

REPORT



BMS
BOAT MUSEUM SOCIETY



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

**Number 217
June 2017**

THE BOAT MUSEUM SOCIETY

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

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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

July

9 Sun NWM *Bikes and Boats Festival* – a bike parade will start at the Civic Square in Ellesmere Port, at about 10am and finish at the Museum where there will be free entry and lots of activities. Do come and join the parade – with your decorated bike. Lots of help will be needed at the Museum. See the NWM web site for updated details.

August

11 Fri NWM *Changing Places, Film and Video Umbrella* – an exhibition of moving images in the Island Warehouse (to 17 September)

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. Bring lots of friends and family.

Throughout the summer

Chalice Media are looking at doing a promenade/site-wide theatre production of "What the Dickens" and a "Wonders of the Musicals" production – these events and dates are to be confirmed so watch the Museum's website and posters round the Museum.

There will also be some children's activities running over the summer – details to be finalised – watch the museum's web page.

Sept

15 Fri BMS *Hospital Barges in Northern France during WW1*. David Long wrote a superb article on this subject in *Waterways Journal Volume 18* and will be elaborating on this at the first BMS meeting of the 2017/2018 season.

19 Tue EPL&FHS *Sex, Sin and Probate*. John Benson, archivist at the NWM will give a talk at this first EPL&FHS meeting of the 2017/2018 season. Sounds interesting!!

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

The days and months since my last report have simply flown by. It is a bit of a challenge sometimes writing my quarterly report particularly in trying to keep a fair balance between current day to day issues and never forgetting the efforts of our longstanding members over the past decades. It is difficult to judge if the members who are not actively involved on a day to day basis at the Museum are happy with the direction the Society is taking and how you all feel reading of the increasing activities and improvements that have taken place. Movement of the boats into storage, the Easter Gathering, improvements to the restaurant and shop, the continued work on the slipway and the planning for other events and exhibitions during the summer and throughout the year have certainly kept staff and volunteers very busy.

Our Easter Gathering and its associated activities are there to let our visitors experience the history of the boats and heritage of the buildings in a positive way, involve them in the activities and hopefully give them an opportunity to develop an interest in the museum at the same time as having a musical weekend that is enjoyed by one and all. The Daniel Adamson was moored alongside, the sun shone, the site was packed with visitors, the atmosphere was warm and friendly and the whole site was buzzing with activity and fun. A high spot of the event was the 'launching' of *George* by our local MP Justin Madders. What a credit to all, the staff, the volunteers and of course the organising team and committee. Thank you.

To be a forward-looking society I believe the basis of our future plans has to build on our strengths and they are many. As I mentioned in my last report BMS is facing some serious challenges and it is always difficult to forecast the future. The best future for the society obviously lies with a continued successful relationship with the Museum and CRT. The committee continues to work with and support Graham Boxer and his team to map out ways that we can bring the vision for the future to life. There are many suggestions but our most strenuous efforts, I suspect, will revolve around the vast amount of experience and knowledge that our membership have to offer from a wide range of skills. As I reported in the last edition of RE:PORT the Society very shortly will be undergoing a full and comprehensive review of our aims and ambitions so now is the time for you, the membership, to put forward any constructive suggestions, ideas, opinions and yes criticisms you may have as to how we take the society forward for the next forty years. WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU.

Thank you

Jeff Fairweather

Boat Collection strategy update

The review of the boat collection funded by the Esmée Fairbairn Collections Fund was the first stage in establishing the strategy for dealing with the very urgent of issue of caring for the collection of historic boats across all three Canal & River Trust museums. This piece of work has allowed us to develop a long term and sustainable plan for the care of the collection and identify the conservation pathway for each vessel. It has enabled us to set short term priorities and successfully fundraise for the longer-term outcomes.

Preventive conservation and boat storage

The museum has never had any capacity to store boats or care for them by preventive conservation. In July 2016, we were successful in securing £314,000 from ACE for a £348,000 project to secure the future preservation of the boat collection. This is funding the lease of a storage building in Ellesmere Port and the lifting and moving of priority boats into store. It will also enable the reinstatement of the large dry dock in Ellesmere Port.

Progress so far has included the lifting and moving of four boats from Gloucester to the store (*Wye*, *Oak*, concrete narrow boat and *Marple*) and moving narrowboat, *Northwich*, to the quayside for display. In March the lease on a storage building was agreed and two boats from the boatyard at Ellesmere Port (*Phoebe* and *Ferret*) including *Lady Fiona*, have all been moved to the yard at Rossfield Road.

Moving the boats from Ellesmere Port is more complicated. Many of these have been partially sunk for some time and the first step is to make sure they can be floated. The collections technical staff and volunteers have been working on this and most have been floated for at least a short period. Two, *Scorpio* and *Merope*, are proving difficult. We are currently working on alternative strategy for floating these working with an experienced boat surveyor.



When all the boats have been successfully floated, we will be able to set a date to move them. The intention is that this will be in July or August.

The ACE funded project includes moving *Mossdale* into the boatyard where she can be displayed more prominently and appropriately. Regular monitoring of *Mossdale* already takes place but we are also working on further stabilisation prior to this move. We are looking at a non-intrusive way of securing moving planks and have installed additional metal supports.

The new caisson for the dry dock is expected to be completed in June.

Much of the match funding for the project is being provided by the time of our volunteer Project Manager, Barry Green. Barry's role has been critical and without his involvement it wouldn't have happened. Barry's involvement as Project Manager has enabled us to undertake this project within the available budget his volunteer time to date has already added a value of over £13,000.

Operational boats

One of the major recommendations of the boat review was to produce conservation management plans for all boats in the collection. This is particularly important for operational boats and we have prioritised two of these, *Sculptor* (at Stoke Bruerne) and *Dredger SND4* (at Gloucester) to develop plans. In 2016 Museum Development East Midlands supported us in working with George Monger to develop a conservation management plan for *Sculptor*. In January 2017, we successfully applied to the Association of Independent Museums Conservation grants for funding to enable *George* to continue working with the volunteer teams on both boats.

