdom Brunel element of the SS Great Britain exhibition in Bristol. The synergy between Brunel/SS Great Britain and Thomas Telford/Wappenshall has certainly not been lost on them. The fact that we plan to utilise the Telford Collection housed at Ironbridge Gorge Museum also particularly impressed them, along with the fact that the Institution of Civil Engineers, of which Telford was the first president, will also be part of our project at Wappenshall.

The really good news so far this month is that the total of small grants, donations and members pledges has now topped the £200,000 mark. Thank you to everyone who has helped us achieve this milestone.

Bernie Jones



RECENT WORK BY THE SHREWSBURY WORK PARTY



Recent months have seen work by Shrewsbury Work Party concentrated on the canal midway between what was Sundorne Wharf and the village of Uffington.

Interest was sparked in this area when, back in October 2014, a contributor to the oral archive project accompanied members on a walk and pointed out a few of the features which he could remember seeing as a child when he walked along the canal towpath on his way to Sunday School in Uffington.

Leaving the area where the wharf once was there is, immediately to the right of the path, what appears to be the bed of the 'canal' running alongside the path for maybe 200 metres before ending in the vicinity of a round brick structure, now somewhat damaged and overgrown by trees.

Strangely from this point the 'canal' appeared to continue through a tunnel, some 100 metres long, ending in the mill pond of Uffington Mill.

Directly at the side of the path where the 'canal' disappears there is a considerable iron structure which some speculated may have been moved from next to the round brick chamber.

I'm afraid our walk threw up more questions than answers.

An 1881 National Library of Scotland map coupled with a 1777 map of Uffington Township provided the answers.

What was thought to be the 'canal' was in fact a mill leet built much earlier, and the brick chamber was a sluice for directing water either to the mill or directly to the nearby river.

But what was the iron structure? Work started earlier in the year to try and shed some light



Using the 'Tirfor' winch to remove tree stumps



We had council permission to remove larger trees



The spillweir bridge is over 200 years old

on this, and after an initial bit of scrub bashing spades were put to work and brickwork started to appear. Over subsequent work parties this brickwork, extending some 5 metres either side of the iron structure, was identified as being a spillweir, from which it was possible to better identify the line and level of the Shrewsbury Canal at this point.

Work has continued in this area to clear the undergrowth from the line of the canal. Small trees have been cut down and their stumps removed with the 'Tirfor' winch, larger trees, with the permission of the council, have felt the sharp teeth of *Alistair Price's* chainsaw. However those trees with roots embedded in the spillweir wall are beyond the capabilities of the 'Tirfor' winch and will have to wait for more robust machinery before the spillweir walls can be reinstated.

The iron structure? This carried the towpath over the spillweir, and although now missing it's side railings has remained exactly where it was placed when the canal was constructed over 200 years ago.

Derek Taylor.

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Nightlife at Wappenshall

One Friday evening late in July the Shropshire Moth Group came to Wappenshall to survey the moth species that are on the site. SNCT members were invited to join them so Rog and I went along. They set up their five traps at dusk in various locations and waited for dark. The sunset was fabulous and the whole site very atmospheric as darkness fell.

The traps were of different kinds but all had a bright light (from which we had to shield our eyes), a type of funnel, usually of 'Perspex', which channelled the moths down into a box lined with egg trays which were there to allow the moths somewhere to settle. While we waited, two of the Shropshire Group had bat detectors and we hoped to see some bats but disappointingly only two largish but unidentified bats flew past and one pipestrelle was detected but not seen.

A barn owl flew over and two tawny owls were heard having a conversation somewhere nearby.

As darkness fell the moths started to appear. At first there were only micro moths - so small it was difficult to distinguish their features without reading glasses. Then the larger moths started to arrive and they were beautiful with incredible shapes, colours and markings. Each moth was caught in a small, clear plastic bottle until it was identified and recorded and then released. Some females were kept until they had deposited some eggs which would then be photographed, recorded, kept until they hatched and the caterpillars, likewise photographed and recorded before being deposited on an appropriate food plant.

