

Narrow Boat Trust News

Sept 2006



On the Thames: *Nuneaton* and *Brighton*, captained by Nick Wolfe, unloading coal at the Flower Pot, near Henley, July 2006

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www.narrowboattrust.org

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The Narrow Boat Trust

President: Tom Henshaw

Chairman and crewing coordination: Roger Morgan

Treasurer: John Fevyer

Secretary: Stephen Morgan

Membership: Anne Perry

Work party coordinator: Graham Scothern

Webmaster: Dave Davies

NBTL News Editor: Fabian Hiscock

Editorial

Fabian Hiscock

This issue has been delayed by various factors. My own ability to pull it together has been one, but as you'll see within there has been a fair amount of uncertainty this year and it's not been at all clear what messages we should be passing to our members.

In trying to let members know what the boats have been up to I've collected a set of observations and accounts from various sources, notably what members pass to Dave Davies as the Webmaster, to tell everyone something of what's been going on. Initially I thought I really haven't had enough direct material to fill the News, but then I found that actually I had rather a lot! And the new posting rules allow it all to come to you...So I'm happy to offer it to members with only a minimum of editing, retaining I hope the delightfully different styles in which everyone writes.

One bit of activity that I'll draw attention to: Nuneaton and Brighton went to the Basingstoke Canal after Rickmansworth, and had a fine time in the hands of (especially) Rob and Mandy Knight. I quote inside the report in the Basingstoke Canal News: but the point is that our presence was noted, and the contribution we made by being there, and by letting people see the boats in the way that we do, directly commented on. That, I believe, is direct evidence of NBT fulfilling its "charitable objectives" and doing things "to the benefit of the public". Good stuff, and I for one hope we can have more of it.

You'll also find the calling notice for the AGM, postponed from July to November for various reasons but mainly to try again to get a fair number there. All such meetings are important, but this one has to consider carefully several matters: one of them being what it is we're trying to do, and so whether (for example) carrying coal is still one of our requirements.

And indeed crewing our boats is a continued problem. As I write I'm still trying to pull together the coal run starting on 7 Oct (one of the interferences with getting this out early), and I'm again worried as to whether we'll be able to actually deliver what we've undertaken to do. Any member with a day or so (or more, or less) to spend boating, or unloading bags of coal, on the Thames or Wey between 8 and 13 October, please let Roger Morgan know - many will already have been contacted before you get this, I know.

But hey - as you'll see within, we've actually done an awful lot of boating this year; many members have had several good days in the boats; and a lot of members of the public have enjoyed visiting them. And that's what we're for...

From the Counter – Sept 06

Roger Morgan

There is an old Chinese saying “many hands make light work” – and this is even more true for voluntary organisations. Whilst our membership has been steady over the past few years, with members joining to replace those that move on, the number of active members has been slightly in decline.

The result of this is that the workload of the Trust is thrust onto fewer people with the result that each person has a higher workload or that it doesn't get done!

Council reviewed this situation at our meeting in July, and we resolved to contact all members by telephone. I hope that you have received a call by the time that you get this Newsletter. If not, it may be that our contact information for you is not correct. If so, please get in touch with me – my contact details are below.

Whilst “armchair” supporters of the Trust are always very welcome, the health of the Trust depends on the level of participation of the members. Activities include

- Crewing the boats
- Showing the boats to visitors at shows and rallies
- Maintaining the boats (mainly in the winter)
- Training members
- Helping to administer the Trust.

As an example of the last area, the position of Crewing Co-ordinator has been vacant since the last AGM.

I sometimes hear (usually via a third person) that some members complain that “no one has phoned me to get involved” – I hope this will be your chance! If you haven't been contacted by mid-October, do call me to ensure that your details are correct.

I would point out this is not a crisis – the boats are in better condition than they have ever been and we are continuing to move the boats across the system at the same level as recent years. However, to quote another saying “a stitch in time, saves nine”.

Elsewhere, you will see the notice of the date of the AGM. As you will see, we have decided to move the date out of the boating season to November – I hope this will help more members attend this important event.

As always, if you have any comments on the running of the Trust, please don't hesitate to contact me – either by phone or by e-mail.

N.B.T.Ltd. BOAT MOVEMENTS 16/11/2005 – 21/11/2005.

Pete Harrison

I don't know why, but almost every time I have been involved with NBTL boat movements it has always been last minute and all in a bit of a rush. After a gap of almost three years I regained my status as an NBTL steerer on 31 October 2005 by the approval of Roger Morgan. Within days a circular was e-mailed asking for a steerer to move NUNEATON and BRIGHTON from Croxley to Stoke Bruerne, where it is intended for them to stay over the winter. With the suggestion that a crew would be provided once dates had been fixed I put myself forward thinking that a couple of days boating on the Grand Union Canal would be a pleasant refresher for me as well the opportunity to meet a few new members. The dates were arranged with Roger, but unfortunately a crew would not be available. In a moment of madness I volunteered to take both boats single handed, something I used to do as a matter of course – but that was over twenty years ago!

Wednesday 16 November 2005.

I arrived at Croxley at about 18:30. NUNEATON and BRIGHTON were tied about two hundred yards above Common Moor Lock where both Fabian Hiscock and John Fevyer were busy barrowing coal into John's car. I busied myself by unloading my car into NUNEATON, lighting the fire and setting up both boats for an early departure on Thursday morning. This involved loosing off the side cloths and lowering the top planks onto the cross beams as far as the mast on both boats. By the time I had rolled up the side cloths on BRIGHTON a heavy frost was taking grip, making it difficult and very hazardous to move around the boats. At my request Fabian gave me a quick refresher around the engine but when it started no cooling water came out. John and Fabian spent an hour or so cleaning the mud box as well as a blockage in the gearbox oil cooler whilst I finished off BRIGHTON and made a tentative start on NUNEATON. The problem I now had was that I wanted to get away at first light but NUNEATON's side cloths were frozen stiff and I had not yet cleared a path to the mast beam. I decided that on this occasion presentation would have to suffer slightly and managed to tie down the side cloths in one place only, alongside the mast beam – leaving the rest of the side cloths laying flat (frozen stiff) across the other two beams towards the back of the boat and the planks exposed on the beams. After all I could always roll these up at a convenient time on-route.

Thursday 17 November 2005.

