

## Volunteers Needed



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!

**Help our Oral Archive team.** This team are talking to, and recording the memories of, the people who can remember when our canals were in use. They need interviewers and also people to transcribe the recordings.

**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, fundraising, scrap metal recycling, stamp collecting, proof reading and event planning.

### Would you like to get involved in editing S&N News?

Do you have a background in journalism, public relations or marketing?  
If so then please contact John Myers on 07711 858986 or at  
[editor@sncanals.org.uk](mailto:editor@sncanals.org.uk)  
for a chat

## 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, 10am - 4.00pm.

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

**Shrewsbury:** Every last Saturday of the month, 10am - 4.00pm.

If you want to find out more or to enquire about how you can help, then email [volunteering@sncanal.org.uk](mailto:volunteering@sncanal.org.uk) with your details and what you are interested in doing or take a look at the Volunteering page on our web site.

[www.sncanal.org.uk](http://www.sncanal.org.uk)

# S&N News



The quarterly newsletter of the  
Shrewsbury and Newport Canals Trust

Winter 2017



S&N News is  
sponsored by  
Taybar Security



SNCT volunteers working to restore the  
towpath at Newport



*Patrons: John Craven OBE and Nick Owen*

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The quarterly newsletter of the  
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*

### **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.

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**COPY WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED AFTER THESE DATES**

send your copy to the editor

email: editor@sncanal.org.uk Telephone: 07711 858986

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## notes from the chair

In August we were honoured to be presented with the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service by the Lord Lieutenant of Shropshire, *Sir Algernon Heber-Percy* at Wappenshall (see page 6). As a result of this evening we gave the editor of the Shropshire Life magazine a tour of the canal. He was so impressed with what he saw that we will be featured in two (possibly three) future editions of the magazine. This is a fantastic way to raise the profile of the Trust to a whole new audience.

As another way of raising our profile, we attended the first Telford Festival in September. Nothing to do with canals or waterways, but this proved to be a success, with several new members being recruited. We will continue to seek new and varied venues to spread the word about the SNCT. I am pleased to announce that the 2018 Norbury Festival will be going ahead on 5th, 6th and 7th May 2018 as we have now identified and secured a suitable field for the parking. Work has already started on publicising and organising what is one of our most important events.

Work on the new HLF bid continues apace (see page 8). With a deadline of early November for the first round, this is taking up almost all of my time and I am grateful

to *John Heather* for his continued support. DENSO, a company based at Hortonwood, Telford, have a commitment to assist their local community and have expressed an interest in working with SNCT at Wappenshall. They have donated £5,000 towards the restoration appeal and are keen for their employees to become involved on the site. I anticipate that they will be involved with us and with Wappenshall for some years to come.

*Bernie Jones*  
Chairman



Do, please, check the website for updates

### ● Monday 13 November

#### IWA Social Evening

SNCT members welcome

Joule's Brewery Tap - The Red Lion,  
Great Hales St, Market Drayton TF9 1JP  
from 6.30pm, dinner at 7.15pm.

Dinner £14 per person, menu on the  
SNCT website.

*The after-dinner talk is "Drama on The Cut",  
in which Pete and Jane Marshall of Day-Star  
Theatre remember their years as a travelling  
waterways theatre company.*

*Book by sending a cheque for £14 per person,  
payable to The Inland Waterways Association  
to IWA, c/o 7 Barnton Edge, Stone ST15 8ZR.  
Please note at the time of booking if you prefer  
the vegetarian option.*

### ● Thursday 16 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.*

### ● Norbury Canal Festival

#### Bank Holiday Weekend

5th, 6th and 7th May 2018

Norbury Junction,  
Staffordshire ST20 0PN  
Opens each day at 10am  
*Volunteers needed*

