

Executive Committee 2019/2020 (Held Over)

Chair 17 Wincely Close 07841 622885 Alan Boon Lang Farm 01327 878021 alan,boon3@btinternet.com Daventry NN11 0GG Vice-Chair Vacant Secretary Lynn Perkins 38 Wilsons Lane 07801 968732 Licensing Agent Coventry 024 7636 3378 CV6 6AD dandlperkins@gmail.com Assistant Secretary Anita Carter 48 Woodshires Rd 07849 744026 Coventry 024 7636 3280 CV6 6AA anitacarter56@hotmail.com Treasurer **Brian Pope** 7 Frampton Walk 024 7661 4463 Coventry brianpope.ccs@btinternet.com CV2 2JĚ Membership Secretary Vacant (Brian Pope - Acting Membership Secretary) Phil Carter 07950 419234 General Member 1 48 Woodshires Rd Joint Property Manager Coventry 024 7636 3280 CV6 6AA philcarter 11@btinternet.com General Member 2 Richard Holden 07875 304594 16 Hillside Rd Joint Property Manager rholden45@googlemail.com Burbage, Hinckley LE10 ŽLX General Member 3 135 Farren Rd 07815 162756 Bob Nash Archivist & AWCC rep Coventry q4qee88@hotmail.com CV2 5EH General Member 4 **Dave Perkins** 38 Wilsons Lane 07850 510758 024 7636 3378 Joint Property Manager Coventry CV6 6AĎ dandlperkins@gmail.com General Member 5 Nigel Wooltorton Unit 1, Leicester Row 024 7641 8796 Canoe Club Chair Coventry merciacanoeclub@yahoo.com CV1 4LH General Member 6 Vacant Harbourmaster Vacant Temporary Cover 07850 510758 024 7636 3378 (Non committee member) Magazine Editor Alan Walker Flat 15

138 Queenstown Rd

London

SW8 3RR

07963 875502

alan nb.mermoz@yahoo.co.uk

(Non committee member)



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Editor's Notes

In this issue to the magazine I am pleased to announce the return of 'Lockie Hasbeen' who has submitted a nice item about leaving narrowboating and moving to the Norfolk Broads. Also another angling item from Chris whom I believe is set to become a regular, and a very interesting item from Frank about a pub that is no longer a canal side pub!

The IWA Cavalcade which I would usually attend has been cancelled this year, it takes place at Paddington Basin at the beginning of May, I hope not too many other canal events will suffer. I believe the Braunston Historic Narrowboat Rally in June is planned to go ahead - fingers crossed.

I had a short note from Bob Nash who recently visited the five and a half, and he says "I managed to have a stroll down the Coventry canal on boxing Day. The towpaths have been repaired and are really good. Alas the litter situation is terrible. It shows that our efforts are badly missed." I assume that the towpath repairs are in preparation for the 'City of Culture' event. There must be other canal related activities planned for the City of Culture - I would appreciate some more info - Thanks in advance.

The milestone markers in Nigel's Paddlers Tales are very interesting, I did not know that they existed on the Coventry Canal, I have seen milestone markers on other canals, but they were much more prominent. The Coventry markers would have been very difficult to spot by a working narrowboats, why were they so small? Are there any more on the Coventry - there should be 26 of them, has anyone seen any?

I was sad to hear that the Coventry Cruising Club have had break-in, I understand that outboard engines and other equipment was taken.

I cannot currently visit my boat due to the current lockdown, *number three*, let's hope that is the very last lockdown.

Cover image (see Tim Coghlan's article): Putting the final touches: Dave Bishop in the small dry dock, painting the coach lines on the narrowboat Chesterton in 2004. The flower- decorations and sign-writing were painted by the legendary Ron Hough, then still active. Dave learnt his trade from Ron, as Ron had learnt from Frank Nurser.

(Tim Coghlan)

Chairman's Report Spring 2021

As I write this report in early February, I feel like an old record droning on because there hasn't been any of my recent reports that haven't mentioned Covid-19, as I write this report we are again in National Lockdown with high case rates and sadly high death rates as well. But there is hopefully light at the end of the tunnel with the Vaccine and I am sure by the time you receive this edition of the magazine some of you will already have received it and as the weeks progress into spring more and more of us will receive it giving us all hope that we may be able to enjoy the summer doing the things that make life worth living.

As a result of Covid-19 despite the hope that things would be back to normal by the start 2021 we have not been able to commit to any of the normal activities that occur throughout the year such as work parties, canal clearances or any of our social events for the year, that's not to say nothing will take place but we must be guided by HMG rules and the impact that has on us as a society, but as soon as we have the green light to safely restore some or all of our activities and events we will do our utmost to make it happen. One of the definite casualties of 2021 will be our charity Lock-Wind day at Hawkesbury, although it is held towards the end of the summer the paperwork to run the event has to be submitted early in the year and as the event involves members of the public your committee felt that we could not take the risk of falling foul of not complying with any Covid-19 restrictions that may still be in place at the time of the event, but fingers crossed it will be back in 2022. One event that is planning to go ahead if permitted is the Historic boat rally held at Braunston, it is planned for the last weekend in June but it remains to be seen if the event happens.

The other casualties of 2020 and into 2021 is the executive meetings held each month at Wyken and of course the members AGM. Although we could not meet face to face your committee has continued to meet at the beginning of each month virtually, not by Zoom or meeting rooms but by some hard work put in by Brian Pope in compiling a meeting with the necessary actions and decisions to be made and sending these out by email to the committee for us to respond, so thanks must go to Brian for the work involved. The Committee has continued to operate as best as it can with members best interest always at the forefront of any decisions made. We

have continued to represent the society at the $5 \, \frac{1}{2}$ advisory board meetings and attended CRT Forums that we were invited to, all be it both held virtually by Zoom or meeting rooms.

