

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.

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 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

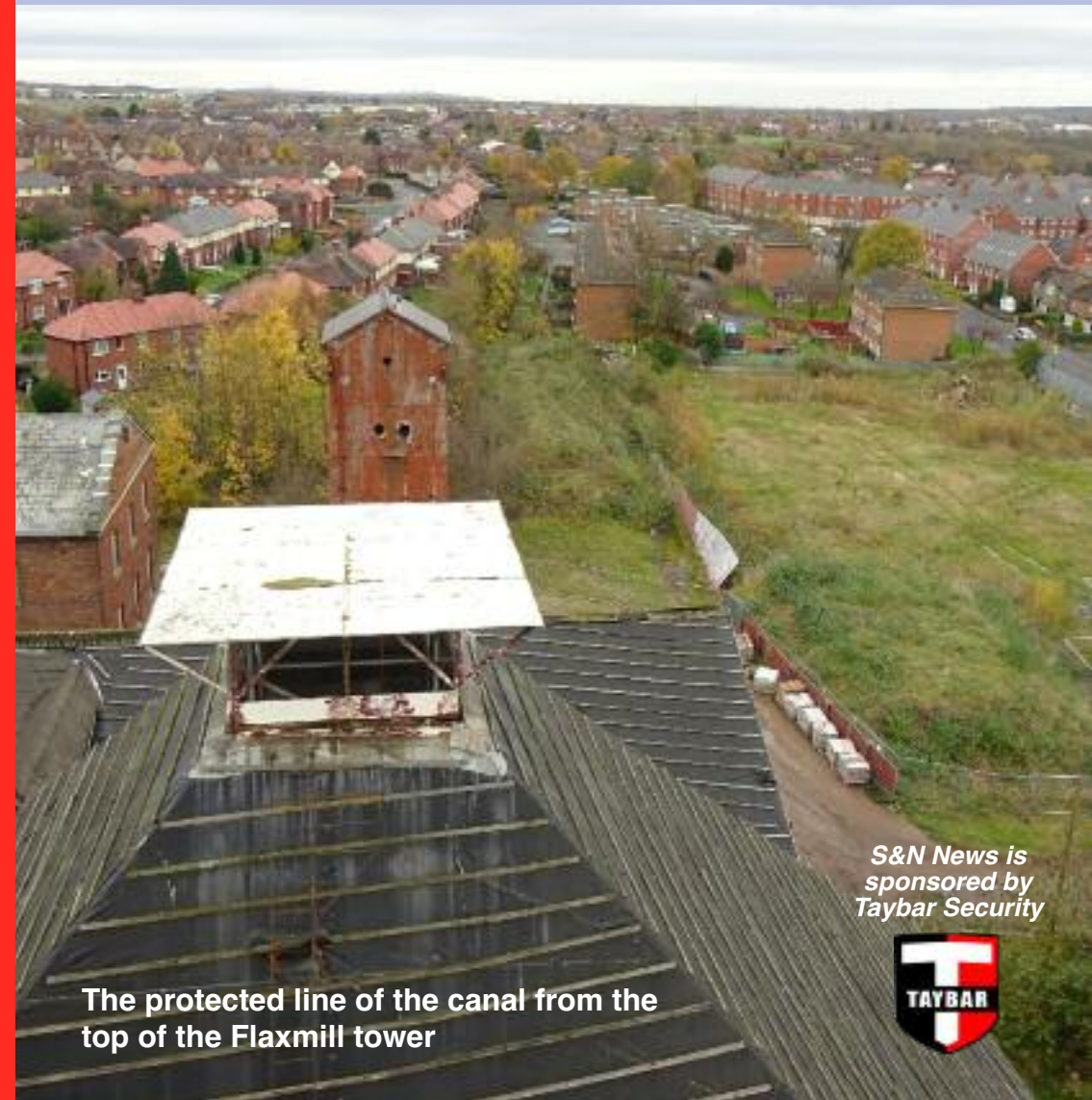
S&N News - Issue 68 Spring 2018

S&N News



The quarterly newsletter of the
Shrewsbury and Newport Canals Trust

Spring 2018



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The protected line of the canal from the
top of the Flaxmill tower