At the end of 2016 we also worked with *George* to start to train volunteers in writing conservation management plans. Many of our volunteers have considerable experience of looking after historic boats and were keen to understand conservation principles. As a result of this work one of our volunteers, Stuart Gardiner, has produced a conservation management plan for *Basuto* and we have recruited new volunteers to work on this. We have commissioned a survey of *Ilkeston* and will now be working on a conservation management plan.



Boat display and interpretation

The second part of the Esmée Fairbairn Collections Fund project was to use new technologies to interpret the boat collection and provide access to boats that were being moved into store. We have appointed Jam Digital to work on this project and are developing an interactive touch wall to feature six boats from the collection. Five of these will be in store and one will be deconstructed.

The wall will be a giant touch screen where visitors can trigger animations, audio, play games or explore an interactive 3D space. The interiors of *Ferret* and *Morna* will be recreated to allow visitors to virtually explore. To incorporate more interactivity, we will use a combination of projection and depth sensing camera to bring an ice breaker to life. Visitors will be able to see themselves on *Marbury* and rock it to break the ice. *Oak*, *Merak* and *Merope* will be brought to life through animations, characters in photographs coming to life, documents opening and a game allowing exploration of boat form and function.

Sharing best practice

An important ongoing part of the boat strategy is to work with other museums, inland waterways organisations and enthusiasts to share best practice in museum collection care.

We consulted widely on the proposals in the boat review, holding briefings with staff and volunteers at the museums, representatives of the Museum Friends' organisations, the CRT historic boat advisory group which includes representatives of the Historic Narrow Boat Owners Club, expert organisations such as National Historic Ships and ACE and museums with similar collections. In December 2016, we held an event in partnership with ABTEM to disseminate the results of our collections review.

We are continuing to share our plans widely. At the Easter Historic Boat Gathering at Ellesmere Port we provided an update to the boaters and are currently working with the Black Country Living Museum to re-establish the Inland Waterways Heritage Network.

Margaret Harrison



Easter 2017

The Easter Gathering this year was the 40th at the Museum – and it was a good one! Our Easter always starts when we visit Chester Basin on the Thursday to distribute info packs to the boats gathered there and to get a good idea of the numbers of boats to expect. More than we expected this year, especially as the official Easter event of the Historic Narrow Boat Owners Club (HNBC) was in the midlands. A real chance to meet up with old friends.

Narrow boats were arriving at the Museum from lunch time onwards on Good Friday. *Kennet*, the Leeds & Liverpool Canal Society's short boat was already moored in the top wide lock and open to the public. By the end of the afternoon the top basin was full, as well as the pound between the wide locks. Other boats locked down to the lower basin, providing activity for visitors. Saturn arrived, towed by the newly restored Mersey Weaver motor, *Dane* – a fantastic sight and fine boatmanship with Andy Cox at the helm, showing how it should be done. Our boat team catered well with the demands and queries thrown at them as usual and Nigel Carpenter led from the front with humour and enthusiasm ... except on both of the occasions when the pontoon bridge was opened, so too did the heavens and the team got soaked both times.

The Good Friday BMS meeting was superb. After a welcome from Graham Boxer, Tony Lewery had his audience in the palm of his hand, giving a presentation on 'Aspects of Horse boating' to a packed theatre. As Di Ascott said afterwards "Well, it was Tony Lewery"! Graham stayed to the very end and was on site every day getting feedback and



comments from everyone. As usual, the raffle was well supported and volume 19 of Waterways Journal was launched.

On the Saturday, Richard Parry and Ian Rogers were at the museum to celebrate the launch of *George* by Ellesmere Port MP, Justin Madders. By the time you read this, the boat should be on its educational travels on the Leeds & Liverpool Canal.

Great publicity included a great spot on Look Northwest on BBC1 at exactly the right time. The Press Association circulated some wonderful images and a video taken by their drone of boats arriving, showing the value of high profile marketing. Over the weekend there were over 2,000 visitors and income in the café & shop was up 19% on last year.

The weather behaved itself for virtually the whole weekend. No gales or snow this year! The newly refurbished café was glad of the volunteers clearing tables & washing up. The car park just about coped, once again keeping BMS volunteers busy. The archive was open all weekend, with talks, discussions and films on Saturday and Sunday. *Gifford* was open to the public all weekend and *Daniel Adamson* was giving twice daily 90 minute cruises from the South Quay on the Manchester Ship Canal.

The historic boaters and HNBC members were all very impressed by the efforts made by the planning team and all the staff and volunteers. As Sue Cawson of HNBC and *Saturn* said, "The week-end went really well and the boaters have all said that they have enjoyed this gathering definitely better than last year. There was a really nice buzz about the museum".

The 'behind the scenes' events, especially the Young Curators' tours of the small objects store and the Lime Shed were well attended and extremely well received. What impressed most people was all the work going on and how this was all clearly showing how the Museum and CRT were tackling the major problems of the past with a well thought out vision for the future and with projects working towards that. It was good to see the Power hall operating. Hopefully, later in the year both this and the Pumphouse will be back in steam. The BMS craft group demonstrated their skills in the Island Warehouse each day.

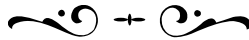
As part of the Easter Gathering we ran a programme of musical entertainment on the Saturday and Sunday, mainly in the Rolt Centre and the Island Warehouse. David Gibb, a young performer from Derbyshire, did sterling service entertaining young people and their families in the Island Warehouse activity room, and was especially pleased that previous attendees to his workshops elsewhere arrived at Ellesmere Port wearing their David Gibb T-shirts! For folk music devotees and other passing visitors, we ran informal sessions during the two lunchtimes in the Rolt Bar. If you've never listened to a folk session, it's an opportunity for local musicians to perform individually and together in a very informal setting with a modest amount of alcoholic lubrication! Both days were well attended with good contingents from two of the local Folk Clubs, the Hungry Horse Acoustic Club (weekly on Thursdays at the Whitby Club) and the Raven Folk Club (weekly on Sundays at the Bear & Billet, Chester). The Hungry Horse ran a folk club concert in the Rolt theatre on Saturday afternoon, and in the evening local 6-piece band Full House (who include Collections volunteer Dave Russell) supported the excellent Mick Ryan and Paul Downes. Mick is one of the finest singers to have emerged from the UK folk scene

and writes erudite and moving songs in a traditional style. Paul is simply one of the best acoustic guitarists and arrangers of songs you're ever likely to encounter. A grand evening was enjoyed by an audience of boaters, volunteers and local folk enthusiasts. Also with us over the weekend was Phil Underwood, a singer and musician who is rooted in the folk and Cajun music scenes and who has written a suite of canal songs, steeped in the musical traditions of the waterways. Phil busked around the site, joined us at the lunchtime sessions, and performed his own excellent concert in the Rolt theatre on the Sunday afternoon. These music sessions went down very well, as did Heather Wastie & Kate Saffin's performance of 'Idle Women of the Wartime waterways.'

