

Newport Canal Work Parties



come and help us with maintenance work on the Newport stretch of the canal

Every first Saturday of the month 10am - 4pm

If you are planning to come along please confirm the date, location and time with

Steve Heise

Email: sheise@sncanal.org.uk
Telephone: 01952 273820

Shrewsbury Canal Work Parties



help with clearance work along the line of the historic Shrewsbury Canal

Every last Saturday of the month 10am - 4pm

If you are planning to come along please confirm the date, time and location with

Derek Hillaby

Email: dhillaby@sncanal.org.uk
Telephone: 01743 709265

Wappenshall Wharf Work Parties



do your bit for the restoration of these historic canal buildings, basin and canal

Every third Saturday of the month 10am - 4pm

If you are planning to come along please confirm the date and time with

Alan Harding

Email: aharding@sncanal.org.uk
Telephone: 07944 753009

COPY FOR S&N NEWS

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

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Send your copy to:

**John Myers,
18 Meadow Lane, Derrington,
Staffordshire ST18 9NA
email: editor@sncanal.org.uk**

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

S&N News

*The quarterly newsletter of the
Shrewsbury and Newport Canals Trust*

Issue 51/4 2013



*The gantry of a guillotine lock gate on the Trench Arm
Photograph by Jimmy Hastall*

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The quarterly newsletter of the
Shrewsbury and Newport Canals Trust

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



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



from the editor

Those of you who still take S&N News as a printed paper copy will have seen a major improvement in the last magazine you received. Advances in printing and computer software mean that we are now in a position to introduce colour to the covers of S&N News whilst also improving the paper quality for the whole magazine, all at an acceptable cost. We have had a few teething problems, so apologies for the delay in delivering the last magazine. We are working on this and will get sharper!

One knock on effect of the change is that it is now taking a bit longer for the magazine to get from final approval to the finished printed item. As a result we will have to close the deadline for new copy for the next magazine a bit earlier and we will have to keep strictly to the final copy date printed on the back cover for future magazines.

I hope that you think that all this is worth it for the improvements, I certainly do. We still have a way to go to get the new systems bedded down and then we plan to take a look at the email version of S&N News, so watch this space. In the meantime your comments would be much appreciated. I would be very interested to know if you like the changes we are making and if the magazine content reflects what you want to read about, do let me know.

John Myers, Editor



notes from the chair

It must often appear to members that Trustees don't seem to be doing much because, as yet, there is little to see on the ground in the way of restoration. Of course, those of you who turn out for the work parties know that there is a lot that is being done, but what do myself and the other trustees actually get up to? Well, in my case I attend a very large number of meetings to further the restoration of our canals. I avoid the "talk shops" and only go to those meetings that actually make a difference. It has taken a long time to get key councillors on board with our plans, but I now have a regular meeting with the Shropshire Councillors through whose wards the Shrewsbury Canal runs, including the Flaxmill site. These meetings include other landowners as well. I am pleased to report that the canal now features large in these sessions and has resulted in the Shrewsbury Town Council's Place Plan including a Statement of Intent to restore the Shrewsbury Canal. I also attend the Staffordshire Waterways Group, where canal trusts and associations meet with Staffordshire County Councillors to further waterway restoration plans. This group is now in the process of prioritising the various projects we represent so that, when funding becomes available in 2014 from the EU, we know where in Staffordshire we will get the biggest "bang" for our "bucks." Then there are the regular meetings with the Canal and River Trust (CRT) managers. These are known as User Forums and occur twice a year, where the latest developments within CRT and plans for the future are discussed, sometimes in the form of a workshop. As

CRT own 5 sections of the S&N, we obviously need to partner with them to restore these sections, so it's very important to keep abreast of CRT plans in this way. It is also vital to keep in touch with all the landowners along the 24¼ miles of our canals. There are over 70 of them, so it's a big job. Your trustees and myself do as much as we can here, especially with the larger landowners with whom we meet regularly. As housing and commercial developments are proposed that include the canals we attempt to obtain funding via Section 106 Planning Regulations, where the developer has to give a percentage of the sale of the built property to the community in the area. I hope to be in a position to announce some exciting news on this front in the near future.

Communication is key to the success of any project of this size, so I do my best to get to the 3 support groups (Shrewsbury, Telford and Newport) which hold regular monthly meetings and to keep everyone up to date with developments. There is a lot of this information uploaded to our website as well. Do please come along to these meetings to hear the latest about what is happening.

Much of my time lately has been spent meeting other trustees and our funding expert Sula Rayska to prepare our re-bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund, which met the deadline of 10 September. We hope to hear the good news that we have been successful on 10 December. Then "Thomas Telford's Wappenshall Wharf" can become a reality. So, there is much that goes on in the background that doesn't make the headlines in S&N News but is vital to the success of our restoration plans. I sincerely hope, if you have read this far, that the above information gives you some idea of what we are all doing on your behalf.

All Aboard the 'Shropshire Star'!