As for the AGM, we could not hold the 2020 and we will not be holding the March 2021 AGM at this present time, you will receive a letter in your magazine explaining what we would like to do, but fundamentally again Covid-19 permitting we would like to hold the AGM at the end of the summer say September time but I must stress it will depend on any restrictions at the time, it may be that we hold it in the grounds at Wyken and not in the clubhouse but we will see.

As you are all aware a prerequisite of having a mooring with the society is that anyone who wishes to License their boat must do it through the society's licensing agent, which is Lynn and Dave Perkins, the reason for this has been that you as a moorer receive the discounts available but the society also receive commission on every license processed. We have always done it by completing a form on your behalf and submitting it to CRT which in the past has not been a problem. But since the Pandemic as in lots of businesses CRT licensing staff have been working from home and this is set to continue for the foreseeable future which means that the submitting of license requests by post is no longer workable as there is no guarantee that the license request would be received and seen by the license team. What CRT has set up is a licensing portal for agents which means we can process all licenses on your behalf through this portal, you receive your discounts available to you and the society receives their commission. For those of you that have already set up an online access to your license account you simply have to log in hit the tab for agent access scroll down until you see Lynn Perkins click on Lynn's name and follow instructions to authorise. If you have not registered for access to online licensing then you will have to contact CRT and get your license account number making a note of it and then simply pass the account number to Lynn and she will take it from there. In either case once you have authorised Lynn either through your online account or by passing your account number to Lynn processing of your license will be then be carried out by Lynn. Just let Lynn know you require a license in the month before you want your license to start so you receive your prompt payment discount. If anyone is unsure of process either contact Lynn or myself and we will explain further.

Before I finish just a reminder for all those with boats moored at Wyken to provide a copy of your boat insurance each time you renew your insurance, you can either print a copy and place it in the smoking area until such time the clubhouse has reopened or you can email a copy to Phil Carter who will pass the details onto Anita who manages our insurance data base. Please remember no current insurance could put your society mooring at risk.

Well, that is it for now, please remember if you are feeling a bit down at the moment, we all have got a lot to look forward to and to quote now sadly departed Captain sir Tom Moore.

"Tomorrow will be a good day"

Please stay safe and take good care of yourself and your families.

Alan Boon Chair Coventry Canal Society



07854522409

jack@ashbycanalcentre.co.uk

info@ashbycanalcentre.co.uk

nigel.boatsafety@gmail.com

Harbourmaster & Property Manager Report

Due to events unfolding since my last report there has not been a crane lift and will not now be one. The lockdowns in November and the current one which is being policed with ever stricter efforts would have made working on the boats very difficult, painting the bottom of a boat is hardly essential business in this sad time.

It is looking most likely that the lockdown will not now be lifted until the end of March which will mean that a crane lift will take us into the start of any cruising season that may evolve. Hopefully we will have a more normal time next winter and we can have a crane lift. Boats that would normally have been out this winter will have first call if numbers are high but generally we can accommodate all who require lifting

The number of moorers in the basin has remained pretty stable over the last year and hopefully will remain so.

Boats that require a licence this year will be done via the new CRT Licensing portal which basically mean its been computerised. All discounts and commission will remain in place as before, licensing through the society is part of your mooring terms and conditions and should be adhered to. Contact Lynn Perkins in plenty of time before your planned start date as there will probably be some glitches to start with.

Unfortunately I have to report that the Cruising Club was broken into in January and a number of outboard motors and other equipment was stolen from the boats that were on the bank. Security checks have been made on our premises since then, and will continue at least until the lifting of lockdown when the basin will become more busy.

STAY SAFE AND LOOK AFTER YOURSELVES

Dave Perkins

Membership News

The <u>thirty</u> members who have not already paid this year's annual Society subscription are reminded that it was due on 01 January. They will find a renewal form enclosed with this magazine. The appropriate subscription with completed form is to be returned to Brian Pope or, if you wish, paid by bank transfer (moorers may pay their mooring fees at the same time). If you receive a renewal form and have paid your subscription since 19 February then please ignore it.

This reminder can be disregarded by Canoe Section (Mercia Canoe Club) members as your annual club fees due on the anniversary of joining the Club include the Society subscription.

The new members named below are welcomed to the Society

Name(s)

Alex Alderson Ryan Kavanagh Alex Smith Felicia Walker & Neville Douglas

Interest in the Society

Boating community and nature Boating community and nature Canoe Section member

2021 Mooring Fees

Annual mooring fees were due by the 31 January but have not been received to date from <u>eleven</u> moorers. They will find a copy of their previously mailed invoice enclosed with this magazine. If you receive a copy invoice and have paid your fees since 19 February then please ignore it.

With the BEEB at Braunston

Tim Coghlan recalls BBC Radio 4's 'Open Country's visit to the canal at Braunston in July 2020

In the midst of June's doom and gloom - with the canals still closed and our running the marina on a skeleton staff - that day me - I found myself 'self-isolated' in the marina shop, and rather wondering what to do next. Then suddenly the telephone rang - by then an unusual occurrence. The caller announced herself as one Heather Simmons, who informed me that she was the producer of Radio 4's *Open Country*.

We had not met before, and worse still I had to confess that I hadn't even heard of her programme. But I informed her that in 2007, we had had onboard what I assumed was the opposition - BBC TV's *Countryfile*. They had joined us for that year's Braunston Historic Narrowboat Rally, with its well known red-headed presenter Adam Henson seen steering the historic steam narrowboat *President*, with its butty *Kildare* in tow. That day the rain came down mercilessly and Adam got soaked in his light blue anorak. But the filming went on, and it had made good TV. However invitations to *Countryfile* to make another visit seemed to fall on deaf ears.