On Sunday afternoon Jackie Robertson presented a musical tots workshop for parents and children from 5-95! The children made simple musical instruments, decorated and played them. There was much attendant song, dance, fun and, of course, noise!

A Great Easter – planning has already started for 2018, when the HNBC will be making it their Easter event!

Mike & Cath Turpin & Dave Russell



Arts Council funding for Resilience Project

Update on our progress

Although it may appear that there has been little progress since we moved the Gloucester boats to our new Large Object Store at Rossfield Road, Ellesmere Port this is certainly not the case.

The refurbishment of the Victoria Arm dry dock has moved a large step forward with the design of the new caisson being finalised & an order has been placed for its fabrication. Delivery will be during June so prior to this we will be moving *Pelican* & the Concrete Barge to allow the caisson to be put directly into the dock.

In the boatyard, we have started to clear it in readiness for Mossdale to be moved from next to Porters Row to its permanent display area in the boatyard. We first moved *Ferret & Phoebe* to the new Store but as with the Gloucester boats they were stored in the yard as we had not got completion on the lease for the unit. In May, we moved all the boats into the new Store Unit plus we took *Lady Fiona* to the store. Shortly we will start resurfacing the boatyard which will be in 3 phases – Phase 1 will be the area where *Mossdale* will sit & when this has been completed we will surface the last 2 areas.

The floating of the sunken boats has started with success with six of the vessels but *Scorpio* refused to move until we enlisted the help of Mike Carter who showed our team of CRT staff & volunteers that anything is possible with the correct approach. These guys really deserve congratulating as they have had to work really hard getting the boats to float.

We are still on course to lift all the boats out & take them to the store by late summer & recommission the Victoria Arm by the end of this year.

Looking back on a busy year at the National Waterways Museum

Recently, we took the opportunity to celebrate National Museums Day, an ideal reason to look back at what's been happening at our National Waterways Museum at Ellesmere Port and Gloucester. It's been a busy year, with both sites grabbing impressive public and press attention.

We all love a birthday and for Ellesmere Port's 40th and *Gifford's* 90th we celebrated with exhibitions, volunteer awards and parties. All generated significant local media coverage. Meanwhile Augmented Reality interpretation brought history to life on the Port's historic slipway.

In July, the spotlight moved to the re-opening of the Museum in Gloucester. Staff and volunteers welcomed BBC Breakfast's sunny Carol Kirkwood who presented the weather, interviewed the team and talked about the museum. She was especially taken with the steam dredger – which, thanks to dedicated volunteers, is now noisily making its presence felt on special occasions.

A big Arts Council England award meant work could start on an ambitious conservation programme on our precious boat collection. First steps involved massive cranes lifting boats out of the canal in Gloucester. The early morning activities were keenly watched by national and local media and bemused members of the public.

Work also began on the boats in Ellesmere Port and featured on BBC Radio Merseyside, whose presenter declared the museum to be “another jewel in the (city's) maritime crown”.

The rare short boat *George* returned to Ellesmere Port. Fully transformed from cargo barge to floating education and visitor centre she's now ready to welcome school groups. In holidays, she'll be open for families to step aboard. In Gloucester, the historic *Sabrina* 5 barge is also being prepared for a new career as an education and meeting venue.

The National Waterways Archive set up its stall at the BBC's popular Who Do You Think You Are Live Exhibition and was well attended by the many visitors to the Show. Our staff volunteers on the stand hardly had time to grab a coffee!

The new look Easter Boat Gathering enjoyed best attendance in years with 20% more visitors. National, regional and local media coverage helped push up awareness. Drone footage by the Press Association took the Museum and Trust story into media across the country, and internationally (with coverage in the Hungarian press!).

And finally – no museum visit is complete without a bit of retail therapy, a cuppa and a piece of cake! All three requirements are now being fully met by the new gift shop and café at Ellesmere Port and the smaller tea room at Gloucester.

Thank you to everyone for being a part of it!

Michelle Kozomara

Thoughts of a Waterways History Heretic

Sources: published oral history work

To write about oral history – something which partly emerged with portable tape recorders from the 1970s, but which has a much longer pedigree – can be to engage with a whole set of arguments about the social purpose of history. Its 1970s incarnation really pursued the idea of “history from below”, providing and using sources that often went outside and challenged the more established (and establishment) written records. I will avoid the temptation here to write a poor treatise on this – and will thus focus firmly and narrowly upon published work that has been based on oral history interviews. There is a distinction between what might be termed “archived” interviews, as opposed to those which are created in order to carry out a specific investigation. Sometimes these are recorded but not transcribed (and stored in archives) and sometimes they are kept as transcribed texts, and often used to illustrate a popular article. The former provided very useful materials for Hannah’s WJ article about the slipway.

Here I will take a single instance of oral history work – three articles about coal traf- fics on the Leeds & Liverpool Canal, published in 1986 in *Waterways World*. Mike Taylor, who selected the 11 interviewees, conducted and edited the interviews and provided detailed commentary, produced many pieces that use oral history techniques. It is useful to consider his work against those who were less expert and informed. All his informants worked on canal carrying, one being an operator. Each told a slightly different story – so, while one never slept on board, another always did so. The full interviews from which the excerpts are taken were not included, and neither were the questions that must have prompted the narratives involved. There were clues about the overall biography of Mike’s interviewees, such as fathers and brothers, but only glimpses about their lives. No doubt most are now deceased, and these excerpts provide insights that could not be determined from the small number of surviving boatpeople, which were inevitably skewed towards the younger participants in trades that ended in 1972, or mostly by the mid-1960s.