Out of bed at 06:00 I was relieved to find plenty of life in the fire. With the kettle on the hotplate (I did not use BRIGHTON's facilities) I set about checking the engine and making the final alterations before setting off. By 06:30 the black of the night sky had the slightest taint of blue, so I set off towards Watford hoping the daylight would beat me to Cassio Bridge Lock – it didn't. As the boats had been breasted up at Croxley alongside the towpath they were the wrong way around for boating. Had it not been frosty the boats could have been changed round at the first lock. As it was I could not get to the fore ends without severe risk so I decided to plod on and change them around later. It was very peaceful passing through 'the parks' and I had complete daylight with me by Watford (Iron Bridge) Lock. The daylight revealed the extent of the night's frost which looked more like half

an inch of snow. I was quite concerned about being single handed in these conditions but I decided that if I take no risks and only boat during daylight hours I should be O.K., if a little slow. The rush hour was picking up by the time I passed through Hunton Bridge, a time of day I particularly like boating through – when the boats are going faster than the road traffic. After these few locks my method and routine were proving successful and I was boating in fairly reasonable time baring in mind I had no lock wheeler. Things were progressing well until I arrived at Apsley. I had noticed throughout the morning that the engine cooling water flow was not as strong as it had been and at Apsley it failed completely. As there was little traffic around I tied NUNEATON and BRIGHTON in the lock above the B.W.B. yard (Lock 65) and started to investigate. At this point I wished that I had taken more notice of Fabian and John the previous evening as I did not know where to start. After cleaning out the mud box (which was already fairly clean) I tackled the gearbox oil cooler, finding it blocked with bits of leaves (which had probably come from the muddy and leafy scour below every lock so far). As the cooling water still did not flow I moved the boats out of the lock thinking that I may be some time. After a short chat on the phone with Fabian I worked out that this was a priming issue and within about ten minutes I was away again. This breakdown cost me about one and a half hours. Progress was steady but I knew that I had a problem looming, Winkwell swing bridge (Bridge 147). As I crept up to the bridge (I once demolished a lift bridge on the Oxford Canal by bumping it a little too hard !) a local boat owner came out and worked the bridge for me. As this had saved me some time I stopped briefly to fill up my water cans at the adjacent boatyard. I do wish B.W.B. would not fit anti-vandal boxes on water taps as it makes it impossible to fill water cans (the open taps above Cassio Bridge Lock were either frozen or isolated earlier in the day). I was now boating as fast as I could as I hoped to make Berkhamsted before dark. As I left Lock 57 (Bottom Side Lock) I soon realised I had a fight on my hands as this fairly pound was considerably lower than normal. With some predictability NUNEATON ground to a halt under Bridge 144, costing me about half an hour and the last remnants of daylight. Although the frost was descending again I very carefully passed up Lock 56 (Top Side Lock) and tied on the bollards directly above. Hopefully this left me only a few hundred yards from the coal delivery I was to make tomorrow. After contacting the customer and arranging a delivery time of 08:00 I walked into Berkhamsted to find a fish and chip shop. On the way back to the boats I located exactly where the delivery was to be made and where to tie the boats in the morning. I didn't quite get around to rolling up NUNEATON's side cloths, which were now frozen again.

Friday 18 November 2005.

What a luxury – a lie in until 06:40 and breakfast before setting off ! Again both boats and all of the surroundings were covered in about half an inch of frost. After checking the engine I loosed off at 07:15, and was tied up again ten minutes later to the handrail just north of Bridge 143. The boats were still the wrong way around as I did not have a safe opportunity to change them yesterday. Fortunately the towpath changes sides at Bridge 143 so NUNEATON was now alongside the towpath. After cracking the side cloths out of the way I sorted out the 20 bags of coal for this delivery. At this point I was starting to feel my age and I soon realised that I am not the fit young boatman I used to be. Half an hour later I thought I was going to die but by

09:00 all was done and I was away again. I soon left Berkhamsted behind me and headed back out into the countryside. Above Lock 49 (Northchurch) the canal was covered in a very thin layer of ice. I felt sorry for the B.W.B. gang working on the towpath there as I passed through with NUNEATON's fire roaring at my feet. Just as I was lining up for Lock 47 (Dudswell) I had a phone call from Andy Belton. He was keen to join me on Saturday morning and we agreed that I would press on and he would find me. I left Cowroast at noon and had assistance with this lock from a pleasure boat crew who were coming down hill. I wish people wouldn't help sometimes and on this occasion one of the pleasure boat crew closed the bottom gate against BRIGHTON's helm, not doing any damage (except to my pride) but leaving the ropework draped in soft mud. An hour later I was at Marsworth, these were my first down hill locks and a completely different proposition when single handed. I was delayed for a minute or two just above the top lock as the owner of a new wide motor pleasure boat was shafting it from one side of the canal to the other. After I passed he shafted it back again! There is not really anywhere to lay the boats whilst preparing Marsworth Top Lock but again fortune was on my side. Three lads who I assume were working in the adjacent drydock set the lock for me and I was able to breast up with more control. Whilst they emptied the lock and opened the off side gate I walked down to draw the paddles of the next lock. What I should have done was stay at the second lock and open the top gates so I could drive straight in, but I didn't. On leaving the top lock I thanked the three lads and set off towards the second lock. As the gates were still closed I had to stop again, get off the boats, open the gates, get back onto the boats and drive them in. Clearly this is not a very efficient way of working so for the rest of the flight I fully prepared the next lock whilst the boats were going down in the previous one. This worked much better but was not very fast. I did intend to thumblin all of the down hill bottom gates open but I was warned off this as the masts are weak - this needs to be sorted out, as thumblin is essential when single or light handed. I was very tempted to tie up after refilling my ice-filled water cans using the open taps at the B.W.B. Marsworth depot, but with over an hour of daylight left I decided to push on through the next two locks and stop at Pitstone. Once tied up I had time to scrub clean the strings on BRIGHTON's helm and give NUNEATON a general mop over before the frost settled. Andy phoned again at 18:00 saying that due to travel difficulties on the Saturday he was on his way now. I spent the rest of the evening sorting out BRIGHTON's cabin as with sub-zero temperatures a good fire on board is essential. Andy arrived at about 21:30 and the rest of the evening was spent in the pub near Bridge 126. I still had not got around to sorting out NUNEATON's side cloths, as they are frozen most of the time.

Saturday 19 November 2005.

Up at 06:00 to another frosty morning and a heavy mist. I walked to the first lock and prepared it whilst Andy got himself sorted out. When I returned Andy was ready for the off and we got away at 07:00. This late start was due to almost zero visibility whilst dark, and visibility only as far as the cratch when light! Andy walked down and swung open the swing bridge (Bridge 125), catching me up at the lock. Steady progress was made across 'Slapton Fields' but with a crew of two I now had no excuse for leaving lock gates open behind us. I think we closed them all apart from Grove Lock where the boats are singled out to pass through Leighton Buzzard. It was no surprise that due to the exposed nature of this area the canal was frozen almost all

the way from Ivinghoe to Leighton Buzzard. This ice was about half an inch at its thickest and caused no problems. Leighton Lock was set for us by a pleasure boat coming up hill and we were soon on the next long pound to Soulbury. With Andy lock wheeling we were through Soulbury Locks very quickly but we were unable to refill our water cans there due to an anti-vandal box. Things were much more relaxed now as we were in easy reach of Stoke Bruerne tomorrow. With water cans filled on the open taps at Fenny Stratford we were soon away from the last of the down hill locks and into the three hour pound towards Cosgrove. The light was dwindling as we approached Great Linford and a 'new' canal side pub at Bridge 78 was too much to resist. There are two added convenience with stopping here, the first is that Bridge 78 is square section so useful for breasting up under (even if it is half full of rubbish!) and the second is a sanitary station. After mopping both boats off and chatting with people on the towpath we enjoyed a romantic dinner for two in the pub, even sharing an apple pie. Side cloths on NUNEATON were still frozen so not rolled up yet!

Sunday 20 November 2005.

