

REPORT



BMS
BOAT MUSEUM SOCIETY



**HERITAGE
BOATYARD**
Working together to keep history afloat

**Number 216
March 2017**

THE BOAT MUSEUM SOCIETY

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Vice Presidents: Tony Hales CBE, Harry Arnold MBE, Alan Jones, Tony Lewery

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Vice Chairmen Barry Green, Chris Kay, Will Manning
Treasurer & Membership Secretary Barbara Kay
Secretary Lynn Potts
Other directors Di Skilbeck MBE, Nigel Carpenter, Dave Ditchfield, Bob Thomas, Cath Turpin, Mike Turpin

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Visit our website

www.boatmuseumsociety.org.uk

Contributions for RE:PORT which is published four times a year are always welcome.

Copy date for RE:PORT 217 – Friday 19th May 2017

All views expressed in RE:PORT are those of the contributors concerned and should not be taken as being the policy of The Boat Museum Society, The National Waterways Museum or The Canal and River Trust.

Dates for your Diary

April

- 1 Sat NWM** The Museum opens for the 2017 season, after the refurbishment of the shop and café. Sunday working parties resume.
- 1 Sat NWM** Exhibition of textile works by students from Grange School, Northwich, inspired by a visit to the Museum (to 5 May).
- 11 Tue IWA** *Middlewich – its canal frontage, heritage and future plans.* Kerry Fletcher
- 14 Fri NWM** EASTER BOAT GATHERING (to 17 April). This festival brings to an end our 40th anniversary celebrations. Boat trips, musical performances and workshops, behind the scenes tours, crafts and activities for everyone. Come and see *Kenet*, *Saturn* and the celebration of the restoration of *George*. This will be a busy weekend and all help would be welcomed. Contact Emma Hermon, Volunteer Co-ordinator, to get involved.
- 14 Fri BMS** After a welcome to the Easter Gathering by Graham Boxer, Tony Lewery will be entertaining us with *Aspects of horse boating*. Tony has long been involved with encouraging horse boating. Sure to be a memorable evening.
- 18 Tue EPL&FHS** *Murder in the Victorian Cheshire Family.* Martin Baggoley

May

- 9 Tue IWA** *The Titanic tragedy – correcting the myths.* Ken Pye
- 13 Sat NWM** An exhibition of Lino cuts by Eric Gaskell at the Museum. (to 9 July)
- 16 Tue EPL&FHS** *Toll roads to motorways in the Wirral.* Gavin Hunter. Another opportunity for those who missed Gavin's talk to BMS in September.
- 18 Thu NWM** International Museum Day.
- 19 Fri BMS** *Lapal Canal Trust.* The LCT promotes the restoration of the lost Lapal Canal on the BCN, to make it navigable to Lapal tunnel from Halesowen and Selly Oak.

June

- 1 Thu NWM** National Volunteering Week (to 7 June)
- 2 Fri NWM** *Stilling the Flow.* Art exhibition by Jim Cooke at the Museum. (to 2 July)
- 18 Sun NWM** Fathers' Day. Bring your Dad to the Museum for a special treat.

July

- 9 Sun NWM** *Bicycles and Boats* – join the parade from Ellesmere Port along the canal to the Museum where there will be special events.

August

- 13 Sun NWM** *Horses at Work.* The Museum's ever popular celebration of the horses that were for so many years the prime movers of inland waterways craft. If you would like to help, please contact Emma Hermon, the Volunteer Co-ordinator at the Museum

BMS meetings are held in the Rolt Centre at the National Waterways Museum, starting at 7.30pm. There is a bar and we have a raffle. Everyone is welcome.

EPL&FHS – Ellesmere Port Local & Family History Society meetings are also held in the Rolt Centre, starting at 7.30pm. Annual membership is £12 and visitors are welcome at £4 a meeting

NWM More information about Museum events can be found at www.canalrivertrust.org.uk

IWA – Inland Waterways Association meetings are held in the Mercer Suite at the Holiday Inn, Ellesmere Port, South Wirral, CH65 2AL, starting at 7.45pm.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

You will see throughout this edition of RE:PORT that much emphasis has been put into the handover of the collection, including the boats, to CRT and the proposed review of our own purpose and aims for the foreseeable future. The committee feel that now is the right time to consider our objectives and look at some of the key points of the original aims of BMS and how they interact with our current activities at the museum, so in full consultation with the Committee, we have put into motion a full and comprehensive review of our aims and objectives for the future. I hope to be able to report back on this at next year's AGM or an EGM if we feel there is any need to make radical changes to our constitution, established in 1971 and amended in 1972.

The original constitution was drawn up to allow the society to establish a Museum. Although the boats were obviously central to the original concept, it was not intended to be just another boat preservation society, the concept was to operate and carry on for the benefit of the public, a museum or museums to provide by public exhibitions, displays, lectures and addresses the collection and dissemination of knowledge about the history of the inland navigation. It could be said that the job is done.

I think that the challenge for the society now is to consolidate our achievements of the past 45 years and to continue to utilise what has always been our major asset – the skills and enthusiasm of our membership – to work with the CRT and museum management to take the museum forward into a successful future.



BMS Chairmen past and present: [from left] Ken Catford, Mike Turpin, Jeff Fairweather photo: Jeff Fairweather

The working relationship with the Museum and CRT has continued to develop, with BMS members assisting Graham and his staff in a variety of ways that add value to the Museum. It is worth noting that however much planning, communication and discussion there is, we can only achieve as much as members are able to put into the society. With more active involvement we could do a lot more!!!

The key to our continued success and survival has been the energy and commitment of the Committee. My thanks go to them for their dedication and hard work in supporting the museum and staff to arrange and coordinate the various events and activities that take place, and also as individuals playing a full part in the activity itself. My thanks go to all members and volunteers who have shared both the organisation and workload and cheerfully participated in a very difficult but enjoyable year.

Finally, I would like to close by repeating what I said to you all last year. We must never forget that despite many changes in management and governing bodies, the one constant at this Museum has been BMS (formerly NWMIN). Whatever the future holds for us we will always be the organisation that created the National Waterways Museum, nobody can take that away from us, and I am sure nobody wants to. It was BMS that founded the Museum, it was BMS that rebuilt and renovated the original buildings, it was BMS that brought the boats and collection together and it has always been BMS to this day that has stepped up to the plate to help the Museum through troubled times. It is as an independent charity and society that we are able to do that and I hope that will continue for many years to come.

Thank you all for this year. Thank you all for your support with our 40th anniversary celebrations, we couldn't have done it without you. THANK YOU.

Jeff Fairweather

9th Waterways History Conference

The next in the Railway & Canal Historical Society's annual conferences on Waterways History will be held Saturday 24th June 2017. in The Noble Room, The Staff House, University of Birmingham. The provisional programme is:

"Waterways History?"

Welcome and Introduction – Chairman, Tony Hirst OBE

Session 1 – Waterways research

Dr Paul Sillitoe

Mike Clarke, President, RCHS

Dr Jodie Matthews, Honorary Research Fellow, NWM

Session 2 – Researching the people

Dr Timothy Peters, Ironbridge Institute, Univ. of Birmingham

Lorna York, NWM Stoke Bruerne

Session 3 – Researching the waterways

Hugh Conway Jones

Ray Shill

Brian Goggin

Session 4 – Outlines of on-going research

General Discussion – A way ahead for waterways research.

Closing Remarks – Chairman.

More details and a booking form can be found on the Railway & Canal Historical Society's website.

FROM THE MINUTES OF BOAT MUSEUM SOCIETY ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD FRIDAY 17 FEBRUARY 2017 AT THE NATIONAL WATERWAYS MUSEUM AT 7.30pm.

Present: Di Skilbeck in the chair plus 25 members of the Society.

Apologies: Barry Green, Cath Turpin, Mike Turpin, Jan Burnip, Ann Gardiner, Sue and John Yates, Nigel Carpenter, Peter Steward, Tom Ormiston, Sue James, Ailsa Rutherford, Alan and Judy Jones.

Di Skilbeck welcomed everyone to the meeting; it is great to have Graham Boxer with us.

RESOLUTION 1: 'To accept the Minutes of the AGM held on 19 February 2016.' The minutes were circulated. Proposed Dave Potts, seconded Dave Ditchfield. The vote in favour was unanimous.

RESOLUTION 2: 'To receive the Annual Report of the Board of Directors.'