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what's in your S&N News

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

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notes from the chair

Happy New Year! The last few months have been very interesting for me. Firstly, I met with the High Sheriff of Shropshire, Charles Lillis, and his wife Veronica. They came to Wappenshall in October and were most impressed with both the wharf and the work that the Trust carries out. Charles kindly obtained a letter of support for our HLF bid from Sir Laurie Marcus, Chairman of Historic England.

In October London WRG visited us and we had a tremendously successful two-day work party at the Berwick Tunnel North Portal. Our efforts were aided by unbelievably warm weather over the weekend. See pages 6 and 7 for details of how you can join in with this exciting new project in 2018.

During December, the Shrewsbury team held its annual Christmas get-together at The Abbey, thanks to Derek Taylor. This was a most enjoyable evening with a challenging quiz kindly supplied by Alan and Sue Wilding. Also, the Wappenshall group enjoyed their now traditional buffet, including turkey baps and mulled wine, in Alan Harding's new summer house (gin palace). Thanks to Alan for organising this.

The Canal and River Trust presented SNCT with a Volunteer Organisation Recognition Award at their Volunteer Day at the Pontcysyllte Aqueduct. This was for the work our volunteers have carried out to ensure the future of our canals and amounted to 16,500 hours, significantly more

than any other Trust. Well done to all our volunteers – keep recording those hours!

Work towards the Norbury Canal Festival on 5th, 6th and 7th May continues apace. Boat bookings are already full and the new car park field has been inspected and looks good. Volunteers are needed to assist prior to, during and after the Festival. Please let me know if you can help.

Last, but certainly not least, I am pleased to report that the Wappenshall HLF re-bid was submitted on time on 6th November (see page 10). Fingers crossed for a successful outcome!

Bernie Jones
Chairman



Do, please, check the website for updates

- **Monday 5th February**
IWA quiz night
The IWA have invited SNCT members to pit their wits against other canal societies in a quiz at The Narrowboat Inn, Whittington at 7.00 for 7.30pm or, if you want a meal beforehand, 6.00 for 6.30pm.
Please email Dawn Aylwin at shrewsandwales@waterways.org.uk if you wish to have a meal so that she can let the pub know catering numbers.
- **10th - 17th February**
Waterways Recovery Group Shrewsbury camp
This will be for work at the Berwick Tunnel. Please come along and help, or just visit and bring cake.

- **Saturday and Sunday**
3rd and 4th March
WRG Shrewsbury weekend camp
Work at the Berwick Tunnel
- **Saturday 21st April**
IWA Dudley Tunnel trip 11am
Further details as they are available.
Booking essential
- **Sunday 29th April**
Newport Paddle Day and litter pick
Meet at 'Black Hut' 10.00am
Water Lane, Newport TF10 7LD
Volunteers needed to help with litter pick
- **Saturday 5th, Sunday 6th,**
Monday 7th May
Norbury Canal Festival
Bank Holiday Weekend
Norbury Junction, Staffs. ST20 0PN
Opens 10.00am each day
Volunteers needed for open days, the build up and the take down
- **Saturday and Sunday**
12th and 13th May
WRG Shrewsbury weekend camp
Work at the Berwick Tunnel
- **Saturday 2nd June**
Annual General Meeting
at Wappenshall Wharf,
Wappenshall, Wellington TF6 6DE
- **Saturday 9th June**
Newport Carnival
Volunteers needed to help man our stand
- **Saturday and Sunday**
11th and 12th August
Tern Valley Vintage Show
at Chetwynd Park, Newport, Shropshire
Volunteers needed to help man our stand

SUPPORT GROUP MEETINGS

NEWPORT

- **Wednesday 7th March,**
Wednesday 2nd May
7.30pm British Legion Club
Audley Road, Newport TF10 7DP
Contact: John Myers 07711 858986