Heather wanted to make a half hour programme about the canal at Braunston. What had inspired her was that somehow she had learnt about the last 'Jam' Ole Run' in October 1970 - the fiftieth anniversary of which was this year - and our plans to make some sort of reenactment of it, if restrictions were lifted.

That last run had marked the end of fleet-carrying of coal under regular contract from the Midlands to the London area. By October of that year, the only contract left for the five remaining narrowboats of the Braunston Marina based Blue Line fleet was to supply the Kearley and Tonge's jam factory in west London, with 125 tons of coal a week. And when that ended, it brought to a close over 200 years of regular canal carrying on the English canals, and with it, the boatmen's way of life.

Heather told me that the programme would be presented by Pete Waterman, and could I help? It was a no-brainer. I had first met the famous song composer / producer in early October, 2019 when he came to Braunston Marina with three other celebrities – Bill Oddie, Jennie Bond and Anne Diamond - to film an episode on the Grand Union Canal for Channel 5's six part canal series, *Britain by Barge: Then and Now*, in which I featured, talking about my now 31 years here at the

helm. That programme had been broadcast in early February 2020, when the gathering storm of Covid-19 was still something like the prophet Elijah's 'cloud as small as a man's hand'.

During the filming, I had learnt from Pete about his childhood times in the mid / late 1950s when he came to what is today Braunston Marina – then still a working yard – to go fishing on Sundays with his father in the then unconnected canal reservoirs. Because of this connection, I had invited him to come and open our 2020 Braunston Historic Narrowboat Rally, which he had agreed to do.

As part of the pre-rally build up, I invited Pete for a lunch-interview in January at the *Mon Plaisir* restaurant in Covent Garden – the favourite watering hole of the IWA co-founder Robert Aickman. The result was a double page article I wrote for the March edition of *Towpath Talk*. But by the end of March, the writing was on the wall for the summer, and our 17th Braunston Historic Narrowboat Rally had to be cancelled - another victim of Covid-19.

With the canals in lockdown for what transpired to be some three months, I thought that media interest in the waterways had gone for the foreseeable future. But, if TV filming for programmes was now dead in the water, I learnt from Heather that radio work could still go ahead.



Braunston CRT volunteers working on Nelson's Lock – L/R Alan Butler, Clive Joynson, Laurence Chamberlain & Mike Gunn. Pete Waterman commented on air: 'They are the most important people on the whole canals today. They do hard working jobs they would never have done for a living!' The Admiral Nelson Inn, where Pete Waterman and Tim Coghlan enjoyed a post-recording celebration, is seen beyond. (Tim Coghlan)

Over the next few weeks I discussed a number of ideas with her – by phone and email - focusing on the marina's long history of serving the canal boater in one form or another since 1792. And also the marina's living history, with many of those historic trades continuing like boat building, traditional boat painting, rope and fender making, canal painted ware, and much more. Heather said she would like Pete to pick up on some of this, but she also wanted to widen the programme to the canal at Braunston, and in particular the outstanding work being performed by the CRT volunteers. She also wanted to talk to someone involved in the forthcoming Jam 'Ole Reenactment in October. In all Pete would

explore five themes. All the recording would take place according to strict CV-19 guideline, and in particular everything had to be recorded outside and correctly social-distanced.

The day arrived, a fine day indeed, with no one about except those few involved in making the programme. Even the skies above were empty, with no sound of the planes that had once sonorously headed low for Coventry Airport. I thought of that line from the 1930s Irish canal-poet Patrick Kavanagh, when he wrote of 'the tremendous silence of mid-July'.

Pete began with an introduction from himself: 'For hundreds of years, Braunston has been at the beating heart of the canals, set as it is at the junction of the Oxford and Grand Union canals. It's also a special place for me, and it's quite strange coming back. Nothing had changed and yet everything has changed. You've still got the boats, but you've just got more of them, and the bridge is still here. Coming back, I do remember it as it was in the fifties, because this is where I spent my childhood holidays – fishing. It always was a magical spot and it still is.'

'Canals are in my blood, and have played an important part in my life. I was born only one street from the canal in Coventry, and I swam in it, I skated on it, I fished in it. I think I even did my early courting life by the canal as well. My dad had an affinity for the marina because it had reputably twenty pound carp in it, and he being a fabulous angler, thought he was going to catch one of these. But I don't think he ever did.'.

Pete joined me on a bench at the marina entrance, looking at that bridge from which, in the evenings, his father would look down on those uncatchable carp, shoaling around in the warm evening sunlight..

We talked about the marina and its antecedent boatyard's long history, and in particular our still functioning small dry dock that dates back to about 1792, to which we then moved. The dock had been in continuous use ever since – one of very few industrial buildings in Britain from the First Industrial Revolution that are still being used in the same way. I commented that someone who had worked in that dock sixty or one hundred and sixty years ago, could come back and recognise it as the same place in which he worked. How many other people who had worked elsewhere could do the same?

We move to the waterside entrance to the dock, where we stood in the empty well outside the dock, between it and the canal arm, where the trickle of water through the stop planks made for the perfect background sound. At our feet were old hand-made long boat nails and 'allsorts' that were deposited there when the dock was refilled. Pete commented, 'It's an architectural treasure here.' Then he spotted a fresh water clam, which he also commented on.

In the dry dock, only yards from us Dave Bishop was painting away before being heralded by Pete to come out into the well - on cue - to talk about the apostolic succession of boat painters going back into the midst of time. Dave had learnt his trade from the legendary Ron Hough, who had learnt his from Frank Nurser, who had died an old man in 1951, and so it went on back into the 19th century.

