

Calling all existing SNCT volunteers

Whatever you do for the trust, be it digging out the canal, baking cakes for fundraising, helping spread the word of your local group's activities, manning the trust gazebo at events, sending out emails or arranging the next meeting or work party, we need to record it - every hour you spend doing anything for the SNCT counts. And every little bit of your time, added to that of everyone else, makes a very large contribution to the bigger picture.

We record the hours that are spent by our volunteers to show community commitment to the restoration of the Shrewsbury and Newport canals. This helps us with grant applications and when talking to local authorities and other bodies who can help us restore the canals.

It also helps enormously with our relationship with the Canal and River Trust (CRT). CRT gather all the hours from their own volunteers and from ourselves and other canal restoration trusts around the country to help them make their case to the government about the importance and the support for canal restoration. Equally important is that, as part of that relationship, we get all sorts of help from the CRT including training courses, aid with parts of our project and access to CRT land e.g. at Forton and at Berwick where they own the canal stretches that we are trying to restore. Its very important that we have a good relationship with CRT, so its very important that every volunteer hour spent for the trust is recorded.

Maggie Phillips keeps the records of all the work undertaken by SNCT volunteers. So please make sure that you feed back to Maggie all the hours that you do, as they are important to us to tell the story and to help secure our waterways for the future.

Many thanks for all your hard work and dedication both in the past and in the future. Maggie needs to have your hours preferably sent monthly with your name, a brief description of what you have done and your hours spent. She can send you a form to fill in or just send the details to hoursatsnct@gmail.com.