### ● Saturday 2 June 2018 SNCT AGM

Wappenshall Wharf, TF6 6DE

*May we wish  
you a merry  
Christmas  
and a  
prosperous  
new year*

## SUPPORT GROUP MEETINGS

### NEWPORT

#### ● Wednesday 1st November

Wednesday 3rd January

7.30pm British Legion Club  
Audley Road, Newport TF10 7DP

Contact: *John Myers 07711 858986*

### TELFORD

#### ● Saturday 16th December 10am

Wappenshall Wharf TF6 6DE  
combined workparty and  
Christmas get together

Contact: *Alan Harding 07944 753009*

### SHREWSBURY

#### ● Tuesday 14th November

7.30pm Meole Brace Bowling Club,  
Meole Rise, off Upper Road,

Meole Brace, Shrewsbury SY3 9JT

Contact: *Peter Cann 07985 046461*

## WE WELCOME THE FOLLOWING NEW MEMBERS

**John & Mary Foster**, Andover

**Anthony Gawthrop & Janis Gwynn**,  
Uffington

**Donald Price**, Eaton Constantine

**Simon Kenyon-Slaney**, Much Wenlock

**David & Janet Crooks**, Nottingham

**Mr W Hartland**, Newport

**Andrew Davies**, Apley, Telford

**Michael Gwilt & Denice Ward**,  
Shrewsbury

**Richard & Janette Nicholas**, Wirral

**Susan Gladding & Peter Haughton**,  
Newport

**Wellington Royal Air Force Association**,  
Wellington

**Bridgnorth U3A**, Bridgnorth

**Robert Nicholas Financial Advisors**,  
Newport



# QAVS Award Ceremony



*Phil Jones and Andy Dady receiving the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service on behalf of all the SNCT volunteers, from Sir Algernon Heber-Percy, Lord Lieutenant of Shropshire*

The Shrewsbury & Newport Canals Trust was proud to be awarded the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service at a ceremony held for our volunteers at Wappenshall on the evening of Monday 14th August. The QAVS is the highest award that a voluntary group can achieve and it is the equivalent of an MBE. The commemorative domed glass crystal and the certificate, signed by the Queen, were presented by *Sir Algernon Heber-Percy*, Lord Lieutenant of Shropshire, as the Queen's personal representative in the county. They were accepted by *Phil Jones* and *Andy Dady* as representatives of the SNCT volunteers.

About seventy SNCT trustees, volunteers, supporters and invited guests attended the award ceremony. The event was thoroughly enjoyed by all, and the Lord Lieutenant congratulated our team of volunteers on their hard work and successes. Afterwards most people stayed for a very successful barbecue and social get together.

The Queen's Award Office has created a limited edition 8cm tall miniature version of the award that can only be purchased by volunteers from winning organisations  
See <http://www.lasercrystal.co.uk/the-queens-award-for-voluntary-service.aspx>  
or telephone **01202 675000**.



*The Queen's Award certificate signed by HM Queen Elizabeth with the commemorative glass crystal*



*The Lord Lieutenant being shown round the site by Phil Jones*



*Phil explains the workings of the Transhipment Warehouse to the Lord Lieutenant's party*



# THOMAS TELFORD @ WAPPENSHALL WHARF - WHERE NOW?

After the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) rejected our Round 2 grant application, the Head of their West Midlands Office, *Vanessa Harbar*, and our Grants Officer, *Jenny Whateley*, came to meet our Team at Wappenshall to explain why and they provided us with advice about re-submitting the bid. They consider that this project is extremely important, particularly from the heritage perspective. Taking this advice on board, the Trustees then started to plan the way forward. They have decided to submit a new application and a Round 1 re-bid is now well underway to meet the submission deadline of the 6th November. If we are successful with our Round 1 and Round 2 bids and raise the necessary match funding, it is possible that work could be completed as early as 2020.