TELFORD

- **Monday 12th February,**
Monday 9th April
7.30pm The Elephant & Castle
1 High Street, Dawley TF4 2ET
Contact: Alan Harding 07944 753009

SHREWSBURY

- **Tuesday 13th March**
7.30pm Meole Brace Bowling Club,
Meole Rise, off Upper Road,
Meole Brace, Shrewsbury SY3 9JT
Contact: Peter Cann 07985 046461

New Members

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

- Ian & Janet Farrington**
Wrockwardine, Telford
- Adam Lewis** Edgmond, Shropshire
- Margaret Mantripp** Newport, Shropshire
- Jane Knight** Newport, Shropshire
- Peter Rawlings** Stirchley, Telford
- Jenny & Brian Jones** Shrewsbury, Salop
- Helen Corrin** Newport, Shropshire
- Dirk Van Rensberg** Hadley, Telford
- Alan & Judy Jones** Warrington
- Graham & Rachel Connan**
Solihull, West Midlands
- Bosom Buddies** Shrewsbury, Shropshire

Berwick Tunnel Workparties



After the closure of the Shrewsbury canal the “Berwick Loop” was cut off from the rest of the canal by the construction of the A5 dual carriageway and this stretch has been left unloved for over 50 years. The Canal & River Trust still own the 887 metre (970 yard) long Berwick tunnel and about 200 metres of canal bed and towpath running in a north westerly direction, from the portal to the A5. Since closure a lot of damage has occurred to the elegant red sandstone tunnel entrance and to the adjacent old lengthsman’s hut.

Volunteers from the SNCT have recently worked very hard to prevent further degradation to the Northern Portal of the tunnel and to open up the canal towpath from there to the A5 road. Their efforts were significantly enhanced over the weekend of 6/7 October, when 21 people from the London Waterway Recovery Group (WRG) came to assist from as far away as Kent, Manchester, Devon and London. Volunteers of all ages put their shoulders to the wheel to clear the site and the towpath around the 225 year old stonework, then erect a sturdy post, rail and stock wire fence to improve safety.

Looking down from the top of the North Portal to the lengthsman's hut

Supported by the Canal & River Trust, the SNCT are planning a week-long WRG camp from 10th to the 17th February and plan further WRG weekend work parties on 3/4 March and 12/13 May 2018 to start the painstaking work of removing the offending tree roots from the tunnel entrance stonework to allow it to be re-mortared back into place. Eventually, SNCT would like to restore the damaged portal, re-build the lengthsman’s hut and create an all-ability circular walk down the towpath to the A5 and back along the opposite bank.

There is a huge amount of work still to do and more help is certainly needed, so if you would like to know more please visit www.sncanal.org.uk or find us on Facebook.

If you would like to get involved call Alistair on **01743 242 609**, Chas on **07734 878 777** or email scrghome@gmail.com.



stamps make money for the Trust

Please keep collecting all your used stamps. In view of the high cost of mailing them, can we suggest that you bring them to Trust functions or you can still send them to:

**Elaine Evans,
231 Monkmoor Road,
Shrewsbury SY2 5SW.**

who has taken over as our central stamp collector from Mal Evans



Drive for business backers

SNCT chairman, Bernie Jones, with Robert Nicholas Financial Advisers director, Steve Graves, by the canal in Newport

The Shrewsbury and Newport Canals Trust has welcomed its latest corporate member as we seek to expand support from the business community. Newport-based Robert Nicholas Financial Advisers has backed the Trust by becoming full corporate members and they have been good enough to make a generous donation as well.

The SNCT has a broad and committed membership of individuals, but having the business community as part of what we are trying to do is hugely important as it sends a signal that the wider community recognises the benefits of restoring the waterways.

SNCT chairman, Bernie Jones, said: “We can’t thank the team at Robert Nicholas Financial Advisers enough for their belief in the Trust and its work. We would like to encourage other businesses to follow their lead as it will help us to bring these wonderful waterways back into use.”