Winter work party



Recruiting new members



Applying for grants



Baking cakes to raise funds

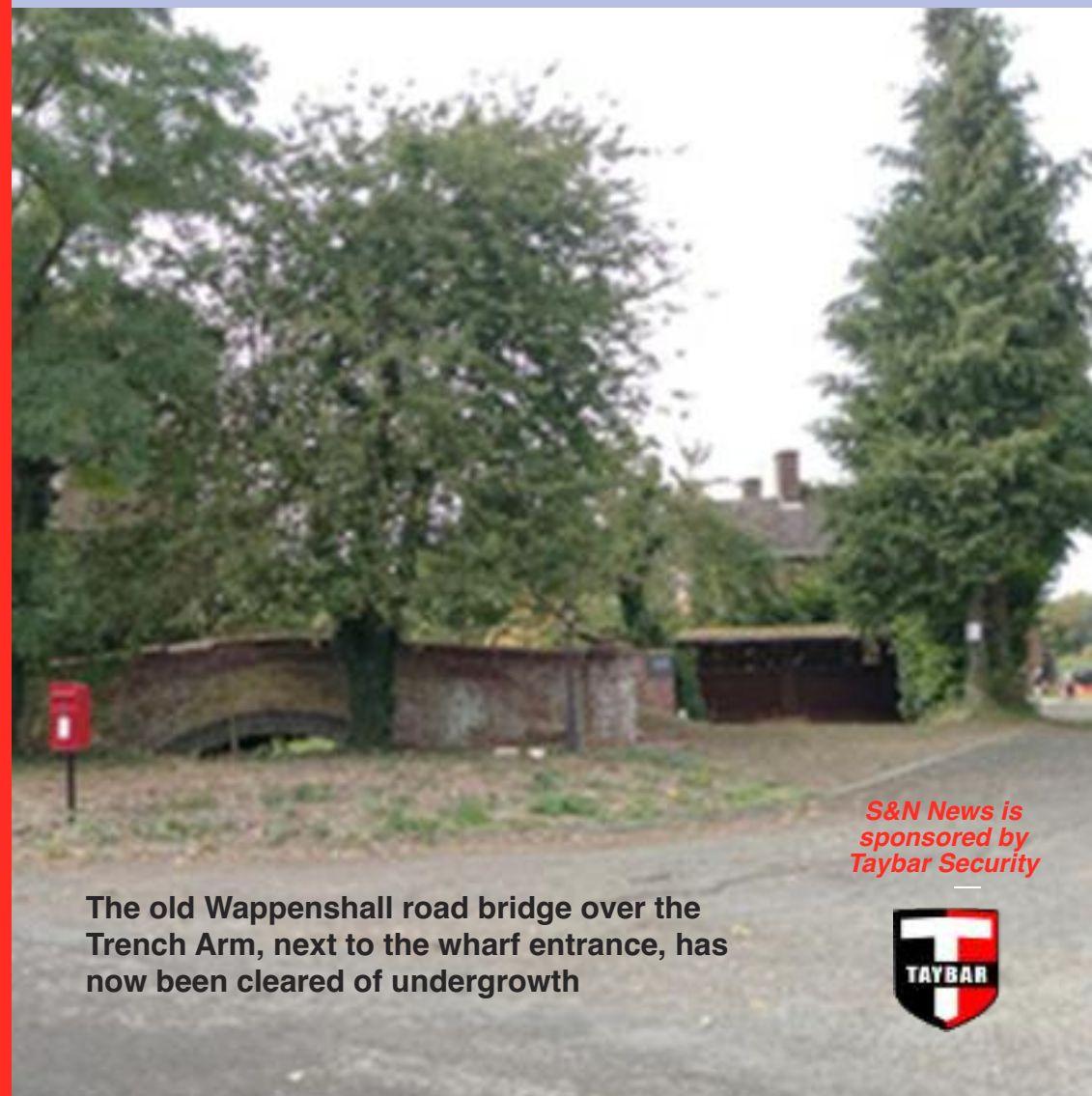
www.sncanal.org.uk

S&N News



The quarterly newsletter of the
Shrewsbury and Newport Canals Trust

Winter 2018



S&N News is
sponsored by
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The old Wappenshall road bridge over the Trench Arm, next to the wharf entrance, has now been cleared of undergrowth

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The quarterly newsletter of the
Shrewsbury and Newport Canals Trust



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COPY FOR S&N NEWS

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

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send your copy to the editor

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

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notes from the chair

As I write this, Autumn is upon us, with the first of the Atlantic storms battering Britain. This has not dampened the enthusiasm of our volunteers though, with tremendous work being done at the North and South Portals of the Berwick Tunnel, where the impenetrable jungle that blocked the 500 metres of towpath to the South Portal has been almost completely opened up and the portal itself is in sight. Widow's Bridge has had its stonework exposed for the first time in many years too. Then there is the battle of the Himalayan Balsam that is most definitely being won in Newport and the progress at Wappenshall that is covered elsewhere in this edition. I'd just like to add my personal thanks to everyone that has worked so hard during the summer heat.

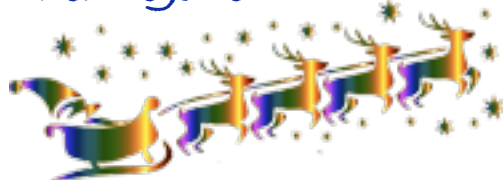
I am pleased to report that at long last we will be starting our Trench Arm project to restore the Hadley Park and Turnip guillotine locks. Trustee Phil Jones is leading on this one and we have funding from a Section 106 Agreement to do the work. Both T&W Council and Melrose (formerly GKN Sankey) have given their approval and member Ian Braine, who runs the Canal and River Services Company, has been awarded the major part of the restoration contract. The whole thing will be carried out under the watchful eye of T&W's Conservation Officer, Phoebe Farrell.

October will see another JCB added to our "fleet" courtesy of Ian Braine. This one will go to the Shrewsbury end and will greatly help to accelerate work there. Many thanks Ian for your continued support to our efforts.

Please listen out for "Waterwaves" our brand new Digital Radio Station at www.waterwavesmedia.org that will very shortly be broadcasting from Wappenshall. This will be playing an eclectic mix of music, interspersed with interviews with some of our volunteers and other people of interest, progress with Wappenshall Wharf, details of our work parties there and much more.

Funding, as ever, is a major job for the Trust, to support all the work that is currently going on. So just a gentle reminder for any of you that have not yet invested in the new Telford & Wrekin Council's Community Lottery (Twincl). Please help us by signing up. For just a £1 stake you can win up to £25,000 every week with better odds of winning than the National Lottery and over 60p of every £1 stake going to the Trust! See the website for details or the previous edition of S&N News