Jeff Fairweather reported: I am very pleased with what we have achieved in 2016 within our limited budget. Under the stern and watchful eye of our Treasurer we have maintained our objectives and found opportunities to support deserving projects. This year we have made the following financial contributions to the Museum. At the February 2016 AGM, we had a raffle with the proceeds going to CRT Flood Appeal – we raised £70 which was sent to Richard Parry – both Richard Parry and Jonathan Ludford, CRT National Communications Manager, sent thanks to the Society for the donation.

The Society this year has also contributed £7,500 to the *Making of the Museum* exhibition. The Coffee and Crochet Group contributed about £1,400 towards storage materials for the Archives. The money left from the grant received for *Marlyn* has now been transferred to the Museum who have bought materials for *Marlyn's* maintenance. Our Christmas Carol Concert and raffle raised £446, a £20 donation was given to the Wirral Singers and Ringers.

It was always the intention to hand the collection and boats over to CRT (previously TWT) when the time was right. After much deliberation and consultation, the BMT Trustees have agreed now is the right time to make this transfer and the collection was handed over in November 2016. The Museum is committed to the sustainability and appropriate care of the collection and in conjunction with the BMT Trustees has been working on a review and plan for the future of the boat collection. The review of the boat collection and plan for the future is underpinned by best practice in museums collections care and review, and by National Historic Ships guidance. Statements of Significance have been produced for every boat using National Historic Ships methodology. These will inform the museum of a decision-making process about each vessel to make sure the collection is as strong as possible, both in terms of historic importance and in the knowledge that it can be adequately cared for.

Now that the Museum is fully managed by CRT and the collection and its management have been passed to CRT (except *Gifford*), the committee feel that the Society has reached another milestone, so over the next few months we will be undertaking a review of its purpose and aims for the foreseeable future. We will report back to the membership at the next AGM or an EGM if we feel there is a need to make any radical changes to our constitution as established in 1971 and amended in 1972.

Di Ascott asked about the handing over of *Worcester*. Jeff Fairweather replied: Worcester was handed over under the same conditions as the rest of the collection. ‘The Museum is committed to the sustainability and appropriate care of the collection including *Worcester*, and in conjunction with the BMT Trustees and the BMS Committee, have been working on a review and plan for the future of the boat collection. The review of the boat collection and plan for the future is underpinned by best practice in museums collections care and review, and by National Historic Ships guidance. Statements of Significance have been produced for every boat, including *Worcester*, using National Historic Ships methodology. These will inform the museum of a decision-making process about each vessel to make sure the collection is as strong as possible, both in terms of historic importance and in the knowledge that it can be adequately cared for.’

Proposed Dave Ditchfield, seconded Chris Kay. There were 25 votes in favour and one abstention. The resolution was carried,

INTERIM MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY’S REPORT.

Last year, I explained how my husband, Chris, and I had volunteered to be Interim Membership Secretaries and here we are again 12 months on. I wonder how many years in the future we will be standing here giving the Interim Membership Secretary’s report?

Having said that, we did volunteer for another year. One of the reasons, certainly, that I wanted to continue, was to ensure that the Society was collecting the correct subscriptions from members. It is only fair to those of us who pay the amount due that those who aren’t paying or haven’t increased their bank standing orders in years, pay the correct amount. So, 2015/16 was the year of being robust in sending reminders and letters to people. I am pleased to report that the majority of people responded in a positive manner. There were a few who have not increased their standing order or paid the full amount and they are now no longer members so they won’t receive RE:PORT. However, there is no problem should they wish to reinstate their membership – they just pay the correct subscriptions.

I envisage the year ahead consolidating that position and having a robust subscription collection strategy in place based on last years’ experience.

In terms of numbers of members, we had 457 paying members at 30th September 2016 compared with 487 at the same time of the previous year. This is a reduction of 30 members, the majority of this reduction is due to taking a more robust approach to subscription collection along with the usual in-year movement of members moving or passing away compensated for by new members.

Di Skilbeck thanked Barbara. Treasurer and membership all takes a lot of time, Barbara is amazing.

ELECTION OF DIRECTORS.

Sue Phillips stepped down May 2016. Thanks to her for her hard work including as webmaster and recording volunteer hours.

Directors standing for re-election: Nigel Carpenter, Jeff Fairweather, Barry Green, Chris Kay, Will Manning, Lynn Potts, Di Skilbeck, Bob Thomas, Cath Turpin, Mike Turpin.

One nomination for Directorship has been received:

David Ditchfield, proposed Jeff Fairweather, seconded Di Skilbeck.
There is no need for an election. The above are duly elected.

ELECTION OF TREASURER

Barbara Kay has agreed to stand, proposed Jeff Fairweather, seconded Lynn Potts.
The vote in favour was unanimous.

The meeting closed at 7.55pm.

Note: some of the points covered in this extract from the AGM minutes are dealt with at greater length elsewhere in this issue of REPORT.



Accounts 2015–2016

The accounts for the financial year ending 30th September 2016 were presented to the Society's AGM on 17th February 2017.

The majority of the Society's income came from subscriptions, donations, fund raising and the sale of publications including *Waterways Journal* and craft books. Income during 2015/16 increased from £11,000 in the previous year to £17,000 due to a generous donation of £5,000 which is to be used to assist the Museum Resilience project which aims to safeguard the boat collection and the money will be used to assist in lifting and moving 12 boats into store and the refurbishment of the dry dock on the Victoria Arm.

During the last year, the Society has been able to make contributions to the CRT Flood Relief Fund through holding a special raffle and the Making of our Museum exhibition to celebrate 40 years of the Museum. The Crochet and Coffee group have contributed materials to the Archives for preservation of documents etc. At the same time, the Society has managed to increase its resources through generous donations, economic spending and fund raising.

The value of the Society as at 30th September 2016 stands at just over £72,000. The Society has allocated approximately half of the funds which is just under £36,000 towards the society's boat, *Gifford. Gifford* will be going on the dry dock in Tamworth later this year for some major works. The Society has £21,500 in the Capital Project Fund – the Committee looks at different projects and allocates appropriate amounts. Obviously we want to use the money in the best way possible and so we will offer matched funding to assist in generating extra monies from other funding bodies. The plans for 2016/17 will continue to do that. The remaining £15,000 comprises £5,000 in respect of the Window on the World project which we are currently talking to the Museum how that can be spent, £1,500 Crochet and Coffee group, and the balance of about £7,000 is split up supporting the publishing fund, and contingency for the Society.

A huge thank you has to go to those members of the Society who work hard in generating income for the Society and enables us to continue supporting the Society's aims and objectives. Particular thanks go to Dave Potts who audits the accounts.

A full set of the year's accounts will be published on the BMS website.

Barbara Kay
Treasurer

Planning for the future of the boat collection at the National Waterways Museums

In 2007 the National Waterways Museum produced a report *The Future of the National Inland Waterways Collection*. This report, written by Celia Webber, laid out in bare terms the challenges of looking after boat collections to an adequate standard. It also acknowledged that the 'majority of these boats are at risk due to a long-term lack of funding'. The museum was not unaware of this problem, having to manage it on a daily basis, and discuss strategic solutions. Celia Webber's work evolved from a report *Boat Collection at Risk* produced by museum staff in 2004. These pieces of work discussed challenges, defined options and, importantly, explored the significance of individual vessels.

By 2012 the management of the museums had passed to Canal & River Trust and it was clear that the boat collection was still at risk and urgent action was required. In 2015 the museum received a grant from the Esmée Fairburn Collections Fund to undertake a feasibility study for the future options for care, conservation and display of the boat collection. This has provided the museum with a very strong opportunity to identify, and agree solutions for the boat collection. While it is clear that the implementation of solutions requires funding, the project has led to a collective understanding of the future shape of the collection that can be sustained through a clear and agreed approach to its care and conservation.

The Museum would like to take this opportunity to outline some of the work that has been going on to secure the future of the boat collection.

The Collection

The Canal & River Trust's Designated collection, held across three museums, includes nearly 70 historic boats representing the most comprehensive and important collection of inland waterways craft in the UK, and the largest in the world. It is a unique legacy from the industrial canal era that played a leading role on Britain's economic and social development throughout the 18th and 19th centuries. In addition, the collection includes examples of craft from the post industrial age, during a time when canals became a focus for leisure and holiday-making. The collection includes narrow and wide craft, service and maintenance boats including dredgers, tugs, a weedcutter, ice breakers and pleasure craft. The boats are both powered and unpowered and constructed of wood, iron, steel and concrete.

This includes 14 vessels that are listed on the National Register of Historic Vessels (NRHV), as well as 12 that form part of the National Historic Fleet.