The largest we saw was a female poplar hawk moth with a body about 1¼" long (3.5cm) and a wing span of about of just over 3" (8cm) which crawled on to my finger to pose for its photograph.

The recordings from each trap are sent to *Tony Jacques*, who is the County Recorder and a complete list compiled. On this occasion 70 species were identified. Tony told me that many

All Photos Shropshire Moth Group



the beautiful Blood-vein moth with a diagonal pink/red line running from the forward wing tip

moths are becoming more scarce because we are too tidy in our gardens and countryside, mowing down plants we think of as weeds but which are vital food plants for different moths.

As part of our avowed intent to encourage bio-diversity on the site, it might be worth considering leaving some margins of the site unmown for the benefit of the moths, the bats and birds that feed on them and the pollinating insects which also visit these plants.

The Shropshire Moth Group were a very friendly bunch and very willing to talk to us about the moths they caught and it was an extremely interesting evening.

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Waterway Recovery Group spent two weeks with us

It seems hard to believe that twelve months have passed since the Waterways Recovery Group (WRG) members came to us for their week's camp in 2015. Burton Borough School, Newport again kindly provided the accommodation and the WRG members started to arrive on Friday 12th August. Saturday and Sunday, in warm dry weather, saw old acquaintances between the WRGies and our more active members being renewed, while preparations were made for the two weeks ahead. Materials and plant arrived on the two sites at Forton and Meretown where we would be working for the first week. Two changes from last year were that we had on site for the first time our own Welfare Unit and our own excavator. Thanks go to *David Cant* and *Simon Fox*, who have spent many hours fitting out the welfare unit and to member *Ian Braine* of Canal & River Services Ltd, who has provided the excavator on long term loan.



Re-pointed blockwork under the skew bridge No 10 at Forton

At Forton work got under way in earnest with a group working on the skew bridge to repoint the stone work and clear the side wall of many years of growth. They also dismantled parts of the canal wall and rebuilt it to correct a small amount of movement which had occurred.

At the other end, another group worked very hard scrub bashing and carefully took down the stock fencing which needed to be repositioned. Meanwhile in the canal bed the last section of profiling the canal banks took place to enable the remaining lining to be laid.

At the same time over at Meretown some work party members expended lots of energy replacing the very large sandstone blocks at the top of the lock and replacing the brick work around the old culverts. Other members dug and laid foundations ready to build an all ability ramp for the bridge over the lock chamber. This bridge, once completed, will enable us to move the current footpath from below the lock and dig out the bed allowing the lock to be re-connected to the stretch in water.

The dry warm weather over the first week allowed us to make great progress in all areas, the exception being Friday when the skies opened and turned the site very muddy. Even this was not enough to stop the work with everyone's boots getting heavier as the amount of mud clinging to them increased.

The middle weekend saw a slowing of work as the WRG members changed, with a new



The WRG laying Bentonite lining at Forton prior to covering it in soil. This is now complete



Installing the French Drain



New access ramp to the footbridge over Meretown Lock

group arriving for the second week. However Sunday afternoon saw everyone up to speed, this time working on three sites - the extra site was at Norbury Junction, where members repaired the service road in front of the Junction Inn. This work proved very popular, with SNCT making many new friends and supporters and greatly improving the appearance of the area at the start of our canal. Food provided by the Junction Inn was not only delicious but greatly helped the work progress. Over at Meretown the large sandstone blocks were all back in place and the ramp finished. The second week at Forton also proved very productive with all the bentonite lining in place along both banks, complete with its covering of earth. The French drain had been buried below the canal bed, ready for use to drain ground water from below the canal.

This has been another very successful WRG camp which finished off with a barbeque at Wappenshall where WRG members and SNCT members enjoyed a social evening, including a tour of Wappenshall and a most informative talk given by *Brian Nelson*, Vice Chairman.

Finally a big thanks to *Jim and Marion Weir* who worked on site for the greatest number of days.

At the time of going to press a WRG weekend work is planned for 15-16 October at Lesley Owen Way, Shrewsbury. This will miss S&N News' copy date so a report will be in the next issue.

Alistair Price

Balsam Bash!