Bernie Jones chairman



Seasons Greetings to all our members



Dates for your Diary

Do, please, check the website for updates

- **SNCT Trustees meeting**
Thursday 15th November 7.30pm
Bridge House, Wappenshall TF6 6DE
Members are free to attend but may be requested to leave the room if sensitive subjects are being debated.
- **Telford Support Group Christmas celebrations**
Saturday 15th December, 1.00pm
after the regular Wappenshall work party, at the Villa next door. TF6 6DE.
All TSG regulars welcome, £2 contribution each towards turkey bap.
Feel free to bring along snacks, cakes, mince pies etc.
- **Newport Support Group meeting**
Wednesday 9th January 2019
Changed from 2nd January
See details in Support Group Meetings
- **Norbury Canal Festival**
Bank Holiday Weekend
4th, 5th and 6th May 2019
Norbury Junction,
Staffordshire ST20 0PN
Opens each day at 10am
Volunteers needed

New Members

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

Ted Cheers, Wolverhampton
Stanley Slaughter, London
Darren Bond & Samantha Jones, Trench
Dorothy & Keith Rushton-Bond, Hadley
Victor & Joan Shepherd, Longdon Upon Tern
Joan & Bob Cockman, Bishops Stortford
James Lowenberg-DeBoer, Newport
Rob & Tina Mansfield, Long Lane
Wrockwardine Wood & Trench History Group, Telford
IWA Warwickshire Branch, Coventry
Gnosall Phoenix Club, Gnosall

SUPPORT GROUP MEETINGS

NEWPORT

Wednesday 7th November

Wednesday 9 January 2019

7.30pm British Legion Club
Audley Road, Newport TF10 7DP
Contact: John Myers 07711 858986

TELFORD

Saturday December 15th 1.00pm

joint event with Wappenshall work party and Christmas party

Monday February 11th 2019

7.30pm The Elephant & Castle
1 High Street, Dawley TF4 2ET
Contact: Alan Harding 07944 753009

SHREWSBURY

Tuesday 13th November.

7.30pm Meole Brace Bowling Club,
Meole Rise, off Upper Road,
Meole Brace, Shrewsbury SY3 9JT
Contact: Peter Cann 07985 046461

Developments around Berwick Tunnel



It is two months since the Shrewsbury Group introduced weekly work parties on a Thursday and the small group of regular work party members have made significant advances uncovering the canal on either side of the Berwick Tunnel. Over this period work has focused on the South/East cutting, restoring a basic towpath through the very thick undergrowth, towards the tunnel portal. This will enable members to get tools and materials to the portal where the stone work will be cleared of vegetation and minor repairs made. As the group push on towards the portal some members are carrying out work to the canal infrastructure that has been uncovered. In particular Widows Bridge has been cleared of most vegetation, with stone work being uncovered either side to mark out the canal banks. The bridge is in



The towpath clear again

good condition needing only repointing of the brickwork and repositioning of two coping stones. Plans are in place to clean and repair the rural stonework supporting the towpath leading up to the bridge.

In the longer term the Shrewsbury group plan to restore the whole Berwick Loop to full navigation, hopefully working with the National Trust, who own a length of the canal bed. In addition plans are being made to develop this section as a stand-alone visitor attraction which, if successful, will produce the income needed to maintain it until the main canal arrives.

The North/West cutting has not been forgotten and tidying the vegetation has taken place along with the construction of a timber skeleton to support the lengthsmans hut while work takes place.

The Shrewsbury Group have really enjoyed getting to grips with some real canal restoration work and seeing a waterway reappear from the tangled undergrowth. If you would like to get involved in this exciting work ALL are welcome at our Thursday work parties or monthly work party on the last Saturday in the month so please get involved.

More information available from Andrew on 07967135223 or Alistair on 07980123444



The towpath re-opened under Widows Bridge

Were donkeys really stabled on the side of the S&N canal?

At a recent Thursday workparty the walls of the lengthsmans hut, next to the North West portal of the Berwick Tunnel, were strengthened with timber, so that it was safe to enter the building. Andy Dady has learnt from Mal Edwards that it was originally a stable for donkeys used on the canal and this was confirmed as the volunteers started to clear the floor. The floor is made of a glazed brick of engineering standard and clearly includes a dung channel, which would have carried the liquids out through the drain in the wall to the outside. It is hoped that the hut will be rebuilt over the coming year.

Alistair Price 24th August 2018



A new canal festival *and right on our doorstep*

Just 2½ miles down the Shropshire Union Canal from Norbury Junction is the village of Gnosall. Indeed Newport, Norbury Junction and Gnosall are the three corners of the “Golden Triangle” walking and cycling path which SNCT would like to re-create. From Gnosall the path would follow the towpath of the Shropshire Union north to Norbury Junction, then along the re-created towpath of the Newport Canal to Newport and then back to Gnosall via the track of the old railway – the other two sides are in place, we just need to re-create the Newport Canal towpath! In the meantime the section can be walked using lanes and footpaths to cross back and forth across the canal route.