The collection at the National Waterways Museums is also recognised as Designated as being of outstanding importance under the Arts Council England (ACE) Designation Scheme (www.artscouncil.org.uk/supporting-collections-and-archives/designation-scheme)

How do museums look after collections?

As a nationally-styled museum with a collection recognised as outstanding by ACE it has always been clear that any plan for the future needed to be underpinned by museum sector best practice.

The challenges faced by the National Waterways Museum are not unique in museums and as a sector, museums have been developing a body of standards over many years to provide guidance on managing and documenting collections. The overarching standard for museums is the ACE Accreditation scheme. ACE say about the Accreditation scheme:

- ◆ The Accreditation Scheme sets nationally agreed standards for museums in the UK. It defines good practice and identifies agreed standards, thereby encouraging development. It is a baseline quality standard that helps guide museums to be the best they can be, for current and future users.
- ◆ The Scheme is regarded as one of the most innovative and effective developments in the museum sector. It has led the way in raising museum standards in the UK, and has been used as a model and source of inspiration for similar schemes overseas.
- ◆ There are currently more than 1,700 museums participating in the Scheme across the UK.

Achieving Full Accreditation allows museums to demonstrate that they can be trusted and gives confidence to stakeholders. It is also a requirement of many grant schemes.

Good collections care and conservation is a major requirement of the Accreditation scheme. The guidance also requires museums to take a conservation approach to the care of their collections:

Caring for the collections is a fundamental duty for all museums. Policies for the care of the collection should be based on a combination of preventative and remedial conservation, both designed to ensure long-term preservation.

Preventative conservation covers the measures necessary to slow down or minimise deterioration of museum objects and specimens and structures. The most fundamentally important tool in preventive conservation is creating the right storage environment. At its most basic the aim is for stable temperature and relative humidity.

Remedial conservation involves a treatment to an object or specimen to bring it to a more acceptable condition or state in order to stabilise it or enhance some aspects of its cultural or scientific value. The standard for museums is that they must work with a conservator if they plan to undertake remedial conservation:

The museum should receive regular advice from a conservator or collection care adviser, or other appropriately qualified/experienced person on the museum's approach to collection care activities. Remedial conservation work should be carried out by or under the supervision of a conservator.

What is conservation?

Conservation is a profession with its own standards and qualifications. At the heart of good conservation practice is a document called the Burra Charter. It was developed for Australian heritage and became internationally influential in the development of conservation charters and protocols. Its principles are universally applied in conservation:

- ◆ What have you got?

- ◆ Why does it matter?
- ◆ What is happening to it?
- ◆ What can you do about it?
- ◆ Who should be involved?

Heritage Lottery Fund will ask for a Conservation Management Plan as a major part of a grant application.

This conservation approach also underpins National Historic Ships guidance in their publication *Conserving Historic Vessels* www.nationalhistoricships.org.uk/pages/advisory-papers.html

Conservation and boats

The review of our boat collection has been guided by these standards. In particular, the 10 conservation principles identified by National Historic Ships:

1. Historic boats and ships should be conserved according to their significance.
2. The aim of conservation is to retain the significance that has been identified and pass it on to future generations.
3. All aspects of significance should be dealt with in a considered and thoughtful way.
4. Rigorous maintenance is a key to good conservation practice for all vessels.
5. Make and keep records throughout, including recording all changes to the vessel and what happened to any material which has been removed.
6. When in doubt, do the absolute minimum. Conservation demands a cautious approach to change.
7. Replace like with like wherever possible and practicable.
8. Conjecture should be avoided in all conservation projects. If uncertain, don't do it.
9. The best knowledge, skills, techniques and types of management available and affordable should be employed in all types of conservation.
10. Do things in a logical order.

The National Historic Ships methodology advocates a 'conservation gateway' approach to decide the appropriate future route for the care of a vessel, once its significance has been assessed. This framework offers a tried and tested approach to the active care of collections and one that it is important that the museum should adopt.

The two main options are 'conservation of fabric' route and 'conservation for operational use' route.

Conservation of fabric

"The working capacity of a vessel nominated for conservation of her fabric in static form will be removed for preservation for display. Inevitably, fabric will be destroyed when efforts are made to keep the vessel operational"

Conservation for operational use

...taking this conservation route will lead to the loss of original materials since the owner will be conserving function over fabric"

However, this approach keeps historic vessels ‘alive’, brings pleasure and develops skills that come with operational use.

National Historic Ships clarify the conservation options further:

- ◆ Preservation: keeping part or all of a boat’s fabric as far as possible in its existing state and retarding deterioration
- ◆ Restoration: returning the existing fabric or part of it to a known earlier state by removing additions or re-assembling existing components with the minimum introduction of new material.
- ◆ Reconstruction: returning all of the fabric or part of the fabric of a vessel to a known earlier state but is distinguished from restoration by the introduction of significant new material into the fabric.
- ◆ Adaptation: modifying a vessel to suit a proposed new use.
- ◆ Replication: building a copy of a vessel, defined at various levels of detail and accuracy.

National Historic Ships stress that it is of the highest importance that a DECISION is made to inform the future approach as “a half way measure can result in a vessel’s significance being lost by default”.

The boat collection review

We were very pleased that we were able to appoint two museum consultants with considerable professional experience in the museum sector and an understanding of boat collections. Emma Chaplin was a previous Collections Manager for the museum at Ellesmere Port and has since undertaken a variety of roles but now runs her own consultancy business. Rachel Mulhearn was Director of the Merseyside Maritime Museum and also now carries out freelance consultancy.

Carrying out collections reviews is accepted practice within museums. An overview of collections is vital to ensure that resources are prioritised most effectively, especially in a sector where funding is under pressure and there are not limitless resources to look after everything to an acceptable museum standard.

Assessing significance

Assessing significance is fundamental to this process and to be sure which conservation route is appropriate for each vessel. In order to establish this, we have carried out a thorough assessment of the information available. This included:

- ◆ An audit and analysis of previous collection reports.
- ◆ A systematic review of information held in the boat files of the National Waterways Museum, Ellesmere Port.
- ◆ A review of all digital files provided by the National Waterways Museum, Ellesmere Port.
- ◆ Survey of information about collections held on the National Historic Ships website.
- ◆ Use of published material to supplement information held at the museum.
- ◆ Stakeholder and expert consultation
- ◆ The production of Statements of Significance, drawing from information collated

and using the National Historic Ships' framework.

- ◆ Visual assessment and photography of vessels, where possible.

The care and management of historic vessels is challenging. These are often very large and complex artefacts. They are expensive to care for, and interpret, to museum standards. By their very nature, over the course of their working lives, they have changed materially. These changes are not always recorded, which is why contextual historic research becomes vital so that the museum can produce an informed assessment of what maintenance and replacement might have happened, and when. This includes the part of their lives as exhibits, and judgement needs to be applied to ensure this use is appropriate in relation to their status as museum collection objects. This may involve making decisions around taking highly significant and unique vessels out of the water for long-term preservation.

There are a wide range of methodologies that can be applied to developing Statements of Significance. For the purposes of this project, the National Historic Ships methodology was used, specifically designed to be applied to historic vessels. The value of this methodology is that, ultimately, it helps those looking after the collection to create robust conservation management plans for each vessel. It helps to identify vessels which have little relevance to the museum and might be better used elsewhere, for greater public benefit. It also identifies those vessels that have suffered from such loss of physical integrity, and for which little information exists, that documented deconstruction is the best option. This route preserves what data can be captured from the vessel to retain an option of replication in the future, as well as knowledge about the original construction.

The methodology developed by National Historic Ships poses the overarching question "Why does this vessel matter?". To answer this, three core areas are assessed: the vessel's physical fabric; associational historic links; aesthetic impact. In combination, this allows for a consistent assessment of each vessel.

The NHS approach poses 3 key questions that have helped to distil core knowledge about each vessel.

What is the vessel's ability to demonstrate history in her physical fabric?

This question has been particularly useful in identifying originality, how the physical fabric of vessels relates to the different phases of their lives and has encouraged honest appraisal of their current condition.

It has revealed that for too much of the collection there are not comprehensive records of conservation or conservation work and no condition reports recorded when vessels entered the collection. There has been a natural bias towards noting and valuing aspects of construction relating to a particular period in the boat's life whilst ignoring others.

What are the vessel's associational links for which there is no physical evidence?