Steve Graves, one of the directors at Robert Nicholas Financial Advisers, which has its offices on Newport High Street, said: “The canal is one of the key historic features of Newport. We think the idea of it being restored and connecting us to Staffordshire and to Telford and Shrewsbury as a green corridor is hugely exciting and would be a boon to the vitality of Newport and a whole swathe of Shropshire. I hope more businesses will consider becoming members. It’s not at all costly, but it is symbolically vital to the success of the project.”

If you know of any other businesses that might want to join the SNCT as corporate members, then do please encourage them as support from the local business community is important when we are dealing with local authorities, public authorities and organisations that give us grants.



Back in October, as SNCT fundraising officer, I put a bid into the Aviva Community Fund to try to win a £25,000 grant for the restoration of the Wappenshall Basin. Aviva receives hundreds of applications to its fund from all sorts of organisations, including quite a few from other canal projects. Once a bid is accepted it is then up to the organisation to get its members and supporters to register with the Fund and to vote for the project they support, the project with the highest number of votes then gets the grant. Applications are split into groups and there are grants available for each group. Our application was kindly submitted by Robert Nicholas Financial Advisers, our newest corporate member (see P8); with the backing of a financial adviser we were allocated to a special group which increased our chances of success.

Many, many thanks to all the people who voted for the project. We managed to achieve 3,721 votes (where did the one vote come from?) but, unfortunately, it was not enough, so we did not succeed this time. However we did learn a lot and, next time, will have a better idea how to get our vote out early and how to inspire as many people as possible to support us. Looking at the winners, many are schools or similar large institutions who can call on a lot of support, so we will really have to work hard. A few more members voting next time and we might make it!

Alan Boney



An artists impression of how the east basin could look

Wappenshall Restoration

- Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) Bid update

As planned, we submitted our new Round 1 bid to the HLF in time for the deadline in November 2017. We expect to hear the outcome in early March 2018 but, based upon past experience, if we are successful it will be a bit longer before we are allowed to announce our success whilst all the paperwork is completed. If our Round 1 bid is successful, we anticipate that the Round 2 bid will be submitted in November 2018 for a decision in early March 2019.

Since our last attempt to obtain an HLF grant for Wappenshall the total costs of the project have risen to £2.57M. This is because of the rising costs of materials and because of changes in the HLF project requirements, particularly contingency and inflation levels together with increases in the project evaluation requirements.

This time our total HLF bid is for £1.88M, leaving the SNCT with £690,000 match funding to find. Whilst the majority of this money has already been pledged by members and from other grants, we still require another £100,000. So, please keep going with all the fund-raising you are currently doing. Your Trustees are constantly applying for further grants too. Please do let us know of any other sources of funding you may come across!



Aerial view of the complex in the 1990s

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1/4

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2/4

Winter Work Party Round up



Progress at Wappenshall

When Wappenshall Wharf was in use it was much larger than just the warehouses and basin that the SNCT are trying to restore. The wharf used to also include about 100 metres along the canal front of the adjacent Wharf Manager's House (now owned by trustee Alan Harding) and the Sutherland Arms (now Bridge House)

The Wappenshall workparties have recently grown in strength as we continue to prepare the site for restoration. The increased numbers have let us start to extend our operations beyond the basin. Our volunteers, together with the digger donated to us by Canal & River Services Ltd, have started to carefully excavate the wharf wall along the bottom of the garden of the former Wharf Manager's House, exposing the massive cut stonework and exploring how deep it goes. To give us better access the garden fence has been removed and the area cleared of vegetation. Eventually an area about two metres deep from the exposed stone edging will be grassed.



Exposing the wharf wall at Wappenshall

Forton

The SNCT recently returned to Forton to trim and clear the canal section so that, once again, it looks like a canal section on its way to being re-watered. In the process we discovered that there were hundreds of 75-100mm tall sycamore seedlings trying to take over, a patch of self seeded hawthorn and some resurgent ash trees, all of which needed to be sorted out so that the canal profile and the already laid Bentonite lining were not damaged.

