

# Newport Nocturne Collection



The Newport Nocturne is a unique floodlit cycle race. It was established back in 1989 and takes place every two years. In past years it has featured *Mark Cavendish, Sean Kelly, David Millar, Geraint Thomas and Ed Clancy!* The event takes place in the small market town of Newport yet it routinely draws crowds of up to 15,000.

This year's Nocturne was held on the 30th August and, as it is very much on our patch, the SNCT decided it would be a good opportunity to try to raise funds for our restoration. First we got agreement from the event organizers then we had to get permission from Telford and Wrekin Council to hold a street collection. We also bought ten street collection buckets in preparation for the event.

On the night our organiser, *Steve Jones*, and a plucky group of five volunteers turned out. They were later joined by a sixth volunteer from the crowd. Whilst not an enormous collection, the people of Newport were generous and it was definitely worth while.

## Work Parties



### NEWPORT

**Every first Saturday of the month  
10am - 4pm**

**Contact: Steve Heise**  
Email: [sheise@sncanal.org.uk](mailto:sheise@sncanal.org.uk)  
Telephone: 01952 273820

### WAPPENSHALL

**Every third Saturday of the month  
10am - 4pm**

**Contact: Alan Harding**  
Email: [aharding@sncanal.org.uk](mailto:aharding@sncanal.org.uk)  
Telephone: 07944 753009

### SHREWSBURY

**Every last Saturday of the month  
10am - 4pm**

**Contact: Andrew Dady**  
Email: [andrewdady@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:andrewdady@hotmail.co.uk)  
Telephone: 07967 135223

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

### **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**

**email: [editor@sncanal.org.uk](mailto:editor@sncanal.org.uk)**

**Telephone: 07711 858986**

***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 55/4 2014



Members of the Waterways Recovery Group restoring the brickwork at Meretown Lock, Newport

# what's in your **S&N News**

The quarterly newsletter of the  
Shrewsbury and Newport Canals Trust



6

4  
Dates for your Diary



8

6  
Wappenshall  
Progress Report



12

8  
WRGies first  
week long camp

10  
A WRGie work camp  
- a leaders diary

12  
The canal system of  
East Shropshire



22

15  
Walking back in time to  
Donnington Wood

17  
A visit to the S&N by  
John Dodwell

22  
Brittain Lock

23  
Late Summer Sale



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

## Trust's Late Summer Sale

The late Summer Table Top Sale was held on Sunday 14th September in the lovely garden of Bridge House, Wappenshall with the kind permission of *Sherrel Fikeis*, one of our trustees. Volunteers erected the Trust's two large marquees the day before and moved all the chairs and tables round from the wharf. Very special thanks indeed go to Sherrel for the delicious home-made curry she provided for those who set the site up on Saturday.

A big well done and thank you to everyone who organised the event, volunteered over the weekend, and baked cakes. From an idea raised last year at a Telford Support Group



(TSG) meeting, we ended up with a successful, enjoyable and profitable event that, while led by the TSG was supported by trustees and members from all over the trust. Thanks also go to *Sallie Lines* who coordinated the tabletop vendors and arranged the advertising, *John Stevens* who created all the signage for us, and *Ralf Phillips* who managed the car parking throughout the day.

We had eleven vendors on the day, more than any previous tabletop sale at Wappenshall, and provided tours around the Wharf to well over 60 people. As usual the wharf, the canal, and our plans for the future proved fascinating. The cream teas were especially popular and we will certainly be serving some at future Trust events.

*Alan Harding*



# Brittan Lock

It was around 1946 and I was about to experience my very first visit to the 'canal'. My brothers Gerald and Terence had just been demobbed from the armed forces and a decision had been made to go fishing, nothing unusual in that as they had been frequent visitors to the 'canal' before enlistment.

The tandem came out of the washhouse at our home in Mafeking Road, Hadley. I was strapped on the crossbar along with fishing rod and tackle and we rode off down Hadley Park Road, past the 'Malt Shovel' turning right into Horton Road and stopped on the canal bridge at Wheat Leasowes, which many Hadley people referred to as "Wheat Lessers", particularly by my father Jack Bennett and many other local fishermen of the 'canal'. It was at this spot that the 'canal' ran down to Wappenshall and up to Peaty Lock and Sankeys Works.

The lock here, at Wheat Leasowes (also often called William Owens, the name of a former lock keeper) was in a poor state of repair, however water flowed successfully down towards Brittan Lock, even though weed was encroaching from both banks. After riding along the towpath we stopped at Brittan Lock; this is where the afternoon was to be spent. The tandem was placed in the hedgerow, tackle was assembled and fishing commenced in the open mouth to the lock. I sat quietly on the bank as any three year old would. It was summer and the day was quite warm. I remained quiet as my brothers took it in turns to cast the line. Brittan lock was decaying fast but some water remained in the stretch down to Wappenshall Lock, which I

could clearly see in the distance. After some hours, the catch of a couple of roach was to be the end of this particular fishing trip. Tackle was put away and I was placed back on the crossbar and off we travelled back home, some two miles away.