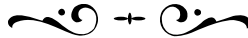
As sources, these interviews left many loose ends – when did trades begin and end, how typical were informants’ experiences, exactly what period of time is being discussed? “History from below” primarily relies on memories, and memory is often unreliable when it comes to precise dates or sequences of events. It also relies on understandings that are very partial, in both senses; few of us have full knowledge of any field and often events and explanations are reconstructed afterwards, while people rarely admit to personal failings, especially to an interviewer.

Beyond information and explanations that might not be available elsewhere, this oral history work provides a sense of what may otherwise seem irrevocably dead; glimpses, at least, as to what it was like. When the interviewer was as knowledgeable and skilful as Mike Taylor, this produced something of lasting value. By contrast, interviewers may lack the knowledge to ask suitable opening questions, can prove overbearing, may offer hints as to what the informant should tell them, and, at worst, may be very critical and judgemental. The latter may be rare, but the late Roger Lorenz told me about an “inter- viewer” who opened his interrogation by telling his informant that he was just plain wrong

about something he recalled. This informant refused to be interviewed again, ever. One damaging factor, if interviews are published, is that the informant may not recognise what they have said, or what they meant to say. Television interviews, produced to entertain, are notorious in this respect.

Oral history interviews, on tape or transcript (the latter can prove to be inaccurate, especially over names), can provide data or explanations that are not available elsewhere. They can confirm or contradict what is contained in written evidence. In reproducing commonly held memories, which may not correspond to other accounts with contemporary records, they may demonstrate “the myths we live by” (to use the late Raphael Samuel’s phrase). They can provide raw materials that need to be combined with written evidence (or oral testimony from others) or may need to be decoupled from the interviewers’ judgement or from the confusions of informants’ memories of events long past. Interpretations may need to stretch to assessments of informants’ veracity and knowledge. In the best cases, oral testimony may provide the only evidence of particular events and developments, can reveal and relate to subjective experience and can help to take the reader back to times that are long gone. It is to be hoped that the original interviews on which Mike Taylor based his article will surface at some point. I hope to consider other types of oral history in later musings.

Joseph Boughey



The Return of the (Model) Waterways Vans

It was pleasing to see in the recently refurbished Museum shop, the model vans in British Waterways livery. These were for sale in the shop a few years ago and then removed as it was intended to use them as part of the launch of the two actual British Waterways vans that were being restored at Hatton Workshops.

The models, priced at a very reasonable £2.50, are of a Morris 8/10 hp van which



is not actually the van that has been preserved. It may well be that British Waterways did have examples of the Morris van, but the full sized examples preserved are the Fordson 5/7 cwt van (see photo) of which there is a model, produced by another manufacturer, although not available in the Museum Shop.

The Ford Motor Company added the suffix ‘son’ to the Ford name for their commercial vehi-

cles for reasons that remain obscure. Personally, I would have liked to have seen at least one of the two vans running around the Museum at Ellesmere Port as I have long believed there should be more examples of cargo and road vehicles to make the dock scene complete.

If there any vans left for sale in the Museum shop by the time this article appears, I would recommend purchase as they are selling for £10 on eBay!

Norman Stainthorp

“Some aspects of horse boating”

Tony Lewery’s talk at the Good Friday meeting

A fairly mundane title you might think, but even before Tony started speaking the audience were preparing for a fascinating and inspiring evening. Tony’s lifelong enthusiasm came across immediately, but how did this young lad from the south coast find himself engrossed in the life of the canals? The answer lay in the sight of passing Thames barges, then six months travelling with a gypsy family’s caravan, and then a visit to busy Braunston on a sunny day – the latter of course enough to inspire anyone to appreciate the colour, community, and history of the waterways.

I always cringe when I hear television presenters and others waxing lyrical about how the canals “remind us of the more leisurely days of times past” or some such phrase. In fact, it was a hectic and exhausting life getting goods from A to B as fast and as profitably as possible. Cutting edge techniques were developed and refined over many years and Tony illustrated how, even in the horsedrawn era, every detail of the canals and the boats were honed to optimise speed and efficiency.

Well-known canal enthusiasts in the audience were suddenly ‘volunteered’ to give a live demonstration of double-purchase, with the aid of a blocking pin and length of towline stretched across the room. This was a technique to ease the strain on the horse when pulling away, thus saving a few seconds at each lock and prolonging the horse’s stamina. Strategically placed strapping posts gave similar assistance (although the few that remain are now called “trip hazards”). An interesting comment was that blocking was not of any benefit to fly-boats whose beautifully streamlined hulls did not require any further boost.

Some years ago, Tony initiated a thorough investigation of the derelict canal stables at Church Minshull. Far from being a quaint old building from a bygone age, the survey showed how every detail of the structure and its operation was designed for up-to-the-minute techniques of freight transport by canal in the 1890s. Tony’s analysis of the survey was published in *Waterways Journal Volume 2* (2000), and it was good to hear that this issue (now out of print) may soon be reissued.

Here at the Museum there is potential scope to interpret many of these techniques, by fixing blocking pins at the locks for example – and hopefully horseboat Ilkeston will soon be restored to join with Gifford to help to give greater prominence to the long history of horseboating and the technical achievements of that era.

Ken Catford.

From the Education Team

The education team have been focussing on filling the school visit diary for the summer term. We organised a mail out to all schools within 30 miles of the museum as well as marketing and promoting *George's Journey* to schools and community groups in Liverpool and along the Leeds & Liverpool Canal locally. We have also been thinking ahead to the summer holidays and have already got several groups booked into four and five weeks informal learning programmes, including one group of families who have signed up to work towards the John Muir family award.

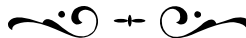
In the more immediate future, we have designed some lovely family activities and trails to run alongside the temporary exhibition programme. Eric Gaskell's Linocuts exhibition opened in May and runs until 9th July. Our front of house team will be helping to deliver a linocut activity from the bank holiday weekend, through the half term holidays and on subsequent weekends. Following this, Jim Cooke's photographic exhibition will be accompanied by a family trail tying in with the exhibition theme.