Autumn Social Outing for Members

We have booked the 42 seater trip boat 'Shropshire Star' from Norbury Wharf, Norbury Junction, Staffordshire ST20 0PN for a members' social outing on **Saturday 16th November**

It will be a three hour trip starting at 2pm followed by a meal at the Junction Inn for those that want this.

The trip boat is enclosed so even if the day is cold you will be warm!

The boat trip will cost £9 per head and the meal will be £5.95 in the pub at 6.00pm followed by a quiz.

There are just 42 places on the boat, but more members could attend the meal and quiz afterwards.

To reserve your place on the boat or for the meal at the Junction Inn contact **Bernie Jones**

Telephone: **01743 709601**

email: bjones@sncanal.org.uk

This will be on a first come, first served basis, so make sure you book early.



Dates for your Diary

Please also watch the events page of the website for updates and further details

- **Boat trip**
16th November 2013
2pm Norbury Wharf
See advert on left hand page
- **Trustees Meeting**
21st November 2013
7.30pm Parish Rooms, Withington
- **Table Top and Crafts Sale**
23rd November 2013
10 am - 2pm Wappenshall Wharf
See advert in right hand column

SUPPORT GROUP MEETINGS

NEWPORT

- **Wednesday 13th November 2013**
Wednesday 8th January 2014
7.30pm British Legion Club
Audley Road, Newport TF10 7DP
Contact: Steve Heise 01952 273820

TELFORD

- **Thursday 23rd January 2014**
7.30pm The Elephant and Castle
1 High Street, Dawley TF2 9JQ
Contact: Alan Harding 07944 753009

SHREWSBURY

- **Tuesday 26th November 2013,**
Tuesday 17th December 2013
and Tuesday 28th January 2014
7.30pm Meole Brace Bowling Club,
Meole Rise, off Upper Road,
Meole Brace,
Shrewsbury SY3 9JF
Contact: Derek Hillaby 01743 709265

TABLE TOP AND CRAFTS SALE

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Newport Canals Trust



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Thomas Telford's Wappenshall Wharf *our new bid for HLF Funds*

On 10th September the button was pressed and our new application was submitted online to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) for nearly £1million to help the Trust create "Thomas Telford's Wappenshall Wharf". The bid was submitted for us by Sula Reyska, our HLF grant expert, whose assistance has been paid for by a grant from the Architectural Heritage Fund. Both Sula and Bernie Jones, with the help of the HLF bid group of trustees, have spent a massive amount of time getting this bid ready and burning a lot of midnight oil right up to the deadline.

Our previous application to the HLF for funds for this project was recommended for award, but the HLF had only £3.3M to cover £8.8M of bids. However the strength of our case was recognised and we were advised to re-submit the application.

We have taken the opportunity to strengthen our bid in a number of ways. One surprising discovery has been to find that nowhere in the UK is there a centre that celebrates the work of Thomas Telford, the pre-eminent architect of our canal system, even though the new town of Telford was named after him! Wappenshall is an ideal location to create a celebration and record of his achievements as it is sited at the junction of the Newport and the Shrewsbury canals, Telford's first and last canals. By creating this focus on his life and his achievements, we have enormously strengthened our bid as this will add to the importance of the Wappenshall site and increase the number of visitors it will attract.

We have added letters of support from a wide range of organisations including the mayors of Shrewsbury, Newport and Telford and Wrekin; local Education establishments that want to work with us to develop courses around the canals, boats and Wappenshall; the tourism departments of both Shrewsbury and Telford and Wrekin councils; the Iron Bridge Gorge Museum and the Institution of Civil Engineers, of which Telford became first President.

We have discovered that the Iron Bridge Gorge Museum did extensive research on Thomas Telford a few years ago, which has never been used. They have agreed to share both their research and artefacts to support this project.

We now have to wait until 10th December for a decision from the HLF and, if we are successful, then the work will really start!

John Myers

As we have changed the title of our HLF bid to "Thomas Telford's Wappenshall Wharf" we are taking this opportunity to reprint this article on his life from S&N News August 2004



Thomas Telford, Engineer of the Shrewsbury and Newport Canals

Thomas Telford was born in August 1757, the son of a shepherd in the Lowlands of Scotland. Three months later his father died at the age of just 33 and it was left to Thomas' mother to raise him in a single cottage room. Thomas was however able to attend school through the generosity of his uncle who paid the fees.

On leaving school Telford was apprenticed to a master stonemason, Andrew Thomson of Langholm, and subsequently became journeyman assistant to Thomson. Together they did much work for the Duke of Buccleuch involving buildings, roads and bridges.

In January 1782 Telford left the Lowlands for London to seek his fortune. Falling on his feet he soon found employment as a mason with a great architect of the day, Sir William Chambers, working on Somerset House.

From 1783, through various contacts, other works were obtained including at Portsmouth Dockyard, Penrhyn Castle and Hurstmonceux Place in Sussex.