Brittan Lock number eight on the Shrewsbury Canal in 1976 *Photograph ©Tony Clayton*

Even though my family had fished and walked the 'canal' for many years previously, it was apparent that the sense of peace and beauty was to become a way of life for me as I grew up. Adventure, danger but great happiness was to become the norm as I later spent time down the 'canal'.

*Clifford Bennett*



from the  
editor

The SNCT is progressively getting on the map – in some cases literally, as we feature prominently on the Canal & River Trust's recent list of restorations.

The membership is now over 1200 and we need to maintain and grow that number as it shows that a lot of people would like to see our canals restored – it's very important when talking to local authorities and to grant bodies. So, if you can only give us your support by being a member, you are very welcome and appreciated.

However, as the SNCT grows in strength we are also growing our commitments so there is an increasing need for people to come forward to help. The core group of members who do get involved is growing and their help is much needed.

It's not all muddy boots work either! We do need volunteers to join our monthly workparties at Newport, Wappenshall and Shrewsbury but, at the same time, we need more people to do desk based jobs such as handling our facebook and twitter feeds, helping to maintain the website, keeping track of the volunteer hours that we work, taking a first aider's course, being responsible for our display equipment between shows, transcribing oral archives after the interview etc, etc.

So if you can help actively do give me a call to discuss where you might be able to fit in. You will be very welcome.

*John Myers, Editor*



notes  
from the  
chair

The summer is now well and truly over as I write this, with the first autumnal storms bringing much needed rain. But what a summer it has been for the Trust. Major steps forward with the restoration of Meretown Lock by our first week-long WRG Camp; Jusfashow attracting the Mayor of Shrewsbury on board; the launch of our new website and our best ever summer season of events attended and organised. Thank you to all those members who turned out to help at all these, we can't do them without you!

During the winter work parties we should have our newly refurbished Welfare Unit ready for use. Thanks to, particularly, *Dave Cant and Simon Fox*, this towable unit will house a cooker and a loo (many thanks to *Mike and Cindy Jones* for both items). So we will now have somewhere for a "tea and pee" and somewhere to get out of the rain, no matter where we are working. No excuses not to join in now then!

Thank you to those members who rose to the £100 Challenge. Have you raised your £100 for the Trust yet? If not, please call me for ideas as to how you can do this. It is not as difficult as you think!

*Bernie Jones  
Chairman*

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

## New Members

We welcome the following new members

Terry & Nicky Lipscombe Wolverhampton

Jenny Williams, Mick Churm & Family Shawburch

Michael & Tina Simmons Trench

Paul Quinn Newport

Stephen & Jane Taylor Market Drayton

James & Marion Weir Apley

Paul Enever Madeley

Geoffrey Moore Leegomery

Brian & Eleanor Boot Newport

John & Tess Hawkins Rickmansworth

Philip & Penny Hall Wellington

Andrew Gajewski St Georges Telford

Anna Curtis & Anthony Vettise Meole Brace

Janis Smith Shrewsbury

Suzanne Thompson & Mr I Thompson Apley

Sue & John O'Hare Sandhurst

Diane Sandford The Humbers

Ian Mitchell & Pauline Curran Shrewsbury

John Dodwell London

Eyton & Wellington WI

Hopesay & Aston on Clun WI

### Hydrogen powered narrowboat visit

One of trustee Eric Cox's contacts at Birmingham University has offered to show a party from the SNCT over the hydrogen powered narrowboat that they have fitted out and, weather permitting, take a trip in it on the cut. Numbers will be limited to 10 people and a date will be arranged once Eric knows who is interested. Expressions of interest please to Eric Cox on **01952 222134** or **ecox@sncanal.org.uk**

## Dates for your Diary

- **IWA talk by John Yates (English Heritage) 6.30 for 7.00pm Monday 10th November**  
Brooklands Hotel, Mill Road, Meole Brace, Shrewsbury SY3 9JT  
Includes a fish and chip supper (*veggie option available*). Tickets £9.00 each  
*Please advise Val Haig by 5/11/14 at [iwa@3-cm.co.uk](mailto:iwa@3-cm.co.uk) if you plan to go to the event, then payment on the night direct to Val*
- **Lesley Smith Evening as Queen Elizabeth I (factual comedy) Friday 14th November 7.00pm**  
**This event has unfortunately had to be cancelled due to Lesley's ill health**
- **Trustees' Meetings Thursday 20th November**  
Withington Parish Rooms, Withington, Shrewsbury SY4 4QA  
**Thursday 15th January 2015**  
Location TBA  
*For January meeting venue see our new website [www.sncanal.org.uk](http://www.sncanal.org.uk) closer to the time*
- **Shrewsbury Support Group Christmas Dinner Monday December 15th 7-00pm for 7-30pm**  
£15.95 for three course Christmas meal  
Brooklands Hotel, Mill Road, Meole Brace, Shrewsbury SY3 9JT  
*Menu details are on our website.*  
*Orders with name and address to [alan.wilding@waterways.org.uk](mailto:alan.wilding@waterways.org.uk)*



## Bridge House Care

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Bridge House is situated in the beautiful countryside of Wappenshall, Telford and is a very special day care centre. The centre provides excellent help to both individuals and family groups which is considered important. Those in need of help due to illness, trauma or accident find the care and understanding they require at Bridge House.