Another heavy frosty and a completely frozen canal saw us away at about 07:00. An hour and half later we were at Cosgrove where we passed through the lock very slowly (slowly by choice). The ice along the pound above Cosgrove was the thickest at up to one inch, but this is too thin to be of any concern and because it was fresh ice it was nice and soft. The bottom of Stoke Bruerne flight was soon in sight and after breasting up in the lock mouth we were soon making good progress up the flight, with the numerous onlookers being kind enough to close gates behind us. We tied in the long pound, just below the second lock down at 12:30 and proceeded to shut down both boats. Andy left at 15:00 after a goodbye pint in the Navigation and was fortunate to catch a bus almost straight away - on a Sunday! I took advantage of the light by clothing up both boats again, NUNEATON in the popular 'switchback' (I knew I would do something with those side cloths in the end!) and BRIGHTON in the conventional way. Top cloths were not fitted as some were being used to cover the last of the coal in NUNEATON and BRIGHTON was empty and unusually tidy. The latter part of the evening was spent in The Boat with David Blagrove.

Monday 21 November 2005.

Up at 08:00 to another heavy frost and a frozen canal. My lift home arrived at 11:00, after all of those last minute putting away, cleaning and shutting down jobs had been completed. My last task was to 'officially' hand NUNEATON and BRIGHTON over to David Blagrove. My journey home was filled with thoughts of a successful, if slow trip (Croxley - Stoke Bruerne is normally two days) on boats that are pretty much up together.

Going, Going - Coming

- Support to a Good Cause

Barrie Humphries

Earlier this year I was asked to help to organize a charity event in aid of St Richard's Hospice in Worcester near to where I live. The event was a Classic and Vintage Car exhibition together with a lunch on Sunday 23 July.

In order to raise further funds for the Hospice an auction was to be held, and I was asked if I could come up with an interesting auction lot. I called Roger Morgan to ask if it was OK for me to suggest a trip on the pair for the autumn coal run on which I will be crewing. He thought this was a great idea and agreed for me to put this forward to the Hospice committee.

I called the Auction lot "A dirty weekend on the river". The highest bidder and his/her partner would be entitled to as many days as they could bear from 7 to 13 October down the Oxford, Thames and Grand Union.

I briefed the auctioneer beforehand, as I wanted to ensure that those bidding fully understood what they were bidding for.

Strangely, the lot attracted a number of bids and finally raised £160 for the Hospice.

Now, although I was not aware of this at the time, BBC Radio Hereford and Worcester got wind of the auction lot and invited me to talk about the trip on the afternoon programme called "A Pie and a Pint" with Tony Fisher. Unfortunately I was unable to do this prior to the Charity Event as I was helping Keith Norfolk to move his Dutch barge from Saul Junction back to the Reading area.

About two weeks later I received a call from Tony Fisher to say that he still wanted me to come and talk about the trip, which I agreed to do so on 10 August.

What an experience ! No rehearsal, just asked to turn up 20 minutes before going live !

No problems though, I talked about the Narrow Boat Trust, its history and objectives and about *Nuneaton* and *Brighton* and about the unique experience the people who were joining us would have.

I have been invited back in October to talk about the trip.

I also gave the listeners the website address for the Trust - for further information.

Narrow Boat Trust Limited

Notice of Annual General Meeting

Notice is hereby given that the Annual General Meeting of the Trust will be held in the Bistro of the Boat Inn, Stoke Bruerne on 11 November 2006 at 16.00 for the following purposes:

- 1. To receive and adopt the Company's accounts for the year ended 31st March 2006, together with the reports of the Directors and Auditors.**
- 2. To re-elect Mr R Morgan as a member of Council, who is retiring by rotation.**
- 3. To re-elect Mr R Hutchinson as a member of Council, who has been appointed since the last AGM.**
- 4. To re-elect Mr A Belton as a member of Council, who has been appointed since the last AGM.**
- 5. To re-appoint the Auditors Coombes Wales Quinnell, and to authorise the Directors to agree their remuneration.**

By order of the Board

**Stephen Morgan
SECRETARY**

1 October 2006

Notes

- 1. A form of Proxy is enclosed. The appointment of a proxy will not prevent the member from subsequently attending and voting at the meeting in person.**

Some locking techniques

Peter Harrison

I appreciate that everybody has their own way of doing things, but I find this is the most efficient way of working a light handed (two, three or four people) pair through flights of *narrow* locks and is often quicker than mob-handed pleasure boats. This system is similar to that used by some crews when the boats were in full trade, and I have used it for years.

Going uphill:

"Drive and draw" means that the motor enters a lock with the steerer closing the gates behind it. The steerer then draws both top paddles to fill the lock and then walks on to the next lock, drawing both paddles to empty that lock but leaving the gates shut. By the time the steerer gets back to the previous lock it is just about full. By going into forward gear the motor will start opening the top gate giving the steerer time to wind down both top paddles before getting back on board. When the boat is level with the top gate reverse gear is selected at "steady" revs and the steerer steps off again. The forward momentum of the motor should see it give enough space for the steerer to half close the top gate before the boat reverses into the gate and finishing the job off. Whilst the motor is closing the top gate the steerer is at the other end of the lock drawing the towpath side paddle to empty the lock for the butty. With the paddle drawn the steerer is finished at this lock and takes the motor up to the next lock gently nudging the bottom gates open, he having emptied it earlier in the routine. This routine is repeated for the whole flight with the motor only waiting to tow for the longer pounds.

Because the motor steerer is drawing off the lock behind him (ready for the butty) the butty does not need a lock wheeler. Instead there is sufficient time for the bow hauler to open the bottom gates as he is 70 feet (if a 90 feet bowhauling line is used) ahead of the butty. The third person steers the butty whilst the fourth (if available) with the butty helps wherever required but (nowadays) always closes the gates as the butty leaves each lock, a job the professional boaters did not have to do.

Going downhill:

"Drive and draw" means that the motor enters a lock with the steerer closing the gate behind it, either by strapping using the forward momentum of the boat to shut the top gate with a substantial line or by pulling it by hand. The motor is left in forward gear whilst descending the lock. The steerer draws one bottom paddle to empty the lock and then walks on to the next lock, drawing both paddles and waiting for the lock to fill. Once full the gate is opened and both paddles wound down. The steerer then walks back to the previous lock, which will now be empty, and opens the bottom gates and winds down the paddles. As

the motor was left in forward gear it will start moving out of this lock on its own. With some urgency, but without running, the towpath-side top paddle is drawn. This will cause the motor to be flushed out of the lock (and it is still in forward gear!) so again some urgency the steerer drops down onto the engine room roof (the engine room has a flatter and less cluttered roof than the cabin) and back between the hatches in time to select reverse gear to almost stop the motor in line with the bottom gates. The short shaft (or cabin shaft) is then used to push the bottom gates shut, which come shut with a bump as one of the top paddles is already open.

This lock is then filling for the butty, and the top gate can be opened by the bowhauler when he arrives as he is 70 feet ahead of the butty (if a 90 feet bowhauling line is used). The motor steerer then takes his boat to the next lock, where he has already opened the top gate earlier in the routine. Again, the third person steers the butty and the fourth person (if available) can be used where required - but (nowadays) always closes the gates behind the butty as it leaves a lock, a job the professional boaters did not have to do.

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By Ed: Members may like to compare this advice with Keith Norfolk's over a couple of issues a couple of years ago. Comments/thoughts?

And also compare the Waterways World series on techniques.

The Stairs

Anon

A vote of thanks goes to Andy Belton, who has designed, built, and installed a rather stylish, H&S-friendly staircase for visitors to *Brighton*.