The trustees have now voted the funds for the re-watering to proceed although fundraising is still ongoing. Outstanding work includes creating bunds at each end, building a pump house then installing a pump and reinforcing the aqueduct and the section under the skew bridge with lining and a layer of ferro-concrete.

Meretown Lock

There is always work to do on the 110m long stretch of canal by Meretown Lock, including a lot of maintenance to keep this showpiece looking good. The hedge that we laid a couple of years ago is growing well so it has had to be cut back and shaped to become a real feature of the area. The scrub and small trees on the offside have been partly cleared and we plan to plant up a new hedge on the offside at the Newport work party on 10th March (note the new date) with 420 hedging plants donated by the Woodland Trust. We are continuing to remove stumps, including one from the lock stonework, and the end of the section in water has been cleared.



Clearing the stonework at the entrance to Meretown Lock



Forton with the undergrowth removed

Shrewsbury

This winter the Shrewsbury work parties, in addition to the work at Berwick Tunnel (see pages 6-7), have started laying the hedge alongside the section of canal that they have been working on for some time near Lesley Owen Way. So far they have done over 50 metres and it looks very professional with an interwoven topping of hazel or willow strands. Later this year plans are in hand to return to Uffington to rebuild the overspill weir.



Hedgelaying at Shrewsbury

Newport

Last summer the WRG made an excellent start restoring the towpath to the west of Town Bridge in Newport, creating a 225m length with a very good surface which is being much complimented by local people, as they can now keep their feet dry. That only left us 125m



Work begins on restoring the Newport towpath

to do to reach Tickethouse Lock! We have had a couple of very productive workparties of our own since the WRG week, until we ran out of stone. Funding is in place for more stone, so more work parties are being planned as soon as the timetable can be worked out.



The new towpath at Newport

Trench Arm

The promised £100,000 from a Section 106 payment is now available to be spent by us on restoring Turnip and Hadley Park guillotine locks and doing whatever else we can for this section, possibly with a footpath to Wappenshall. Phil Jones is working with Telford & Wrekin Council and GKN with a view to starting workparties there very soon.



Alistair Price explains the workings of Turnip Lock



Hadley Park Lock 1979

CRT Annual Showcase event

Back at the end of Autumn the Canal & River Trust North Wales and Border Region Partnership held its annual Showcase, this year in Northwich. More than 40 partners, stakeholders, boating groups, businesses and associated organisations, including the SNCT, attended and had stands there. It is an opportunity for all the multitude of canal based operations associated with the CRT region to get together and show what we have achieved over the past year. Not very many of the public took the opportunity to call in – but it was a fantastic opportunity to network with all the other canal trusts and restoration societies, exchange information and discuss topics of mutual interest.

The programme opened at 9.45am with presentations from CRT’s chief executive Richard Parry, local waterway manager Wendy Capelle and partnership chair Brenda Harvey. Guests then had a chance to view displays and to network with CRT staff and the other waterway groups and local organisations.

Regional Partnership chair, Brenda Harvey said: "Our annual regional showcase is a great opportunity to talk about how important the waterways are locally and how individuals and communities can enjoy the benefits they bring. The Trust is a charity and relies on donations and an expanding team of volunteers to keep the canal network looking its best. We also have a strong network of partners and together we have enjoyed many successes over the past 12 months. This is a perfect event to celebrate these good things and an ideal opportunity to network with a wide range of people connected to the canals."



Richard Parry called by to say how impressed he is with what the SNCT has achieved. Our stand was voted best in show.



The Clifton Community Arts Centre

The SNCT is always keen to forge links with other organisations in our local area and recently we contacted the Clifton Community Arts Centre Ltd (CCAC) in Wellington.