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[www.bridgehousecare.co.uk](http://www.bridgehousecare.co.uk)



## The SNCT £100 Challenge

When we obtain our Second Round HLF bid of just under £1 million we will still be short of about £400,000 for the restoration of Wappenshall. We are searching as hard as we can for other grants to make up this amount.

Can we appeal to our members to each try to raise £100, maybe by running a pub quiz, selling things at a car boot, a sponsored walk or any way that you can think of.

If every one of our 1,200 members could each raise £100 that's £120,000, a massive help to achieve the Trust's first major restoration.

If you can help, please send the money to Bernie Jones and let us know how you raised it – you might inspire other members to do the same.

If you need help from the trust to do whatever you have decided then give Bernie a ring, telephone **07971 016322**

**Make cheques payable to Shrewsbury and Newport Canals Trust** and send them to: Bernie Jones, Tangalooma, Caernarvon Lane, Withington, Shrewsbury SY4 4PX



Shrewsbury & Newport Canals Trust is a Registered Charity, no. 1088706  
and a Registered Company, limited by guarantee, no. 4075920  
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## Trustees

### Chairman: Bernie Jones

Tangalooma, Caernarvon Lane,  
Withington, Shrewsbury SY4 4PX  
Tel: 01743 709601

email: [bjones@sncanal.org.uk](mailto:bjones@sncanal.org.uk)

### Vice Chairman: Brian Nelson

Brookfield, Wroxeter, Shrewsbury, SY5 6PH  
Tel: 01743 761447

email: [bnelson@sncanal.org.uk](mailto:bnelson@sncanal.org.uk)

### Company Secretary and Treasurer:

#### Steve Bean

4 Arscott, Pontesbury, Shrewsbury, SY5 0XP  
Tel: 01743 860488

email: [sbean@sncanal.org.uk](mailto:sbean@sncanal.org.uk)

### Secretary: Steven Jones

15 Waterford Drive, Newport,  
Shropshire, TF10 7AU  
Tel: 01952 812586

email: [sjones@sncanal.org.uk](mailto:sjones@sncanal.org.uk)

### David Adams

Beeston House, 2 Princess Gardens, Newport,  
Shropshire, TF10 7ET

Tel: 01952 810681

email: [dadams@sncanal.org.uk](mailto:dadams@sncanal.org.uk)

### Eric Cox

35 King St, Broseley, Shropshire TF12 5NA  
Tel: 01952 883568

email: [ecox@sncanal.org.uk](mailto:ecox@sncanal.org.uk)

### David Crow

Wappenshall Farm, Wappenshall,  
Telford TF6 6DE  
Tel: 01952 222134

email: [dcrow@sncanal.org.uk](mailto:dcrow@sncanal.org.uk)

### Sherrel Fikeis

Bridge House, Wappenshall,  
Telford TF6 6DE  
Tel: 01952 676953

email: [sfikeis@sncanal.org.uk](mailto:sfikeis@sncanal.org.uk)

### John Freeman

Rock House, Ironbridge Road, Broseley,  
Shropshire, TF12 5AJ.

Tel: 01952 883459.

email: [jfreeman@sncanal.org.uk](mailto:jfreeman@sncanal.org.uk)

### Alan Harding

The Villa, Wappenshall,  
Telford TF6 6DE

Tel: 07944 753009

email: [aharding@sncanal.org.uk](mailto:aharding@sncanal.org.uk)

### Julie Harris

Tel: 07702 465190

email: [jharris@sncanal.org.uk](mailto:jharris@sncanal.org.uk)

### John Heather

Six Oaks Farm, Sandy Bank, Whixall,  
Whitchurch, Shropshire SY13 2NS

Tel: 01948 880850

email: [jheather@sncanal.org.uk](mailto:jheather@sncanal.org.uk)

### John Myers

18 Meadow Lane, Derrington,  
Stafford ST18 9NA

Tel: 01785 255263

email: [editor@sncanal.org.uk](mailto:editor@sncanal.org.uk)

### Alistair Price

Ellerton House, 50 Monkmoor Road,  
Shrewsbury SY2 5AU.