The chairman bashing the balsam with gusto

Himalayan Balsam slowly reducing on the Newport Canal

On the Balsam bash morning we had very heavy rain. Not many people wanted to get soaked so, not surprisingly, we only had eight brave souls turn up to help but fortunately we were reinforced by four Army Cadet Force (ACF) youngsters and their sergeant.

In the morning we worked on the canal and the Strine Brook to the east of Town Lock which we have addressed in previous years and, as there was a lot less balsam there this year, in the afternoon we started to seriously address the area to the west of Town Lock for the first time.

This was the third year that we have cleared the canal between Fishers Lock and Town Lock and we found very little balsam there. There were a dozen small plants right up at Fishers Lock, from a plant that we could not get to last year. Between there and Victoria Park were only 4 plants!

After lunch we went to the west of Town Lock. Below Town Lock is a long untouched and overgrown "island" between the canal and the Strine. The ACF cleared the towpath side of the canal and some of the island then moved on to clear a farmer's field above the Strine. The rest of us worked on the island and managed to get about 150 meters into it. Some brave people worked in the Strine, where there was a lot of balsam. Our progress was stopped by a large and overgrown fallen tree; I tried to clear a path round it with a scythe but had to give up as it was impossible to tell where the branches were.

All in all a very successful day and it proved again that once balsam has been pulled from an area very little comes back.

John Myers

Tickethouse Lock Open Day



Tea and cakes were served

As last year we also gained knowledge from our visitors. We were delighted to talk to one lady who had been born in the cottages beside the lock house and next to the windmill, sadly all demolished in the 1960's. In the afternoon a party-like atmosphere developed as SNCT work party members popped in for a welcome break from 'balsam bashing', a family of Spanish folk visiting their son called by and other families enjoyed the balmy weather.

We were astonished to be shown by one young lad the many monsters who were amongst us on the lawn, one of which was apparently rare and valuable. This solved the mystery of why we had seen so many young, and not so young people had been walking along the canal towpath waving their mobile phones around. It was the Pokemon craze!

We served countless cups of tea and coffee, demolished several cakes and raised £97 for the Trust. In the evening, some of the Newport members stayed on for a BBQ, a lovely ending to the day.

Thank you every one who came and helped make an enjoyable and useful day.

Terry Otter

The 6th of August dawned fine and sunny and by 10 AM the local SNCT team had erected the information tent in our canalside garden, chairs and tables were laid out under and around a gazebo, the urn was switched on and a mouth-watering array of cakes were arranged on a table inside the house.

To the regular explosion of the balloons decking the gazebo a steady procession of dog walkers and passers-by entered through the gate and were interested to learn about the plans for the canal and for Wappenshall.

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The Shrewsbury and Newport Canal Association - in the beginning...

Bob Johnstone, along with his wife Jan, was one of the original members of the Shrewsbury and Newport Canal Association, the first group that formed to try and restore the S&N canals and a fore-runner of the SNCT. Sadly Bob passed away earlier this year and his widow Jan has kindly written this article about those early restoration days. The S&N Association eventually became the Shropshire Union Canal Society, which is still working to restore the Montgomery Canal today.

It wasn't long after Bob and I had met that he told me he had overheard a conversation in Donnington library near to where he lived that had made him eavesdrop. Someone was talking about restoring the Shrewsbury and Newport canals.

Bob had always had a fascination with canals and had for his own use and interest penned histories on the ones in our area together with plans of their routes. He and a friend, whilst still teenagers, had also cruised the Birmingham stretches in a small hire boat (very basic).

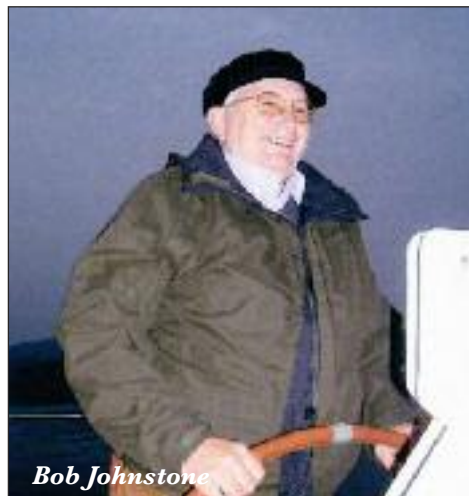
They had had some fascinating times, avoiding hazards such as one stretch where coal had spilled into the cut and they had had to pull the boat through and tackling areas where the towpath had disappeared.