Andy conceived the idea last spring, and got his design underway. He got the timber (decking, so all pretty robust), and hauled it all to Little Venice for fitting on the run-in to Cavalcade. But the boats were delayed (see separate article), and there wasn't time to finish the job. Then Andy was taken ill (and, by the way, wasn't at all well – Andy, good to see you back and in form), so it all stopped. But it wasn't the end – oh, no.

Having made up the materials at home, he took them (and the last bits) off to the Thames, but even then a bit of ingenuity was needed to get them to Beale Park, where Mark Burt and Keith Norfolk provided support. Here's his Report:

Saturday 19 August:

Working party to fit stairs for public access to *Brighton* in time for the National Waterways Festival.

We loaded the stairs on to Keith Norfolk's 1925 Dutch Barge, *Petra*, on the Thames between Pangbourne and Beale Park, and transported them by river to N & B's mooring close to the Festival site. Mark Burt stopped by to drop off a set of steel fixings he had made for attaching the stairs to the bulkhead lockers on *Brighton*. Fabian Hiscock turned up while I was off buying drill bits. By the time I got back he had moved the coal that was at the back end of *Brighton's* hold onto *Nuneaton*, so that the stairs could be installed.

After fitting a steel bracket to the stairs and starting to fit the a corresponding piece to the Battery locker, it started to rain heavily which prevented further use of power tools. Suspended operations for the day.

Sunday 20th August

Finished fitting the steelwork to the lockers. Some work remains to be done but the stairs may now be used.

The stairs can be easily attached to either locker, depending on which side the bank is. During shows, a hand rail may be attached to either side. When the stairs are not in use, they may be taken down and stored in the hold. If necessary, they may be dismantled and stored flat or removed from the boat and stored elsewhere.

In addition to the inboard assembly, there's also a stairway for the bank, so that visitors can get onto the locker to come down the stairs and in.

Note by Ed:

Andy has designed and built these to be removed when not open to visitors. Personally, I find a day's working on a pair of big GUs exhausting – too much climbing in and out. I reckon the Belton Stairway won't be dismantled very often! And they transform our access to visitors. But we need to make sure they stay in good nick.

And while we're on the subject: the Belton Stairs should be mentioned in the same breath as the Wolfe Rack. The fore-ends of both boats now have a very useful area of racking, solidly built by Nick Wolfe in the late winter before we left Stoke Bruerne. They make keeping the boats in order much easier – and were widely used in "carrying days". These are real advances, put forward and executed by members. Cracking, Grommit.

The Boat Manager

Graham Scothern

A few weeks ago it became clear that we needed someone to pay real attention to the boats, and to coordinate their maintenance, and I volunteered to take on the role. Council have approved my draft of the duties of the Boat Manager, and here they are.

I have taken on this function to try to keep the boats functioning, and the skippers and crew happy with the state of the boats. This, however, relies on the captains (and others indeed) keeping me informed - all reports should be made to me, leaving messages as appropriate.

This is what I'll do:

- **To co-ordinate and manage the day-to-day running of both boats.**
- **To act as a reporting point for skippers to report faults and problems affecting the operation or the safety of the boats**
- **To update skippers taking over the boats any problems that they need to be aware of**
- **To find contractors to effect repairs and to brief and act as NBT contact point for them**
- **To maintain a list of jobs held over to Winter Maintenance and to arrange for the work to be done**
- **To consult with other members of the Trust regarding repair/modification priorities and financial constraints**

To make this work, I need Captains to:

- **Report serious faults on the boats to the BM as they occur**
- **Complete an End of Trip Report on hand-over to next skipper (or to BM if boats are left for a period of time)**
- **Log engine hours and pass figure to BM**
- **Discuss any issues with BM before taking boats over**

We also need to get used to making an End of Trip Report (EoTR):

- **Fault that need attention**
- **Faults repaired during trip**
- **Gripes, suspicious noises or other nebulous thoughts!**
- **Any experiences requiring guidance for successful operation by others.**

I think this is an important role, but it really will depend on everyone else playing their part.

Photographs

As usual, we have some photos to amuse our readers!

Overleaf you'll find:

Nuneaton and Brighton at Soulbury 1 April 2006. Having spent the winter at Stoke Bruerne, we set off towards London and Cavalcade: Soulbury was the first stop. Photo by Dave Davies.

Cavalcade in the Sunshine. After much difficulty from the unscheduled stoppage at Cowley Peachey lock, Dave Davies and Roger Hutchinson joined Andy Belton at Little Venice on the Saturday evening. Photo by Dave Davies.

*If only it was always like this.... (it isn't, of course). Dave Davies steers past Windsor Castle on the way to - where was it, exactly?
Photo: Roger Hutchinson*

Part of the Show. Lizzie Knight dressed up at Beale Park. The Knights showed the boats off at Brookwood in May and at Beale Park, and also took them from Brookwood to Oxford (see text): here's Lizzie in "show dress"...





Activities

The pages that follow contain notes from many sources on our “year” so far. There are some real “epics” here, but many of them tell of some really valuable contributions made by the Narrow Boat Trust to the enjoyment of others.

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February 18th/10th Our first 'Experience Weekend', *By David Blagrove:*

The day began foggy and frosty. Nick Wolfe opened the boats up at 8.20 and lit the fires. DB joined him shortly after, followed by Andy Belton, Dave Davies and Roger Davies. Following a quick safety briefing we set off at 09.45, with both fires going well. The winding hole being only a short distance away, we backed up to it since Stoke locks were closed for maintenance. Dave Davies steered the motor through the tunnel, with Andy Belton on the butty, and by the time the boats had arrived at Gayton junction the weather had cleared and a brilliantly sunny day developed. The boats went down the Northampton Arm to the top of the locks, where crews undertook narrow lock working. Because of time constraints only the first two locks were operated, but some useful practice in butty work was undertaken.

Both boats returned stern first to the top, winded, and then set off for the main line. Crews now had a chance of experiencing main line work, and the pair ran as far north as Furnace Wharf, where they winded and returned to Stoke, changing crews in the meantime so that everyone had a chance of steering. After winding the pair backed up to the basin at Stoke top lock ready for the morning.

Sunday 19th February. This was a cold and foggy day, much less pleasant than the previous day. The plan of the day was the same as before. Crew was: DB, Fabian Hiscock, Derek Palmer and Nick Strivens. The boats were away by 9.40. On arriving at the top lock of the Arm, we discovered that the second pound down had been emptied in the night - apparently deliberately, for a brick was jamming the top gate slightly open. Apart from the butty training, this afforded the crew extra pleasure in refilling and removing the offending brick. Afterwards we once more went to Furnace Wharf and winded. Nick's turn at steering the butty was frustrated by his taking an unforeseen dip soon after (*by Ed: important lessons here, which I offer elsewhere in this issue*). Both days went without serious hitches, and all the crews, even Nick, enjoyed themselves.

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[There was another weekend a month later, which was generally similar. As models they were successful, and we'll hope to do it again this winter].