Tel: 01743 242609

email: [aprice@sncanal.org.uk](mailto:aprice@sncanal.org.uk)

### John Stevens

11 Roe Deer Green, Newport,  
Shropshire TF10 7JQ

Tel: 01952 402936

email: [graphics@sncanal.org.uk](mailto:graphics@sncanal.org.uk)

### Dee Nelson Membership Secretary:

Brookfield, Wroxeter, Shrewsbury SY5 6PH  
Telephone: 01743 761447

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## SUPPORT GROUP MEETINGS

### NEWPORT

- **Wednesday 5th November**  
**Wednesday 7th January 2015**  
7.30pm British Legion Club  
Audley Road, Newport TF10 7DP  
Contact: Steve Heise 01952 273820

### TELFORD

- **Saturday 20th December**  
*(combined with the final work party of the year)*  
**Monday 9th February 2015**  
7.30pm The Elephant and Castle  
1 High Street, Dawley TF2 9JQ  
Contact: Alan Harding 07944 753009

### SHREWSBURY

- **Tuesday 25th November**  
**Tuesday 27th January 2015**  
7.30pm Meole Brace Bowling Club,  
Meole Rise, off Upper Road,  
Meole Brace, Shrewsbury SY3 9JF  
Contact: Bernie Jones 01743 709601

## An Evening with Queen Elizabeth



**14th November at 7.00pm,**  
**Burton School**  
**Audley Road, TF10 7DS**  
The evening will start with a meal (own drinks)  
The presentation by Queen Elizabeth I  
available from Bernie Jones  
01743 709601 or [bjones@sncanal.org.uk](mailto:bjones@sncanal.org.uk)  
**£20 per head**

**CANCELLED DUE TO  
LESLEY'S ILL HEALTH**

# WAPPENSHALL WHARF PROGRESS REPORT

## First bricks removed in Transshipment Warehouse

The Trust Project Team is working hard to submit our Round 2 bid by the 10 December 2014. As there are only four dates each year that we can submit our bid, December, March, June and September, it would mean a wait of at least another 3 months if we don't get all the necessary paperwork and reports to the HLF in time. We do have until the 15 December 2015 to submit the bid, but obviously want to do it as soon as possible so that we can get on with the work.

A key meeting will take place with our HLF mentor, *Sita Brand*, on 11th November 2014. This meeting will determine whether or not our documents are complete and up to standard and if we can submit our Round 2 bid in December.

As the HLF grant will be just under £1M, we also need to raise the remaining funding to achieve the £1.55M total required and this will be a challenge. This is because smaller grants often have a "use by" date that comes with them and these are normally within 12 months. So it really is a question of matching these grant dates with the main project funding from HLF.

Have you raised £100 towards this project yet? We have already received £900 from

members who have held sponsored cycle rides, organized a quiz or a raffle and some donations too. PLEASE do have a bash at raising your £100. You are one of over 1200 members of the Trust now, so if everyone does this we would raise £120,000 + and this would get us "over the finishing line!"

We also need to meet the pre-planning conditions of the Planning Permission (PP) and Listed Building Consent (LBC) we have with Telford and Wrekin Council and these too have a "do by" date for actually starting



*Bricks are removed from one of the bricked up windows in the Transshipment Warehouse*



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## Sometimes help comes from far away

One highlight of the Waterways Recovery Group's week at Meretown Lock in Newport was the presence of Rodrigo, a very determined young man. Rodrigo wanted to come over from Spain to improve his English but, given the current state of the Spanish economy, he did not have a lot of money to pay for this. He raised the money for his trip with sponsored swims and bike rides then he researched the possibilities and discovered the Waterway Recovery Group's restoration camps. As the charge for a week's camp is only £54 including food and accommodation, this is what he decided to do. He booked himself in and, after working for a



week on Meretown lock, he was going straight on to another WRG camp for four days, having 2 days off for sightseeing then another week's WRG camp in Stroud before returning home. Hopefully his command of English will be much improved by the end of this.



## Painting the Black Shed black!

After the refurbishment of the small room in the Black Shed in Newport earlier in the year and extensive repairs to the large warehouse doors, the outside of the building has now been re-painted.

Seventy litres of black paint were provided by Telford and Wrekin Council and the work was done on behalf of the SNCT by volunteers from the Telford office of Capgemini. The work party was led by SNCT member *Ian Gaston*, who works for the company, and was part of their Community Activities Programme. Capgemini is one of the world's foremost providers of consulting, technology and outsourcing services and they believe in getting their people involved in the local community in partnership with organisations such as the SNCT.



the physical work. They "time expire" after 3 years and as the Trust applied for PP and LBC 3 years ago, these would have run out on 16 September 2014 unless we had made a start on the buildings and met the pre-conditions. There were 14 conditions that had to be met including things like providing samples of the bricks we intend to use to replace those that have deteriorated, samples of quarry tiles and roof slates too. Then there was an Ecology Report that needed to be supplied which we managed to get completed just in time. On the 16th September, *Dave Cant* and I made a start on the restoration itself by removing the bricks from one of the bricked-up windows in Transhipment Warehouse that is actually inside the Romney Building. This cannot be seen from the outside and will not let the weather in (see photograph).

Our Activity Plan Consultants, *Allan Randall* and *Carol Parr*, who many of you will have met, as they have consulted with both members and Trustees – even if this was only by an e-mailed survey – have been very busy. The first draft of their plan has now been produced and has been scrutinized by *Sita Brand* at our meeting with her in Birmingham on 10th September. There has been an enormous amount of work put into this because the HLF see this as a key document, mainly because it will detail how the Trust will manage Wappenshall when it is open to the public. They need to be sure that we have the plans and ability to generate sufficient income to sustain it into the future.