In 1786 Telford's work brought him to Shrewsbury to superintend renovation of Shrewsbury Castle as a home for William Pulteney, the town's M.P.; but other work

soon arose including construction of a new infirmary and county gaol. He also carried out extensive excavations of the Roman remains at Wroxeter and built churches, including a replacement St Chads in Shrewsbury, and bridges.

In September 1793 his first association with canals arose as 'general agent, engineer and architect' to the Ellesmere Canal Company, whose canal was planned to connect the rivers Mersey and Dee with the Severn at Shrewsbury.

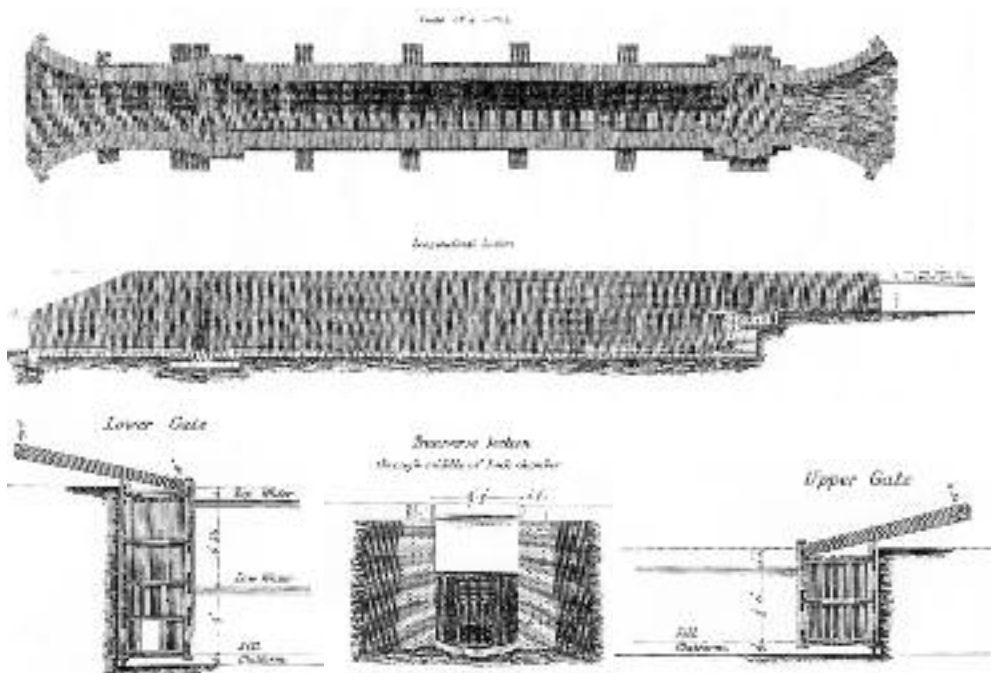
Three months prior to Telford's employment by the Ellesmere Canal Company, the Shrewsbury Canal had been authorised to extend the tub-boat canals of the Wrekin district to the county town. This canal was to be engineered by William Reynolds and Josiah Clowes. However, Clowes was to die long before the project was complete and in early 1795 Telford was appointed in his stead.

He was soon to make his mark. Clowes had planned, and was constructing, a masonry aqueduct to cross the River Tern at Longdon but before it was complete a flood destroyed much of the work. Telford reconstructed it using a cast-iron trough between Clowes'

original stone abutments. This was not only a solution to the crossing but very likely a trial for the far larger iron aqueduct at Pontcysyllte on the Ellesmere Canal for which Telford had produced plans in 1794.

Although the Shrewsbury Canal opened in 1797 it was not until 1805 that the Ellesmere Canal, using a revised route since the Shrewsbury Canal had taken away its need to reach Shrewsbury, was opened.

propose ways of improving the Birmingham canals. He was reportedly shocked by “the appalling state of the waterways”, and he was also clearly unimpressed by Birmingham itself, saying it is “...famous for buttons, buckles and locks and ignorance and barbarism. Its prosperity increases upon the corruption of taste and morals.” By 1822 he was working on the second Harecastle Tunnel, as a relief to Brindley’s original, on the Trent & Mersey Canal.



Telford's design for locks on the Birmingham and Liverpool Junction Canal

In 1801 Telford's talents took him back to Scotland when he started surveying the line for the Caledonian Canal. Although building and construction work started in 1804, it took no less than 18 years to complete, finally opening in 1822. His spreading fame also took him to Sweden in 1808 to survey the Gotha Canal.

It was in 1820 that Telford was asked to

The modifications on the BCN took until 1827 to complete and by this time Telford was involved with the building of the Birmingham and Liverpool Junction Canal, including its Newport branch to connect with the Shrewsbury Canal. It was to be his last major work. The canal used a similar method to that he had used to shorten the canals in Birmingham, the route being

almost straight, utilising cuttings and embankments to overcome the undulations of hills and valleys.

Locks were installed only at permanent rise and fall points in ground levels. This included his longest ever flight of locks, the Norbury Flight on the Newport Branch.