We had our winter mooring until 1 April, and had to get the boats heading south that day. We did:

Saturday April 1st - Stoke Bruerne to Soulbury. *By Dave Davies*

Crew: *Fabian Hiscock, John Fevyer, Rich Davies & Dave Davies*

My brother Rich [*by Ed: I was amazed to find that this was the first time Rich had actually managed to come boating. He's earned it in spades!*] & I arrived at Stoke Bruerne around 8.40am, got the range going and did the engine checks. When Fabian & John arrived we took down the top cloths, on a blustery day. Off by 10am, we found a brace of hire cruisers proceeding down the flight very slowly in front of us! It was their first time on a boat and their knowledge was slim. But we worked with them, and were through the flight by 11.30am. Fabian & Dave shared motor duties while John & Rich dealt with the butty on cross-straps. Conditions were now very difficult with strong winds gusting across the open fields, and we proceeded 'crabwise' down the Stoke pound, arriving at Cosgrove lock without mishap by 1pm.

Through endless *Milton Keynes*, which always seems to take an age, we met very little traffic and apart from the wind and a 5-minute shower the weather was kind to us. But we picked up something nasty just as we were passing a Dutch barge, and lost steering: but 'chucking back' hastily cleared the problem and we only slightly bounced off the barge!

Through *Fenny Stratford lock* around 5pm, then on through *Stoke Hammond* to the *Soulbury Three* and good mooring above the top lock for 6.40pm. We tidied and clothed up, before Pat Hiscock came to take us back to Stoke Bruerne. Job done.

April 10th: *the boats were at Marsworth*, having been moved from the top of Soulbury Three by *Jason McCabe* and crew. But there were problems with *Nuneaton's* engine overheating (again), and Jason arranged for an examination of the engine but not until a few weeks later. "*It needs at least a full top-end strip down to check & change both head gaskets and the gasket at the bottom of the barrels. There is a chance that the heat exchanger has failed and water can transfer to the raw water system.....*" Uhrrrmmm.....? We should be OK with care, and have the chance to sort it properly on the way up to the *Rickmansworth Festival*.

April 24th: *the boats are at: Croxley*, after being moved from Marsworth by *Rob & Chris Knight, John Bull, Colin Morgan, Andy Belton & Graham Scothern* over the weekend. No engine problems and some fine weather on Saturday: Andy Belton describes "*an excellent trip*":

Having left cars at Croxley, *John* drove *Rob, Chris and Andy* to Marsworth before driving to a convenient station near the end of the first day's boating. The boats were well presented with side cloths tied and top planks down: *Pat* had been cleaning the cabins during the week and had re-hung the crochet and horse brasses. We had just loaded when *Colin* turned up, having walked from Tring Station. We filled the water cans and set off up the Marsworth flight. *John* met us approaching the top of the flight, having caught a train back to Tring. We stopped at Cowroast to help a boat with what seemed to be lead piping (but was actually a plastic pipe fender) wrapped round their propeller. We had a quick lunch while waiting in the sunshine, and weren't the only ones:

the beer gardens of canal-side pubs in Berkhamsted were bursting at the seams. The one undesired effect of this was that the *Three Horseshoes* at Winkwell, where we stopped for the night, had run out of food by the evening. *John* and *Colin* left for home, leaving *Rob*, *Chris* and *Andy* aboard overnight.

We woke up to rain, were joined by *Graham*, and continued through Boxmoor and into the new development that used to be Apsley Mills, this time eating in the traditional way - on the move. There was still evidence of the paper industry at Nash Mills, but more new houses at Kings Langley are built on the site of the *Ovaltine works*. Then it was under the M25, through Hunton Bridge and Grove to Cassiobury Park and Croxley, again the site of a former paper mill, where we tied just above Common Moor Lock.

We all had a stint at steering. We all made mistakes, especially those of us who had never used a wheel to change gear before. We singled out, breasted up, entered locks and negotiated bridge holes on awkward bends. Sometimes it went like clockwork, sometimes it was ugly, but at the end of the trip, thanks to expert tips and instruction from *Rob* our skipper, we came away somewhat better at it than before. We had an excellent time and we got the boats back on schedule to get to Little Venice next weekend. My thanks to all who took part.

Andy Belton

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April 27th: The boats set off on their way down to the *Canal Cavalcade* at Little Venice, taken by *John Bull*, *Dave Davies*, *Roger Hutchinson* & *Andy Belton* in face of the breach at Cowley during dredging by BW subcontractors.

Roger Hutchinson reports:

We shall Overcome tripped off my tongue more than once during our three day trip from Croxley to Paddington for the Canal Cavalcade. This song of hope was stimulated by the actions of the BW subcontractors '*Land and Water*' and a plethora of other obstacles plus our own blunders.

Arriving midday on Thursday at Croxley we parked in a convenient space opposite to where our two dear old girls were moored breasted up - looking very chic with those side cloths too. Little did we know how well we would acquaint ourselves with this car park in the near future.

John Bull was already there. We discussed the situation with the stoppage at Cowley and decided to get as near to the problem as possible so when it was sorted we could be the first boats through.

Oft We Go. The trip down the Grand Union was uneventful with little traffic and fine weather. We all took a turn at lock wheeling and competently steering the breasted up pair slowly through the green budding and blossoming landscape. We got various updates on the stoppage, and got to Uxbridge to find that we'd be there till Saturday.

Admiring Antipodeans. So *John Bull* bade us farewell and headed for the station, while we had a look round *Keith's* Dutch barge. Back on the boats as dusk fell, cooking dinner while enjoying a soothing libation, a middle age couple

happened upon us. We jokingly fielded the usual questions about our girls and their activities, and learnt that they were over from New Zealand seeking out their English roots, and planned to hire a boat on the Oxford for a weekend in May. Their curiosity had led them to the canal to learn more before setting off on their own trip. They came on board, delighted with the cosy cabin and appreciative of our efforts to preserve this wonderful heritage. We waved them goodbye as the chilli began to stick in the pan on the range, and they strolled off happily into the night with enhanced excitement for their forthcoming trip

Working in a Chain Gang

Friday morning was bright and breezy and after a fine breakfast I found the bicycle pump and inflated the back tyre to ride the couple of miles to the stoppage. The contractors were deep in the bed of the drained short section of the canal by bridge 190, laying in concrete, bucket by bucket, to the exposed top of the damaged 200 year old brick culvert. It appears they'd been dredging the bridge hole as deep as they could to provide as much depth as possible over the illegally discarded objects that would otherwise impede passing boats.

The BW engineer overseeing the work could have taken the role of a straw-chewing, carbine-toting, mirror-shaded guard in a big hat standing over a sweating chain gang, leaning, as he was, casually over the bridge parapet making sure that no-one slacked in the mud below. A perfectly decent fellow really, he informed me with steely confidence that we would get to Cavalcade by Saturday afternoon.

Dave got the boat's mobile phone powered up and bought credit to ring round the plan to go on on Saturday, and the rest of the day was spent tarding up the girl's make-up followed by one of *Dave's* cupboard stews and an early night.

Oft Again. We woke early to another fine day, and while *Dave* was down at the stoppage to get the latest news (confirmation) I busied myself with cooking a full English. Breakfast was followed by a good clean out of the butty and buffing of the brasses while we waited for *Andy Belton* to join us. We left at 10.30 with *Dave* steering the motor, *Andy* working on his new grand staircase in *Brighton's* hold while I hung on to the butty's elum. WE went through the breach (which now showed almost no sign of the frantic activity of the previous days), and made steady progress down to London.

Brief Encounter

After an almost textbook port turn at Bull's Bridge the conurbation of London became more evident, but it was interesting in the variety of built and natural environments we travelled through.