So obviously his ears pricked up at the mention of the Shrewsbury and Newport canals and he took the opportunity to speak to the person he'd heard talking, I think his name was *Beron Arden-Wood* but can't be sure.

When next I saw Bob he was keen to tell me all he had learned about the proposals and plans for the derelict Shrewsbury and Newport canals with the eventual aim of opening them from Norbury, down into Newport, through Wappenshall and on towards Shrewsbury.

It was hoped that the canals could be opened as a facility for all; walkers, boaters, fishermen and those who just wanted to wander through quiet countryside away from the noise of traffic.

The canals in question covered 22 miles, built in two sections in 1797 and 1820 and abandoned in 1944 under the Transport Act. Just 21 years later, in 1965, they were a sorry sight; many sections had been sold off and filled in and the Berwick Tunnel on the Shrewsbury section at Atcham was bricked up at one end because it had become hazardous due to falling brickwork and general deterioration.



Bob and I however, were lucky enough to go through the 970 yard, 10' wide tunnel designed by *Josiah Clowes* who sadly died before it was completed. *Thomas Telford* may have been engineer when the tunnel was eventually finished. Our trip through was courtesy of the lengthsman stationed there at the time, *Malcolm Edwards*. Malcolm later became skipper of a charity boat based at Trevor and was awarded MBE for his dedication.

I remember the day of the tunnel visit well; we were poled through the shallow water in a small craft by the light of a lamp which was doused frequently by dripping water or positive downpours from the roof and occasionally we had to remove bricks from the shallow water so we could proceed. There had been a wooden towpath, I believe it was the first ever to be built through a tunnel and was, I think removed in 1819. All that was left were the rusting iron supports sticking out of the wall.

Roughly halfway along, where most probably those constructing the tunnel from both ends had met, someone had painted in white the words 'dog-leg'. Finally reaching the bricked-up northern end we changed direction and poled back, emerging into the light rather wet. We squelched back to the car, wiping away the water which had run down the backs of our necks. The other end of the tunnel is still sealed; it's not accessible as far as I know.

Came the day when Bob heard from someone, sorry again the name escapes me, that an inaugural meeting would take place in Newport in the rooms of an Adams Grammar School teacher, *Mr Paris*. We duly arrived on the night of the meeting and climbed the stairs to Mr Paris' rooms facing onto the main street. As was to be expected for a school teacher, the room the meeting was held in was crowded with books, on the table, on chairs and on the floor which I remember had highly polished wooden floorboards.

There were four of us *Mr Paris*, Bob, myself and one other (again my memory fails me, this was fifty years ago!) and our enthusiasm for the cause was great as we discussed how to proceed. Later, when membership cards were decided upon as more and more people joined the Association, Bob and I were numbers 2 and 3, *Major Hilditch* I think, was number 1, thus, in 1965 the Association was formed.

The first annual meeting of the Shrewsbury and Newport Canal Association was very well attended by the public. Held in the Royal Victoria Hotel, Newport in June 1966, it was at this meeting that it was unanimously resolved that the Association's Committee should examine thoroughly the possibility of forming a trust to purchase or lease the canal with the onus initially being on the portion stretching from Long Lane via Newport to Norbury Junction.

A petition, organised by *John Battison* the Association's publicity officer, was presented at the meeting for signature, the intention being that it would be presented to the Ministry of



Transport representatives at an upcoming meeting. It read:

“We the undersigned, wish to affirm our support for the aims of the above Association. We wish to object to the proposed elimination of the Shrewsbury and Newport Canals, and hereby signify our hope that they can be restored to good condition for the general benefit of the community.”

The President of the Association at the time was *Mr Patrick Hall* of Longford Hall and he offered his home as a meeting place on 2 July for the Minister of Transport’s representative, local interested MPs, *Gerry Fowler* representing the Wrekin, *Sir John Holt* representing Shrewsbury, and the Chairmen of both Shropshire and Staffordshire County Councils. The aim of this meeting was to persuade the attendees to support the aims of the Association.