So, as you can see, this whole project is not an easy one to manage, but we have a very good team working on it now and I'm certain that we will win through and see Wappenshall open in the summer of 2016.

*Bernie Jones*

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# WRGies' first week long camp on the S&N canals

In August the SNCT were delighted to host our first week-long Waterways Recovery Group (WRG) camp on the Newport Canal and it was very successful. Many of our members joined in with the work and found it extremely rewarding.

The twenty WRGies were accommodated at Burton Borough School in Newport, who were incredibly helpful and supportive. Quinney from the Pheasant pub in Newport helped things along by lending us his outdoor bowling alley and giant Jenga for evening entertainment and a WRG v. SNCT quiz was also held at the British Legion Club, another great supporter of the Trust.

The camp's main objective was to work on Meretown Lock, clearing it out and re-pointing the walls so that it is in good condition for the future restoration of this section of canal. However, when the undergrowth around Meretown Lock was cleared back it was discovered that the roots of the vegetation had done much more damage to the structure than expected. Over 3,000 bricks needed to be removed, cleaned of lime mortar and replaced to bring the lock sides back up to the right level. 300 bull-nosed blue bricks were purchased new to top off the far side; the near side has also been built back to the correct height. The lock was cleared to a depth of about 1500mm and the walls were re-pointed with lime mortar. We are very grateful for the support of Newport Town Council, without which this work could not have been done. We also received a cheque for £450 from our branch of the IWA, the Shrewsbury & North

Wales branch, towards costs. We hired the equipment from one of our members at a preferential price.



*The canal and towpath prior to restoration showing the amount of vegetation that had to be removed from the bed of the canal*

Next to Forton skew bridge there is a section of the old canal bed which is owned by the Canal & River Trust. In association with the Norbury to Newport Canal Restoration CIC we are looking to re-water it. This length has never been filled in, so we do not need planning permission to re-water it. The WRGies have now moved a fence back out of the canal bed and have done a massive amount of scrub bashing to clear the area. Once a little more clearance has been done, it will be ready for re-lining and re-watering. Our engineer is currently preparing plans and specifications for this work, whilst the Trust is fund raising for the job to be done.

## A visit to the S&N by John Dodwell



*John Dodwell with Bernie Jones on the Longdon-on-Tern aqueduct*

On 7 September 2014, a "VIP" visited the S&N - Canal & River Trust (CRT) National Trustee, John Dodwell. He's the CRT Trustee who really has a canal restoration pedigree with involvement dating right back to the 1964 Stratford Canal re-opening and including the fight for the Stourbridge, the 'big digs' on the Cheshire Ring and restoration of the Upper Avon. His brother Tim was involved in the working parties of the London & Home Counties branch of the Inland Waterways Association which led to the founding of Waterway Recovery Group. John contacted me a few weeks before hand to ask if it was possible to meet someone from SNCT to show him the S&N, as he did not know much about it. He was taking his boat back north and planned to pass through Norbury Junction on the 7th September.

Anne and I drove over to Norbury on a sunny Sunday morning to meet John and headed off first to Wappenshall. John was very interested to see the wharf and buildings and asked many questions about the place. I think I managed to answer them all! He was especially impressed that we had managed to obtain our HLF grant.

We then went on to see the Longdon-on-Tern Aqueduct and he was fascinated with this marvellous structure, which he had only seen the odd picture of before this visit. After walking over the aqueduct we went on to see the work done at Meretown Lock by the recent WRG Camp. John was very pleased to hear about the tremendous effort that this wonderful bunch had put in on our behalf and also to hear about our future plans for this section.

Finally, we went to the Forton Skew Bridge and Aqueduct, which John had not known about before and both mightily impressed him. He was very interested to learn that CRT owned this short section and was pleased to learn that we were working with them to re-water this stretch too.

After retiring to the Junction Inn for a bite to eat and a pint, we were shown over John's very interesting historic boat, a 1942 BCN tug named Helen.

I think I can safely say that the S&N is now firmly on the CRT map at national level! For more information about John see [www.waterways.org.uk/iwa\\_publications/waterways\\_mag/february\\_2012/meet\\_the\\_trustees](http://www.waterways.org.uk/iwa_publications/waterways_mag/february_2012/meet_the_trustees)

*Bernie Jones*



*The*  
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3/4



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3/4



This quarter we feature some photographs of the Trench Arm from the extensive collection of canal images by *W Howard Williams*



*The Trench railway bridge over the Shrewsbury Canal in 1954*



*An aqueduct carrying a stream over the Shrewsbury canal at the foot of the Trench incline plane*



*The Trench incline plane after the tracks had been removed with Trench Pool in the background*



*In the foreground is some of the ironwork from the decayed lock gates*



*Work starts on laying the bricks salvaged from work around Lock 20 (Newport Town Lock)*



*A mini-digger and dumper truck were employed to move the tons of earth and stone used to fill the lock*



*WRGies clearing concrete from the lock entrance with a jackhammer*



*The bricks have been laid and covered to dry, while the team tidy the site ready for grass seed to be sown*



*The lock as it now looks*

# A WRGie work camp on the Newport Canal - a leader's diary



Members of the Waterway Recovery Group and the SNCT gather at Meretown Lock after finishing work

On Saturday 16th August twenty volunteers, a mix of old hands and first timers, descended on Burton Borough School in Newport to set up our base for the week.