On trying to tie for desperately needed water but confounded by fishermen, I called to a cyclist to kindly assist in pulling me in. He introduced himself as *Richard Scarfe* of the '*Friends of Raymond*,' just on his way back from the Canal Cavalcade! He told me that we were needed at Paddington, where as there were few working boats on display. He also mentioned that he had filmed *Brighton* back in the 70's when she did the gravel runs for Three Fellows, and promised to dig out the Super8 reel so it could be transferred on to DVD.

Crossing the viaduct over the Circular Road, we saw a new wharf for the transshipment of recycled waste along the canal (*by Ed: this is the site of a*

scheme in which the Rickmansworth Waterways Trust is involved, with waste paper from Marks and Spencer to the Paper Trail at Apsley}.

The Carnival is Over (for us!)

On reaching Little Venice we were made to feel like returning heroes by the many smiles and greetings from those on boats and the bank. On entering the basin we were confronted by a seeming wall of brightly decorated boats surrounded by a thick heaving crust of humanity and multifarious stalls making our two girls dowdy but honest in comparison. The PA system announced our arrival in glowing term as *Dave* deftly piloted us through the melee with *Andy* on the bank guiding him to the allocated mooring for *Brighton* where he dropped the tow, and waited while we moored up. I then joined him to head up the Paddington Basin to wind about and return to *Nuneaton's* mooring space. *Dave's* reversing into the end-on space was like threading a needle wearing boxing gloves enhanced with a host of eyes watching every move, waiting for an entertaining mistake. They must have been quite disappointed in this respect as *Dave* executed a perfect manoeuvre and we blithely tied up and stopped the engine. The smell of delicious food wafted from the stalls stirring our appetites but *Brighton* needed a tidying and leaflets required folding so when we emerged half an hour later I was dismayed to find the stalls bare and all the visitors gone! Swallowing our disappointment, we had a quick drink with *Andy*, then *Dave* and I headed for the tube with all our gear only to be crammed into a carriage, filled beyond capacity until we changed trains. With our intended Underground route closed for maintenance we eventually arrived in sleepy Croyley several hours later. Starving but with only a pizza place on offer we decided to head up the M1 before assuaging our appetite: so we walked down the steep *Mill Lane* to the canal and the car park.

Purgatory

It was quite dark here - the car was just as we had left it, but when *Dave* turned the key - nothing! The vehicle was totally devoid of electrical power and so after many phone calls exploring the options, and long walks to a garage, we ended back at the car with a pizza which lived up to our earlier doubts. So we got out the sleeping bags and fell into a fitful sleep until the rain of a grim dawn woke us.

Back at up the top of *Mill Lane* in the rain, we got hold of a breakdown firm who were there in 30 minutes, and identified the problem as being a flat battery due to side lights being left on for three days. Fifty notes lighter, (*arrgh!*) we arrived back home feeling like death warmed up but a hot bath and coffee soon sorted that out. As I lay there soaking the aches away it occurred to me that the one major difference to previous trips was that at least it hadn't rained - so I can't really complain

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May 6th: the boats were at Uxbridge, taken from Little Venice by *John Fevyer & Andy Belton*.

May 20th: the boats are at Rickmansworth for the Festival. But the crewing was creaking.

May 24th: *Pat Hiscock reported* "Fabian and I were involved with organising the Festival rather than with the NBT over the Ricky w/e. The weather was pretty terrible, but the feedback from the boaters and around Batchworth lock, where we were promoting the 'Learning at the Lock' schools educational programme, has been very good indeed. Over the weekend the boats were manfully attended by *John Fevyer* on both days - he was alone on Saturday and because the pair hadn't a towpath side pitch [*by Ed - because it wasn't clear that we'd be there at all, our registration for the Festival was late*] the poor chap couldn't even show *Brighton* off. *The Knight family* joined him on for a very wet and miserable Sunday, and with a bit of juggling had *Brighton* on the bank. When I saw them, Chris was in full flow showing folks around!

We were clearing up around Batchworth after the festival when Nick Wolfe arrived to take over the boats, heading south on Monday!"

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May 27th: the boats were at: Brookwood, on the Basingstoke Canal, for this weekend's IWA Campaign Rally. The ONLY pair of working boats at the Rally, the pair were brought down from Rickmansworth by Nick Wolfe, Richard ?, John Bull and Colin Morgan

Mandy Knight and the family took charge of them there. She reported:

Sat 27th May:

The family arrived at Brookwood, about 9.00am to find the boats and prepare them for showing. Lots of interest with the boats and many people coming by and saying "thank you for being there"! We were graced with showing the boats to the Mayor of Woking, who had a full guided tour. Had a sudden downpour late afternoon, which dispersed the crowds so we packed up and went home just after 5.30pm.

Sun 28th May:

Got back to the boats really early, to do pump-out and sort out the boats....huge amount of interest, several old members of N.B.T asking about the whereabouts of *ALTON*. We were also filmed by *Surrey & Hants Canal Society* for a promotional video.

Had visits from *John Bull, Dave Vickers and family, the Clutterbucks* and saw *John Fevyer* on and off all weekend.

We actually stayed on board that night too, and the illuminated boat procession was one of the best we had ever seen!

Mon 29th May:

We set off to take the boats up the Thames. We followed *Renfrew* and *Theo* down to the locks just after 9am, got to St John's and the heavens opened but once the boats were in the lock we had no problems and the sun came back out. 2nd lock was no problem either but at the 3rd lock we were met by member Colin Morgan who had come to give a hand.... and then we found we could not get one gate open, so we bow-hauled the butty out and then manouvered the motor out. We were then joined by John Bull and his lock wheeling team, to give a hand with the remaining locks and ended up doing

most twice, and the canal ranger was following locking all the gates so we had no one following us down. We were very grateful for the help and once we had done the last lock we decided to grab a cup of tea, so everyone left us to it...unsuspecting that we would at once get both boats well and truly stuck in the short, and shallow, section before coming out on to the Wey. We managed to free ourselves with a lot of hard work, but our problems weren't over: when we tried to moor it was so shallow we again got stuck, and after some frustration we ended the day by mooring below New Haw lock - and rewarded ourselves with a fantastic Chinese takeaway.....

Tuesday 30th May:

Left New Haw at 8.30am, but I couldn't budge any of the lock gates on the Wey so Rob ended up doing them all. But out of the Thames lock and on to Shepperton, where our saga continued: with the lock keeper not knowing what to charge us! So an inspector was called, and we were kept at the top of the lock until everything was sorted. Frantic phone calls were made until we had the correct paper work. We were eventually allowed to go on our way and we made steady progress mooring at Runnymede at about 5.30pm. *[By Ed: it's really amazing how few of the EA staff have any idea how to charge working boats. Are we that unusual?]*

31st May - 2nd June:

Left at 8.30 and made good progress all day at each lock we were asked to show our paperwork, had lunch on the move and moored at Crookham Reach for the night and took ourselves off for a pizza and beer.

Left just after 8, and continued on our way, at Hurley lock the lock keeper again quizzed us about our paper work, but when we got to the next lock he had telephoned ahead and apologised!! Ended up mooring at the bottom of Sonning lock for the night.

Decided to have a long day and left at 7am, had breakfast and lunch on the go, ended up at Abingdon at about 7.30 and had difficulty finding a mooring, but managed to moor at the bottom of the lock.