Our Young Curators programme has been going well, some of you may have encountered them over the Easter weekend giving behind the scenes tours. They are currently working towards their Junior Lock Keepers Certificates, with the help of the boat movement volunteer team. This programme will finish on 6th July with a celebration event at the museum. The Young Curators will give a lock demonstration for their teachers and families as well as receiving their certificates.

Work on the Window on the World activity plan continues with *George's Journey* (currently engaging schools and communities in Liverpool) and with preparation for activities within the Carpenters Workshop. Work will begin during the first week of June to prepare the space ready for opening it to the public in time for the summer holidays. This area (next to the current exhibition area) will contain a wood pattern making activity, along with interpretation to explain this process. It is being designed to be self-guided and family friendly, with elements of progression to cater for different age groups and attention spans!



Helen Evans



Couples at the Museum

2. Cath & Mike Turpin

We moved north from Brighton in 1969 to work. We both had an interest in history and industrial archaeology and we turned up on the Sunday of the first working party weekend at the site of the future Museum (first the Boat Museum and now National Waterways Museum), little knowing what we had let ourselves in for – and how it would

change our lives. In those very early days we remember boarding up doors and windows, water inches deep in the Island Warehouse, the rats and meeting people who would become lifelong friends.

In 'real life' Mike was a scientist with Unilever Research and Cath was a science teacher. We had two young daughters who, with other children of the Sunday volunteers

joined us on the then derelict dock site at Ellesmere Port. Janis, our elder daughter escaped to Australia over 20 years ago, but always visits the museum when in the UK. When Kerry's daughter spent time at the museum with us recently and got home, a famous quote from her mother "... she smells of the Boat Museum – and must have had a wonderful time!"

Soon we were also getting involved with the Committee of what was originally the North Western Museum of Inland Navigation (NWMIN). The Society's objectives were and still are about having a Museum and all the things that this entails, including the preservation of related skills. At the same time our commitment to the boats and learning new skills grew, Mike taking on the pumping of *Ethel* a Calder & Hebble wooden keel, and both of us getting involved in the teams around *Gifford* and *Worcester*.

Cath knew nothing about canals in those early days, except hiring rowing boats on the Bude Canal on weekly visits when growing up in north Devon, something we still do when in the area! Mike had had boating holidays with his family as a child, so had a little more experience. We well remember our first trip on *Gifford*, being towed by Ray & Ivy Woodland's boat *Taurus* from Stourbridge to Audlem in 1976, the year the museum opened.

Learning fast about boats & boating, we acquired the 'middle Northwich' pair of boats, *Radiant* and *Regulus* in the late 1980s and have boated with them to/from such diverse places as Gloucester, London, Nottingham, Braunston and Runcorn! After a week on the converted grain barge *Pisgah* on the Canal du Nivernais in France with museum friends and joining *Waterways World* holidays on a sailing clipper in the Netherlands, we had the aspiration of a boat in France. In 2000, we bought a converted Dutch 'Shell' bunker boat *L'Heritage*, which we share with others. Every year we enjoy getting away after Easter & during August to L'Heritage, enjoying French, Belgian and Dutch canals & rivers. Continental waterways aren't better than those in the UK – just very different in



scale & operating methods.

Our roles and interests at the Museum have changed over the years and we are more involved than ever.

Mike has been a past Chairman of the Society and this gives a wide perspective on the range of skills necessary to run a sustainable Museum and the importance of teamwork utilising the mix of staff and volunteers lead by the Museum. At the same time being a Trustee and on the Board of Management gave real practical experience on 'looking after the pennies' – trying to ensure resources, people and money are well employed and spent. All this was great experience and very useful as my career in Unilever Research developed into managing teams and leading projects.

Cath spent many years as editor of RE:PORT and now volunteers in the Waterways Archive, edits the BMS research publication *Waterways Journal*, gives guided tours, speaks to outside organisations, helps to look after *Gifford* – and gets involved in other activities like the Santa Cruises. She is also very interested in researching the history and development of Ellesmere Port and its docks.

One of the great things that stands to this day is the great mix of people and skills at all levels. There were enthusiasts, those with waterways backgrounds, people from all walks of life, as well as Museum professionals like David Owen, Mike Stammers, Adrian Jarvis, Edward Paget-Tomlinson and Keith Robinson. This diversity is something that's been maintained to this day and is perhaps the greatest strength of the Society and part of what it brings to the Museum now.

Finally, of course making many friends old and new is all part of our enjoyment. We're sure it's the same for most of you too.

Volunteer awards

We were delighted that five of our volunteers: Martyn Kerry, Sue Phillips, Jeff Fairweather, Mike Turpin and Dave Crosby, were all invited to receive their Gold badges at a CRT event in Birmingham as recognition for contributing over 2000 volunteer hours each to the Museum. Four of the team are pictured here. A huge achievement and congratulations from us all!



Waterways Journal, Volume 19

Yes, we have got to volume 19 of Waterways Journal and as usual, the new publication was launched at Easter. Four major articles as well as a follow-up on the Cumbrian iron ore trade, with the John Wilkinson connection.

Copies are available at BMS meetings, the NWM shop at £7.99 and by mail order. Visit the BMS web site and download an order form from the Publications link.



Contents:

“Little Ventured: Little Gained”: Dee Navigation improvement plans between 1836 & 1854:

David Parry

The Dee Estuary, in particular efforts to improve navigation on both the canalised and open sections, appears to fall in a grey area between canal, maritime, and, railway history. In this article, David Parry looks in detail at attempts which were made to improve navigation conditions on the River Dee below Chester, believing railway connections could help to revive the city as a seaport.

The Patent Slip and Associated Buildings at Ellesmere Port:

Hannah Holmes

When the docks at Ellesmere Port were enlarged and developed between the mid-1830s and early 1840s, a Morton Patent Slip and workshops were installed. The building of the Manchester Ship Canal meant that considerable changes were needed. The Patent Slip was lengthened and new, much larger workshops were built. Hannah Holmes tells the story of this area of the docks, which has now been opened up to visitors at the National Waterways Museum.