Although this article has concentrated on Telford's canal projects, his work included many other schemes which he was called on to advise and engineer.

These included notable roads and bridges, such as the road from London to Holyhead and others through the Scottish highlands and the Menai and Conwy suspension bridges in North Wales.

In addition, the economic slump after the Napoleonic wars led the Government to offer cheap loans to encourage public works and Telford became the engineering advisor to the Exchequer Loans Commission in 1817. This entailed touring the country surveying and inspecting the proposed sites and plans for those projects seeking a loan. It meant that for a time he saw nearly every

civil engineering project in the country. Telford died in London on 2nd September 1834 at the age of 77. This was a year before the final opening of what is regarded by many as one of his his finest achievement, the design of his locks on the Birmingham and Liverpool Junction Canal.

Telford was buried in Westminster Abbey, as a mark of his unrivalled reputation.

When Thomas Telford entered the stonemason's trade, there was no such thing as a civil engineering profession. By the time he died it was well-established, and from 1820 he was the first president of the fledgling Institution of Civil Engineers.

Those that followed clearly respected the mark he had made for, twenty-five years after Telford's death, Robert Stephenson's wish that his body should be laid to rest near that of Telford was carried out.

For more detail about Telford's work and life I would recommend Thomas Telford by L.T.C. Rolt.

Steve Bean



Telford's Longdon-on-Tern Aqueduct on the Shrewsbury Canal

Photograph: © Row 17

Flaxmill update - restoration begins

Now that the Flaxmill has been awarded a £12.1m Heritage Lottery Fund grant for its phase one development, things are starting to move very quickly. Under a three-year regeneration plan the project will adapt a number of Grade 1 listed buildings on the site, including the mill built in 1797, a kiln, an office and stables. An exhibition and display area outlining the mill's history will be created with much of the rest of the space becoming offices; office space is already being marketed to businesses with facilities to include broadband and free parking

On 7th - 8th September 2013 English held the final open weekend at the Flaxmill before the phase one development work starts in the Autumn and it closes its doors to the public for 2½ years. This was a good opportunity for people to explore the world's first iron framed building and to look at the plans of how it will be transformed for the modern day. Guided tours and demonstrations of flax processing, weaving and spinning all added to the festive nature of the celebration

The Flaxmill is an important feature on the Shrewsbury Canal, particularly as it was sited next to the canal so that it could use this, then modern, means of transporting its raw materials and its finished products to the world

The SNCT took the opportunity to set up its stand in the Flaxmill during the open days and we had a very successful weekend, details of which are covered on the opposite page.



A supporting iron pillar in the mill, part of the first iron framed building in the world



Exterior of the mill with scaffolding erected for earlier roof repairs

SNCT at the Flaxmill open weekend

The Flaxmill Open Weekend on September 7th and 8th proved to be as popular as the previous open weekends, with hundreds of visitors passing through. Individuals, couples, families and guided groups, all looked around the Mill, wearing the obligatory hard hats, eager to learn more about their local history.

Almost everyone had a quick look at the SNCT display, admiring the information boards and taking a leaflet or two, as they passed by. A few even made donations to the cause and/or pledged their support by becoming members.

Some showed a great deal of interest and stood chatting for several minutes, wanting to know more about our proposals and of the very real possibilities of revitalising the canal. We answered questions about funding and grants to the best of our ability, and explained possible alterations to the route taken by the original canal and why these would be necessary.

A few of the older generation had their own stories to relate, many recalling their childhood memories of the canal, which were invariably fond ones. I did try to encourage one lovely lady to allow me to interview her for our 'archive project' but unfortunately, she turned me down, on the grounds that she was too shy! Needless to say, I asked her to get in touch if she changed her mind, reassuring her that she could remain anonymous if she preferred.

All in all, the couple of hours I spent assisting Derek on 'the stall' passed quickly and enjoyably and I am certainly no expert on these matters, having only learned 'on the job' as it were. So my task now is to encourage more of you to volunteer in the future. We all know the sayings 'the more the merrier' and 'many hands make light work' so please give it some thought and spare us a few hours of your time, if you can, next time 'the stall' needs 'manning'. Thanks.

Gayle Doyle



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4/4

Christmas is coming...
recycle the stamps from
your Christmas cards and
help restore our canals!
We can also recycle your empty
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and mobile phones.

In view of the high costs involved in mailing items to us, could we suggest that you either pass them to a Trustee or send your stamps to **Mal Evans** 231 Monkmoor Road, Shrewsbury SY2 5SW.

Pass your ink cartridges, copier cartridges and mobile phones for recycling to a Trustee or send them to **Viv Rozario**, 32 Brightwell, Reabrook, Shrewsbury SY3 7TQ

A journey into the heart of Shropshire



In July and August 1939 Mr T Wheeldon and his wife set off on a boating holiday on the Shropshire Union Canal system. Initially bound for Llangollen, they then decided to explore the long neglected arm to Shrewsbury. Mr Wheeldon's account of their trip first appeared in Motor Boat & Yachting on 29th September 1939, and is reproduced here with the kind permission of the current editor of Motor Boat & Yachting. (www.mby.com)

This article is re-produced as originally printed with no corrections to the original text or attempts to correct grammar, spelling or accuracy.