Saturday 3rd June:

Left at 7am for Oxford. We decided to go via the Duke's Cut as neither of us had done this before. It was such a lovely day, really hot...the Duke's Cut was very overgrown and windy, but we managed it and at last we were on the Oxford canal. Stopped for lunch, then continued on our way - when much to Chris and Rob's delight 3 boats full of women in little more than bikinis came past - and got to our final destination at Thrupp just after 7. It took us ages to tie, as it was just too shallow to leave the boats singled out: so we ended up having to breast them up, with difficulty and not much room to pass. I got stung by stinging nettles, Rob got a wet foot - but we ended up having a lovely meal at the JOLLY BOATMAN...

Sunday 4th June:

We got up and cleaned the boats before our lift came at 11am, had a really enjoyable trip as usual the children worked so hard, we are really proud of them, and we all ended up with a suntan!!!

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June 11th: *the boats were at Marston Doles on the S. Oxford Canal, with Roger Morgan & Crew, having left Thrupp on Friday and on their way to Napton Junction to be taken on to Saul by Pete Harrison & crew. Pete reports on that stretch:*

Tuesday 13th June 2006:

We arrived at Napton Bridge at 11:45 having being driven up from Bristol by my wife as I had come directly off a night shift. We found the boats tied singled out in a fairly good position, and unloaded all my boating gear - I take quite a lot of stuff, and this took some time and as we enjoyed a picnic lunch on *BRIGHTON* my friend *Richard Scarfe* turned up having come by train from Watford and then bicycle from Rugby. We set off at 13.30, the crew being me as steerer, two of my sons (*Jack 17 and Luke 16*) and *Richard* whilst my wife went to Leamington Spa to pick up another of my sons (*Dan, 20*) who was due to arrive from Hull. A prolonged stop was made to acquire diesel, and by 14:30 we were clearing Wigrams (Calcutt Locks) and making our way towards Stockton at pace. The plan was to make the top of Warwick Two (Cape Locks) in time for food at the Cape of Good Hope pub. My wife and Dan met us whilst we were dropping through Stockton Locks, and after helping us through she left us at Stockton Bridge (Blue Lias pub - Bridge 23) taking with her *Luke* who was only on a day trip due to school exams. With the benefit of both Richard's bicycle and my knowledge of this stretch we were tied up above Warwick Two in plenty of time for food. With our orders placed behind the bar I returned to the boats to mop them off.

Wednesday 14th June 2006:

This was always going to be a big day and a 05:00am (!!!) start was in order. I don't usually like to boat for more than twelve hours, but I was sure it would put us in good stead, and it would be an easy afternoon anyway. We cleared Hatton by the time most people were getting up for work, and enjoyed breakfast on the Eight Mile Pound (*eight miles from Hatton to Knowle*). 08:30 saw us making a start on Lapworth Locks, our first narrow locks - a new experience for Richard. I now find it easiest to tow across the lower reservoir pound at Lapworth, as BW have placed a signpost that interferes badly with a bowhauling line. From the second lock from bottom (Lock 19) I went on alone with *NUNEATON*, leaving the inexperienced Richard with my two experienced sons. My job was to "*drive and draw*" (see separate short article) whilst *BRIGHTON* came up in relative ease being three handed. We cleared Lapworth Locks by 12:30, being delayed by slow pleasure boats in the last four locks. The gearbox oil cooler also became choked whilst ascending these locks due to the build up Summer debris (grass cuttings, weed etc) and was cleared whilst waiting for *BRIGHTON* to come through Lock 6, it requiring a tow to Lock 5. As soon as we started out of Lapworth Top Lock it was clear that the Birmingham level was several inches lower than usual as we ploughed our way through the mud towards Birmingham. The outskirts of Birmingham gave much more trouble as we bumped and ground our way through the bridges. Only two blade fulls, one a pair of trousers and the other a tyre were caught at Shirley and only 5 yards apart. The swing bridge near Kings Norton (Lifford Lane) was open and looked derelict. This used to be a favourite place for jobs to cause problems as you slowed down for the bridge. *Dan* thought that the bridge

was off its turntable – lets hope so and that it stays that way ! At the old guillotine lock at Kings Norton we were greeted by a woman running down the towpath waving her arms. It transpired that she was on a pair of hotel boats that were stuck whilst exiting the lock (coming towards us) and that the canal was blocked. Having local knowledge I know it is essential to get the motors line right when entering and leaving this lock, something the hotel boat steerer clearly did not know as he was several feet off line. I was asked if I would pull them off, which I was quite happy to do as I could make no further progress with them in the way. Whilst I was lining myself up for the pull the hotel boat steerer powered his fore end into the bank where it was even shallower, leaving me struggling to remain afloat and unable to assist. They were soon free and the butty steerer said to *Dan and Jack* on *BRIGHTON* that they would not learn any manners from me as I was trying to push my way through. We had no problem entering the guillotine lock where *Richard* left us as he had other commitments, although he would have liked to have come all the way to Saul (even though he was very unimpressed with the combination of a butty and narrow locks). The length from Kings Norton Junction to the entrance of West Hill Tunnel was a real effort, passing another hotel pair in the shallows for good measure. Once clear of the tunnel the rest of the journey to Tardebigge Top Lock was much easier as the bridges were only full of mud. We tied opposite the B.W.B. maintenance yard and made use of the local facilities again, this being one of my favourite tie ups.

Thursday 15th June 2006:

Although yesterday was a long day this was the hard day psychologically. I used to bring my sons to Tardebigge when they were younger where they would help boats pass through the flight of locks. I always said that one day we would help a working boat through Tardebigge – clearly today was our day, and we were now three handed. I had no prospective destination for the day as I did not know how long Tardebigge would take us, and it was due to be the hottest day of the year. I towed *BRIGHTON* down the first pound and then set off with *NUNEATON* into the flight promising Dan and Jack an ice cream at the bottom. Once again it was my job to “drive and draw”; a good routine soon developed and it wasn’t long before reaching the half way point, passing *RAYMOND* being bowhauled back up the flight after recent cabin repairs. The boys worked hard and we stopped for our ice creams at Stoke Prior. Unfortunately the shop there is no longer in business so I had to disappoint them, but we did stay tied up for an hour for a proper lunch – and it was very hot. We were away again by 14:30 and made steady progress towards Worcester, only having one minor problem with *BRIGHTON* sticking for about half an hour in Astwood Top Lock. Unfortunately this upset two boaters, although neither did anything to assist except suggesting a phone call to BW. Once clear of Lock 17 it made sense to push on to Tibberton, where we had been recommended a good pub. The moorings at Tibberton have changed considerably since I was last there twenty one years ago. Back then it was very shallow with only one permanent mooring. Now there are loads of “private” moorings followed lines of visitor moorings. In the distance the visitor moorings looked full so I chose a suitably vacant “private” mooring. Initially a local man complained about us stopping where we were, but it turned out we have a mutual friend and he was then more than happy for us to tie there, even letting us use a tap in his garden to refill our

cans. The pub was excellent providing such large helpings that we could not drink! I also had the opportunity to buy the ice creams I had promised earlier.