The collection is much richer in associational links relating to the lives of vessels both before and after they entered the museum collection than in conservation records. Many of these are anecdotally based with few references. They undoubtedly contribute to a fuller understanding of individual vessels and could form the starting point for further research.

How does the vessel's shape or form combine and contribute to her function?

This question has helped to clarify the key features of the vessel that are central to its very essence or purpose.

Consultation and dissemination

Consultation was a crucial part of this stage of the project, designed to ensure that the input of stakeholders and experts informed the final recommendations. This process of consultation aimed to achieve two things. Firstly, to provide a mechanism of presenting findings and to receive critical feedback, then built into the recommendations. Also, to create a forum in which the extensive tacit knowledge about collections, held with many staff and volunteers, was captured.

It was also important to disseminate our findings to stakeholder groups to share and discuss issues around the care and maintenance of historic vessels.

There were five consultation groups:

- ◆ **Staff and volunteers of the National Waterways Museum/Canal and River Trust.** This consultation involved ongoing dialogue with the museum's Collections Manager, and planned engagement with the Head of Museums. Structured consultation was completed with volunteers and staff, both around broad recommendations, and specific vessels.
- ◆ **Representatives of museum friends' organisations.** While most of the vessel collection is located at Ellesmere Port, it was important that the consultation extended to representatives from Gloucester and Stoke Bruerne. This involved a presentation of broad and specific recommendations to the chairs of friends' groups, all involved in the operation and maintenance of vessels, and in-depth discussion.
- ◆ **CRT Historic Vessels Advisory Group.** This specialist group consists of CRT staff and expert volunteers. Their remit is to advise on historic significance of vessels. The group is made up of individuals with expertise knowledge of the museum's boat collections. This consultation involved a presentation of broad and specific recommendations, and in-depth discussion.
- ◆ **Expert organisations National Historic Ships UK and Arts Council England.** Consultation with staff at National Historic Ships was essential to inform and discuss proposed recommendations. Arts Council England is the government body responsible for the Designation Scheme and Accreditation Scheme. We discussed, with relevant staff, the aims of the project and broad recommendations. This included consultation about specific vessels, in relation to the collection's designated status.
- ◆ **Museums and organisations that hold similar collections.** Consultation with relevant museums and organisations has helped to place findings in the wider context of inland waterway boat collections, with particular reference to specific vessels. In addition, it was useful to discuss models of working, in relation to realising recommendations. Organisations consulted included:
 - Black Country Living Museum

- London Canal Museum
- National Museums Liverpool
- National Trust

Recommendations

This is a critical time for the boat collection. Without radical choices being made, boats will be lost through lack of action and opportunities to secure the long term future of a core collection of boats and to implement a planned approach will also be gone. This is not a time to do nothing or to aspire to unrealistically expensive and ultimately unworkable options.

We have openly acknowledged that this will involve difficult decisions but we are confident that undertaking this project has supported the museum in making the right choices for the collection, and the public for which it exists.

The proposed future collection outlined below equates to about a 50% reduction in the number of vessels, while protecting its integrity in terms of range of boats and significance. This also allows for further, well-managed, collecting in under-represented areas. This may seem a radical proposal, but in order to protect the most vital collections for the long term, the challenge of maintaining these vessels to acceptable museum standards must be dealt with realistically. It is far better for a museum to have a collection of fewer items in top condition, than many in a poor state.

The fact must be faced that some vessels that were collected for their importance are in such a state of disrepair that much significance has been lost as a result. The focus of the museum now needs to be how to best preserve, and care for those vessels that are of most significance and still retain some physical integrity that can be protected. This will invariably move the museum away from previous approaches to restore all vessels, which has proved unsustainable and unrealistic.

The options for individual vessels are:

1. Retain in collection as a floating exhibit with a robust conservation management plan that includes a long-term maintenance plan. This follows National Historic Ship's operational route of conservation and care.
2. Retain in collection and remove from the water for either indoor, or appropriate outdoor display, and with a robust conservation management plan, that includes a long-term maintenance plan. This follows National Historic Ship's fabric route of conservation and care.
3. Documented deconstruction using the National Historic Ships' framework. This option, while meaning the complete loss of the vessel, also opens up the future opportunity for a high quality replica. This option should be used for significant vessels where no other records exist, that are in an extreme state of disrepair, have little original fabric, and are actively deteriorating in their current situation.
4. Disposal following Museums Association guidelines and best practice and working closely with National Historic Ships. This may include transfer to another registered museum or sale to another organisation.
5. Loan to another organisation following museum policy and procedures.

- 6. De-accession and retain as working boats to support museum maintenance activity.

Fundamental to these recommendations include ensuring that best practice in conservation planning and recording is followed in future.

Next steps

The museum has already been able to make a lot of progress putting the recommendations into action. The recent Heritage Lottery Fund development project enabled the preservation of *Mossdale* and the removal to better conditions of the deteriorating boats from the Slipway. We've received grant funding from Museum Development North West and the Association of Independent Museums to produce conservation management plans for some operational boats and work with an accredited conservator to put the plans into action with volunteer teams. Most importantly, we received £314,000 from the ACE Museum Resilience Fund to acquire a suitable building for boat storage and to reinstate the dry dock at Ellesmere Port.



Mossdale in her new support cradle

More detail on all these projects and case studies of conservation approaches to individual boats to follow in further articles.

Margaret Harrison
Collections Manager



Boats that will be moved into storage for preservation, with *Mossdale's* new support cradle under construction in the background

Arts Council funding creates huge improvements in conservation of our boats

At both our Gloucester & Ellesmere Port museums we are starting to see the improvements we have needed in the conservation of our fleet of boats.

The first challenge was to find a new store capable of housing up to eighteen narrow boats plus racking for other large objects. The hangar we had found when we were applying for the grant was withdrawn from the market after we had secured the money so now we had to find somewhere in 6 months or risk losing the funding. The biggest issue was that we had to deliver, offload & manoeuvre the boats through, generally, a single access door into the storage area & if we found one with a large enough area there were roof supports in the way. After viewing what seemed like hundreds of warehouses we found the ideal store which had a single span building with access doors onto each bay plus a one acre yard at Rossfield Road, Ellesmere Port. The Trust's Property Team quickly secured a license so we could achieve the deadline to move the boats.

The priority was to move the rail wagons at Gloucester so that *Northwich* could be lifted out of the water & made into a static display down the side of the museum where the wagons had been. Before we could do this, we had to return *Bluebird* to its owner down in Gloucester & replace it with *Blue Belle* which was in the Island Warehouse at Ellesmere Port. Both boats were not on the ground floor & so they would have to leave the buildings at high level. To achieve this scaffold towers were erected so the boats could be skidded outside & lifted off using a lorry fitted with a Hiab crane [pictures inside back cover.] This was achieved over two days so we could now move *Northwich* plus lift *Wye*, *Oak* & the concrete narrow boat out of the water & transport them to our new store. A study of the boats was made both by Trust personnel & our specialist sub-contractor Commercial Boat Services on the safest method of lifting the boats. As the concrete boat



Boat lifting under way at Gloucester



After arrival at the new storage yard in Ellesmere Port

was made during the first World War we were concerned that the reinforcing within the concrete may not stand the stress of the lift so it was decided to put an underframe in place to support the hull during the lift.

On the 26th January, we put our plan into operation & at 7am the crane was ready to lift the concrete narrow boat at Gloucester museum onto the waiting semi low loader & by 8am it was on its way to Ellesmere Port. At 9.30am we were given the keys to our new store & at 11 am the crane was rigged ready to lift off the concrete narrow boat. This arrived at 12 noon followed by *Oak & Wye*. A team of volunteers sheeted the boats so they could stay in the yard to start drying out before they are moved indoors.

The PR team at Gloucester had done an excellent job with the BBC local radio & press giving the museum some great publicity.

Now the boats are in the yard we will be cleaning the hulls & superstructure and allowing them to start drying out before we move them inside the building. Once inside we will be scanning the crafts & taking detailed photographs so we can monitor their condition. We will also record the temperature & relative humidity of the air in the store.

In March, we will start to float the sunken boats in the top basin at Ellesmere Port so we can start lifting them out for conservation at our store later in the year. We will also be moving *Mossdale* to its new location in the boatyard.

Barry Green

Easter at the Port – 40 years on

40th Easter Boat Gathering at the Museum, 14th – 17th April 2017

Plans for Easter are well underway and the Museum staff and volunteers look forward to welcoming you to join in the celebrations and to help us create a great atmosphere that will be enjoyed by all.