Many of you will be aware that the CCAC are negotiating to lease and convert the vacant HSBC bank premises in the town into a community arts centre and, like us, they are fundraising to get capital for their project. We have discussed various items with them including fundraising and, in particular, we are grateful for a lot of advice that they have given us on how to obtain loan finance in a tax effective manner to help our match funding for Wappenshall.

We strongly support their efforts to help to regenerate Wellington and would ask our members to consider joining them. You can become a member for as little as £10 for a one-off share subscription, for which you will become a part-owner of a facility that will benefit the community for generations to come. Members will be entitled to shareholder benefits in relation to the facilities.

The group is looking for as many members as possible, as it makes their grant applications more robust. If you would like to support this worthy cause you can find further details on how to become a member at their website <http://www.theclifton.org/>



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The supporting scaffolding



The slates have been removed from the roof, and the wool insulation is being renewed



View along the ground floor of the Flaxmill



A reopened and renovated window - note the quality of the new brickwork



The stone edging at the base of the wall is the last remnant of the wharf

Since the last issue of S&N News I have had the privilege of being taken for a tour of the Flaxmill. The Flax Mill came into public ownership in 2005 when English Heritage (now Historic England) bought it as a purchaser of last resort following a number of failed development attempts. My guide was Alistair Godfrey of Historic England, who has recently taken over as the Project Lead.

So, on with the helmet and high viz jacket, get signed in to the site and off we go. It was absolutely fascinating to visit the five floors, the tower and the boiler rooms under restoration. I saw a number of windows which are being opened up and, for anyone who has previously visited the building, the main thing that you notice is how light it has become. Attention to detail means that HE have even managed to find a brick works that have matched the larger than normal bricks used to construct the Flaxmill - there was a tax on individual bricks at the time of construction in 1797 so they were made bigger to reduce the tax.

The structure of the Flaxmill is very fragile and the external and internal scaffolding is necessary to support it until it has been stabilised and strengthened. This work is being done extremely sympathetically, so that the building will again become self-supporting with all the complicated and extensive supporting structure out of sight.

The current phase of restoration will refurbish the Grade I listed Main Mill and Grade II listed kiln transforming both buildings into spaces to be used for both public and commercial activities. Once complete, the Main Mill will be removed from the Heritage at Risk register. To keep up to date with events, news and updates keep your eyes on the Historic England website <https://historicengland.org.uk/get-involved/visit/shrewsbury-flax-mill/> or that of the Friends of the Flaxmill Maltings at <http://www.flaxmill-maltings.co.uk>



Victorian hoist equipment installed in the Jubilee tower in 1897 to move grain around the site

John Myers

DEATH AND CRIME

on the Shrewsbury and Newport Canals

This article features a selection of deaths and crimes in the Shrewsbury and Newport canals area as recorded in press reports and canal company minutes from 1775 to 1920. It does not include murders, which will be the subject of a future article.

Extracted from a series of articles that originally appeared in "Cuttings" the magazine of the Shropshire Union Canal Society

To carry out a crime on Christmas Day seems especially uncharitable. George Jones, a farmer's servant, was the victim. That day in 1841 he met William Furber, a boatman who was an old acquaintance, and together they went drinking at the Canal Tavern in Shrewsbury. Later William Oakes, captain of the Wellington and David Jones, his crew member, joined them for much of the evening.

At about midnight, Furber suggested to George Jones that he spent the night on board his boat and then left. George Jones followed shortly afterwards, but when passing the Wellington, Oakes, who was standing on top of the boat, invited him in for a drink. Seated inside were two prostitutes and another man. The victim remembered having a glass of rum or brandy (possibly drugged); the next thing he remembered was lying on the towpath, robbed of nine shillings, a pocket knife and his boots.