Dave explained that all painting was done by brush – you just couldn't build up the required thickness of paint required for a steel in any other way. Boats were first taken back to bare metal. A boat in good condition might then only require only five or six coats. 'It all depends on the level of deterioration by the time I get to the boat.' In poor condition, it could be as many as seven or eight coats, with painting going on over a period of fifteen to twenty days. Dave was about half way through this one, having just rubbed down the fourth green undercoat to remove all brush marks so far 'to get that finite finish.' . As a result he was covered in green paint dust, and resembled the Green Man of old.

Pete now moved on to talk to Karen Flockhart about Tradline Fenders, the rope and fender making business she runs with her husband Pete. Karen and Pete Waterman sat at the bench-table outside the old blacksmith's forge, which now serves as the rope and fender making workshop. Karen demonstrated how they made fenders, using tools that had been passed down the generations at Braunston, probably handmade in times past in her workshop, when it was the blacksmith's forge. Pete commented, 'They look like medieval instruments of torture.' Then he examined the recently completed large bow fender, put out for him to look at.. 'This fender is a magnificent piece of work, and I imagine it took ages to do.' Karen replied, 'Once you know the ropes – excuse the pun – it does take a long time, but it's measured in hours not days. Unfortunately there are less and less people making fenders, and if those of us left don't keep at it, and pass the trade on, the tradition will sadly disappear'.

It was now Jam 'Ole time, and Pete moved with Heather across the yard to the 71' 6" former working narrowboat *Stanton*, built for the Grand Union Canal Carrying Company in 1936. It was moored on the marina point, where Pete

talked to owners Peter and Laura, with yapping interjections from their new Jack Russell pup Jack. The *Stanton*, Pete learnt was on that last run in October, 1970. Years later Peter and Laura had bought it and lovingly restored it to its original working narrowboat condition, including overhauling the Lister HA3 twin cylinder diesel engine that Blue Line had installed in 1968. On cue, the engine was started up by Peter to give the perfect radio sound.

Laura talked of the Jam 'Ole reenactments they had done, firstly on the newly restored *Raymond* and then the *Stanton*. 'We made the runs in eight days, like the boatmen did, getting up at five thirty in the morning and carrying on sometimes till nine at night. My memories of it were that we always seemed to be going in the dark, but we weren't. It was exciting and quite moving to think you were doing what those boatmen did, and that then in our fifties, we were about the same age'. If the planned October Jam 'Ole had been permitted, they would have been on it with Jack.

Pete and Heather then moved on up the towpath to talk to two of the Braunston Canal Volunteers working on the second lock – Vince and Chris. Pete could not praise their endeavours highly enough. 'They are the most important people on the whole canals today. They do hard working jobs they would never have done for a living.' Like the preservation of railways, in which he was so much involved, this just could not happen but for the volunteers – to which one of them said, 'Canal volunteering gives us something to get stuck into. It's what keeps you going in retirement – we're outside in the fresh air. Lots of people to talk to – wonderful. It beats daytime television anytime!'

That concluded the formal recording, with Heather very pleased with what she had 'in the can'. I suggested we celebrated by all retiring to the Admiral Nelson, where we could sit socially-distanced on the benches outside by the lock. But Heather said this would be going against BBC strict Covid-19 rules, and she had almost used up her time limit: Cinderella would now have to leave the ball! She also had lots of work to do, as she would have to put the programme together largely on her own, working from home, and it would be broadcast in only about five weeks time.

I asked just when – it transpired this would be on a Wednesday afternoon in August at 3.15 with a rerun the following Saturday morning at 6.15 am. Who listens to the radio at those times of day? I asked myself. No wonder I had never heard of that programme! But when it came out, I was contacted by so many

people I knew – some going back over the decades – most of them amazingly listening to that early Saturday morning slot. And they all said how good it was.

I later heard from Heather: "As soon as I read about Braunston Marina and the Jam 'Ole Run I knew there was a programme to be made about it. I couldn't believe it was only 50 years ago that coal was still being transported by canal! I found the whole process fascinating and learnt so much from Tim and Pete, along with everyone else I met. If nothing else, I've been working from home since March, so it was a real joy to be allowed out of my spare room with a microphone in my hand!"

By contrast, Pete certainly had time for a pint at the Nelson, and we enjoyed a very pleasant relaxing time in the warm sunshine, watching the boats going through Nelson's Lock, now that they could move again. Pete said he would most certainly be on for opening next year's rally, when hopefully the last surviving steam narrowboat *President* would have its restoration completed, and be back in steam to do the honours. In late February Pete had formally presented our £20,000 sponsorship cheque for *President's* restoration at the Black Country Living Museum in Dudley – before dashing up north on the M6 to Manchester to make another episode of *Britain's Got Talent*.

After my day with the BEEB, I went home and told my wife of my great adventures, saying that I had now met the great Pete Waterman four times in less than a year. She commented, 'By now you must be NBFs!'

The BBC Radio 4 Open Country visit to Braunston is still available online: https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m000lvcp



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This third lockdown has made writing up-to-date pub reviews somewhat difficult so I got to thinking about what other sort of contribution I could make to the Society magazine. I was very tempted to do some research into "Lost Canalside pubs" but the first list I produce was depressingly long and now has every chance of becoming much longer. So I decided to stick with pubs that are currently open (or would be if they hadn't been ordered to close) and instead of canals that have lost their pubs I've decided to concentrate my efforts on pubs that have lost their canals (Applause please). I hope you find it interesting.