The HLF indicated that we needed to strengthen our Business Plan by improving the long term sustainability of the project and this is undergoing extensive re-working at the moment. As well as some general points they also included the fact that, despite owning the wharf, Telford & Wrekin Council (TWC) were not seen to be supporting the project. *Bernie Jones*, *John Freeman* and *John Heather* have since held several meetings with TWC's Senior Managers, including their MD, *Richard Partington* and their Director responsible for Wappenshall, *Katherine Kynaston*, in an effort to rectify the situation. This has met with some success, as we now have four consultant days, paid for by TWC, to assist in improving the Business Plan; the break clause in our lease has been extended until November 2019 and we are working with their "Telford@50" Celebrations Team to obtain a grant. We have invited all TWC Councillors to a presentation and tour of the wharf on 19th October so that they can see for themselves what a fantastic project it is and to realise the many benefits it will bring. This will be followed up by an offer to take them to another successful canal restoration to see the proof that canal restoration is an excellent investment.

We have also enlisted the Canal & River Trust's Fundraising Team, who have been successful with a number of HLF bids, to help us with improvements to our bid and this is already bearing fruit.

One of our biggest challenges remains the match funding of the project. Since our initial bid, prices have risen and the overall project will cost more than £2M. With a maximum Intervention Rate of 67% from HLF, this will still leave us with £700,000 to find. So to everyone that has pledged to support the project, thank you, but could you find a few more friends and relatives that would do likewise? With Brexit looming and EU funding disappearing, we really need every pound that we can find.



Earlier this year SNCT were asked by the Waterway Recovery Group (WRG) if we had a project that they could work on for a week during the summer as a planned camp had to be cancelled on another canal. At fairly short notice we managed to put a project together and went back to offer this to the WRG. As a result, on the 20 August, a dozen WRGies arrived to lay a towpath along the length to the west of Town Bridge in Newport.

It was a warm and humid week and the work was heavier than expected. Nevertheless, with the help of a good number of SNCT volunteers, the WRGies managed to complete 225 metres of renovated towpath alongside the canal west of Newport Town Bridge. Using edging boards, diggers, dumpers and a vibrating roller, some 106 tonnes of limestone were turned into a finished towpath. SNCT plans to use its own volunteers plan to complete the final 125m.

Thanks are due to the WRGies for their fantastic work, to Burton Borough School for the use of their excellent facilities and to Newport Town Council and Telford & Wrekin Council for providing the materials and the equipment.





# Restoration of the Flaxmill has begun



*An artists impression of the canal and the Flaxmill with the windows restored*

Funding of £20.7m from the National Lottery - combined with funding from Historic England, Shropshire Council, and the Friends of the Flaxmill - has enabled construction to begin at the Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings. Work started on 19th June 2017 and is being carried out by Croft Building and Conservation Ltd.

This unique building was built alongside and facing the canal so that it could use it for transporting flax - the canal access was the reason the Flaxmill was built in this position. The work will restore the Grade I listed main Mill, the first cast-iron framed building in the world and forerunner to the modern skyscraper. When complete there will be exhibition and activity space plus a café on the ground floor of the Mill, which will be managed by the Friends of the Flaxmill Maltings. The upper four floors of the Mill will become commercial office space. Later the Grade II listed Kiln will also be restored.

Croft are responsible for the structural repairs to the Mill, including re-opening the windows that were bricked up during the maltings phase, installing discreet tie-rods to reinforce the structure and removing the scaffolding, at last. This phase should be complete by the end of 2018 when work will start to repair the Kiln, fit out the buildings and complete the associated landscaping work and car park. The plan is for the restored site to fully re-open in March 2021.

The Flax Mill was built in 1797 and was the largest employer in Shrewsbury. The flax business declined in the 1870s and the mill closed in 1886. The site was converted into a maltings in 1897-8, when the Kiln was added. After being used as a temporary barracks during World War Two, the site resumed as a maltings until its closure in 1987. The planned works will transform and open the site up for local people, visitors and businesses.