Gnosall already has a well established bi-annual village festival in July called G-Fest, which last time had over 30 events and has run successfully for a number of years. In 2019, under the auspices of the Gnosall Towpath Restoration Group, it will be adding a three day canal festival as the finale to G-Fest on 19-21 July. The planned attractions of this new canal festival will include historic boat displays, trade boats, a waterside treasure hunt, an historic waterway walk and talk, a photographic exhibition, local canal societies and three participating public houses with live music, a skittles competition and a waterways quiz.



Forton update



Our plans are to re-water Forton as soon as we can but there are access problems at the moment. Although we are still fundraising for the project, the trustees have allocated £20,000 in the reserves to underwrite the cost of restoration. Last autumn a large workparty went on site and completely cleared back the scrub, mostly to re-assure ourselves that there are no trees growing there and that the liner, which has already been laid, is still in good condition.

We did have to clear hundreds of small sycamore seedlings by hand and a small patch of hawthorn was also dealt with. The really good news is that the bentonite lining is in good condition. A few of the stronger seedlings had managed to root down to the bentonite but they had not penetrated it: when we pulled them up we found that the roots had been turned by the bentonite so that they ran parallel to it.

In mid summer I received an urgent call from one of the Forton neighbours to tell me that ragwort was running riot on the site. Ragwort, when it is cut, is extremely dangerous to horses and, as we have both the River Meece and the Back Brook adjacent to the site, there were worries that its seed might be spread around the area. So, at short notice, seven SNCT volunteers turned out and managed to clear it all. The whole ragwort plant has to be removed, roots and all, or it will re-grow. The gang filled more than a dozen large bags with the plants that had to be disposed of as landfill waste, so that there is no possibility of it getting back into the countryside. A good job done and helpful to our neighbours.

John Myers



The first part of Plan B is now well underway and funding for all of Phase 1 is almost complete. We have received the Ecology Report that we commissioned as it will be required when we re-apply for Listed Building Consent and Planning Permission.

We have appointed a roofing contractor to completely remove the roof of the small Telford style warehouse. This will give access to our volunteers to carry out any restoration needed of the exposed roof timbers before the roofing contractor re-roofs the building, re-using the old slates to make the building weatherproof.

Denso have funded the essential soil sampling and analysis of the infill material from the East Basin and the samples have come back 'clean'. Denso have also now indicated their interest in sponsoring the excavation of the East Basin.

The foundations of the small warehouse have been exposed, both inside and out, and were quite surprising! We found that they are extremely robust as they have five courses of bricks turned through 90 degrees to the walls to provide a 140mm wider support for the walls, but these bricks are further supported by a still wider course of stonework approximately another 400mm deep! No wonder this building is in such good shape after almost 200 years!

The large steel tank found in the watered section just outside the transshipment warehouse has finally been removed and taken for scrap. This had been a real problem for some weeks, but finally succumbed to being winched out with our Tirfor winch and some careful handling with the JCB. Weighing at least 1½ tonnes, 3m long x 1½m x 1½m and constructed out of 3mm thick steel, removing it from site necessitated cutting it up with a large angle grinder.

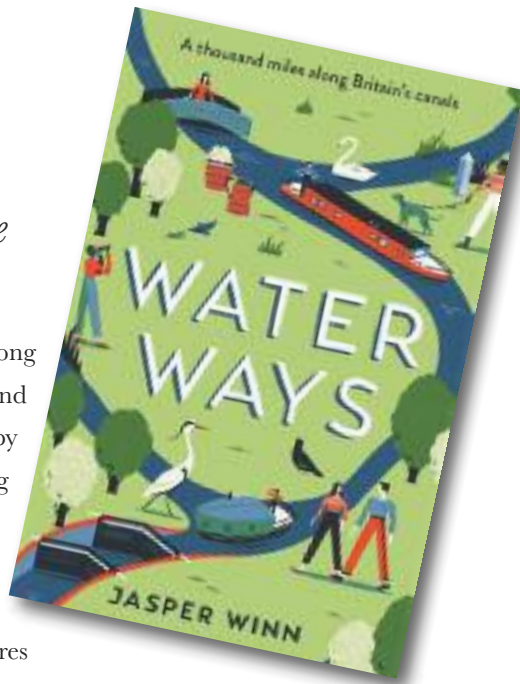


Water Ways

by Jasper Winn

“One of the best books I have read about the waterways”

This book charts Jasper Winn's travels along 1000 miles of waterways, both canals and navigations, over a period of a year by narrowboat, kayak, bicycle and foot. Along the way Jasper meets many interesting people and we learn a lot about the history of the waterways. His style is informal and yet you realise he has given you lots of facts and figures without seeming dull.