If Mr and Mrs Wheeldon or any of their descendants should happen to read this, the Society would be delighted if they would get in touch with our Archivist, Margaret Cann, SNCT Archivist, telephone: 01743 362444 or mobile: 07703 540553 email: mcann@sncanal.org.uk

When early in July, my wife and I set out from Chester down the Shropshire Union Canal, it seemed generally accepted that we would devote our time to a run to Llangollen and back. Generally accepted, that is, by the various people with whom we had discussed the matter. Llangollen was the arm always favoured by leisure craft, the main canal was "dirty and busy", and the other long arm was impassable anyway.

It was this last remark which roused our interest as, on the map, the branch to Shrewsbury looked inviting and worthy of exploration. Furthermore, no definite details were forthcoming as to why this particular waterway was impassable. The most general suggestion was that it was weeded up, but, as with 'Tomlinson', the knowledge was never first hand. In the absence, therefore, of anything definite against it, we decided to make Shrewsbury our objective, visiting Llangollen en route.

The boat was a new type eighteen feet six inch cabin cruiser, drawing rather less than two feet, and with a six feet three inch beam. A two horsepower 'Solo' engine gave the maximum permissible speed of three to four knots without difficulty, on about one sixth

of a gallon of petrol per hour. The cockpit was right forward, giving a clear view and making navigation simple, a desirable arrangement in narrow waters, as was proved time and time again before the journey's end.

A trip to Llangollen

The first ten days we devoted to a run up to Llangollen and back. Besides being a most enjoyable wander, it enabled us to acquire some valuable experience in handling the boat, to polish up our lock technique and, by no means least, to glean information on the Shrewsbury arm. We found that the lengthmen varied from gross pessimism to cautious optimism whenever the subject was broached and, on the whole, we learnt nothing definite.

One who had been that way recently thought we might get to Berwick Wharf, some five miles before Shrewsbury. On the other hand, Wilson's excellent *Inland Waterways of Great Britain* (1939) does not even mention the existence of the portion beyond Withington, much less consider it navigable. A coal barge, which runs down to Long Lane about every six weeks, is apparently the only traffic other than a maintenance dredge,

Thus primed, we returned to the main canal at Hurlleston Junction and turned into the 'unknown waters to the south'.

From Hurlleston to Norbury Junction is about twenty three miles which, without hurry, took one and a half days. We certainly did not find this main canal "dirty and busy"! The water was muddy, it is true, and there was a certain amount of traffic, but the canal winds south through some beautiful scenery, and is quite as attractive a waterway as parts of that to Llangollen. Tyrley Locks and Tyrley Gorge, in particular, are worthy of mention. The two miles through Tyrley Gorge are very narrow but, fortunately, we met no barges.

If there is any complaint about the main canal, it is that one has to be especially careful in choosing one's night mooring, to avoid being hit or pulled away from the bank by passing motor barges. Whilst the vast majority of watermen fully uphold their reputation for courtesy by easing down, it is regretted that a few, always either girls or young lads, do ignore one's presence and cause one an anxious few moments as they sweep by.

Up the Shrewsbury arm

At Norbury we turned west under a narrow bridge and the Shrewsbury arm lay before us. Immediately there is a flight of seventeen locks to be negotiated, a portion of the twenty three which drop the canal to below Newport.

Looking down this flight, everything seemed in desolation. The surface of the water was lost beneath masses of weed and green slime,

the ironwork of the gates was rusty, and the paint thereof had long since peeled off. It was apparent, however, that the weed down the centre of the basins was less dense than at the sides, and a passage was therefore feasible.

There followed some four hours of quite hard work! The lock gates groaned and creaked, and from time to time paddles refused to budge. On the whole, however, everything worked, and that was all that really mattered. Once through the flight, we

moored for the night. These two days had seen us through forty nine locks, sufficient for any enthusiast!

The next morning we continued the three miles into Newport and stopped to shop. The Shropshire Union system is to be commended in this respect.

I doubt if there is another canal which passes so consistently through open country, and yet provides such adequate shopping facilities.

Whilst here, the maintenance dredge came up the locks. This was the only boat we were destined to see until we returned to the main canal.

The lengthman who came over to inspect our permit was quite the most optimistic we had yet met. Shrewsbury, in fact, seemed just around the corner.

The first two miles beyond Newport, to Edgmond, until we were clear of the locks, were really bad. A thick, grassy weed fills most of the canal, and is so covered by water lilies that it is difficult to find a way through. In the circumstances it is not surprising that we soon weeded up. The first time I cleared the screw I waded in to do so, but I soon

*everything
seemed in
desolation*

learnt that it was better to wait for a bridge or deserted wharf, where the stern could be brought close in and the screw reached comfortably by lying on the bank.