A fascinating update on the plans was given by *Nick Hill*, National Conservation Projects Manager for Historic England, to the Friends of the Flaxmill Maltings on the 5th of July, 2017. A video of the presentation can be found at

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5cfzu-Up5j8&feature=youtu.be>



*Illustration and photograph © English Heritage*

*Rear of the Flaxmill with the crown on the top, added in 1896-7 to celebrate Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee*

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# First SNCT Workparty at the Berwick Tunnel

*The bricked up north portal of Berwick Tunnel with the linesman's hut on the right*

A while ago Jan and Tony Gwynne, who live next to the Berwick Tunnel, wrote to the Canal & River Trust (CRT) to explain that the North Portal receives quite a lot of visitors but, unfortunately, it is hard to locate the entrance, parking is difficult, the site was overgrown and, most importantly, the condition of the historic listed North Portal was deteriorating fast.

In spring this year CRT asked the SNCT if we would like to take the project on and a few of us paid a visit one evening to look at the site and found that it was in a poor state. In addition to the problems identified by Jan and Tony we found that large trees were growing right on top of the portal with their roots firmly set into the stonework. One side of the portal has already collapsed and the middle and other side are in a perilous state.

We then obtained official permission from CRT to work on the site and a work party was arranged. An enthusiastic band of SNCT volunteers turned up armed with tools and equipment one Saturday morning under Andy Dady's leadership and set to work. A car and trailer load of rubbish, scrap and rubble were removed from site, the brambles and nettles were cleared, ivy was cut, a few obstructive lower tree limbs were removed and the path down to the canal side and the portal was cleared. The lengthsman's hut was rediscovered buried in the scrub!

The dangerous top of the now loose and unstable portal was screened off and a "bug hotel" created.

Throughout the day this work party had the luxury of Jan and Tony's amazing hospitality, with frequent stops for tea, coffee, comfy seating, cheese, crackers, pork pies, cake, etc, etc

(tea and cake always motivates me!). The only problem was dragging ourselves away to do some work!

Fantastic progress was made and the site now looks as though someone cares. What's more we have permission to carry out further work and to stabilise the remaining parts of the portal which we will, hopefully, one day rebuild.

We invited Andrew Morris of CRT to visit the site one evening and arranged to meet him. Andrew has recently taken responsibility for volunteering in our area and is hugely supportive of our efforts. He is trying to obtain some tools and materials to enable the next phase to proceed. This project is of course an addition to the vital work at Sundorne & Uffington, so it does stretch the resources of the Shrewsbury Group. If anyone would like to get involved then many hands make light work & all are welcome, please.

There is a huge amount still to do, but the potential of the site is now clearly visible and the canal is in water all the way through to the A5. Maybe one day we will see this cleared and open too.

I would like to thank Jan and Tony, CRT, and all the SNCT members who are supporting this work. It is great to see what can be achieved when we all pull together.

*Chas Warren, August 2017*



*Damage to the portal masonry*



*Felling and cutting up one of the trees*

**The Berwick Tunnel**, on the Shrewsbury Canal, is 970 yards long and listed in Bradshaw's Canals & Navigable Rivers, published in 1904, as the ninth longest canal tunnel in England. It was the first canal tunnel ever to be built with a towpath, although that was removed in 1819. Because the tunnel is not straight, it was impossible to see if someone had entered from the other end - to overcome this, a byelaw was introduced which stated that whoever reached the centre first should continue, whilst the other boat would have to turn back!



# Benchmarking

## – on the S & N canals

A couple of years ago Mrs Editor came back from one of her walking trips along Hadrian's Wall and was full of talk about "benchmarks". Slightly worrying! But I have to admit that, after a bit of checking, I found that there is a relevance to canals.

We often talk about benchmarking as something to measure ourselves against - but do we ever ask ourselves what a "benchmark" actually is? It turns out to be a chiselled horizontal line created by the Ordnance Survey surveyors. They were cut into convenient stone structures and are found on buildings, bridges (including canal bridges) and on many other stone structures. The name comes from the angle iron which the surveyors fitted into the horizontal cut, usually with a chiselled arrow below to identify it, to give a 'bench' or support for a levelling rod. The design ensured that the measurements could be accurately repeated in exactly the same place in the future but, really, I would like to see a demonstration to understand how it works in practice!