Steam on the River Weaver Navigation:

Terry Kavanagh

There were steam vessels on the River Weaver from 1863 until the mid-twentieth century, operated by large salt carriers and processors

like Brunner Mond (later ICI) and much smaller companies. Terry Kavanagh tells the story of these craft, their problems and incidents in which many of them were involved.

Holt Abbott - a pioneer in canal cruiser design and hire boat operation

David Brown and Angela Clark.

In 1950, Holt Abbott built Avondale, the first of his pleasure craft which formed the basis of Canal Pleasure Craft Ltd. of Stourport. This was one of the earliest hire boat companies to build their own craft for leisure use on the inland waterways. David Brown owns *Silver Heron*, the oldest of their few surviving boats and he and Holt Abbott's daughter Angela Clark have written a comprehensive history of the company and the boats they built.

John Wilkinson, his role in the ore trade:

Peter Sandbach

John Wilkinson (1728 – 1808) is well known as the Staffordshire industrialist who pioneered the use of cast iron. Not as well-known is his responsibility for some of the first shipments of iron ore from Cumbria to Staffordshire via Chester and Runcorn, some of which were carried in his own iron narrow boats. Peter Sandbach follows up his account of this trade in Waterways Journal Vol 17 with Wilkinson's involvement.

Tilbury – A correction from Richard Thomas

Review – Waterways Journal 19

The latest Waterways Journal has kept the general format followed since 1999 – four long main articles; this one also includes a short note and a briefer article that both follow up items in earlier Journals.

The opening article, on proposals to improve the Dee Navigation, is by David Parry, who has been drawn into this subject from an interest in railway history. As he points

out, the Dee falls into a “grey area” between canal maritime and railway history; hopefully more work will appear that crosses these boundaries. His study focusses on developments from 1836 to 1854, a period during which successive improvements were sought, partly to benefit Saltney, but none proceeded. David’s study includes coverage of the periods before and after the chosen dates and there is clearly scope for further detailed studies.

The second article is decidedly closer to home, in that it deals with the history of the patent slip at Ellesmere Port and is by Hannah Holmes who was employed as part of the Window on the World project. Her study begins in a similar period, as the Patent Slip seems to have been completed in 1841, but takes the history forward through its disuse in 1922 and partial destruction in the 1980s. Coverage extends to many associated buildings, their uses and modifications, and eventual fate – some being conserved as part of the project. This demonstrates the value of oral history sources about the Museum site and the need for a finely detailed historical study of the whole site at Ellesmere Port. Hannah’s study will prove an important exemplar and component, should a wider history be researched.

Terry Kavanagh has been a regular contributor to the Journal and his piece, on the development of steam navigation on the Weaver, also begins in the mid-nineteenth century. Steam haulage began to replace sail in 1863, being generally more efficient. Terry’s study, much of it based on newspaper sources, explores a great deal of detail about owners, vessels, traffics and operations, through to the post-war period. Of particular interest are the accounts of the watermens’ strike of 1892 and of various accidents, in 1901, 1906, 1912 and 1915; two of the latter affected the same vessel, Alice Capper, owned by the Northwich Carrying Co. Where it is known, the subsequent fate of several vessels is recorded.

The subject of the fourth piece is one close to my own interests; pleasure boating might not have been of interest when the Journal first appeared in 1999, but it is now. David Henthorn Brown and Angela Clark’s article on Holt Abbott is welcome both in its focus on a pioneering canal boatbuilder and hire operator, and boats, of which at least three survive. David is the owner of the oldest of these, *Silver Heron*, built in 1954; it constitutes a significant survival for a marine ply boat. Angela, Holt Abbott’s daughter, now owns *Jemina*, (in 1964/5). The background to Holt Abbott, his family, the boatbuilding and hiring business are well-covered, along with the bases at Stourport and details of hire operations like sinkings (only two) and other emergencies. As an enthusiast for the history of leisure and for this Journal, I would venture that it is a pity that earlier Journal articles on pleasure boating were not used to provide background. I hope that this example will inspire further historical articles on the building hiring and operation of holiday pleasure boats.

A shorter contribution from Peter Sandbach supplements his article in Journal 17 by details of the role of John Wilkinson in the iron trade by boat through Chester and Runcorn; this includes excerpts from Wilkinson’s letters.

This year’s Journal is up to the standards of illustration and presentation of previous issues, although it has more pages and many more colour illustrations.

Joseph Boughey

Couples at the Museum

3. Lynn & Dave Potts

Having had a canal holiday and been bitten with the bug, Dave and I visited the Boat Museum with our two children. We decided to join the Boat Museum Society (NWMIN as it was then) and picked up a form. We decided to attend the monthly meetings. At the time Di Skilbeck was working party organiser and at every meeting she appealed for people to come and help on a Sunday. Dave decided to go along and I quickly realised that if I didn't come too I would be left at home with the children. Much to my surprise I discovered two great things. Firstly there were several other families and the children all looked after each other which meant that the adults could do their own thing. Secondly I found I loved joining the working parties and getting involved with looking after boats and doing some steering.



After a while Di stepped down from being organiser and Dave agreed to take over. He organised the work parties for about five years until work commitments forced him to give up. When Dave started as organiser he joined the committee as a Director. After a while he was asked if he would take over as Treasurer and he performed this role for seven years. In the meantime I was asked to become Secretary and joined the committee. This is a task which I still carry out to this day and I expect to carry on for a few years yet. I can only say how lucky we are to have such a marvellous experience and to have made so many friends. I still continue to help on a Sunday and hope to be able to continue for a number of years more still enjoying every minute. We still come to the monthly meetings and to support the Society and the Museum.

Model Boat Show – 4/5 March 2017

Although very well attended, there is little at the Model Boat Show for the inland waterway enthusiast, apart from the Clyde 'Puffers', which qualify as inland craft as they worked on the Forth & Clyde Canal and the Crinan Canal. I was amazed at the detail incorporated into these models, especially this one, 1:24 scale model of the Puffer, *Highlander* by Dave Maddocks of the St Helens & District Model Boat Club.