Once clear of the locks, the weeds were not so troublesome and we made good progress for over an hour, to the imposing Humber arm junction. At this point the two branches are so wide as to resemble a lake and, with the profusion of water lilies, reeds and stately trees, made a perfect setting. The Humber arm is quite short. It was originally used to distribute coal from the Lilleshall mines. Now, of course, it is completely weeded over, but no doubt a passage could be made to its farther end if desired.



The wharf at Rodington on the Shrewsbury Canal

Some little way on we came to the first of the two Eyton locks. These are the last on the system, and are noteworthy in that the lower gate of each is of the old-fashioned guillotine type. The arrangement of wooden wheels and beams of which they consist is an indication of their great age, and we spent some time in trying to move them, and it needed all the efforts of a passing lengthman and myself to lift the first to its full height.

Between locks seems to be a bad stretch for weeds. This was no exception, and the mile to the lower gate was easily the worst yet.

Clearing the screw had by now become part of the routine, and did not take long. About this time, too, the lift bridges started getting troublesome. Normally, of course, they are quite easy to move but these, through constant farm usage, had become firmly bedded down, and the draw chains were either missing or thrown up over the beams.

In the latter event careful fishing with the boat hook was required, whilst the former called for the application of much elbow grease to the bridge rails themselves.

Up to this point we had covered some ten miles in four and a half hours - rather less than two and a half miles per hour. It was not exactly speeding, but fair enough in the circumstances.

The weed had now changed from grass to furry moss, not so liable to clog the screw, provided one does not run into too thick a batch of it. Otherwise, the water was deep and we were able to make excellent progress to Long Lane. This is the terminus of the afore mentioned

coal barge, and beyond it we expected undisturbed water and plenty of weed. The first obstacle we met was a footbridge, composed of a couple of planks, thrown across from bank to bank. With a gallery of "locals" giving us moral support, we removed the obstacle and proceeded into the "wilds" beyond.

That night we moored just beyond Rodington, on a comparatively clear stretch. We had made a good fourteen and a half miles that day, and were only nine from Shrewsbury - so near but yet so far.

The following morning we moved off at ten o'clock. For a brief while we enjoyed fairly clear water. Soon, however, there came weeds in abundance and clearing the screw became a necessity at every bridge.

Eventually it dawned on us that it would be much easier to tow through these bad patches. With the line secured to the canopy

frame, about one third of the length from the bow, this proved highly successful. Thereafter I did far more towing than otherwise - much to my wife's amusement.

Thus to Withington which, as aforesaid, Wilson's book considers to be the navigable limit. We soon discovered he is not far wrong. From Withington conditions got steadily worse until, at Berwick Wharf, some two and a half miles farther in, we were brought up all standing by solid masses of green slime

The four miles covered that morning had taken two and a half hours and it looked as if we had come to the end of our forward progress. The immediate prospect was depressing and uninviting but, rather than give up without being quite sure, we moored the boat and went on ahead to reconnoitre.

The canal now ran into a shallow cutting preparatory to entering Berwick Tunnel. It seemed like the Valley of Desolation. The coping stones of a bridge had fallen into the water, and were covered with the same green slime. There was a sickly, nauseating smell.

Built in 1797

Thus we came to Berwick Tunnel. An inscription on the face read 1797 - one hundred and forty two years old, in fact. We stood there a little while and tried to visualise the scene in those far off days, fifty years before railways came to steal the traffic.

Judging by the number of wharves and basins we had passed, this must have been a very busy arm in its heyday.

We had noted the large layout at Newport, the Humber arm whence Lilleshall coal passed for export, also the wharves and warehouses at Wappenshall and Berwick, and the iron foundry just before Berwick, still known as the Forge. In addition to these

there had been all the trade of Shrewsbury town and the agricultural requirements of the countryside.

The interesting thing about Berwick Tunnel is that it has not got a towpath, concrete evidence that the crews had to propel their craft by footwork on the tunnel roof as we had often heard tell.

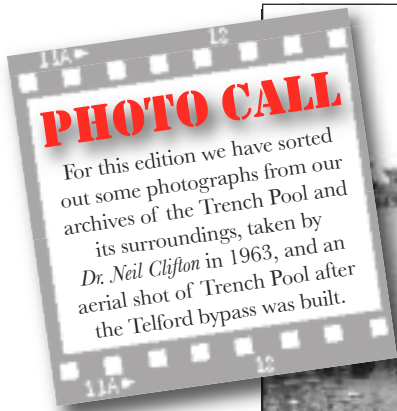
As weeds will not grow in darkness it appears quite navigable, although loose bricks under the several ventilating shafts might prove dangerous. Guided by these shafts we walked the half mile over the top to the other end

There is no definite path as would appear necessary for the horses to use. It would be interesting to know how they managed in this respect.