The book is intimate and friendly - he might almost be chatting to you in a pub and when Jasper writes about the waterways in the past he evokes a real sense of what life must have been like for the people who were building, then working and living on the canals. The same goes for modern life on the water and during his travels he meets and has friendly conversations with many different waterways users. He vividly describes the scenery and wildlife and the characters he meets and there are lots of photographs, both old and new.

If the book has any fault it is that British Waterways' responsibility for the demise of so many of our canals was rather glossed over which I found slightly annoying but Jasper Winn is currently the Writer in Residence for the CRT so maybe that explains it. He certainly promotes the CRT and the very good work they are doing now in supporting restorations.

I have read many books about the canals which were interesting, though a bit dry, but *Water Ways* was difficult to put down as Jasper Winn's adventures made me want to keep reading to find out what happened next. I would definitely recommend this book as a "good read".

Sallie Lines

Meet the new Trustee



Stephen Kearney has had a long career as Chief Executive of an international charity which worked on the regeneration of hundreds of communities in the UK, Africa and India. After studying agriculture at

Harper Adams, he became a commodity broker before starting work with the charity.

Stephen is now a Director of Powerful Organic.com and leader of an arts initiative which involves TV and Film Production.

During his career he trained as an actor.

Stephen has owned boats all his life. He is a keen narrowboater and sailor. He is passionate about the waterways and the role they can play in developing a sustainable future for our country.

He says, "To be asked to be a Trustee of the SNCT is an honour and I will do my best to bring energy, enthusiasm, my skills and my interests to the Trust and the team."

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Himalayan Balsam

- clearance success



I believe we have finally been successful in clearing Balsam from the canal to the east of Town Lock. A few plants were removed from there during our first two workparties but it was entirely clear during the third. But that still leaves the rest of the canal and all the Strine Brook.....

By the end of our first workparty in July, we had already managed to reach the same point that it took us three work parties to reach last year, so we were able to move on to clear new stretches on the area of land between the canal and the Strine Brook.

We cleared most of the Strine Brook to the east of Town Bridge including the farmer's field near to the A41, which is the highest point upstream on the Strine that we have found Balsam. However there is so much silt in the stream that, in some places, even working in waders can be dangerous. So there were a few small areas at the bottom of people's gardens on the opposite bank where we couldn't get to the Balsam. We quickly produced a leaflet for householders with gardens backing onto the Brook, explaining the problems that Balsam causes, especially with bank erosion, and asked for their help in pulling it out and disposing of it safely. The leaflets were delivered to about 30 houses and we were encouraged by the people that we met, most of whom seemed to recognise Himalayan Balsam and were keen to see it eliminated. Hopefully they will encourage neighbours who are less knowledgeable to do likewise. It was also encouraging to find that people were mostly well aware of the work done by SNCT volunteers along the length of the canal and are very supportive. Some are already members but it gave us an extra opportunity to promote the Trust.

To the west of Town Bridge, on the island between the canal and the Strine, we managed to progress quite a lot further than in previous years but there is still much work to do. Terry and Ruth continue to remove it at the Tickethouse end and are making significant progress up the island. Hopefully next year we will eliminate it from more areas.

John Myers

White Poplar

- the pest that will not die!

You may remember that in the February 2017 edition of S&N News I reported on the cutting down and removal of a very large white poplar tree, over 20 metres tall, which had its roots and trunks growing in the stonework of Meretown Lock.



A white poplar colony growing from the old roots

White poplars reproduce, mostly, by putting up suckers from their roots to form a "colony" and they can send their roots out up to three times their height. I found over 15 white poplar trunks around the main tree, including the two large trees on the stonework in front of the main trunk, but most had followed the line of the back of the lock structure. Poplar roots "follow the path of least resistance" and usually turn when they encounter obstacles so, hopefully, only the two trunks at the front had actually got into the structure. These white poplars had to be got rid of as quickly as possible, before they did any more damage to the lock structure.

