

Summer 2025

Cuttings

Journal of the Shropshire Union Canal Society

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Journal of the Shropshire Union Canal Society

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All photos are by the author of the article except where stated.

Click on photos to view a higher resolution version in your browser.

Cover photo: Llangollen Moorings at the western limit of the Llangollen Canal (photo: G Mitchell).



Editorial

April started well when, over the weekend of Friday 4th to Sunday 6th, the Society hosted guests including members of the Shropshire County Council and C&RT to celebrate the topping out of the re-watered sections at Crickheath Wharf. And there was plenty to shout about with our volunteers having given 6,500 hours of their free time to reach this outstanding achievement which has reduced the Shropshire Gap, the yet unrestored stretch of canal, by a further 10 per cent. Find out much more information in Tom Fulda's report on page [22](#).

Norbury Canal Festival 3rd to 5th May proved to be popular and lively, particularly on Sunday and Monday with many interested parties visiting our stall to ask about progress. Sue was kept busy telling our story and although we both returned home somewhat chilled and hoarse, at least two visitors with families have joined and one particularly wants to take part in the work parties so our efforts weren't wasted.



Day three of Norbury Boat Festival – colder and windier than ever (photo: S Ball)



Quote of the day by gentleman studying publicity photos: "By 'eck! Bet it takes some money restoring this canal, eh?" (photo: S Ball)

Dates for the Society stall continue to be added and, thanks to Sue Ball and Fred, we now have updated photographs of the latest achievements for our publicity boards. Sue and I look forward to meeting some of you on our travels this year, details of venues can be found on page [43](#).

Don't forget that next year will be the 60th Anniversary of our Society's founding which took place on 9th November 1966 in Newport, Shropshire at the Grade II-listed Royal Victoria Hotel, now currently under reconstruction. Any ideas of how to mark this special occasion would be welcomed and can be forwarded to secretary Sue Ball whose contact details can be found on page [2](#).

Jan Johnstone on behalf of the Editorial Team

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Chairman's Report

Spring seems to be the season for waterway restoration conferences. I have attended two in the last month or so. The first, hosted by the very well organised Friends of the Cromford Canal, was at the Langley Mill junction of the Cromford, Erewash and the old Nottingham canals. The visit brought home how fortunate we are on the Montgomery to have all of the canal under C&RT ownership. Much of the southern end of the Cromford has been sold off or built over, including areas used for opencast coal mining, and the partially navigable northern section of the Cromford is isolated by a lengthy collapsed tunnel. (For a full report, see page [40](#).) The second event was hosted by the IWA at Ellesmere Port Boat Museum. This addressed a number of interesting subjects including water transfer by canal, heritage and young volunteers. My old boss of many years ago used to say that the most important part of a conference was the tea breaks. Suffice to say I made great use of these to talk to the various C&RT and IWA representatives present!

The Society held a topping-out ceremony on 4th April to celebrate the completion of the first phase of work to close the Shropshire Gap. See Tom Fulda's Restoration Update on page [22](#) for more details. Our thanks to you all – this work could not have happened without you.

The above "Phase 1" work was completed well within the agreed timetable and budget set out in the grant funding from the Government's Shared Prosperity Fund. As a result, we have obtained agreement to utilise the full funding within the original timescale to deliver a further 130m section of the canal. For those readers familiar with the site this length extends to the clay dam just before the badger setts and includes the "hole on the towpath". At the time of writing well over half of this section is lined complete with rip-rap and soil on the banks. Well worth a visit!

A second round of bids to the Shared Prosperity Fund was launched in April and (as before) a further application has been submitted via C&RT. The application will fund the Society's work on the Montgomery Canal at Crickheath — the channel and also design work for the "missing link", the farm bridge at Crickheath. This covers the period up to 31st March 2026. Fingers and toes firmly crossed for the result which is expected in late May.

I understand that the start of on-site work at Carreghofa Lane is now imminent by contractors Keir Construction. This is a great tribute to the C&RT project team who have overcome multiple challenges over several years to get the work to this stage. The next bridge "down the line" is of course Williams Bridge which is now the subject of a planning application. See page [30](#) for details as to how you can support this planning application.