The boat entry form is now available via canalrivertrust.org.uk/nwm (scroll down to the events section) or by telephoning the museum on 0151 355 5017.

We will soon be publishing a full programme but activity confirmed to date includes:

- ◆ At the BMS meeting on Friday evening, Graham Boxer, Head of Museums will welcome visitors to the Easter Gathering and following this, Tony Lewery will give a presentation on *Aspects of Horse Boating*. Tony is a superb speaker and has long been involved with encouraging horse boating. Sure to be a memorable evening.
- ◆ The meeting is in the Rolt Conference Centre at the museum, 7.30. There will be a bar, raffle and the opportunity to catch up with what is going on at the Museum at this busy time. All welcome.
- ◆ Musical entertainment with Phil Underwood in Concert, performances by Mick Ryan and Paul Downes, folk band 'Full House' plus other local folk bands and the Wirral Singers and Ringers.
- ◆ *Idle Women of the Wartime Waterways* performed by Heather Wastie & Kate Saffin.
- ◆ David Gibb, on a mission to create great music for children and families.
- ◆ Open music sessions in the Rolt Bar with other local and visiting folk musicians.
- ◆ Waterway family history research drop in sessions in the Waterways Archive.

In addition to the above, costumed interpreters will bring Porters Row and the Slipway to life, behind the scenes tours by our Young Curators and volunteers plus a whole host of family activity. Boat trips on *Centaur* and accessible boat *Over the Rainbow* will also be available.

Please keep up to date with activity online at canalrivertrust.org.uk/nwm but if you require any additional information please feel free to contact the museum on 0151 355 5017.

Michele Kozomara
Marketing & Communication Manager

A busy summer ahead...

Summer 2017 will bring us no less than four temporary exhibitions which are programmed to fill the Island Warehouse spaces. The first of these exhibitions will come from A-Level students at the Grange School, Northwich, who recently visited the museum and archive to take inspiration for their coursework pieces. The students will display their finished works which take the form of everything from wallpaper to cushions alongside the objects which inspired them. The exhibition will open on Saturday 1st April and run until Friday 5th May 2017. This exhibition is followed by three more and you can find more information about them below.

Water, Locks and Linocuts: Saturday 13th May 2017 – Sunday 9th July 2017

This exhibition brings together Eric Gaskell's linocuts, paintings and drawings that move through the figurative, detailed and patterned, to more abstract views of our canals, their structures and the water that flows through them.

Eric Gaskell has been making art for 36 years, he has art in public collections and has exhibited his work around the world.

You can view one of Eric's most recent pieces featuring the boat Gifford on YouTube <https://youtu.be/bDeSRtVtQwc>



Stilling the Flow: Saturday 3rd June 2017 – Sunday 2nd July 2017

As an artist and boater, Jim Cooke responds to the quiet mystery of the waterways. Through his photography he embraces the privilege of spending time reacting to the unique atmosphere and components of this man made landscape and showcases his fascination for the relationship between chaos and order evident in bankside vegetation, the surface flow and the timelessness of water.

Jim Cooke is a photographer with special interests in the relationship between natural and manmade landscape. He has exhibited works nationally and internationally as well as being represented in major international collections. He is a senior lecturer in Photography at the University of Brighton.

Changing Places: Friday 11th August 2017 – Sunday 17th September 2017

Changing Places is a touring programme of moving-image work by artists from India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, presented in collaboration with FVU: Film and Video Umbrella. The National Waterways Museum is one of ten venues across the country participating in this nationwide tour and will host work by Bani Abidi, Yasmin Jahan Nupur and Desire Machine Collective. The pairing of artworks and places in the programme aims to highlight the local, national and international significance of the venues, while showcasing parallel histories and trajectories from distant locations.



*Zofia Kufeldt
Collections Assistant*

The View from Planet Archive

Hello everyone and a belated Happy New Year! Some of our wonderful volunteers, along with Linda and myself, will be in attendance at *Who Do You Think You Are Live 2017*, to be held at Birmingham NEC from 6th–8th April. We'll have some new glossy family history leaflets to hand to people (13,000 of them at last year's event) along with new bookmarks and, of course, a helping hand genealogically speaking. We'll be subsequently doing our best to measure how many enquiries and visits we have as a result. Many thanks in advance to our volunteers who are making this possible.

Some of you will be aware that we recently concluded our initial series of *Archives in the Afternoon*. After a slowish start, attendance-wise, things really picked up and, while there are certainly things that we need to do differently, I think we can count the trial a success. There was a family history course, talks on the history of Ellesmere Port, a concert by renowned local guitarist Graham Bellinger, presentations on the Mersey Iron Works and Ellesmere Port Docks, talks on historic maps and old handwriting, among others. We'll be continuing these in some form, though possibly at a different time and day, and we'll keep you posted. We've also started a small series of events working with Astbury Lodge Care Home in Ellesmere Port, where we've been making new friends and meeting old ones. Among other things we've been showing archive film and photographs on which residents have been spotting their old headmasters and, on one occasion, their own daughter! One of the residents, Fred Challenor, is a long standing member of the Boat Museum Society and will, I'm sure, be known to some of you. We're doing or facilitating these sessions for an initial period of six months with a view to keeping them going if the residents want us to!

We're also supporting a new development at National Waterways Museum Gloucester, where there's now a small library resource. We're hopeful of installing some ITC in it too. This will be a valuable resource for local volunteers and staff. Either Linda or myself will be working there once a month and can use the time to tie up a few loose ends from the top floor where the archive used to reside, assist people using the new facility and 'connect up' a bit better the work of the archive here with the museum's work in Gloucester.

I've recently visited Canal & River Trust's (CRT) offices in both Fazeley and Hatton and am making arrangements to transfer historic records from both locations to Ellesmere Port. There's some very fine 18th century canal plans heading our way in the very near future. At Hatton I was invited to speak about the archives to a team meeting of 20 hydrologists! It reminded me not for the first time what a diverse organisation CRT is.

It's good to work with a collection that has so much potential for development.

John Benson
Archivist

The Christmas Grotto – the inside story

Every grotto starts with an idea, good, mad fanciful or interesting. This year was no different. After quite a bit of head scratching and visiting the local library, the idea of the baker plagued by elves emerged. Building on what has worked in the past few years, this year's story was a mix of grotto, panto and forgiveness – not a bad mix and a good theme for Christmas. Once again, Santa's Christmas preparations were to be hindered by the naughty but cheeky elves.

As in previous years, the Site Maintenance volunteers (Pete McOnie, Steve Sunley and Brian Spencer) rose to the occasion, constructing the grotto and interpreting the storyteller's ideas and sketches (does a scratchy drawing on a piece of A4 count as a technical specification?) so that the final grotto looked amazing. Don Readman supplied the cake over which the baker and the elves competed. The attached pictures illustrating the challenge that they undertook and successfully completed.



From this...



...to this

Sue and her crew went about the decoration of both the grotto area and the “old café” with gusto and soon created a welcoming and festive feel.



The trip boat and its veteran crew, was suitably decorated and operated a slightly different system this year. Setting off from the café but berthing alongside the Island warehouse. This worked well and provides the visitor with a slightly more interesting trip. Next time we could build on this with a few festive touches at the disembarking point

Bob the Baker, aided and abetted by the two “puppeteers” (Di and Cath) brought the set and story to life and once again the area resounded to screaming children all in best “panto” fashion urging the baker to turn around and spot the elf. The hidey-hole behind the elf picture, beautifully crafted by the construction team proved a great prop. Given the short preparation time, the puppeteers did a fantastic job.



As usual, Alan’s portrayal of Santa lived up to his high standards with yet more youngsters convinced they have met the “real Santa” and of course they have! Both on the boat and listening to his story, they were enthralled.

Chris and Jim kept the team supplied with all the usual consumables (pies, biscuits, milk and most importantly presents for the children) whilst the rest of the front of house staff kept up the festive feel from start to finish.

Despite the changes to the school Christmas holidays limiting the opportunity for many children, attendance was as high as usual, more than 800 revellers turning up. Considering the slight reduction in performance days and the late closure of schools before Christmas a great turnout. Next year we will need to establish exactly what is happening with Christmas holidays at all the school areas. Once again, we had our usual batch of past visitors some were “regulars” who have attendee over the past 5-6 years (and more).