Pubs that have Lost their Canals by Frank Mander - cr Rag Tag

The first pub I've chosen is one very close to Wyken and I'm sure many of you will have already knocked back a few in there. The pub is "The Boat Inn" at 31 Shilton Lane, Coventry and although it's still easy to access it on foot when moored at Sowe Common Bridge (7) on The North Oxford Canal, until the early 1960s it was much closer to navigable water. The building is believed to date from the first half of the 19th century, probably comprised of several cottages constructed early on in that period. For over 100 years of its life, the Boat was effectively located on an island on Sowe Common formed by a long bend in the original 1771 main line of the Oxford Canal and the new straight cut linking Whitings Bridge (5) at Wyken Wide and Stone Bridge (9) constructed in about 1830. Unusually for long bends in the Oxford canal that were bypassed in the straightening, this one remained navigable from both ends and over its whole length in order for it to continue to serve the Alexandra Colliery arm and a couple of established boat building yards. It's not known exactly when the cottages were amalgamated into one licensed premise but it's unlikely to have been before the 1830 Oxford Canal shortening as the first recorded licensee, one George Ebbern (or Ebburn) was born in late 1817 so would not have been old enough to run a pub in 1830. What is certain though is that he and his wife Rebecca were in charge in 1847 when he was listed for jury service.

George was born in Sowe Waste, Walsgrave-On-Sowe, the son of Sarah and Thomas, a boatman and was baptised on Christmas Day of that year in the medieval church of St Mary The Virgin. Christmas Day would not have been an unusual choice for holding a wedding or a Christening as at that time it was probably one of the very few days in a year that his father was not required to work. Apart from the 1841 census where he is listed as a single 24 year old carter living in Black Pool between Sowe Waste and Potters Green, his father having left the water and become a farmer, and later consecutive listings for jury service, the next mention of George that we

find in historical records is in the 1851 census where he's recorded as a Licensed Victualler living with his wife and brother William who is listed as an Inn Keeper. The only clue we have as to location is that their abode is within the parish of Sowe, as street names were not recorded at that time, but it's reasonable to assume that they lived at "The Boat" At first glance it would seem that George and Rebecca have no children but looking closer it can be seem that the property next door is home to Sarah, George's now widowed mother together with her five Ebbern granddaughters aged between 5 and 14, who are all listed as visitors plus a servant, Eliza Wilkins. The detailed location records are unclear but I believe it's possible that it was George who was responsible for combining the adjacent cottages to form the Boat Inn. George's neighbours and customers at that time were mostly coal miners and colliery workers but the area was also home to a good number of silk weavers and winders and of course many agricultural labourers. His next door neighbour described himself as a letter carrier'.

Jumping forward 10 years to 1861 we find George now listed as a Publican and Farmer living at "The Boat", with wife Rebecca plus one general servant, Emma Ludlow (23). Sarah, George's widowed mother survives next door aged 83, with her servant Eliza Wilkins. Rebecca sadly died in January 1865 aged only 42. George Ebbern realised the value of his canalside location by selling not only beer but pork, eggs and milk. but retired in 1866 from both the licensed trade and farming moving to a comfortable property in nearby Ryton, taking his housemaid Emma as his second wife and producing at least two children before passing away in 1895. At some stage in the 19th century, the bridge carrying Shilton Lane over the original 1771 course of the Oxford Canal was named Eburne's Bridge but I don't believe this was to commemorate either George or his father as, regardless of its similarity to George's, Eburne is a surname that appears frequently in local census returns in its own right.

And so in 1866 the tenancy of the "Boat" passed to John Eaglestone, a Farmer born in Banbury, Oxfordshire in 1839 and married to Elizabeth, a local girl from Keresley. In 1871 John and Elizabeth were running the pub with the assistance their 15 year old daughter Charlotte and Elizabeth's two brothers, Arthur and James, 26 and 15 years old respectively. Local custom remained much the same as when George Ebbern was the licensee but with noticeably fewer agricultural workers. The enclave of silk winders and weavers remained close by appearing by now to concentrate on ribbon weaving. However, there is a notable increase in the number and proportion of colliery employees of all grades from agents and timekeepers down to wagon boys whose job it was to open and close ventilation/fire prevention doors before and after passing coal wagons. Of the colliery employees by far the greatest number were the miners themselves, some describing themselves as miners but many stating that they were hewers. By 1881 John and Elizabeth appear to have moved to a more affluent neighbourhood on Shilton Lane as they are living next door to a butcher and a cordwainer (shoemaker) and nearby are a plumber and a carpenter. John's farming interests had expanded as he now declared that he farmed 86 acres and many of his neighbours were of a similar calling, some farming as many as 300 acres. Even so by far the greatest number of residents were associated with the coal industry but with still a fairly substantial number of silk weavers.

In 1880 John had passed the license to Joseph Ivens, another local Farmer born in the city in 1837 and married to his wife Sarah and who together ran the pub until 1896. We have census records of Joseph and Sarah at the 'Boat' in 1881 and 1891 with two 17 year old servants, Mary Trendle and Sarah Moore, both from Staffordshire. By this time almost the whole neighbourhood was occupied by workers in the coal industry interspersed by just the occasional silk weaver, so the bar must have been quite a dusty spot as this was well before the era of pit-head baths.

The earliest map to be found in the internet which also shows The Boat Inn and surrounding features is the 1885-1900 Outline OS map and the section I've attached here shows that there were three collieries close by; the Old Wyken Colliery (1854-1915) opposite our security gate, the Alexandra Colliery off Deedmore Road and Craven colliery (1854-1925) off Henley Road. Alexandra Colliery (1885-1890) was a short lived affair and together with Craven was served by a branch off the 1771 loop of the Oxford Canal terminating at a large basin of roughly the same size and indeed design as our own at Wyken and soon gained a railway connection in the form of a branch off the L&NWR Coventry to Nuneaton line at Black Horse Road which was extended from Wyken.