Readers may remember that in March 2024 we got £1,500 from the Tesco Stronger Starts Scheme for our "Enhancing Ellesmere's Canal" project. This money was used to both buy tools and other equipment for the work, and to train three volunteers to achieve the RYA Helmsman certificate. Over the past year, the enhancement group has planted nearly 400 trees, cleared towpaths, cared for canal-side furniture and cleared offside channel vegetation using a loaned Canal & River Trust workboat steered by our newly trained volunteers. Appropriately, the Tesco Ellesmere store is located at the end of the Ellesmere Arm, and to mark the end of the year-long support, we were joined on the towpath by store manager Ella Hammond and her colleague Chris Harris. The group's work will continue and during the summer months will feature towpath surface improvement work



Being based at Ellesmere Yard, our enhancement group has been following the continuing C&RT-managed work on the restoration of the historic building complex. The work is being done to a very high standard with some wonderful craftsmanship on display. There are highly recommended hard hat tours on offer during the restoration period to view the work. It is evident that, when finished, the Yard will become a major visitor attraction.

Caring for assets that are over 200 years old is a complex business. In our work on the restoration of the old tramway wharf at Crickheath we had to decide which bits of the original structure could be saved and, if not, what replaced them. We received specialist guidance and I hope that we made the right choices! Talking to some of the specialists involved at Ellesmere Yard there are similar decisions to be made there. For example, there is a debate about the final external finishes of the complex with some advocating fresh paintwork as opposed to ageing patina. I can see the merits of both arguments and I am very happy to leave it to the experts. However, both examples illustrate the many, sometimes very difficult decisions that have to be made in the stewardship of a 200-year-old network.

I would like to welcome a new advertiser to Cuttings: Nantwich and Border Counties Yacht Club. See their advert on page [11](#).

The Society is out and about during the summer at a number of canal events (see page [43](#)) and of course has work parties at both Crickheath and Ellesmere (see page [9](#)). If you are around during these events, please drop in and say hello!

David Carter, Chairman

Council Clippings

A selection of discussions, reports and decisions from the March council meeting:

- A very good lecture was given by Society member Les Green to the Chester Lecture Society on 20th February at the Grosvenor Museum in Chester. The subject was the links between the 'Daniel Adamson' and the SURC Co. Good on yer, Les!
- A "full" year of events to be attended by the Publicity stall is planned (see page 43) – well, full enough for those manning it – and our "new" publicity boards (well, new photographic content) are up and ready. Make a note and come along and say hello, eh?
- A small increase in new members joining SUCS – always most welcome news. Thanks to various council members and Brian Wells for working at this in their various ways.
- Applications for grants of various kinds in Shropshire put on hold until the outcome of local elections at the beginning of May.
- Oswestry Rural Parish Council awarded £1,500 to the Montgomery Canal restoration project on 27th March.
- An excellent result from the Health & Safety Audit carried out on site at Crickheath by C&RT recently. Some great comments on our volunteers and working practices. C&RT quote: "I couldn't find fault with them. Totally professional". This reflects the superb work being done by Tom Fulda and co. Congratulations to all concerned from Health & Safety Officer, Pat Tolster.
- There have been a few reported instances of empty envelopes being received by members which should have contained the latest copy of Cuttings. Do contact the Cuttings team (see page 46) if this ever happens to you.
- Discussions on events to celebrate the Society's 60th anniversary year continue and increase. A timetable should be available soon. Watch this space....

Sue Ball, Secretary

Shroppiewalk 2025

As there's just so much going on elsewhere, this year's Shroppiewalk will be held in October. Date TBA but it will be based on Market Drayton. Please keep an eye on the website and social media for further details.