Perhaps our full sized *Basuto* will one day have so much detail!

Norman Stainthorpe

Harry Arnold, who writes regularly for *Towpath Talk*, the free magazine distributed through canalside businesses, including the Museum, has given us permission to include the following article in RE:PORT. It was first published in *Towpath Talk*, April 2017. Brian Haskins and John Freeman were very good friends of the museum in the 1970s and 1980s and made sure that many of the records which had been in their area offices in Northwich and Wigan found their way into what is now the Waterways Archive. They were both present when the first exhibition in the Island Warehouse opened at Easter 1982.

It's their 'Just Time' Sir Frank

Long-time waterway enthusiasts may have heard this story in speeches by the then British Waterways Chairman Sir Frank Price who was happy to tell it 'against' his own organisation. It rates, in my opinion, with the one told by my friend BW Architect Peter White OBE who recalled the time when a BW maintenance man stamped on and killed a snail. Asked by his mate why he did it, he said – "It's been following us about all day!"

Sir Frank was on an inspection tour of the then Wigan Area with ebullient and outspoken Area Engineer John Freeman when – visiting a site on the Leeds & Liverpool – they found the maintenance gang (BW had a lot of men then) just standing about. Sir Frank looked surprised and unhappy but the ever-confident John said: "Don't worry Sir Frank they will be in their 'just time'."

Asked to explain, John said they will have just finished something, just about to start something or be just thinking about what to do next. Sure enough, when they approached the foreman he said that they were "Just about to start..."

Later, Sir Frank was on a similar tour of the Northwich Area with Area Engineer Brian Haskins when they came across a similar situation. Brian looked embarrassed but Sir Frank said: "Don't worry Brian, I fully understand that they will be in their 'just time'."



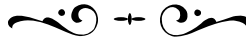
British Waterways' area engineers Brian Haskins and John Freeman at the opening of the Island Warehouse exhibition, Easter 1982.
photo: Waterways Images

Perhaps this is a good time to record our thanks to these two late area engineers. They were true waterway enthusiasts and the first to recognise at their level the value of volunteers and the restoration campaign. They 'fixed' a lot of situations with us, when they could have lost their jobs or been at least disciplined by their often-backward thinking bosses in the London Melbury House HQ: Which was christened by the late, great Graham Palmer 'Melburyland' – as in 'Alice in Wonderland'

Harry Arnold



Cllr Peter Jones opening the Island Warehouse exhibition on Easter Saturday, 1982. from left: Peter Jones, John Freeman, Brian Haskins and Tony Hirst the Boat Museum's Director. photo: Cath Turpin



The Shropshire Union Railway still lives – just!

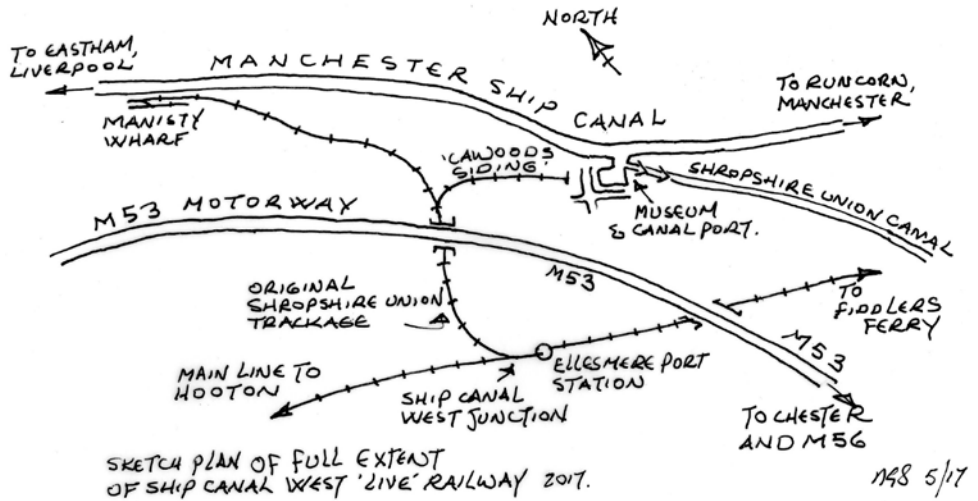
During the construction of the Ship Canal in the early 1890s, a contractors railway was laid from the Hooton-Helsby railway line west of Ellesmere Port station. After construction of the Ship Canal was completed, the line was taken over by the Shropshire Union Canal & Railway Co. and extended as far as the Raddle Wharf, alongside the Lower Basin. Some may be surprised that much of this track is still a 'live' railway, coming very close to the Museum, just to the north of Lower Mersey Street.

In February 2017, I had the opportunity to travel on a maintenance crew rail tractor and riding car from alongside the main line at Ship Canal West junction, north to Manisty Wharf and south to the former Cawoods Container siding, close to Lower Mersey Street, used recently by Quinn Glass for delivery of glass-making sand to their premises at Ince.

In the photo, taken from the buffer stops north of Lower Mersey Street, the roof of the Island Warehouse and the Pump House chimney can be seen tantalising close in the background.

Until 2015, there were daily coal trains from Manisty Wharf, over the original Shropshire Union trackage to Fiddlers Ferry Power Station, east of Widnes. The power station cooling towers are still visible from the Museum on a clear day.

Since the announcement that Fiddlers Ferry is to close, rail traffic has ceased as the power station is using up coal from other power station stocks until closure.



There was however, in 2016, a revival of traffic with trains carrying specialist glass-making sand from Ellesmere Port, to the Quinn Glass works at Ince.

The glass works has more recently, established its own wharf at Ince in order to receive the sand directly from vessels in the Ship Canal.

The trains from Ellesmere Port have all but ceased but in the event of capacity issues at the Ince Wharf, the company retains the option to operate occasional trains from the sand stockpile, which is maintained at Ellesmere Port.



The Gator tractor unit

At the present time, all the rail tracks, including the level crossings off Merseyton Road, are maintained in live condition by 'Marsh Trackworks' using a 'Gator' road/rail tractor unit and crew riding cars. Peel Holdings are actively pursuing other traffics, perhaps sea-born containers, to the extensive Manasty sidings – long may use continue!