Since the removal of all the trunks that we could find it has become obvious that the root structure is alive and well and also goes out into the adjacent field. This has become obvious from the dozens and dozens of small shoots that have appeared each year and which we have removed. At any particular time there are probably 50 or 60 shoots coming up – the only good thing is that they break off and pull out easily. From the strength of the growth I think it will be a few years before we finally get rid of this menace.

John Myers



A press cutting located for S&N News by Mike Shaw of the Shropshire Mining and Caving Club and member David Adams. From the Shrewsbury Chronicle dated 16th September 1938:

A Disgrace to Their Old Town

Shrewsbury Council and Canal

A recommendation to take immediate steps to obtain a warrant of the Minister of Transport for abandonment in respect of the length of the Shropshire Union Canal

within the borough was adopted by Shrewsbury Town Council at their monthly meeting on Monday.

The recommendation was made by the Highways and Improvements Committee, who recalled that in 1936 a joint application had been made by the Salop County Council and the Town Council to the Minister for a warrant authorising the abandonment of certain lengths of the canal on the ground that they were derelict within the meaning of the Railway and Canal Traffic Act 1888, as they had not been used for at least three years previously for navigation. The application had included the length of canal within the borough. After complying with the tedious and lengthy procedure to lead to obtaining the proposed warrant, the committee continued, they had now been informed by the Salop County Council that the County Council withdrew for the time being from the joint application.

Mr J R Lea moved the adoption of the committee's report, and, in seconding, Mr T G Robin said he thought that everyone would feel satisfied that the end of that rather disagreeable subject appeared at last to be in sight.

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With Christmas just around the corner, can we ask everyone to collect their stamps. We can sell stamps and raise money for the Trust. We received £98 from the last lot and that's with only a few people helping. If all the trust's members collected their stamps this Christmas we can significantly increase that amount.

CONTACT:

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

**OR BRING THEM TO ANY
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stamps make money for the Trust

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

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A few facts about the old Wrockwardine Wood Glass Works

By W. Howard Williams

In past issues of S&N News we have included a number of articles by W. Howard Williams. This piece was originally published in the Shropshire Magazine in February 1953 and it recently came to light during research into Howard Williams' letters, undertaken by Jim Cooper at the Ironbridge Gorge Museum.

No corrections have been made to the original text of this article. Republished with the kind permission of Shropshire Magazine: www.shropshiremagazine.com

As a keen student of the industrial past in the district in which I reside, I have collected a number of facts about the Wrockwardine Wood glass works which I am sure will interest readers of the Shropshire Magazine.

The first mention of these glass works is on the plan of the proposed Shrewsbury Canal prepared for the newly formed Shrewsbury Canal Company in 1792, by George Young of Worcester. The glass works was at the side of the Wombridge Canal which William Reynolds of Ketley had constructed a few years earlier for the purpose of conveying ironstone from Wombridge to his Donnington Wood Furnaces.

In an article dated 1791 in Plymley's General View of the Agriculture of Shropshire (1803) and signed by Thomas Telford, mention is made of these glass works which were erected by Messrs. Reynolds who "are preparing to carry on other works in the neighbourhood." From this it may be assumed that the Reynolds mentioned were the brothers, William and Joseph of Ketley, and possibly their famous father, Richard.

In 1814, Richard Mountford was the proprietor of the works. He entered into partnership with William Cope, John Biddle and Henry Cope, but the partnership was dissolved in 1816, when William Cope resigned. The firm was reconstituted as Biddle, Mountford and Cope.

In the Salop Directory for 1824, by Tibnam and Company, the firm is recorded as "Biddle, Mountford & Co., glass house, Donnington." They continued under that title until at least 1835, but no further mention can be traced. The firm was definitely out of business in 1842.

It is of interest to note that the names of Biddle, Mountford and Cope are found in connection with glass houses at Birmingham and Stourbridge.



*Wrockwardine Wood Glass Jug,
picture courtesy of Ironbridge Gorge Museum*

All kinds of glass objects were turned out including bottles, door stops, rolling pins in striped glass, full size walking sticks with a corkscrew twist about half-way up them and with coloured centres, glass baskets and vases with earthenware bases and sheet glass for windows. I recently priced a glass door stop which was almost certainly a Wrockwardine Wood product - a big blob of dark green glass roughly four or five inches in diameter, flat at the bottom, and containing a number of air-bubbles. The price was 3 guineas.