The far end of the tunnel presented an even more desolate appearance than the other, banks of reed growing out of the slime and completely obstructing the waterway. There was thus no hope of taking the boat beyond Berwick. It was some consolation, however, to know we had covered nineteen and a half miles of the twenty four miles from Norbury to Shrewsbury. Only two of our many advisers had been optimistic enough to think this possible.

There had been great agitation in recent years in Shrewsbury to fill up the portion of canal in the town and now, no doubt, this will soon be done. From a hygienic point of view this is very desirable, but I cannot help shedding a silent tear at the passing of yet another of England's old waterways. No amount of optimism can, however, foresee any future for a branch such as this, with road traffic now so speedy and efficient.

T Wheeldon



For this edition we have sorted out some photographs from our archives of the Trench Pool and its surroundings, taken by Dr. Neil Clifton in 1963, and an aerial shot of Trench Pool after the Telford bypass was built.



Boys looking across Trench Pool in 1963. The building to the right is the Sea Scouts' boat house



Another photograph of Trench Pool taken in 1963. The building in the distance is the old engine house to the incline plane, now removed



These cottages, known as Trench Pool Bank, did not long survive this photograph being taken in September 1963 as the site was being redeveloped for housing. Out of shot, just to the left, is the Shropshire Arms pub, now called the Blue Pig, and further round is Trench Pool itself



➡ A more recent aerial photograph is of Trench Pool showing the Telford bypass and housing development. The small white building in the bottom right is the Blue Pig pub and further right is the site of the inclined plane

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Work party updates

NEWPORT



The September work party concentrated on clearing the area around the new fence at Meretown Lock. We used strimmers to cut back the brambles and other weeds and then cleared the area around the fence.

The whole project at Meretown Lock is about creating a wild life section, in a section of canal that we will not use, to allow boating on the canal through Newport.

We have proposed to Natural England that this area should be re-watered as a new home for the special species that make the canal in Newport an SSSI. Whilst we wait for their response it's very important that we keep this

section which we have cleared under control. The Waterways Recovery Group may be coming in the early part of next year to help us reinstate Meretown Lock's stonework and repoint the brickwork. The lock will not be fully dug out but only the depth of the new pound. Uncovering the various channels and sluice gate areas associated with Meretown Lock will give people an idea of the workings of a lock.

The October work party will continue to work on the area around Meretown Lock and to do small jobs along the line of the canal in Newport.

Steve Heise



WAPPENSHALL

We did not have a members' work party at Wappenshall in August. However in late August prisoners from Stoke Heath spent a day clearing a lot of bushes and several blockages from the Shrewsbury Canal below Wappenshall.

At the September work party our volunteers spent most of the morning dragging this cut wood back to the main site so it could be cut up, the logs sold and the small branches burned.

Also during September *Phil Pritchard* and *David Cant* continued work to replace the internal steps in our 'Jusfashow' display boat - these were damaged by water flowing into

the boat through its rear door, whilst it was stored outdoors. Phil and David are also planning to bring our old caravan up to scratch so that it can be sold. The funds raised can then be used to restore the trailer that we purchased in the summer. This will have facilities installed so that work parties will be able to have a hot drink and a comfort break anywhere they are working along the canal.

A couple of extra work days have been held to get the site ready for the table top sale.

Alan Harding

SHREWSBURY



Work continues apace on the canal in Shrewsbury, clearing new sections and ensuring those already cleared do not get overgrown again. We had to stop work during July so as not to disturb nesting birds but we pressed on in August on the Lesley Owen Way section and we are now ready to remove the tree stumps from the canal bed.

Work also progressed on the footpath and Shropshire Council have now allocated £30,000 to tarmac the surface. I think that this shows that the local council, as well as the local residents, value the work that the Trust is doing to maintain sections of the canal and towpath in Shrewsbury.

Derek Hillaby



Andy Dady and Peter Cann using the 'Trifor' winch to remove a tree stump from the canal bed.



Can you take a "shot" for the cover of S&N News?

This is your chance to get on the cover of a forthcoming edition of S&N News. The subject must be of the Shrewsbury or Newport canals or their features such as locks or bridges, in colour and in portrait format. Please include your name and address with the picture and details of the location where the photo was taken.

Send your photograph to:
graphics@sncanals.org.uk
or by post to John Stevens, SNCT Graphics,
11 Roe Deer Green, Newport, Shropshire TF10 7JQ

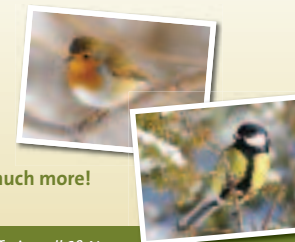
● *The judges decision is final. Any photographs submitted may be used, with suitable credits, by the SNCT in future publications or displays. Prints cannot be returned*

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Recruitment Drive

Can you help recruit more members for the SNCT?

The Shrewsbury & Newport Canals Trust has over 1000 members. This gives us enormous strength when applying for grants or dealing with local authorities as it proves the level of local support for the restoration of our canals

Imagine how much stronger that influence would be if we had 2000 members!