*Newport Town Bridge benchmark*



*Forton Skew Bridge benchmark*

Benchmarks were created as part of the first UK mainland levelling survey, carried out between 1841-60, well after the Shrewsbury Canal and the Newport Canal were opened. They were created by Ordnance Survey staff to provide a network of points at which the height above sea level has been precisely measured. There used to be about half a million benchmarks in Great Britain but, with GPS, they are no longer needed and about half have disappeared through redevelopment, road widening and erosion

Bench marks are more common on the rest of the Shropshire Union system but, on the Shrewsbury and Newport canals, the public data base (<http://www.bench-marks.org.uk/>) lists only two that I can find. These are on the Forton Skew Bridge and on Town Bridge Newport. It seems unlikely that these are the only ones so, if readers can find any others, would they please take a photograph and send it to [editor@sncanal.org.uk](mailto:editor@sncanal.org.uk)

*John Myers*





# Return to Maesbury

*Maesbury Canal Fayre with Canal Central in the background*

The bi-annual Maesbury Canal Festival, at Maesbury Marsh on the restored section of the Montgomery Canal, used to be a standard event on the SNCT's calendar. Unfortunately the 2014 Festival was the last one, with 2016 being cancelled. In the event, a small celebration called the Maesbury Canal Fayre was organised by local people in 2016 and, as it was successful, this year it was held again for three days on 15/16/17 September and it was bigger and better.

The Trust gazebo was in a good position near the entrance and, whilst attendance was lower than expected due mostly to the weather, the stand attracted a lot of interest. *Alistair Price* and *Chas Warren* took their narrowboats to moor on site, as part of the boat rally. The sacks of fire logs, which were offered for sale for the first time to help finance the re-watering of a canal section at Shrewsbury, sold out. *Chas Warren* took along his coracle which attracted a lot of attention with a few people testing their skill on the canal.

On the Sunday evening, after clearing up the trust site and putting away the equipment, SNCT members enjoyed a nice cup of tea in the evening sun, which sadly had been in short supply most of the weekend. Notwithstanding the weather, everyone who came enjoyed the tranquil delights of one of the most picturesque stretches of the canal system.



*The trust continues to invest in equipment and tools for the workparties. A while ago we bought high viz waistcoats for the workparty groups at Shrewsbury, Telford and Newport with the trust's name printed on the back - that helped to make it clear to people that we are not doing Community Service!*

*Unfortunately those waistcoats tend to melt if hot ashes from our bonfires land on them so we have now purchased four orange fire resistant jackets (as modelled above) for each group in time for Autumn/Winter when most of the bonfires are held.*



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# How I Became a Workparty Leader

*Phil Jones –  
Wappenshall Team Leader*



My first encounter with Wappenshall came as I was driving home from work several years ago. I saw a sign for 'Wappenshall Wharf Table Top Sale'. It was intriguing and I asked work colleagues about it but no-one had any information. Wanting to find out, I went to the Table Top Sale and asked if I could wander around. Then I discovered 'The Bridge' and knew I wanted to find out more.

I found out how to become a volunteer and could not wait for the third Saturday of the month. The experience was really worthwhile and enjoyable. All of the other volunteers were friendly and helpful. I soon discovered that my practical skills and mechanical knowledge were useful attributes. Volunteering became more and more important. As I discovered more about the project, I was hooked!

My team leader was extremely helpful and ensured my interest was maintained. However, he had other work commitments which took him away for long periods and he eventually had to relinquish his role. I was fortunate enough to be chosen as his replacement.

With the help of the chairman, *Bernie Jones*, and the existing volunteers, I gained an insight into what was required.

The role of the Team Leader is to have an overview of the project and activities needed to move towards completion. It is important to increase volunteer involvement and utilise individual skills and capabilities.

I always have a list of work that needs to be done. To be effective, I have to know the best way to complete the tasks and organise the team to carry them out.