Work Party Dates for 2025

Dates	Type	Location
June 6-8	Restoration	Crickheath
June 21	Enhancement	Ellesmere
July 4-6	Restoration	Crickheath
July 19	Enhancement	Ellesmere
August 1-3	Restoration	Crickheath
August 16	Enhancement	Ellesmere
September 5-7	Restoration	Crickheath
September 20	Enhancement	Ellesmere
October 3-5	Restoration	Crickheath
October 18	Enhancement	Ellesmere
November 7-9	Restoration	Crickheath
November 22	Enhancement	Ellesmere
December 5-7	Restoration	Crickheath
December TBD	Enhancement	Ellesmere

For more information, contact:

- Restoration WPs: Tom Fulda, 07810 646026, tom.fulda@shropshireunion.org.uk
- Enhancement WPs: David Carter, 01244 661440, dcartersucs@gmail.com.

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	Facebook	@shropshireunion
	Instagram	@shropshireunion
	X	@shropshireunion
	LinkedIn	@shropshireunion



Membership News

We extend a warm welcome to the following new members:

- Mr Martin MacMillan & Mrs Elizabeth Clack of Chelmsford
- Mr Simon Gulliver of Otford
- Miss Kathryn Davis of Pant
- Mr Matthew Lanham of Prees
- Mr Ken Law of Trelystan
- Mr Stephen Allsobrook of Cyfronydd
- Mr Brian Williams of Loppington
- Mr Derek & Mrs Patricia Tonks of Wolverhampton
- Mr Dan Hughes and family of Whitchurch
- Mr Martin Ridges of London
- Mr and Mrs Boots of Market Drayton

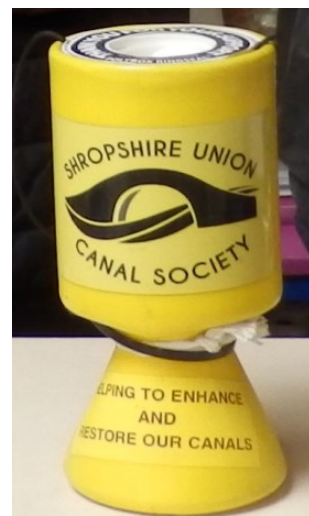
Members are reminded that annual subs are due on July 1. Those of you who are Life members or who pay by standing order do not need to do anything. Otherwise, please pay your annual subs of £15 by one of the following means:

- Make payment online at shropshireunion.org.uk/subs.
- Post your subs to me at the below address; please make cheques payable to The Shropshire Union Canal Society.
- Make a one-off BACS transfer to the Shropshire Union Canal Society Limited business bank account: Sort Code is 55-50-05; Account Number is 01630962; Reference should be your membership number or your postcode and surname.
- Set up a Standing Order for July 1 every year in favour of the Shropshire Union Canal Society Limited business bank account: Sort Code is 55-50-05; Account Number is 01630962; Reference should be your membership number or your postcode and surname.
- Ask me to send you a Standing Order form.

You can contact me about any membership matter at 42, Foyle Road, Blackheath, SE3 7RH, telephone 07920 708255 or by emailing memsec@shropshireunion.org.uk.

Richard Feeney, Membership Secretary

Collecting Box News



We've seen for a while that small cash donations were going down but it's sad to have to report the first financial year with the total box income only in three figures, only £789.55. Still, that's more than we would have without them and the boxes continue to remind boaters and others of the Society's presence.

To further draw attention to our presence, the collecting box team now have leaflet holders alongside collecting boxes. Thank you to everybody who has identified likely venues; it all helps to spread the word. If you can think of a suitable location for a collecting box, please contact me via milseam@btinternet.com or 01691 839286.

Sarah Thursfield

Moorings Available

Moorings are available at Nantwich and Border Counties Yacht Club (NBCYC) for narrow boats up to 40 feet long including GRP Cruisers. The moorings are suitable for those who wish to moor and take part in a club environment. We do not accommodate liveaboards.

Established in 1953 and nestled next to the picturesque Nantwich Canal Centre in Cheshire, NBCYC is a club rich in tradition and community spirit run by members for members.