Thursday 16th June 2006:

Tibberton village store opened early for me the following morning, allowing me to get an 06:30 start. Dan spent most of the morning on the bike, closing gates behind us and setting the next lock ready for us. The towpath going towards Worcester is a registered cycle path and is very good. I had been pre-warned about Lock 6 where the bottom tail walls have come in several inches. This is no problem for modern boats but is a pinch point for the high fore end of an empty large GU motor. There are several views on how to overcome this, and I selected the least dramatic. Whilst setting Lock 5, which is only about two hundred yards away, I drew all four paddles and lowered the pound above by about twelve inches. This allowed *NUNEATON* to float out of Lock 6 with about two inches to spare although it was very clear how narrow these tail walls are. To be on the safe side *BRIGHTON* was towed out of this lock, but would have come out on a bowhauling line with ease.

Both Diglis Basins at Worcester are in the centre of a major construction programme, with the inner basin drained. As the outer basin is accommodating boats from the inner basin as well as its own, visitor moorings at Diglis have been suspended. We had passed a couple of boats coming north during the morning, and I was optimistic at finding a good mooring at the Commandery, leaving only one narrow and two wide locks to the River Severn. Sure enough a perfect space was found outside the Commandery, and we settled down at 11:30 to an afternoon off. My wife visited us for lunch and whisked away Jack, who had other commitments for the next few days. Dan fell asleep for most of the afternoon (well, he is a student!) whilst I potted about the boats preparing them for Saul. I rehung the stern fenders on *NUNEATON* so that they point slightly upwards, and fitted a chain "jumper" onto the rudder of *BRIGHTON* which should prevent the rudder lifting off whilst passing over debris on the canal bottom (although as one link is split the rudder shouldn't become damaged if caught on something more solid such as a lock cill). The small exhaust (*titch pipe*) is missing, and the front face of the pigeon box had become blackened by the exhaust: so we cleaned off both this and the roof round the pigeon box, and did a few running repairs to the bicycle, a valued item that requires constant maintenance. Much of the early evening was spent entertaining a German family who were enjoying the last evening of their fifth canal boat holiday. They were most interested in the boats and had a full tour that included both cabins and the engine room !

Friday 17th June 2006:

The two wide locks at Diglis Basin are not opened until 08:00 which gave me time to give the engine a thorough check over, including the gearbox oil cooler, prior to going out onto the River. The anchor was set up just in case and good mooring lines strategically placed - all rivers command respect, and I've seen the Severn in anger on several occasions. At the same time you can give yourself some advantages with good preparation, hence the thorough engine checks. By chance Waterways World magazine recently published an article on the Severn and Gloucester and Sharpness Canal, which included the telephone numbers for both the lock keepers and swing bridge operators. This ensured

that each lock on the River and each swing bridge on the G. & S. Canal was ready for us. We were clear of Diglis Lock (the big one on the Severn) by 08:30 having had a leisurely descent of the two wide Diglis Locks on the canal, assisted by the lock keeper who now owns and lives on *BEXHILL*, which was paired with *BRIGHTON* throughout most of the 1970's and 1980's although with three different owners). The Severn was as boring as I remember with its high banks and no discernable features. Three and a half hours saw us passing through Tewkesbury, but nothing of the town can be seen from the river. Another three hours saw us entering Gloucester Docks and Andy Belton on the lockside to welcome us. Andy removed some of his wood from *BRIGHTON's* hold once we were tied up and stayed with us for the night. Gloucester Docks is also the subject of major construction works with several projects under way: no doubt future owners of these expensive new homes will be in conflict with the late night trip boats that operate from these docks, as these boats are unbelievably noisy, most of which comes from the D.J.!

Saturday 18th June 2006:

Andy left us at 08:30 and we were away shortly afterwards. The first swing bridge out of Gloucester had been vandalised during the night but an early phone call to the bridge operator gave him plenty of time to open it by hand. The next couple of bridges are high so do not need opening although the traffic light system must still be adhered to. 10:30 saw us tying at Saul and after about half an hour we were directed to another mooring by one of the harbourmasters.

The usual period of cleaning up the boats for the next crew and shutting them both down (isolating both engine cooling water inlets, gas, batteries e.t.c.) followed and we were away by 13:00.

Job done!

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Tipcats and Titbits

Congratulations to the Knight family on the award, by the Surrey and Hants Canal Society, of the Robin Higgs Award. It was awarded to the whole family for their contribution to the running of the trip boat John Pinkerton for at least 20 years.

It just shows that you can make a real contribution to more than one organisation, if you try hard enough. Well done to Robert, Mandy Christopher and Lizzie.

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Malcolm ("Blossom") Edge has finally had the long overdue operation to replace a well-worn knee joint, and is in recuperation. That's kept him out of action for the summer, but he'll be back to fitness next year. We all hope his recovery continues to plan.

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Keith Norfolk, always happy to expand his experience, took his barge to Saul Junction via the River Severn from Bristol (and back, of course). Nothing like a spot of sea-time...

But commiserations to Maria, who badly broke an arm coming off her bike just before the Saul Junction event: she's recovering too, but we all wish her well also.

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Congratulation also to a long-time supporter of the Narrow Boat Trust: Chris Coburn, on whose moorings we spent a winter a few years ago, was awarded the MBE in the Queen's Birthday Honours list.

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The Jam Ole run this year will be the last.

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Some dates for next year will be of interest to Members, and quite possibly to the Trust as well:

- § Rickmansworth Festival 19/20 May.
- § Stoke Bruerne "rally" (organised by the Friends of the Canal Museum) 16/17 June
- § Braunston Gathering of Historic Boats – 23/24 June
- § Saul Junction 30 June-1 July.

This gives a fine opportunity for boats (inc ours) to go from one to the other in a sort of crocodile: no doubt the Crewing Coordinator will be ready to hear from members to make this work!

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On the subject of communication: *could all members please update their contact details (address, phone, mobile, email) and either post or email our Membership Secretary, Anne Perry.*

We also need to know your availability/interest in the following:

1: Crewing

2: Maintaining the boats (mostly working parties, often in winter but not only.)

3: Preparing the boats for Events:

4: Exhibiting the boats at Events

5: Day/part day assistance - ie: lockwheeling/loading/unloading - anything at all, really!

This info is essential for the Trust to achieve even it's basic functions, let alone new and exciting initiatives.

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Tail piece – Food for Thought

Fabian Hiscock

A lesson for all of us: you'll have seen that in February a crew member got wet. It happened when he was trying to get back into the empty butty from the towpath, with the boats under way but moving very slowly. Holding the hand rail and stepping firmly up into the cockpit, it was only when he tried to climb over the coaming that he realised just how high he had to get: he missed, basically. The steerer (me) couldn't lift him in, and he ended up waist deep while hanging on to various bits of the boat.

This was when it got really interesting. I made to steer the back end in so that he could get back onto the bank, but even then he (in the water) and I (in the hatches) together were unable to get him out of the water in wet clothes and boots. Fortunately a passer by provided the extra lift necessary. Total immersion about 50%, total immersion time about 3 minutes, bank height above water level about 18", water depth perhaps 4' – no problem. But it was - remember that this was February, and even in that time Nick found his strength starting to go.

Fortunately the range was alight and we have several old towels in the boats for just this purpose; and we had a change of clothes – so hypothermia, a real risk, was avoided. But we've had a reminder: don't underestimate the size of our boats - and never ever underestimate the consequences of accidental immersion.

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