If every member goes out and recruits one more member then that target can be achieved.

Please think about your friends, relatives and other contacts and try to recruit one new member for the SNCT. With your help we can achieve this goal and add enormously to our influence with grant bodies and local authorities

New Members

We welcome the following new members

Jeremy Cragg

Shrewsbury

Peter Roscoe and Geoff Hardy

Shrewsbury

Rita and James King

Muxton, Telford

John Bott

Red Lake, Shropshire

John Slynn and Jean Hubbuck

Newport, Shropshire

Peter & Yvonne Stoddart

Stirchley, Telford

Michael and Pam Bancroft

Horton, Telford

Keith & Marie Smith

Rodington Heath, Shropshire

Wellington Townswomens Guild

Wellington, Shropshire

Maurice Cornwell

Wellington, Shropshire

Pontesbury and District Forum

Pontesbury, Shrewsbury

B W and Marilyn Young

Whitchurch, Shropshire

Wilf and Sylvia Jones

Whixall, Shropshire

Pat and Geoff Gibson

Narborough, Leicestershire



**Shrewsbury & Newport Canals Trust is a Registered Charity, no. 1088706
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Showing off!

Promoting the Cause

The SNCT promotions team have been busy again throughout the summer season publicising the Trust at a range of events. A new venue for us this year was at the Freshers Fair at Shrewsbury Sixth Form College (pictured) where we hoped to catch the interest of the younger generation as the new 16-year-old students arrived for their first week at the college.



Our display made a very good impression and helped to bring home to students the close proximity of a canal that the majority didn't know even existed. It will be great if at least a few can also find the time to become actively involved in the work of the Trust.

Brian Nelson

Celebrating Shrewsbury's Heritage

On 7th September the Trust was invited to take part in "A Celebration of Shrewsbury's Heritage" at St Mary's Church in Shrewsbury. As the main Trust display was at the English Heritage Flaxmill Open Weekend, *Bernie Jones* took our rather smart Shrewsbury model (made by member *Phil Pritchard* not Fred as erroneously printed in the last edition - sorry Phil!) and a few other bits and pieces to this event.

BBC Midlands News was supposed to be there as well as Radio Shropshire, but they did not

turn up as there were other more dramatic news events to cover. However, *Bernie* met some really interesting people and signed up a few new members.

Whitchurch Boat Rally

This is an annual rally held by the Whitchurch Waterway Trust which currently owns and manages the existing Whitchurch Arm, extending about 200 yards towards the town, off the Llangollen Canal. The Trust's aim is to extend the Arm a similar distance again and create a small visitor marina at the new terminus. The original Arm went on right into the town. More information on the Trust's website:

<http://www.whitchurchwaterway.org.uk/>

The Rally is one of several that SNCT usually attends in September. And how lucky we were as the weather was glorious on both days and we actually found ourselves hiding in the shade at the back of the gazebo!

The Rally was spread out along the towpath for the whole length of the Arm with a variety of stalls and boats. There was a lot to see and do which was great for everyone attending and supporting the event which the public did in a steady flow over the two days. In particular, there was a great range of boats to see and go aboard, including Saturn (restored Shropshire fly boat) and Ilkeston (restored general carrying butty boat). Regrettably there wasn't time to visit a third restored boat, Plover, but we did get the opportunity to see inside a 31 foot aluminium hull "Sea Otter" which was for sale. It took us back to a holiday in a camper van with an amazingly compact layout inside and we were almost tempted to make an offer.....

At the end of the rally, we enjoyed seeing the crew of Ilkeston showing off their handling skills, manoeuvring her out of the Arm without an engine and onto the main line to be roped up to it's towing boat for the 3 day journey back to the National Boat Museum at Ellesmere Port.

Over the weekend, the SNCT stand had many

visitors and raised a lot of interest in our own restoration project. We made some useful contacts and a good many new friends. Members *Ray and Gwyneth Buss* (our Harbourmasters at Norbury 2013) had brought their boat Blackden Gem and helped out with manning the SNCT stand as well.

Another member, *Ken Benbow*, tried his hand at manning the stand for the first time and gets the gold badge for signing up new members! *Mal and Elaine Evans* also took their turn and their donations of homegrown veg sold very quickly along with the paperback sales. And somehow *Bernie and Anne Jones* managed to squeeze in a visit, along with a very busy schedule of other SNCT activities, to give us a bit of encouragement. A great turnout by SNCT members and thanks to everyone. Over the weekend, the stand raised a good amount for SNCT funds and undoubtedly raised the profile of the Trust whilst supporting another important local restoration project.

Sam Myers



View of the Festival with members Ray & Gwyneth Buss' Blackden Gem in the foreground

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NB Saturn, the restored wooden hulled Shropshire Fly boat in front of the SNCT stand



Restored working butty Ilkeston being manoeuvred out of the Whitchurch arm with a tow rope