

BOW KNIFE

Newsletter of Llanymynech Wharf Visitor Centre

June 2020

www.llanylime.co.uk



Chairman's Report

This report is written in the dark days of lock down. It looks as if 2020 will be the year when nothing happens. Even if we are able to run trips towards the end of the season I suspect the public will be shy of crowding into a narrow boat. It seems likely that our only income this year will be that from plant sales.

That said, 2019 was one of our better years. Thanks again to the Friday "kids go free" trips which proved very popular with grandparents who had children to entertain during the school holiday.

We had a visit from Radio Shropshire which I did not make the most of. Never having been interviewed on radio before I did not plan what I was going to say and did not get as much air time out of the interview as I could have.

We also featured in CRT's video of The Montgomery Canal. Again we did not get the air time that I think we deserved even after spending most of an afternoon with Chris Smith filming on the boat.

Stay Safe

Roy Mansell

Visitor Centre

We were fortunate to have been awarded £350 from the Tirgwynt Community Fund. This has been used to buy better tables for the Visitor Centre, an urn to provide instant boiling water for our hot drinks without having to wait for the kettle to boil (a watched pot and all that!), folding chairs and a sun

umbrella for our outdoor events, perching stools for the workforce behind the counter, tools for use when servicing the boat and a banner which we can use for advertising when we open again. Thank you, Tirgwynt.

We continued to have plants for sale outside the Centre throughout the year. These included vegetable plants, geraniums, dahlias, cosmos, petunias, hydrangeas, French marigolds and sunflowers to name but a few. It was gratifying that people bought these plants even when we were closed and put the money for them under the door. We are

carrying on
displaying plants



for sale this year
when it is unlikely

that we'll be open and trust that the 'honesty' system will result in some income. At the time of writing we have penstemons, geraniums, cerinthe, petunias, raspberries and eunonymus with dahlias, cosmos and hebe in the pipeline.

Our initiative in allowing children to have free boat trips on Bank Holidays was a success. This complemented the Free on Fridays in August. This lets all children have a free boat trip provided that they are accompanied by an appropriate adult. We needed to have a booking system and a timetable in August as the take-up proved very popular.

With an aging volunteer force (and few younger folk joining us) we have curtailed most of our special events. However the August Bank Holiday strawberry tea is one event that we continue to hold. 2019's was a success as usual. It is amazing how the prospect of scones, strawberries and cream proves such a magnet!

We were pleased to host the Oswestry Round walkers again. We provide a welcome pit-stop for walkers doing the whole Round and a chance to recuperate for those to whom getting half way round is enough of a challenge! We're also a welcome break and toilet stop for the participants in the Montgomery Triathlon. Luckily for us all these energetic folk buy supplies to keep them going. It's amazing how many cups of tea and bars of chocolate are needed!

Heritage Open Days, now covering two weekends in September, were a success. We gave free boat trips and had about six full boatloads on each of the two Sundays. Many of the visitors enjoying these trips left donations or spent money in the Centre making our participation worthwhile.

The sale of refreshments, gifts, plants and books from the Centre continues to provide a steady income to help us with the costs of running the boat and the various licence fees and insurances. 2019 gave us a profit of £200.00 plus.

Thank you for all your support.

This year will be a bit of a blank, but hopefully we'll be back as usual from Easter 2021.

See you then

Joan and Liz

A PARTNERSHIP

The cob seems to be riding higher in the water as he shoves his latest patrol. His neck is straighter, holding his lighthouse head, laser-like-aware; or can it be that I have seen what he already knows – every presence is peril, and all interest self-indulgent.



She had picked her place;
plucked, pulled, dredged, lifted
and pushed spear on spear of spent
rush and iris into a stack-yard shape
where a pen might think the poetry
of encapsulated life and spread her
own stored heat to incubate.
She lies, overflowing, sag-necked
and collapsed; not asleep –
absorbed in her part of their plan
that we dare not even notice.

Llewelyn Rogers April 2020



IDLING

The grey-noise of the A483 breathily
modulating with speed and weight
is an alien place. Its threads
steal the gift of sun and home
by the slow arterial; long dead.

Time has made a settlement of rudd,
tench and moorhen; swans -
“not-talking” and ducks’ “domestics”
unashamed in front of ramblers whose
footfall and people-chat filter
through the hawthorn.

I must lower that hedge.
Earwiggling, from the crook of my
trunk-and-branch anti-gardening chair
in the sun, is not fair where
every word could be a greeting
and every smile a pledge.

Llewelyn Rogers June 2013

Zooming all over the place

The canalside in Llanymynech was quieter
than we expected on 2nd May, the day for the
Montgomery Canal Triathlon. Bookings had
been better than ever with over 200 entries
received by the time the dreaded virus struck.
Many disappointed entrants have carried
their bookings forward to the next Triathlon
on 8th May 2021 and next year’s bookings year
are already better than ever!

One of the disappointed entrants, Pat Lewis,
decided on an Alternative Canal Triathlon at
home on an exercise bike, treadmill and
rowing machine. He raised over £2,000 for
Hope House. Pat is 83 and had completed
each of the last three Triathlons!

As well as the Triathlon there has been a long
list of cancelled or postponed events we were
hoping to join and of course the work parties
at Crickheath are too suspended for now. We

have been working for over three years to
raise funds and plan the work to rebuild the
last bridge blockage in Shropshire,
Schoolhouse Bridge, and these cancellations
have affected our ability to raise the final
funds for the project.