Following our normal regime of checking and counting the kit which travels from camp to camp, introductory talks and safety briefings, we were all set to start work on Meretown Lock.

On Sunday morning we started bright and early. Having secured the site with Nymesh fencing and, most importantly, installed the Burco ready for our tea and coffee break, we set about scrub clearing the lock sides to investigate what lay beneath and to find the reason for the bulge in the offside wall brickwork.

By lunchtime the lock looked like a very different place and the scrub clearance team were well on the way to the A41. The

bulging brickwork had been removed and prepared ready for rebuilding. The concrete dam at the tail of the lock had been partially dismantled using our disc cutter and a good helping of brute force with a sledge hammer! When the hired plant arrived the digger was immediately put to use lowering the level of the lock infill by approximately 500mm to provide a solid base for the bricklayers at a comfortable working height.

In the afternoon we collected some reclaimed bricks from the Black Shed to be cleaned for reuse in the lock wall rebuild.

Monday started with the newcomers being instructed how to safely mix lime mortar. Several teams started on the tasks of brick cleaning, mortar mixing and bricklaying. The sound of chipping hammers echoed throughout the morning as there were a lot of bricks to clean. On the camp we had several volunteers who were doing their Duke of Edinburgh Gold Award residential

# Walking back in time to Donnington Wood

I recently led a very interesting walk for Trust members, made more pleasant as the rain held off, where we explored the canal routes and industries in the Donnington Wood area of Granville Park.

Walking north along the route of one of the Lilleshall company's railway lines, we soon reached the area where the Waxhill Barracks, mine and chapel were situated. It is close to this point that the Donnington Wood tub boat canal crossed under the railway lines and then ran parallel to the Muxton Mine. Here they shared a loading wharf, with the two transport methods on either side of the raised brick loading area.

Muxton was the earliest deep pit in the area, made possible as advances in pumping technology enabled these deeper mines to be drained. Before this the mining in the area had taken place to the west of the fault line. Whilst here we were able to inspect the remains of the large winding house and the pumping house with its foundation, a thick wall which held the beam, the flywheel pit and its pipes. Some

members of the group also went to find the capped tops to the two shafts of the mine.

Retracing our steps we moved our cars the short distance to the Lodge Furnaces, reservoir and canal basin. The canal basin came after the canal's completion and was added to serve the Lodge Furnaces with coal, limestone and ironstone. The basin has now most likely changed from its original appearance, probably due to water entering after landscaping work to some nearby clay pits. We were impressed by the huge retaining ramparts, where rail wagons delivered material to charge the blast furnaces from the tops.

Standing inside the remains of the furnaces (thankfully now cool) the group looked at the burned bricks which lined the furnaces, discussing why the iron had been of such high quality and why three of the five furnaces had not lived up to expectations after they were built. Before returning to the cars we took a look at the remains of the stables, office and store, which are built into the compacted earth wall of the reservoir.

*Alistair Price*



The remains of the winding house, pump mountings and flywheel pit



*This was once the Lilleshall Inclined Plane with a drop of 70 feet*

purposes, whilst the limestone would go to the Donnington Wood Furnaces which *Richard Reynolds* of Ketley had erected at the western extremity of the canal, in 1772. In later years the limestone would undoubtedly be supplied to the furnaces at Wrockwardine Wood and the Lodge.

About 1790, the shafts and tunnel were abandoned and an inclined plane, 123 yards long was substituted.

When the original Lilleshall Partnership was formed in 1802 (later to become the Lilleshall Company) in which the Earl Gower was chief partner, the Lilleshall limeworks, the canal and all its appurtenances were leased to the new partnership.

When this company erected the famous plant of five furnaces at the Lodge, a short arm was constructed to serve that undertaking.

These furnaces brought the company world wide fame as here they produced the finest quality cold blast pig-iron ever made. The Lodge Arm was abandoned when the last furnace was “blown out” in 1888.

The beginning of the end of this canal came in 1878 or 1879, when the inclined plane and the branch canal were abandoned. It is safe to assume that this coincided with the closing of the Lilleshall Limeworks. Little use was

made after this time of the section of the canal east of Muxton Bridge.

About the year 1890, The Duke of Sutherland made his long carriage drive between Lilleshall Hall and the Golden Gate. To accomplish this, it was necessary to destroy some hundreds of yards of canal, thus cutting off the section of the canal east of the drive to Pave Lane Wharf.

Boat-building and repair sheds were at the Old Yard, Donnington Wood.

By 1904, the remaining portion of the Donnington Wood Canal had become redundant. The Lilleshall Company were making increasing use of their mineral line from Muxton Bridge to Lubstree Wharf on the Humber Arm of the Newport Branch, with the object of saving time lost when the boats were passing the Trench Inclined Plane and the nine locks to Wappenshall.