Twenty or thirty years ago glass objects of the type listed above were a common sight in homes in the Wrockwardine Wood and Donnington areas. Their disappearance is no doubt due to the fact that the present generation, having no use for such bric-a-brac, have thrown them out.

It is a surprising fact that, although the Wrockwardine Wood glass house disappeared over 110 years ago, the church is still referred to as the "Glass' us" church by people near and far. The only possible explanation I can offer is that Glass-house Row and Glasshouse Square still exist.

Recently I was told that the Rectory was formerly the glass house manager's residence, and that a tunnel beneath the (Shrewsbury) canal connected the house with the works. The object of the tunnel was to avoid paying toll on goods sent over the canal. I cannot verify this, however.

An old canal worker once told me that much glass was always brought up whenever the canal was dredged at the point near the works. In 1696, a glass works existed at Oakengates, but I have no details.

A fascinating plan entitled "Wrockwardine Wood 1847" can be found at <https://www.british-history.ac.uk/sites/default/files/publications/pubid-65/images/fig37.gif> This shows the area including the Shrewsbury Canal with the Glassworks on one side and the vicarage (formerly the Glass House manager's house) on the other.



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Monday - Friday: 7.45am - 5.30pm

Halesfield 21, Telford, Shropshire TF7 4PA



Public launch of the Thomas Telford Trail

The Thomas Telford Trail travelling exhibition had its public launch on 5th September when Richard Partington, Chief Executive of Telford & Wrekin Council (TWC), officially launched the exhibition at Southwater Library.

The display includes a large information board detailing Thomas Telford's links with various places around the local area and it is supported by leaflets that will allow people to take the journey around the borough, and beyond, for themselves. It features 13 landmarks in the borough of Telford and Wrekin including Wappenshall Junction, Hadley Park Locks and St Leonard's Church in Malinslee, which was the last of three churches Thomas Telford built in the area. A further 11 locations, that Thomas Telford designed and built, are featured in the area around Telford including Shrewsbury Prison, Bridgnorth Bridge, Montford Bridge and the Pontcysyllte Aqueduct.

Telford and Wrekin Council has largely funded the information board and the leaflet as part of the Telford@50 celebrations. The display will be at Southwater 1 Library till early October and will then move to Wellington Library and on around the county. See the SNCT website for the full itinerary.

The display will be publicised right through to December 2019 by TWC, and it will then become a permanent display at Wappenshall.



The historic stop lock gate in its final resting place, proudly displayed for all to see

First display installed at Wappenshall

When the water below the large warehouse at Wappenshall was drained so that the structure could be checked, an old canal gate was discovered and we decided to rescue it. The gate is very unusual as it is so wide. Normally, two gates rather than a single gate would have been used to close a canal channel which is nearly 16 feet (4.8m) wide and it must have weighed many tonnes. The gate had been submerged for a long time and was waterlogged and covered in mud and silt.

The team used a Tirfor winch to slowly drag the extremely heavy gate out from under the warehouse and up the slope to the edge of the filled in basin. Then, as the gate dried out, volunteers removed all the mud and debris from it. Slowly the remains were revealed and a hole became visible at the bottom of the gate where a sliding paddle could be opened and shut; the ironwork surround for this is still there, proud of one side of the gate.

The gate was originally installed by the Birmingham & Liverpool Junction Canal (B&LJC), when it built the Newport Canal. It was designed to protect the water of the existing Shrewsbury Canal from an unplanned breach of the Newport Canal or a planned de-watering of the Wappenshall basin.

Although partly rotted we felt that it is worth preserving and displaying as an historic artefact. After the gate was cleaned off it was coated with wood preservative to help to protect it.



Laying the base



The gate waiting to be installed



The stop gate visible on the right through the bridge in 1967

To fund the display stand for the gate we applied for a grant from the Tesco Bags of Help Scheme and were delighted to be given £1,000. A galvanised steel stand was designed and constructed and a concrete base laid, which involved a lot of hours of hard work by many very dedicated volunteers. The stand was bolted to the base and, with the help of David Crow's Manitou telehandler, the gate was finally lifted onto its stand and securely fixed in place.



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