The bridge site is on Long Lane, Crickheath, a
couple of hundred yards from the end of
Penygarreg Lane, Pant. We think the crossing
was embanked sixty or so years ago and
obviously a new bridge is needed if we are to
open the canal to Llanymynech (and beyond).

The only way we could tackle the project with
the sort of money we could raise as local
canal charities is to use volunteers as much as
possible, bringing in contractors for the most
specialised tasks. Canal volunteers have great
experience in building or rebuilding locks and
bridges on projects across the country and we
have already seen them using serious pieces
of machinery on the Montgomery Canal.

We now have enough grants and donations to
proceed with the project, we do though have
various extra costs to face which is why we
need those final funds. If necessary we can
borrow but of course a loan would have to be
repaid.

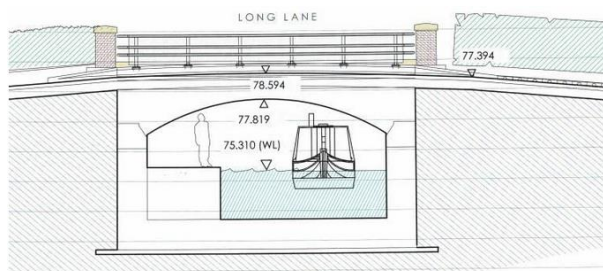
We had originally planned to rebuild the
bridge this year, but it became obvious late
last year that this would not be practicable
given the design and structural approvals still
needed so the project was deferred by a year.
With the current emergency, that is just as
well!

In fact, we are still having to deal with those
design and structural details – thank goodness
for video-conference calls. You have no doubt
heard of Zoom: we have been Zooming all
over the place!

Our plan is to prepare the site later this year
(if we can) with the main bridge work starting
next spring. Next year’s work will involve
closing Long Lane to dig out the old
embankment, then installing a concrete base
and sides for the new bridge ready for
contractors to bring and install the bridge

arch. This will consist of trapezoidal segments stitched together so that when they are lifted from a flat-bed lorry they fall into an arch which is very quickly fitted onto the base structure – that really is the most exciting part of the programme!

With the bridge arch in place, volunteers will face the concrete in brick and build up the road level so that contractors can lay the final surface.



We have to reopen Long Lane as soon as possible but realistically it will take some months to complete the project. Light traffic will be able to use the alternative route through Crickheath and we shall provide a temporary by-pass trackway for use by arrangement by heavy vehicles of local farms and businesses.

If that sounds simple, I can assure you that planning it isn't! Hence those Zoom discussions, both within the project team and with outside bodies involved, mainly the Canal & River Trust which owns the canal and Shropshire Council as the highway authority.

Now we nearly have the money, and we nearly have the technical approvals. On the strength of this we shall shortly be committing to contracts to move the water and telephone services across the site. The next stage is to call for those volunteers, for the preparations this August/September and the main work next year. We are confident that volunteers who already work on the Montgomery Canal and on other canal projects will support this as one of the most significant volunteer-led projects the restoration has seen. We shall be providing tools and equipment and, where appropriate, training too, because like any construction site the project has to be run to the highest standards. We are always on the

lookout for more volunteers to join us to make this most exciting project happen. Could this be you, or someone you know?

Michael Limbrey

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Waterside flowers

Ever since my mother found that she could only persuade me to go walking with her by proposing expeditions to see how many different flowers we could find and identify, I have been an amateur botanist. On retirement, I enrolled in botany classes and became slightly more knowledgeable - I now knew most of the terms in my flower books and how to set about identification in a little more organised fashion.

I have been lucky to retire to a village so rich in flora and one of my joys has been walking along the canal towpath identifying the flowers.

Many will be familiar to you: the beautiful yellow irises which make such a display in early summer and the reed maces (once



called bullrushes). There are two sorts: the common reed mace has a fat clump of seeds and then tapers off in a narrow long point; the lesser reed mace has one clump then another, smaller clump above it. Down nearer to the water you may find occasional watermint and



water forget-me-nots (very similar to the common dry land varieties).



White frogbit covers the water surface with its small white flowers near Carreghofa and just under the

water grows the spiky water soldier choking the canal in that area. Further on, where the canal is interrupted by the dropped bridge near the Vyrnwy, the water sometimes turns deep pink as it is covered by minute water ferns. A stranger told me she thought it was a road surface until she got out of her car to look closely!

Here and there you may come across the tall spike and tiny red flowers of water figwort



and' one of my favourites, the neat white clusters of gypsywort



Of course much of the canal side is dominated by a mixture of tall green plants best identified from the



boat. Hemlock water dropwort is very poisonous as its name suggests and it was one of the first waterside plants I learnt to identify as my mother was

worried I might make use of one of its hollow stems as a pea shooter!

One of my favourites is branched bur reed with its little round seed capsules zig-zagging up its stem like the spiked bombs you see in cartoons.



The commonest plants are the sweetgrass and water reeds along the canal bank and there is a fine bank of brambles where the Heritage Area field abuts the canal.

My favourite of all the canal flowers is flowering rush only found in the Carreghofa length opposite the Wern. It flowers in July-August but the numbers vary from year to year as it does not like to be disturbed when the workmen occasionally clear the canal.



Paddy Martin