The furnaces which *Richard Reynolds* had erected at Donnington Wood, having passed into the hands of *Bishton's* of Snedshill in 1796, were brought into the Lilleshall Partnership in 1802 by *John Bishton*, and thus became the Lilleshall Company's first furnaces. Though these works were eventually replaced by the Lodge Furnaces, the works were maintained as a foundry and engineering department until 1860, according to *Randall*.

The water for the canal came mainly from the coal-mines at Donnington Wood; beam type pumping engines there and at Muxton Bridge were in operation until the latter 1920's. The supply for the branch came from Limekiln Pool and Willmer Pool. The western section of the canal dried out when pumping ceased in 1928.

The craft used on the canal were square ended tub boats with a maximum load of three tons.

qualification and some of these were shown how to lay bricks.

After lunch several volunteers went to the second site at Forton to begin scrub clearance in preparation for repositioning the boundary fence.

Investigation work began at the tail of the lock and the towpath side paddle hole was found to be in good condition. The lower section of the concrete dam proved to be an inverted T shape and too thick for the disc cutter so we decided to hire a pneumatic breaker and compressor which, as soon as it arrived, was put into action. Again a number of newcomers were shown how to safely operate the breaker. The dam proved straight forward enough to remove. However the other task for the kit proved less straightforward. At some stage a mound of concrete had been dumped in the offside paddle hole and had restricted access, which made working on it a very difficult task but persistence paid off and it was all removed. Thankfully before dumping the concrete the offenders had bizarrely decided to place a sheet of corrugated iron in front of the paddle opening. Very thoughtful – but not putting the concrete there in the first place would have been even more thoughtful!

It was decided to cap the offside wall with bullnose engineering bricks which were ordered for next day delivery at a local builder's merchant. Work also progressed at a pace at the Forton site with more scrub clearance and the fence being moved out of the canal bed. SNCT members worked with us at both sites.

Bricklaying continued to bring the offside lock wall up to match the height of the nearside wall which also needed some infill bricklaying to complete. The bullnose engineering bricks duly arrived and were



*Clearance work at the Forton Bridge section*

collected, ferried to site and straight into the brickies hands to begin laying.

Friday, the last day on site, had arrived in the blink of an eye. At Meretown Lock we needed to point up the bullnose capping bricks, which is not a quick task! The capping bricks had to have a concrete haunch laid behind them so, once we had sufficient lime mortar for the brickies to finish the pointing, the mixer was going flat out to produce sufficient concrete. The plant was being collected at 4pm before which we had to level the infill in the lock but this could not be done until the pointing was finished. In these situations it is a question of belief – if you convince yourself you will finish everything you likely will – and we did, both at Meretown Lock and Forton.

As leader of the camp I wish to thank all of the SNCT members who visited us both on site and at the social gatherings. Your can-do attitude was a refreshing change and your hospitality was outstanding. I hope we will all work together again in the future.

*Bob Crow, WRG camp leader*

# The canal system of east Shropshire and the industries it served

by W. Howard Williams

This piece was originally published in the Shropshire Magazine in the 1950's and subsequently reproduced by Shropshire Libraries in the book "Shropshire Canals" in 1980.

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When Francis, fourth Duke of Bridgewater, conceived the idea of making a short Canal connecting the coal mines on his Worsley estate with Manchester for the purpose of supplying the latter with coal at a cheaper rate than had previously been possible, he little dreamed that his venture would earn him the title "Father of Inland Waterways." This ten mile long canal was completed in 1761, and so immediate was its success that many hundreds of canals were made in the ensuing years.

The first canal in Shropshire was that constructed by the Earl Gower and Company in 1768. There is little doubt that the Earl, who was the owner of much land in East Shropshire, had been inspired by the success of the Duke of Bridgewater's venture. The Duke and the Earl were brothers-in-law, and their respective land agents were the brothers, John and Thomas Gilbert.

It had long been known that rich deposits of coal and iron-stone lay beneath the Earl Gower's Shropshire estate, which included the greater part of Donnington Wood,