What did our visitors think of our efforts? The feedback forms make great reading and make all the efforts worthwhile – “Yet another fabulous Christmas event,” “Looking forward to 2017 already,”

“As good as always,” “Better than ever” “Will be back next year” “the staff were fantastic and amazing,” “fantastic day for adults and kids,” “magic from start to finish. The children loved every minute.” etc etc. We even had an enquiry as to whether we could put on a “private performance” for a local football team. Maybe this is something we might think about adding to our “offer” if we can get the resources right.

Judging by this feedback we seem to be getting things about right.

So, looking ahead, we need to make sure that we salvage as much of the grotto as possible, together with the various Christmas decorations. We need to carry out a review to assess what worked and what we can do better – grottos are competitive and we need to hang on to our regulars, whilst attracting even more.

Finally, I am sure that I have missed out on naming all those who contributed to the event. Rest assured your efforts are really appreciated and I hope that you will all support future events with equal enthusiasm. As for next year, keep involved and if you would like to participate or help develop the story etc. make sure people know.

I understand that Chris Kay has produced a video of one of the performances and I look forward to seeing it soon.

Bob Thomas

Ellesmere Port before the Museum – Part 4 1971-1975

This final article deals with the period after the immediate threats to the line at Ellesmere Port had receded, in 1971, and 1975, when work was well under way to transform part of the site into the new Museum, but within a heavily modified landscape.

What became the Boat Museum embodied three major elements: historic boat preservation, site and collection development and voluntary involvement; as other contributions have pointed out about open-air museums, it was not entirely new in concept. While the background to industrial museums and historic boat preservation must await a separate essay, some points may be sketched. The Transport Trust, formed in 1965, aimed to establish “living museums” for all forms of transport. Boat preservation tended to accompany declining numbers of working craft: hence the Thames Barge Sailing Club in 1948, Norfolk Wherry Trust from 1949, and the first Thames Sailing Barge Trust (1952), as wherries and sailing barges ended commercial operations in the 1960s and earlier. These initiatives sought to acquire and operate historic boats, and conserve skills.

Other organisations extended their scope into historic locations and buildings, such as The Dolphin Sailing Barge Museum Trust, which from 1968 had included the preservation of Burley’s Yard at Sittingbourne in Kent. The Exeter Maritime Museum, conceived in 1962, was based from 1965 in some of the Exeter Canal basin warehouses; after various seagoing craft were acquired, it opened in 1969. Other projects had boats as an adjunct, such as the Cheddleton Flint Mill Preservation Trust, formed in 1967, after the Caldon Canal reopened in 1974 the preserved narrow boat Vienna (acquired and restored in 1972) was moored there.

What is now the Canal Museum at Stoke Bruerne had been formally established at Easter 1963, although it used collections and items from both engineer Charles Hadlow (who became curator until 1969) and Jack James, local lock-keeper since 1947. An early exhibit, in the dry, was the FMC horse boat *Northwich*.

The use of commercial narrow boats was declining steeply in the 1960s, and, while many hulls were being converted for pleasure use, some enthusiasts began to acquire historic craft out of interest. The formation of the Narrow Boat Owners Club (now Historic Narrow Boat Club) followed difficulties in navigating waterways, especially getting from the Marple Rally in 1966, but this would foster private preservation. The continuing commercial use of narrow boats, albeit under enthusiast operation, was encouraged by the Narrow Boat Trust from 1970. It is difficult to determine exactly which was the first narrow boat to be specially preserved, but the action not to break up *Gifford* in 1965-6 must provide one landmark in the preservation of narrow boats.

This presented elements of the present museum at the Port – boats, site and collections, and enthusiasm. A further element was the use of volunteers – and indeed its initial establishment entirely by voluntary effort. Voluntary manual work on waterways restoration or maintenance had begun in 1949, but later some voluntary work on British canals concerned features that did not involve the restoration of navigation. The Crofton and Claverton pumps, that pumped water into the Kennet & Avon Canal, were perhaps early examples. Restoration of both began in 1968, but while this Canal was to reopen in

any event, the Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust, established in 1968, acquired a length of the long-closed Shropshire Canal, with no intention to restore navigation. Work assisted by voluntary effort began in 1969, with the upper level and Hay inclined plane cleared and re-railed by 1972. In the same year a tub boat, found in use as a farm water tank, was launched after renovation.

While the formal inaugural meeting of the North Western Museum of Inland Navigation was held on October 8 1971, it was not then envisaged that the growing boat collection would be sited at Ellesmere Port. The site at Preston Brook would have included some historic canal buildings, but the later proposal for Anderton would have involved a wholly new basin and buildings.

By mid-1971, while the surviving structures and basins at Ellesmere Port were not threatened by development, they continued to decay. A joint sub-committee of the IWA North-West Branch and the Shropshire Union Canal Society suggested some improvements to the surroundings. In 1971 demolitions had begun prior to motorway construction; these probably included the Canal Tavern, in the way of the roundabout and a new bridge. Presumably the rest of the small local boats, usually moored by the pub, moved out to the linear moorings at Croughton, at this time.

At Easter 1972, an SUCS visitor noted that the narrow locks were choked with rubbish, and while the wide locks were in better order, the intermediate pound was completely empty. A working party was then suggested, but it seems that no work was carried out between the clearance for the 1970 Rally and the first Museum working party in December 1974. In 1973, it was noted that the narrow locks might be abandoned, while a *Waterways World* article asserted that the Port offered “a sad ending to an inland voyage”.

Early in 1974, BW took over maintenance of the locks at Ellesmere Port from the Ship Canal Company; these were restored by the summer. *Waterways News* of October 1974 commented that “it is hoped that craft will avail themselves of the facility more and more...Perhaps the proposed North Western Museum of Inland Navigation will provide an added attraction.” However, vandalism meant that the paddles were locked up, and passages required prior notice. The renovation of the site for the new museum appears to have been a separate initiative; this followed Adrian Jarvis’ meeting with Peter Jones of the newly formed Ellesmere Port and Neston Council in spring 1974, from which agreement was reached for the use of part of the Ellesmere Port site for the new museum.

By 1974 the building of the M531 motorway was well under way. This included a conversion of the earlier Hooton Industrial Road to a motorway, and the careful threading of a new section through to the new crossing south of Powell’s Bridge; neither met the highest of motorway standards. In the process, the west side of Dock Street and Victoria Park disappeared, and levels on Dock Street itself were realigned. Photographs of the area before the demolitions show how much the area was transformed, albeit with retention of the basins and some associated buildings. The motorway opened in June 1975, by which time work on the Museum site was proceeding towards the stage of formal opening.

The canal line to Chester remained difficult to navigate, and weedy in summer. This was shown by Alan Jones’ trip at Easter 1975 in *Clematis*. Unusually, this used an historic boat to carry building materials (reclaimed slates and timber from a warehouse) from

Preston Brook for reuse at Ellesmere Port. This material was loaded onto *Clematis* in February; a Bridgewater Canal butty (*MSC (BD) MB No 7*) was loaded later, loaned by Alfred Hayman, Bridgewater Department manager and a Museum supporter. Further material was loaded to the deck of *Gifford*. The Manchester Grammar School Scout group then helped to move these craft to the Port over the Easter weekend.

On April 1st, after the Bridgewater butty proved too wide for Stanthorne lock on the Middlewich Branch, its sides had to be pulled in three inches using a chain and two turnbuckles. The following day Ellesmere Port was approached in the dark; work was going on under floodlights at a new motorway bridge, behind a deep piled trench. From the A5117 northwards *Clematis* hit obstructions on the bottom all the way, running aground at Powell's Bridge. Here Alan Jones took "one of P Brook warehouse spars from the butty, uses grot on bottom of canal as a fulcrum and levers *Clematis* off into clearer water under bridge." The next morning was spent unloading the cargoes of both boats into the Island Warehouse. In the afternoon, BWB workers, seeing a Ship Canal boat near Chester, reported the apparent theft to the local police; once the position was explained, their response was to "roar with guffaws"!

This seems a suitable place to conclude this account, with a restored Thomas Clayton oil boat returning to the Port, albeit as a Museum exhibit, but being used to carry reclaimed materials from another historic canal-based location. The canal landscape at Ellesmere Port had changed greatly, with historic buildings destroyed and new embanked sections of motorway and bridges replacing a flat landscape with many buildings from the historic town. Conservation of remaining structures, among the devastation created by new construction, was beginning, but much lay in the future.

Despite four articles, there remains much that is unexplained, much of it through details that are probably long-lost. I would list the following areas for queries:

Pleasure boating: much remains unclear about the use of the canal between the end of the oil traffic in 1955 and the first threats to the line in 1966. This includes the establishment of small local pleasure boats (whose inception is uncertain), their use (did many travel any distance?), when they began to moor at Croughton and when they first moved out. The fate of the Wirral Cruising Club remains unclear. There must have been other passages of the locks and trips on the canal to Chester; reports are patchy.