Of course, it is extremely important to understand all aspects of Health and Safety in order to protect everyone working on the project. This includes environment, equipment and clothing. Running a work party means being sensitive to particular needs of individuals and maintaining a harmonious and constructive working environment. I have to 'keep the tops spinning' by having additional tasks for people to move on to. No-one likes to be bored!

I have been extremely fortunate to have a fantastic team of volunteers who work well together and support me in every way. They go above and beyond for the team and I try to do the same.



*Phil with the old stop gate after being pulled from the water*



*Leading the team at Wappenshall*



*Getting stuck in clearing balsam*



*Hedgelaying*

It is important to lead from the front and this is what I endeavour to do. Whatever needs doing, I am happy to do it. I am often the tea maker but there is motive to my madness. If I brew up, more work tends to be done!

After a hard morning's work, everyone looks forward to lunchtime. This is an opportunity to chat and catch up with everyone's news. It also enables me to update people about future issues and projects.

At the end of the day it is my responsibility to ensure that the site is secure. Therefore, I am always the last to leave. It is usually with an enormous amount of satisfaction because of the amount of work that has been completed by the team. The hard work and dedication of the volunteers make the Team Leader's job one of the most worthwhile that I have ever been involved with.





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## Himalayan Balsam at Newport, *an update*

The secret to getting rid of Himalayan balsam is to start at the upstream end and to clear it downstream from there. This is because the balsam can only progress upstream by a seed cast each year but the moving water will distribute the seed all the way down its course. We have followed this principal for the last four years, progressively moving downstream from the start of the balsam on the canal and the Strine Brook. Each year it is heartening to see that we have made progress and that less balsam has re-appeared, so that the first section that we cleared four years ago is now virtually clear – but its much slower than I expected.



*Photo Kim Young*

*The Capgemini team (with a couple of familiar faces) in front of a trailer and a caravan which were originally invisible behind Himalayan Balsam*

This year we have really tried to get on top of the balsam, with two dedicated workparties plus a mid-week day and, separately, help from some great Capgemini volunteers on an environmental volunteering day. Waders have been used to make progress in the Strine and a very helpful volunteer brought his boat along, which proved invaluable at getting to plants at water level that were otherwise inaccessible.

To the west of Town Bridge, on the island between the canal and the Strine, we are making (slow) progress but we will get there. I would particularly like to thank the volunteers from Capgemini for their help, which was invaluable. They cleared most of a field at the east end of the Strine, where we discovered balsam for the first time this year, then moved on to another field above the island to the west of Town Bridge, which we had partly cleared last year but would otherwise have struggled, this year, to have enough manpower to address.



## Deliveries and shipments of the Horsehay Iron Works

The mode of delivery in the good old times was by (*horse*) teams on the turnpike roads to all towns within a radius of thirty miles or so of Horsehay, and all orders consigned for sea board shipment were sent to Bristol down the Severn...

On the opening of the Junction Canal to Wappenshall, the Company could then, by sending their iron down to that wharf, have it delivered to almost any part of England. Arrangements were forthwith made to send the iron to (*the Shropshire Canal at*) Dawley Castle, unload it into tub boats, and then trans-ship at Wappenshall. This mode of conveyance continued for some time, but was found to be attended with so many expenses and inconveniences that it was decided to discontinue it and send the iron to Wappenshall by teams. A new road was soon made, opening into the Wellington Turnpike road, and the teams commenced working, making three journeys each day without back carriages or two journeys per day with back carriages...

This system of delivering by canal both for home and foreign consignments continued until the opening of the Shrewsbury & Birmingham (*railway*) line, when Wellington became the trans-shipping station; and continued so until the opening of the Wellington & Severn Junction Branch, when conveying accommodation was such that iron could be rolled, loaded and into Birkenhead before it was cold...

*W. G. Morris, 1876*

*(editor's clarifications in brackets)*



*Aerial view of the Horsehay iron works, possibly in the 1950's*



*Photo Ironbridge Gorge Museum*

*Interior view of machine shop at Horsehay Iron works, unfortunately we don't know exactly when*



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