And then in 1896 the "Boat Inn" was taken over by its longest serving licensee to date, Jacob Nelson, born into a wealthy farming family in Bleasdale, Lancashire in February 1854 and living till the ripe old age of 88 before passing the license on to his youngest son, also Jacob, born in the Boat in 1898. In 1882 when Jacob married his Lancashire Lass Sarah Rhodes he was a farmer in Preston but upped sticks in 1891 to take on the prestigious role as Farm Bailiff at Whitley Abbey Farm in Coventry by which time

he and Sarah had produced one son and five daughters of ages 6,5,3,2,1 plus a babe in arms. Clearly running a pub diverted his attention from matrimonial duties as he and Sarah added only one additional daughter and their youngest son Jacob Ernest in the ensuing ten years so by the time of the 1901 census the Boat was home to Jacob and Sarah together with their six daughters and two sons, all of school age. The demography of the neighbourhood had also changed considerably during their first few years installed at the Boat. All the local silk workers had disappeared together with most of the other trades listed in previous censuses in fact when browsing the returns for 1901 it's difficult to find a resident who wasn't employed at a colliery. Sadly Sarah didn't make it to the next census passing away in the summer of 1909 so Jacob is listed on 1911 as a widower, publican and employer, assisted in his business by the eldest four of his daughters, the other two preferring a different calling, one a schoolteacher and the other a milliner. Young Jacob Ernest was still at school. This census return also informs us that at some time Jacob and Sarah had a ninth child who didn't survive. Interestingly in 1909, Jacob's eldest son, John Charles Nelson, married Clara Hannah Beasley, the 22 year old daughter of Benjamin Beasley, the licensee of The Greyhound at Sutton Stop. George Nelson is known to have reared cattle, sheep, pigs and horses on the pub's farming land. He was renowned for the lavish meals he held at the annual distribution of beef to his customers. The Boat also held fishing rights to the canal, for which Jacob

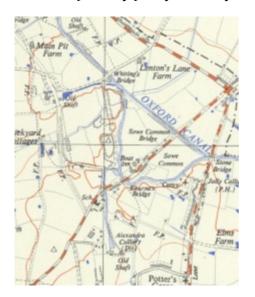
charged 6d per day. The holder of a day ticket was also entitled to a free pint of ale and a supply of bread and cheese. Good times! Again the demography underwent a notable change as apart from a schoolmaster, a greengrocer, a baker, a gardener, a hairdresser and a couple of farm labourers absolutely everyone of working age in every household was either employed as a coal miner or at a colliery in some other capacity.



detailed more 1913 Ordnance Survey indicates that all canals in the area were still navigable together with colliery railways, even clearly showing redundant earthworks of the original Oxford Canal route paralleling the Coventry to its original junction at Longford Bridge on Bedworth Road. Wyken Old Pit has closed but clearly from census returns, other collieries remain very shortly busv. However afterwards in 1915 remaining colliery in Wyken closed followed ten years later by Craven colliery.

Although the 1937 map shows all canals still in water, the local collieries have all gone together with the railway sidings and branch line which has been cut back to serve just the city power station, again dramatically changing the demography of the district as evidenced by the wartime General Register compiled in the autumn of 1939. 85 years old Jacob, by now incapacitated is still licensee and is listed as Publican and Farmer but cared for by his eldest daughter Mary Evelyn, a 53 year old spinster. His youngest son, Jacob Ernest, now 41 years old is recorded as Pub Manager assisted by his incapacitated wife, Beatrice. Jacob senior died in the third year of the war aged 88 leaving a sizeable legacy of £7,702-14s-5d, about £310,000 of today's spending power. Jacob's eldest son, John Charles, only just outlived his father, passing away in his own pub The Greyhound, in 1946 and leaving his widow a legacy of £9,249-3s-7d, about £330,000 in

today's money. Browsing the records of the district I managed to find only six coal miners living nearby who probably had to travel to Keresley or Bedworth every day, and surprisingly one silk worker, but who specifically pointed out on the register that she worked with artificial silk. Most of the male population were by then employed in factories, the names GEC, BSA and Alfred Herbert appearing frequently, many being highly skilled toolroom workers and I'm guessing that there was probably plenty of money available to be spent in the bar of The Boat.



My last map shows the situation between 1949 and 1970. A few new houses have appeared in Shilton Lane but the collieries and railway lines have all gone. The original 1771 loop appears to be still in water as may the Alexandra Colliery basin but the Deedmore Road bridge over that canal branch has gone as has at least a couple of hundred yards of the cut. Today, it's all gone, including Eburne's Bridge but if you look very closely between houses and behind bushes, you can still see a little evidence of what was once a busy waterway.

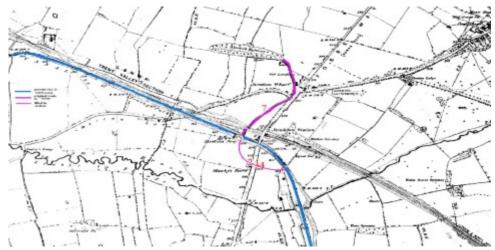
Following the death of Jacob senior, Jacob Ernest took on the license until his death at the age of 63 in 1962. He and Beatrice had two children, another Jacob Ernest born in 1934 and a daughter Pamela born in 1936. Pamela married David I Wood in about 1958 and together they operated the pub well into the 1980s completing a near 90 year family business dynasty. Pamela clearly couldn't resist the pull of the Boat as in 2010, electoral rolls recorded her living in a bungalow at 30 Shilton Lane, directly opposite her childhood home. The interior of the pub hasn't changed much in that during Pamela and David's time so I'm told, sawdust was still strewn on the floor of the bar, meat hooks hung from the ceilings but the tiny brew house was remodelled into an extended lounge. To the rear stood the stables used for the horses that once pulled the boats from the local collieries. Today the building is listed although only locally by Coventry City which does not afford it as much protection as The National Heritage List for England, but it's something. As for its reputation as a drinkery and eatery you only have to log on to TripAdvisor to see that if, like me, you haven't sampled the place, then you absolutely must put it on your bucket list. You won't regret it.