The use of the port area at Ellesmere Port between 1955 and 1974 (and indeed before 1955 for parts used for non-canal purposes). This is all very uncertain, although there seems to have been informal use of various areas. An early BW (pre-BWB) guide shows the Toll House as a British Waterways office, and it would be good to know when this was abandoned.

The precise details of the campaign against the motorway and container terminal threats need further details. I am investigating "Swalwell's Scheme" whereby pleasure boat movements here and elsewhere were recorded, but I have also been informed that Mr Swalwell and his partner resigned from the North West IWA Committee over what they saw as capitulation by Stanley Offley. There may be files, over the motorway scheme and site clearance, that could shed further light – the National Archives presents one possibility. It is possible that there was provision to drop down under the motorway by a lock,

through an underpass, and subsequently to the Ship Canal.

I would be very interested in any insights or information over this four-part history. I am placing these articles, and updated versions, on my website at <https://josephboughey.wordpress.com/the-canal-at-ellesmere-port>

Joseph Boughey

Situation Vacant

W*aterways Journal*, the annual research publication which has been published by BMS since 1999 reaches its 19th edition this year.

Tony Burnip edited *Waterways Journal* from its inception in 1999 and established it as a well respected publication. The initial objective of the Journal was to give a wider audience for the many thousands of images, documents, books, periodicals and other material held in the what was then the David Owen Archive. The archive has since been expanded with the addition of the British Waterways archive collection to form the Waterways Archive, run by the Canal & River Trust.

Waterways Journal has also provided a vehicle for researchers into Inland Waterways matters to publish their work and make it accessible to a wide audience. This Tony did admirably and was a hard act to follow when I took over the editorship with Volume 11.

Since Volume 1, Mike Clarke has done much more than the layout and organise the printing of the Journal. He makes sure that the images we use are of a high standard and regularly adds some from his own collection. Mike has also been a regular contributor of articles for the Journal and compiles a comprehensive index to each volume.

Mike's skill and meticulous approach as well as his wise counsel has been a great support to me over the last 9 years, but he now feels that it is time to pass the task on. 19 years is long enough for anyone in a job like this.

Hence – Situation Vacant!

The most important skill needed is a mastery of desktop publishing and also an interest in waterways history, although this isn't essential. Mike has said that he will willingly guide his successor through the process he has used to produce *WJ* so consistently well. Mike will be doing the layout etc for Volume 19 which is due out at Easter 2017, but it would be good to have someone learning the ropes well in time for Volume 20, next spring.

If you are interested in taking on this task and would like to find out more, please do get in touch with me, Cath Turpin the editor of *Waterways Journal*. cathturpin@onetel.com Tel 0151 632 5446.

Notes on the Pattern Shop

The 'List' states a date of 1880 which means the Pattern Shop was built some time after the completion of the dock expansion works and the completion of the narrow locks (approximately 1844). The late date puts the building into the same time period as the buildings alongside the slipway, built in anticipation of the coming of the Ship Canal.

The split-level nature of the building, and its awkward positioning against the narrow locks embankment suggests that they needed the higher access to the lock side and the double doors suggests that large items had to be moved in and out. Perhaps the specialist casting sand came in by narrowboat.

All this suggests that the joiners who made the patterns worked at the higher level where there were windows providing natural daylight, and that the lower level room was used for other purposes, perhaps for horses or for storing materials.

The iron-framed windows confirm that the building was of a late date, early buildings on the site have wooden windows, whereas iron framed windows didn't become popular until after they were shown at the 1851 Great Exhibition.

To the right of the door at the lower level, the corner brickwork has been built rounded rather than square suggesting that circulation past that corner must have been very tight at the time it was built. Again, it may have given extra room for horses to prevent them grazing their flanks on corner brickwork.

Prior to the restoration of the fire damaged building in the early 1980s, there was no sign on the upper floor of any equipment for pattern making, such as belt-driven lathes, or even joiners' benches. Perhaps pattern-making didn't last there very long and the upper floor was used for general purposes, and the lower floor as a stable.

Pattern-making was a specialist job for joiners who had to make their wooden patterns slightly oversized in three dimensions to allow for the fact that cast iron shrinks as it cools. Having made the slightly oversize wooden pattern, for, say, a cog or wheel, the pattern would be pressed into the fine black casting sand and then lifted out to leave an impression. The casting box would then be closed and taken to the Foundry where molten iron would be let into the box via a small hole to fill the impression in the box.



The fire-damaged Pattern Shop before restoration

When cooled, the casting box would be 'struck' (opened) and the sand removed to reveal the cast item to the correct size required.

The joiners had special rulers, which had oversized measurements in inches marked on them that allowed for the shrinkage. It is said that many of these rulers were taken away by local children during the 1960s



The Pattern Shop today

when the Canal Port lay derelict. They would, however, have found that the rulers were useless for normal purposes as the measurements were not correct for any other use!

After the Pattern Shop had been restored, an exhibition on the History of Ellesmere Port was installed in the first floor. This was removed in about 2012, due in part to the fact that the area isn't wheel chair accessible. It now houses an office used for admin work, the 'Volunteer Hub'. A new History of Ellesmere Port exhibition is now in the Island Warehouse. For a number of years, the ground floor was used as a volunteer run café and raised much of the money needed for the restoration of *Gifford*. It is now used by the Site Maintenance team for the storage of their equipment.

Norman Stainthorp



The two-storey rear elevation of the building

BMS Meeting January 2017

The first meeting of the New Year was given over to talks by four members and some film.

Derek Speakman started the proceedings with memories of his time working as a surveyor on the Manchester Ship Canal. He showed us pictures of early cranes working on the canal. The Titan was built in 1900 and was specifically designed to lift lock gates. This was necessary because there were accidents when ships hit and damaged the gates which then had to be replaced. The Titan worked until 1930 when she was scrapped. She was replaced with a 250 ton floating crane, no powerful name was used! Several other vessels were fitted with cranes in order to work around the docks and the Canal. Two of these former crane barges are lurking in the Lower Basin – *Cedar*, a flat built pre-1878 and another floating platform, the *Cathead*. Derek's talk was accompanied by some superb archive pictures which gave us a glimpse into working craft and the complex jobs they undertook.

Ailsa Rutherford told us the incredible story of the Sutcliffe sounding wheel. Two of these objects were found on a high shelf in the small objects store. There were no manufacturers marks but it was rumoured that it had been used in the construction of the Queen Elizabeth 2nd dock at Eastham. Ailsa got Derek Speakman to look at it and he advised contact with MSC hydrographers. Ailsa got a reply from MSC archives who confirmed it was a Sutcliffe Sounding Wheel invented by Fielden Sutcliffe who was born in Ireland in 1844. Sutcliffe had worked for the Mersey Docks and Harbour Board. Ailsa had contacted the Society of Hydrographers to find more information and in so doing they had sent the information on the wheel world-wide. As a result of this Sutcliffe who was unknown, is now known world-wide. This has occurred as a result of careful and thorough research, an activity which goes on daily in the Archives.

Joseph Boughy shared with us his interest in the development of pleasure boating on the canals. He pointed out that pleasure boating on non- tidal rivers, and lakes had occurred for a while and the image was the wealthy gentleman with his steam launch operated by members of his staff. Christopher Davies popularised pleasure boating on the Norfolk Broads although he had started his pleasure boating in the Netherlands where rates were cheaper. Christopher was a keen photographer and was interested in working boats, he took pictures of 'peasant girls' presumably boat women!!

Norman Stainthorp told us about the Ellesmere Port Tramway which ran from Ellesmere Port station down to the docks. The tram waggons were drawn by cart horses and much of the traffic was coal which was tipped into the boats from the waggons. Some of the tipping methods were from the side or end of the waggons. In other areas coal chutes were used, e.g. Aire and Calder.

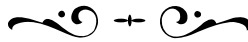
In 1920 steam locomotives were used so the tramway ceased operation. However, signs of the tramway still exist near Leigh's the stationers where setts have been exposed. The street name near Leigh's shows it was once part of Station Road before the road system was re-aligned. In the lower basin the raised bricks show the route of the railway and also indicates the position of the turntable. Norman treated us to some of his drawings

which showed how the railway wound its way through the dock complex. Some of these railways still exist and until recently were used as part of the coal traffic to Fiddlers Ferry power station. The only sign of the loading bay is three bollards on the quayside below Porters Row. This was a fascinating talk and should make us all more observant as so much history still lies under our feet.