At the time of the meeting representatives from the Association were *John Boulton*, Chairman, Bob, Secretary, *Mr F A Creese* Treasurer, and *John Evans*, Fundraising Officer. BWB had already contacted us to say that they considered restoration very unlikely and disposal was, as far as they were concerned, the only option. Information had also been received by the Association that BWB had instructed its local depot to proceed with disposal of the canal. Fish had been taken out and farmers (BWB were not prepared to say to who) had already ploughed over sections of it whilst at Long Lane the length had been severed and piling put in.

The meeting decided that the Association would contact both the Minister of Transport and BWB with an appeal that the decision be reversed or at least delayed whilst Newport Urban District Council confirmed that it was interested in obtaining the section that ran through the town with a view to restoration (this was eventually carried out in 1967 when, with a Grant from BWB, works were undertaken to restore it), it was hoped other authorities would follow suit.

The rest of the meeting that night covered the problems that needed to be overcome and the hopes that eventually the whole of the system might be restored, with connection to the River Severn an aim for the future. By now we had contacted the IWA to ask for their support which had been given. They also suggested that the Association become a Trust which would help further in our efforts.

John Battison announced a public petition was to be presented with the hope that at least 22,000 signatures could be obtained to save the canal. The outcome was that some 8,000 signatures were collected and together with the Director of the Anglers Co-op Association signing on behalf of his 11,846 members, the total was nearing 20,000.

In November 1966 British Waterways and some of the S&N Committee met in London to discuss the proposals for the canal. Despite a valiant effort and much correspondence between the Association, BWB and interested local authorities, the aims of the Association came to nothing. I remember Bob coming home that day very downhearted, more so



Junction Bridge No29

when later we found out that on the very day of the meeting to save the S&N, the authorities were still busy selling off stretches of the canal to landowners for virtually no cost. At least in November 1967 the then Dawley Development Corporation (later Telford Development Corporation) put a preservation order on the roving bridge at Wappenshall thus preventing those who wanted to, from flattening it. Today English Heritage has taken over its protection.

To a certain extent the Association had anticipated the outcome of our appeal, following a meeting in March 1966 when BWB had said that the cost of piling just part of the system would be £150,000, a huge sum 50 years ago. From the start BWB had insisted that ‘it could not bring itself to believe’ that restoration was feasible whilst *Barbara Castle*, the then Minister of Transport, when asked to forestall any further works replied that she could not ‘see her way to intervene’.

As was quoted at the time when the demise of the canal seemed inevitable:

‘Built by Telford, sentenced to death by the LMS Railway Company, executed and buried by British Waterways.’ A sad day.

After this set-back, the Association took up a new cudgel and the Shropshire Union Canal Society was born; its aim, to foster interest in the county’s main canal system. By September 1967 our committee was well established, *J Boulton*, Chairman, *D Nagington*, Deputy Chairman, *A Clegg*, Treasurer, *R Johnstone*, Secretary, *J Williams*, Membership Secretary, *H Arnold*, Bulletin Editor, *J Battison*, Bulletin Producer, *H Machin*, Social Secretary, Committee: *Mrs A Williams*, *Miss J Bird*, *R Lee* and *J Timperlake*.

Many nights were spent at The Old Hall, Cheswardine (home of *John Battison*) where the meetings were held. After we were married in 1968 I remember we’d get home around 1am, fall into bed and then off to work next day bleary-eyed. The evenings were spent with me on the typewriter typing up the minutes and any correspondence which had been deemed necessary and Bob making phone calls that had been decided upon to drum up support for the cause.

Our weekends were taken up with working parties on the Montgomery Canal, sometimes on both days, again home late, into the bath ready for the following working day. I remember that we had to cancel some of the work during 1967 due to the outbreak of foot and mouth, returning as soon as the all clear had been given. But it was fun; we were young, full of eagerness and, most of all, hope that the Society could succeed.