Lost Loops of the Oxford Canal – the Stretton Arm

The Oxford canal, in our neck of the woods, was subject to a major realignment in the 1830s when many of the tortuous winding sections were straightened out. James Brindley, the original commissioning engineer, built canals that followed a particular contour. In the case of the Oxford canal this was along the 300 foot contour. The reason was to avoid locks and embankments to reduce costs. However, in many places this lead to very slow going.

The onset of the railways meant that speed became very important. The Oxford canal company undertook a programme of straightening. Some of the abandoned loops can be readily identified.

Anna and John Beech went for a walk around the Oxford canal in the Brinklow area and stumbled across a part of a lost loop of the canal.







John Beech picked up the old part of the canal and this is illustrated in the pictures below. The figure numbers refer to the numbers on the map above



Figure 4

More old the old canal can be seen the other side of the road.



Figure 5

This shows the area at the back of the chandlery at Rose Narrowboats.

The line of the canal is to the left of the wall and hedge.

Part of it has been built on.



Figure 6

Taken close to the straightened part of the canal. The number 7 on Figure 1 refers to part of the arm that is still in water and which provides moorings

John Beech and Robert Nash

Not Another Bloody Lockdown

Well we thought it was over,

But that's not the way,

Thought we'd be back on our boat,

Now wait for another day.

How long that will be,

Nobody will know,

This annoying virus,

Just don't know when to go.

But hopefully soon,

The vaccine will kick in,

And be back on our boats,

Whether plastic or tin.

So don't lose heart,

This won't be forever,

We'll all be back down the basin,

Hopefully with nice boating weather.

Basin Bard

Stay safe everyone

Membership News

The <u>thirty</u> members who have not already paid this year's annual Society subscription are reminded that it was due on 01 January. They will find a renewal form enclosed with this magazine. The appropriate subscription with completed form is to be returned to Brian Pope or, if you wish, paid by bank transfer (moorers may pay their mooring fees at the same time). If you receive a renewal form and have paid your subscription since 19 February then please ignore it.

This reminder can be disregarded by Canoe Section (Mercia Canoe Club) members as your annual club fees due on the anniversary of joining the Club include the Society subscription.

The new members named below are welcomed to the Society

Name(s)

Alex Alderson Ryan Kavanagh Alex Smith Felicia Walker & Neville Douglas

Interest in the Society

Boating community and nature Boating community and nature Canoe Section member

2021 Mooring Fees

Annual mooring fees were due by the 31 January but have not been received to date from <u>eleven</u> moorers. They will find a copy of their previously mailed invoice enclosed with this magazine. If you receive a copy invoice and have paid your fees since 19 February then please ignore it.

Moving On

Some of you will recall a few articles I wrote some time back around my duties as a lockeeper. They naturally dried up when anything of amusement or interest could be garnered from my ailing memory. Much has changed since those times and at risk of repeating myself that period of employment was a huge pleasure to be involved with and an equally huge privilege.

A great deal has changed since those amazing times. By and large from the point of losing my employ, my wife and I elected to continually cruise and more than that, did so in the areas that we felt very much at home in. That being the mid shires. Move forward to this year and change aplenty.

Both my wife and I hail from the fine county of Norfolk and family issues especially around elderly parents, beckoned us home. Time to evaluate the remainder of our own lives. Sadly, and with much regret we sold our lovely narrowboat home and returned to Norfolk. In the short term we bought and lived in a caravan just North of Norwich which gave us ready access to the north of the county and our ailing relatives. It was in hindsight the right thing to do and neither of us regretted the decision. During this time my wife lost both her parents almost exactly a year apart and to be there for them was the least we could do, and, absolutely the right thing to do.

Despite this very sad loss it still left us with family in the county which we now felt very drawn to be alongside. Next phase....consider the broads?

Current situation is we now live on the broads in a 12ft x 37ft GRP ex hire Bounty37. Wow how different is that? No comparison. The width gives a very spacious accommodation which on the broads is not out of place. A few down sides though. They are not anywhere as well insulated as your standard narrowboat and whilst many have solid fuel fires ours does not. We are often cold. The broads though are without doubt a much different type of waterway. Pretty much most of what we have travelled is about 15 narrowboats wide which is why our 12 foot width is not out of place. One issue we did not consider even fleetingly is that

all of the broads are tidal. That did surprise us. Well at least "how tidal" it is. Each average daily tide raises or lowers us at least three feet and on some more dramatic days it can easily be four feet. That being we have to be moored very loose indeed. When I think back to tying up on the canals and heaving in the very last spare few inches...ah well.

The wild life here is on a different scale as is the very flat and haunting views. Mile upon mile of reedy marshland and derelict windmills etc etc.

What to say then... Do we miss the canals?, yes very much if we are honest. The mid Shires still feels like home along with the very wonderful people we were acquainted with along the way. Could we return? Probably not. We have watched with alarm at the rising prices of narrowboats and realise that a half decent boat is now out of our price range. Still no regrets. All things for a season as they say.