The evening finished with a film showing *Radiant* towing *Gifford* and *Merak* up to Chester dry dock. It illustrated the challenge of towing two boats and attempting to keep them in line. Mike Turpin was working hard to get everyone towing the line!!

This was a fascinating evening and should make us aware of the knowledge, expertise and speaking ability within our own ranks. A great deal of research had gone into this evening and was much appreciated by the audience.

Di Skilbeck MBE



Joint meeting

Association of British Transport & Engineering Museums (ABTEM) and the Canal & River Trust (CRT)

On the 7th December, CRT and the Museum hosted a joint event about the sustainability and conservation of large objects. Such objects in collections present all organisations with major challenges in terms of their long-term sustainability particular when they are used and in an aggressive environment.

All in the same boat: sustainable large object collections

The meeting was advertised as “The day will be of interest to anyone facing challenges of managing large and working objects. It will look at approaches to conservation and how to decide which route to take. It will also be applicable to anyone who has to deal with approaches to reviewing and rationalising collections that have become unsustainable.”

Using the Canal & River Trust boat collection as a case study the day will focus on the realities and challenges of managing large object collections for the long term. Caring for large, industrial and operational objects in museum collections presents unique challenges and none more than boats in water. According to the MGC Standards in the Care of Larger and Working Objects:

“The care of boats, particularly of those afloat, can be more difficult than the care of any other larger object.”

The day will look at how the museum started to tackle this situation by carrying out a collections review to identify the future options for every boat. There will be case studies of different conservation approaches to managing large working objects and writing conservation management plans.

The event attracted a lot of support with participants from all over the country and this contributed to some very good discussions and inputs during the day.

To set the scene Margaret Harrison and Mike Turpin took the participants, in two groups, for a tour to highlight both the fantastic site we have at the Museum, and particularly to point out the different challenges facing us with craft both in and out of the water, and seeing first-hand the range of different solutions and the major challenge of the sunken boats.

Of course, a major focus were the challenges faced by the Museum in facing up to the difficult decisions, long ignored, that face the boat collection. Margaret Harrison as Canal & River Trust Head of Collections introduced the situation where CRT Museums faced a situation of rapidly and actively deteriorating boats and urgently needed a sustainable plan for the future of the collection. Clearly a major review was required and the Museum was able to get funding support from the Esme Fairburn Collections Fund to involve Emma Chaplin and Rachel Mulhearn as independent consultants to the National Waterways Museum and its team of staff and volunteers

Emma and Rachel spoke about the Collections Review, methodology and outcomes of the boat collection review. They took specific examples as case studies to show the range of options that are available, all of which are being pursued in the way forward and the recommendations to CRT Trustees and Management.

George Monger, who has also been working with us, extended the scope with examples from other collections and spoke further about the need for specific conservation management plans for every craft that goes into specific details based on their individual significance and specific situation for each craft. This is a process we are actively working on at present. He also spoke about the conservation approaches when an operational solution has been chosen.

The importance of Statements of Significance was highlighted as part of both Museum methodology as well as the specifics for vessels using the specifics of the National Historic Ships Guidelines These have been completed for every boat in the Collection.

All the participants face similar difficult decisions in facing challenges and welcomed the opportunity to share experiences and the best range of approaches in making decisions for the long term benefit of large object collections.

There was a brief item on the important proposals to update the national “Standards in the Care of Larger & Working Objects.” Rob Shorland-Ball, who was at the meeting, was intimately involved with the production of the first version in 1994. He was also involved extensively with the Museum here at Ellesmere Port before the Waterways Trust took over in 1999. We look forward to this update and to contributing to it.

STOP PRESS: Following a further successful bid to Arts Council England, ABTEM has been awarded a grant to update and revise these standards. It is hoped that the new guidelines will be available at the end of 2017.

Finally, Meredith Greiling, Curator for Windermere Jetty gave a very good summary of the similar challenges faced by the boat collection on Lake Windermere. Entitled “One Size Does Not Fit All”, she showed in practical terms how a varied approach to boat conservation was being taken. They are further on in their decision making and working

now on the practical aspects of implementation. This was encouraging to see that we are not alone.

In the final round-up it was clear that participants had found the day useful and recognised the value of speakers describing the challenges faced, the approaches used and the decisions being made in an open and constructive way. Overall this was a useful and practical meeting and for us it was good to show how we are facing up to our responsibilities and that we are not alone in the difficult choices we are making.,

Organising and hosting this seminar continues to the increase reputation of the Museum in the wider community. Specifically, this will help with the continued support we need to get from external funding organisations as well as CRT as we move towards a more sustainable future.

References:

ABTEM: abtem.co.uk

Standards: <http://collectionstrust.org.uk/resource/larger-working-objects-a-guide-to-standards-in-their-preservation-and-care/>

National Historic Ships: Guide to Statements of Significance for Vessels <http://www.national-historicships.org.uk/pages/statements-of-significance.html>

Postscript:

As a follow up to this meeting and other contacts, members of the Collection / Boat Care team will be visiting Windermere in March. In addition, we will be running a small project to start using 3D photogrammetry to produce 3D models of boats. Initially focussing on two craft we hope to build up in house expertise to carry out more with our own people and resources. Of course, such techniques as with the 3D laser recording used for *Mossdale* and *George* need to be supplemented by specialist expert knowledge of boat construction details. Ways of doing this again with input of external specialists are being pursued. This will be reported in the next newsletter

Mike Turpin

Membership Matters

We would like to welcome Norman Johnstone as a new volunteer who has become a BMS member.

Barbara Kay

Daniel Adamson in steam again

A full programme of cruises has been organised by the Daniel Adamson Preservation Society following its restoration. For further details and to book, visit the Daniel Adamson web site, www.thedanny.co.uk

Easter weekend 14th–16th April	Daniel Adamson mini cruises (90 minutes) on Manchester Ship Canal – at 10.30am and 1pm from Ellesmere Port
April 22nd & June 21st	Daniel Adamson – Manchester Ship Canal cruise – Ellesmere Port to Salford Quays
April 23rd & June 22nd	Daniel Adamson – Manchester Ship Canal cruise – Salford Quays to Ellesmere Port
May 12th & June 16th	Daniel Adamson – River Weaver cruise – Ellesmere Port to Anderton Boat Lift
May 15th & June 19th	Daniel Adamson – River Weaver cruise – Anderton Boat Lift to Ellesmere Port

Have you joined the Boat Museum Society 200 Club yet?

Members of the club ensure a significant and steady income for boat restoration projects. Each month 50% of total money subscribed is paid out in prize money and 50% goes into boat restoration. By joining the **200 Club**, members who live too far away from the Museum to be able to come and help, or those who have other commitments, have the opportunity to make a regular contribution to the Society.

You can buy as many numbers as you like at £1 each, the only proviso being that you are a member of the Society. The more numbers that go into the draw each month, the bigger the prizes.

The **200 Club** draw is usually made at the monthly Society meetings. You can join at a meeting, or by completing the form below and sending it with your membership fee to Lynn Potts, whose address is below.

Winners

December Cynthia Green(49), Sue James(44), Jeff Fairweather(56)
January Brenda Wilson(34), Jan Burnip(68), Dennis Bushell(37)
February Alan Jones(31), Dennis Bushel(37), Mike Constable(04)

Many thanks to those who have so generously donated their winnings back to the Society, this is much appreciated.

Application form - The Boat Museum Society 200 Club



Name:

Address:

.....

Post Code: Telephone:

I apply for membership of the Boat Museum Society 200 Club and agree to pay the sum of £1.00 per month per number. Subscriptions are payable in advance for the months up to and including June or December. I am over 18 years of age and a paid-up member of the Boat Museum Society.

Signed:..... Date:

Please send the completed form with your payment to:
 Lynn Potts, 58 Frankby Road, West Kirby, Wirral. CH48 6EF
 Cheques should be made payable to the 'Boat Museum Society'.

Blue Belle is gently extracted from the upper floor of the Island Warehouse before setting off on its journey to Gloucester. See page 17





2017 Easter Boat Gathering 14 to 17 April

Come and celebrate the 40th Easter Boat Gathering at the museum.

Full programme of activities and entertainment will be published on canalrivertrust.org.uk/nwm shortly.



Show your support

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Become a Friend

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Charity number 1146792.



Canal &
River Trust