Luckily there was a witness. Roger Bradshaw was able to say what had happened. He had been unloading coal at the gas works at about 1.30 am when he heard a boat moving. Together with another man, he saw Oakes standing on the deck, pushing the boat over to the towpath. He then saw the boat's captain shove a man out of the boat, get out onto the towpath and then, together with Oakes, start kicking him. Bradshaw called out to them to stop, but Oakes picked up a stone, threw it, and it struck Bradshaw's companion. As soon as he recovered he ran into the town to get help, whilst Bradshaw stayed on watch. Some young men tried to help but the two ruffians used their boat pole, severely injured one of the men and robbed him too. They were eventually arrested by Constable Thomas.



The Canal Tavern in 1950

At Shrewsbury in 1868 a boatman fished up from the bottom of the canal a basket, the mouth of which had been carefully sewn up with twine. Thinking it contained 'a dead cat or summat', he left it on the towpath and went for his breakfast. A workman passing a little later saw the basket, opened it and found the body of a three-month-old child. The surgeon told the inquest that it had been thrown alive into the water.

In 1903 three men were prosecuted for destroying fish in the canal near Wappenshall using dynamite. They were each sentenced to fourteen days' hard labour. It was only that year that the canal company had made an agreement with the Duke of Sutherland to acquire the fishing rights in the canal.

The most dangerous time for a boatman was working a lock, especially in the dark and in mid-winter. Lock mechanisms need care. For example Jane Jones, of the boat Bee, died in 1908 at Trench Lock (near Wellington) after being hit on the head by a flying windlass, her husband having left the windlass on the pinion of the winch while he went to tend to the horse.



A photograph of Trench Lock taken from a newspaper

Drunkenness was by far the most common contributing factor to the death



of adults not working on the canal system. The inquest into the death of Emma Dorricott in 1902 was told that she and Edward Ruscoe were walking along the towpath of the canal near Wellington. Both were intoxicated. She fell against him, and he stumbled into the water. The woman had her arm linked in his, and she was dragged after him. He managed to get out but was too muddled to give her any help. He told the lock-keeper but was too drunk to show him the exact spot where she fell in. The lock-keeper told the inquest that drunkenness on the canal side had greatly increased, and it was a common occurrence for intoxicated people to fall into the water there.

Sometimes suicide was evidently not premeditated. A dramatic example of this happened in 1838 at Old Park on the Shropshire Canal where a man and his wife were both drowned. They had a quarrel, and the woman left home saying she was going to a neighbour's. The husband followed her. She was heard to say that if he persisted in following her, she would jump into the canal. She then carried out her threat — and he immediately did the same.

Peter Brown

Letters (or emails) to the Editor



Benchmarks – I'm always happy to rise to a challenge.

As one who lives some way off the canal, I thought I would look at old OS maps on line to see where benchmarks were.

The maps are amazing showing the canal mainly in use - although the Telford Arm appears overgrown in places. It would be a fascinating project to buy the current sheets complete and superimpose the old ones on to them. How about doing that as a series along the canal month by month in the news? Sorry, I ran out of map before I got to Norbury, though.

I spotted some 19 marked on the 1890 OS maps. Maybe some still exist, I don't know.

Shrewsbury Canal

- Shrewsbury on the canal towpath south of Flaxmill
- Shrewsbury on Comet Bridge 46 (Shrewsbury Whitchurch Rd)
- Uffington Bridge 43 (also know as Kennels Bridge)
- Road bridge north of Berwick Wharf
- Bridge east of Berwick Wharf
- Withington drawbridge
- NE of Withington drawbridge
- Drawbridge east of Withington drawbridge
- Drawbridge east of Rodington

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- Marsh Green Bridge 22
- East of London Road (adjacent Bucks Head Inn)
- Eyton lock

Trench Arm

- Wheat Leasows Bridge
- Teagues Bridge
- Little Hales Bridge

Newport Canal

- Adeney Bridge 21
- Oxmoor Bridge 26
- Culvert west of Oxmoor

best wishes, Bob Dewey

Editor: *the drawbridges and some of the other structures that Bob has located have certainly been demolished but it would be interesting if some are still there. I know that at least one of the bridges is still standing but it's on private land, so hard to check. Can anyone locate any of the benchmarks listed above and send me a photo?*



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