Lockie Hasbeen

Society Brand Items for Sale

Show your pride in the Society and contribute to our funds by purchasing one of the following items carrying our brand:

Brass plaque commemorating our 50th anniversary in 2007	£5.00
Button badge commemorating our 60th anniversary in 2017	£3.00
Pennants complete with toggle and loop	£10.00

Polo shirts with embroidered logo (navy: sizes S, M, L, XL & XXL)	£17.50
Sweat shirts with embroidered logo (navy: sizes S, M, L, XL & XXL)	£21.00

Also in stock British made 100% cotton tea towels in various designs at £3 each. Just the thing for the new season for those who do the dishes.

Please contact Brian Pope who can show you samples, take your orders, receive payment and arrange for collection or delivery.

Paddlers Tales

Mercia Canoe Club held their annual meeting at the end of January. We had to go for an online meeting and proceeded with few glitches. It was also a good opportunity for a group catch up. The attendance was lower than usual, so key documents were circulated by email to Mercia Members as well. Not surprisingly 2020 was a quiet year for paddling at the club, with a drop in membership and a small deficit for the year. We are in a good position still and ready to get back paddling from the club as soon as we can.

The West Midlands Regional Team are attempting to put together a good variety of events for 2021 but who knows what we may end up doing? Currently there are provisional plans for the Paddle to the Heart, from Icknield Port to Gas Street Basin, Birmingham in June, which we have done before from different start points. There is also a trip through Dudley Tunnels, which are only accessible by canoe on booked events. There is then the Stoke Heritage Trail and the popular River Severn Paddle from Bridgnorth, downstream 14 miles to Bewdley and Sea Kayaking for all on Anglesey. It will be good to get out again. In addition, they are looking at running coach and leader update sessions.

You must look closely to see the first two milestones out from Bishop Street Basin. Often the vegetation has overgrown them but last Autumn they were easier to spot.





Nigel Wooltorton

Canoe Club Chair

Being as going out for meals or getting takeaways has not been possible of late, I enclose a recipe for homemade Doner Kebabs that are cheaper, healthier, tasty and easy to make.

Doner Kebabs

450g to 500g Lamb Mince

3 Cloves Garlic Crushed

1 tbsp Plain Flour

2 tbsp Oil

2 tsp Ground Cumin

2 tsp Ground Coriander

2 tsp Ground Cinnamon

1 Beaten egg

Salt & Pepper



- 1. Grind the lamb in a food processor or put through a mincer 3 times.
- 2. Put mince in a bowl add all other ingredients, mix well till all combined.
- 3. Spread mixture onto a large baking tray (no need to grease tray). Press meat down with hands to make a thin even layer over tray.
- 4. Put under a pre heated grill for 4 to 5 minutes until brown and shrunken.
- 5. Turn meat and grill for further 2 to 3 minutes.
- 6. Cut meat into thin strips and put into warmed pita breads with salad and sauces of your choice.

Enjoy, keep staying safe, hopefully we may all get to enjoy some boating this year!

Clare Nixon - nb Cladel

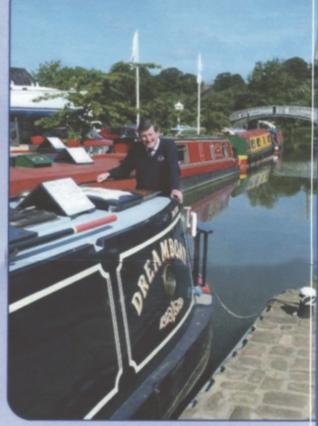
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The object of the Society shall be to promote and encourage, in all possible ways, the proper use and maintenance in good order of the Coventry Canal and all connecting waterways.

The objective stated above was adopted by the Coventry Canal Society when it was formed in 1957. During the rebuilding programme after the WW II, the Coventry City Council put forward a plan that surrounded a modern traffic free centre with a ring road. This new road was to be built across the canal, which unlike the old medieval city centre and cathedral had survived the blitz. Local members of the IWA. including David Hutchins, who worked for the council and Bert Dunkley, a local canal enthusiast, started campaigning to save the canal.

The IWA. supported this campaign and at short notice switched its National Rally from Stourbridge, where dredging had already started, to the Coventry basin. The event attracted a large number of boats and thousands of visitors to the rally site. This interest in the canal was harnessed by the formation of the Coventry Canal Society with Bert Dunkley as its first chairman.

The fight to save the canal took two long years during which time it was under continual threat of being in-filled and built over. The Coventry Canal Society was very active in promoting the advantages to the city of a local canal. Eventually opinions changed and the future of the canal was secured. In 1958 the society rediscovered the Wyken arm, a disused and overgrown colliery canal just south of Hawkesbury Junction on the North Oxford canal. Society members cleaned out and restored the arm as moorings for members' boats. The first ever canal restoration project by volunteers. Members of the society and others were concerned about the Hawkesbury engine house falling into decline and set up the Engine House trust. Later the Trust was incorporated into the Society and now the Pump House has been the subject of several planning applications for development – all of which have so far failed.

The Society supplied most of the boats on the first two protest cruises during the early days of the Stratford canal restoration project. They also provided labour for the Stourport canal restoration work and later went on to become involved in the planning for the re-development of the Coventry City basin in the late 80's and the redevelopment of the canal corridor and the art trail in the 90's.

Many members of the Society gave their time and hard work in the exploration, restoration and refurbishment of other canals throughout the country. The Society continues to carry out monthly rubbish clearances along the canal. In 1994, the society was presented with a "Queen Mother's Award" by the Tidy Britain Group at a special ceremony in London.

The Society boat Panther can be seen at many events throughout the Midlands, promoting both the Coventry Canal and the Coventry Canal Society. It also follows when attending shows like the Town and Country Festival, the society finds itself promoting the inland waterways of Britain in general.

If you would like to join us then please contact us either via our website or by writing to: Brian Pope, 7 Frampton Walk, Coventry CV2 2JE.