Many thanks to Peel Holdings and to Graham Marsh of Marsh Trackworks for the opportunity to visit the system.

Norman Stainthorp

The Last Museum

The Waterway Museum at Preston Brook stands
Patronised by the Quality of Numerous Lands
And illustrates fully to rich and to poor
The life of the boatman in Peace, and in War.

An amazing array, it's really fantastic,
Old boats, chimney chains, cloths both canvas
and plastic.

An original Primus, minus its burner,
A genuine can (made last week by Ron Turner)
A castle by Rembrandt, it comes as a shock
To see the address printed "Charity Dock".
A flywheel signed "Laars",
An old china vase.
Which was brought by the original boatmen from
Mars.

Some hairs from a dog,
The plans of Ted's Bog,
And a scaled-down Butty-boat, carved from a log,

And in a glass case,
A smile on his face
A life-sized Jack Roberts, a'winding apace,
On receipt of a shilling
A paddle (quite willing)
And out gushes water, a'foaming and spilling
In a fibre glass lock
(It's all quite a mock)
As it fills up the chamber, it empties the dock.
As the mainspring runs down
O'er the face steals a frown
And all silent, awaits the next party from town.

Here's an old 'Clayton's' boat
Barely afloat
And a photo of Old Sam catching a stoat
In 1918

Above Hassall Green
You can scarce recognise him
His face is so clean.

Here's a shot of George Page
And part of the Gauge
Which was used in the '80's
And kept in a cage
Beside Suttons stop lock
By a man in a smock
Who wrote each boat's weight on a board by the
clock.

Here's a very clear print
Of a man with a squint
Who is stood on a boat heavy laden with flint
Which was sunk at Longport
(at least so it's thought)
By a large piece of ice which a weak plank has
caught.

Here's a fine old engraving
Amongst old Bills of Lading
Of a Sunday School trip with children a'wading
In bold Newport town
As the sun's going down
With the Captain, blind drunk, dressed up like a
clown.

Here's an old cabin side
And part of a slide
Washed up on the Severn, by a very high tide,
There's the sale of a clog
Unearthed by a dog
Three feet below ground in Welsh Frankton Bog,

And a hand-written note
 Concerns the last boat
 To have come up the Shrewsbury cut, scarcely
 afloat

Worked by poor old Jack Jones,
 (Here arises great groans)
 For it seems in this claim he is not quite alone.
 Ninety-Seven more names are attached to this
 claim.
 Whoever it was, will be accorded great fame.

So each moustachioed fool
 And their ladies in Tulle
 Take a sip from the can, squat on a stool.
 "See, here's how they would sit
 The old woman would knit,
 And crochet lace curtains, bit by bit."

Even the bucket's admired
 They never grow tired
 Of explaining how on it, Tom Williams expired
 And of how big Bill Black
 Got a horse on his back
 For a bet of two shillings, and then got the sack.

And with reverence and awe
 They handle the saw
 Which was once used at Bloxwich, to re-plank
 the 'Daw'

And their transistors wail
 As they half-grasp the tale
 Of how, long since, the Mossdale was driven by
 sail

And a folk-singer's been hired
 To do all that's required
 And an old Pigeon-Box has for stereo been wired,
 And he wails and he groans
 And he drearily moans
 Of how he bow-hauls with poor aching bones
 And with hair all awry
 He howls at the sky
 Of how poor he is, and how hungry and dry,
 And how he sleeps under bridges

And how his clog fridges
 His foot, and he's bitten by hundreds of midges
 And with a last twang at the stars
 Packs up his guitar,
 And drives home to his penthouse in a new
 Rolls-Royce car.

The crowds wonder and gaze
 Wander round in a daze
 (It's all slightly like the great Hampton Court
 maze)

How they sigh and they groan
 O'er the days that are gone
 "Oh, how sad, what a shame, now it's past" they
 all moan.

But OH DEAR and OH MY
 Here's a smack in the eye
 As a boat loaded with timber goes clattering by
 And the engine's no dud
 For it stirs up the mud
 And down drop the jaws of the museum patrons,
 THUD.

Here's a shout and a rout
 And a turning about
 This is more than a shock, it's really a clout.
 "Money back, Money back!" goes up the cry,
 As back to their cars through the clutter they fly
 And they shout and they bawl, their rage
 undiminished

"We would never have come,
 BUT WE THOUGHT BOATING WAS FINISHED!!"

M J Taylor

Membership Matters

We would like to welcome Haydn Cook as a new Member.

Barbara and Chris Kay are due to step down as interim Membership Secretaries at the end of the summer. David Ditchfield and Ailsa Rutherford have agreed to be the new Membership Secretaries.

The Society would like to thank Barbara and Chris for their work and wish David and Ailsa the very best in their new roles..

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

March Pat Steward(5), Cynthia Green(49), Michael Crompton(95)
April Graham & Beryl Hefford(36), Barry Green(48), Pat Steward(5)
May John Noton(55), Dave Cleverley(23), Bob Derricott(39)

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'.



Ellesmere Port Bike & Boats Festival Sunday 9th July from 10am

Bling your Bike & join a fun-filled, traffic free family
bike ride along the canal with

**BRASS
BAND**

DAN FOX
and his Astounding Boombox

**DANNY BUTLER
STUNT DEMO**

**TREASURE
HUNT**

departing from
CIVIC SQUARE
to the

**NOVELTY BIKES
FROM 1-CYCLE**

NATIONAL WATERWAYS MUSEUM.

**FREE ENTRY
TO MUSEUM
ALL DAY
TILL 5PM**

Parade begins 11am.

**LOTS OF
FREE ACTIVITIES
THROUGHOUT
THE DAY AT
THE MUSEUM**

To Register:

sustrans.org.uk/events/bike-parade-festival

canalrivertrust.org.uk

Sign up at www.eventbrite.co.uk

#BLINGYOURBIKE

The Bike & Boats Festival is a charity partnership project between the Sustrans Community Place Project, a Local People Project and The Canal and River Trust for The National Waterways Museum