I will apologise now for any errors in the above. As mentioned earlier, most of this took place over 50 years ago and my memory is not what it was! I am glad that the S&N resurrected itself with new enthusiasts to carry on in 1988, meetings of which, until illness in the family prevented it, Bob and I used to attend. Today there is more of a lean towards restoration by the authorities, a feeling that we need to protect our history instead of destroying it.

I wish today’s Committee all the best in their efforts to finally open the Shrewsbury and Newport Canals, more power to their elbow and may they succeed in all they wish for.

Good things come to people who wait, but better things come to those who go out and get them. (Anonymous)

Jan Johnstone May 2016

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A 10 year research project



-a project to show the effects of raised CO₂ on trees



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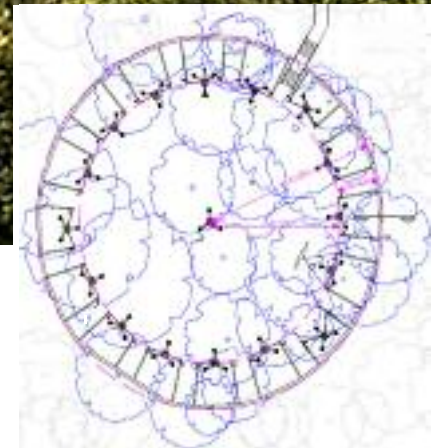
The University of Birmingham's Institute of Forest Research (BIFoR) has set up a new research facility in local woodland at Norbury Junction, where it can be seen from the towpath. This world-leading 'big science' Free-Air Carbon Enrichment (FACE) project aims to help our understanding of how our forests will respond to the changes in the surrounding air by about 2050, when we expect the level of carbon dioxide (CO₂) to be significantly higher than today. We want to take this opportunity to keep SNCT members informed about what the project is and why we feel it's so important.

For the project's ten year duration we will supply extra CO₂ to some of the forest trees and measure how this affects their growth and related changes in the woodland ecosystem. To do this we have built 6 FACE rings around specific trees (see photo above) which will let us increase the CO₂ to those trees. Although the level of CO₂ within the rings will be higher than in ordinary air it does not pose a threat to humans or to other animals and plants. In fact, the highest concentrations of CO₂ in the rings will be lower than that typically found in offices or classrooms!

Humanity has always, and will always, need to understand forests. Our skills level in forest science and management has been on the decline for decades — in the UK at least — and this indicates the low priority that we give to conserving one of our most precious ecosystems. The work of BIFoR and its partners will investigate how to value our landscape so that the public can participate in environmental decision-making. Together with further research into the environmental and ecological functions of forests, science studies like BIFoR FACE are vital aspects of re-shaping our view of, and valuing of, forests.

We have a number of open days planned. You can find out more and keep updated about research at www.birmingham.ac.uk/bifor or you can follow us on twitter @BIFoRUoB.

Deanne Brettle, Institute Administrator, BIFoR



A plan showing the layout of the project



Prof. Rob Mackenzie, BIFoR Director (left) and colleagues



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The fleeces are navy blue and are a generous fit with the trust's logo embroidered on the left hand side and useful zip up side pockets. They are £22 each and very warm.

The baseball caps are a matching navy blue and have the SNCT name (in full) embroidered onto them - one size fits all as they can be adjusted and they are priced at £10 each.

If you want to place an order please contact *Sam Myers* at editor@sncanal.org.uk with your order and contact details. You can also order the full range of Trust merchandise through our website.



Waterways Routes offers a full range of canal cruising guides, maps and DVDs covering the whole canal network. The maps they make of restoration canals are free to download and their maps of the Shrewsbury & Newport canals have just been published and are available free from www.waterwayroutes.co.uk/san.

Maps are available as printable PDFs or Memory-Map's QCT format for use on computers, Androids and iPhones/iPads with real-time tracking (like sat-nav) on GPS enabled devices. They show lots of accurate up-to-date details about the canal, such as mooring spots, water points and services. For useable canals you can buy the guides for individual canals or for the whole system and they make great Christmas presents for boaters.

I was so impressed by the demonstration that I have bought the Leeds and Liverpool version and will be trying it out soon Ed.