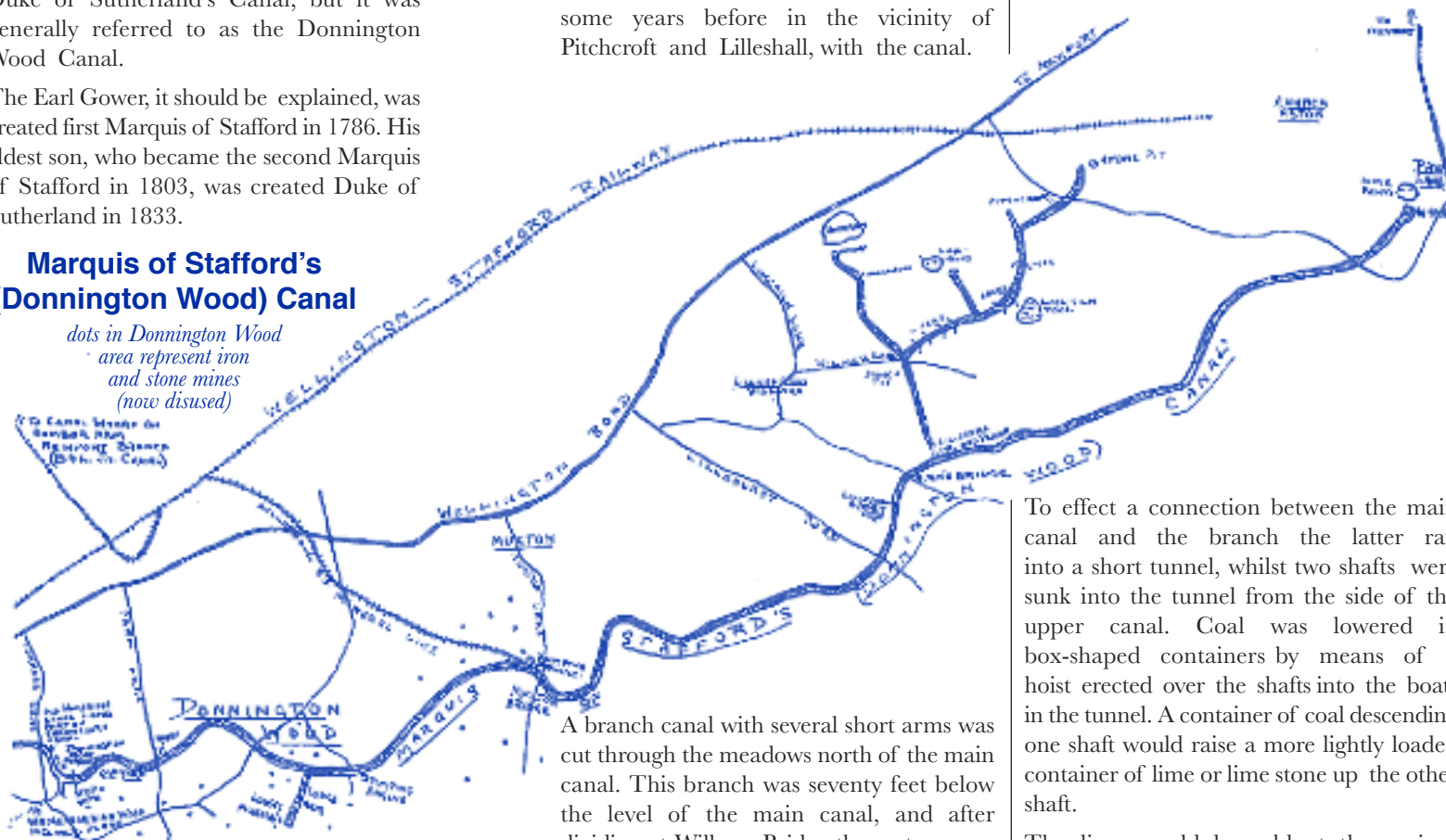
Wrockwardine Wood and Ketley. Lack of good roads or waterways had delayed the development of these industries.

In 1768, John Earl Gower took into partnership the brothers Gilbert, and this Company constructed what has been variously described as the Marquis of Stafford's or the Duke or Sutherland's Canal, but it was generally referred to as the Donnington Wood Canal.

The Earl Gower, it should be explained, was created first Marquis of Stafford in 1786. His eldest son, who became the second Marquis of Stafford in 1803, was created Duke of Sutherland in 1833.

## Marquis of Stafford's (Donnington Wood) Canal

*dots in Donnington Wood area represent iron and stone mines (now disused)*



Originally it was about five miles long, its western extremity being at Donnington Wood. Passing south of Muxton village and almost under the shadow of Lilleshall Abbey, its eastern terminus was near to the Newport-Wolverhampton turnpike at Pav Lane, two miles South of Newport. Here a wharf was constructed for the distribution of coal to Newport, and the surrounding villages. Old maps reveal that lime was formerly burned in kilns close to the wharf. At a later date it was decided to link up the lime quarries and kilns belonging to the Earl Gower which had been established some years before in the vicinity of Pitchcroft and Lilleshall, with the canal.

stone pit at Pitchcroft. The western arm ended at the north eastern end of Lilleshall village, near Limekiln Lane. Near to this terminus (which was called Colliers' End) were extensive lime quarries. A wharf was made here for distribution of coal to the village.

In the meadows between the east and west arms were the lime kilns. To service them a short cut was made from the eastern arm and a light railway ran out from the wharf at "Colliers' End" on the west arm.

To effect a connection between the main canal and the branch the latter ran into a short tunnel, whilst two shafts were sunk into the tunnel from the side of the upper canal. Coal was lowered in box-shaped containers by means of a hoist erected over the shafts into the boats in the tunnel. A container of coal descending one shaft would raise a more lightly loaded container of lime or lime stone up the other shaft.

The lime would be sold at the various wharves on the canal for agricultural

A branch canal with several short arms was cut through the meadows north of the main canal. This branch was seventy feet below the level of the main canal, and after dividing at Willmer Bridge the eastern arm passed through seven locks on its way to a