The following are included in our mooring fees:

- Electric hookups for battery charging when owners are on board
- Water supply
- Elsan disposal.

In addition to these amenities, our clubhouse and meeting room serve as a central hub for socialising and hosting events. Also, our social events and club cruises offer members the opportunity to connect and enjoy shared interests.

For more information on membership and mooring applications, please visit nbcyc.club.

SUCS in the 1960s

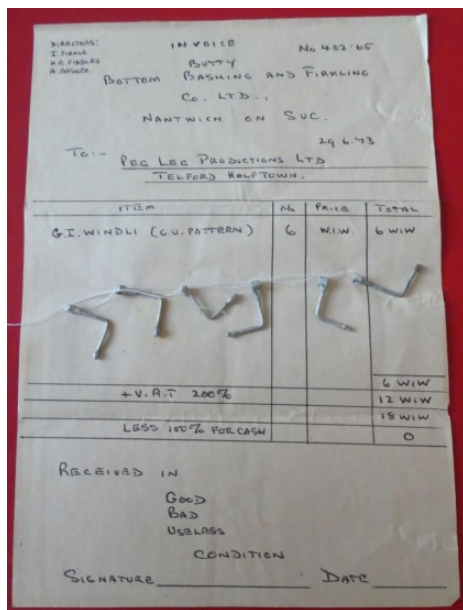
In the early days of the Shropshire Union Canal Society in the 1960s, the need for funding was every bit as important as it is now and to raise income, we started in a small way by selling crafts on the Society stall. Any takings helped to cover publicity, handouts, postage and other essentials.

I remember attending many rallies both on the canal and in towns and cities as the Society got more and more involved with events. One that is particularly memorable is Chester on a day when it didn't stop raining until we got home. Sitting under a large umbrella, I spent my time painting names on horseshoes whilst a steady stream of water poured down my back. Happily, the weather hadn't put off the crowds and we made a profit.

We, the first members of the Society, regularly volunteered for working parties and manning the stall and were every bit as hopeful and energetic as today's volunteers knowing we had to do everything we could to support the Society. A lot of those involved no longer with us would be over the moon if they could see where those early days have led.

The Society stall began to attend more venues and it was then some of us began producing items to sell. Personally, I recall making hundreds of what became known as triangular mice: small stuffed cone-shaped figures made with any scraps I could beg from family and friends then provided with whiskers, bead eyes and a plaited tail.

I also made peg doll canal women in full regalia clutching a tiny windlass. The windlasses were courtesy of friend Geoff Wilson, Pat's husband, and how he made such a tiny item complete in every detail is amazing. See the picture alongside for an idea of the size. He also sent me an invoice which generously didn't expect any payment and would regularly provide top-ups until I had to stop making the dolls due to illness in husband Bob's family.



On one occasion, we acquired a lot of rusty horseshoes which Bob, working in a foundry, got shot-blasted. These were then painted black and along with colourful enamel paints and fine brushes, taken to the Society stall at events. Various of us volunteers would then sit painting them with canal "flowers" and would offer the public a chance to personalise them. I remember on one occasion, a sailor in full regalia turned up and I painted the name of his ship on the one he chose. Wish I could remember the name now, I wonder where the horseshoe ended up?



Other things that came in for a paint job were egg cups, small plates, small tin boxes, in fact anything you could paint, we painted and what we were offering on our stall went down well as we always had some profit to hand over at the end of the day.

As time went by, other things arrived on the stall and we received donations of handcrafts or canal-related items, not just from members but also from interested members of the public, all helping to raise funds for a very worthy cause still in its infancy.

Talking of Geoff earlier made me recall seeing him in his famous "Inner Firkle" safety helmet recognisable to all of us who attended working parties. The logo on the front was taken from the Inner Circle logo used on London Underground pin badges. At one working party at Pool Quay lock just outside Welshpool, I was passing with a wheelbarrow and glancing down saw Geoff covered in mud in the bottom wearing it, very much Geoff's sense of humour. Incidentally, H&S in those days was casual but we were beginning to wear PPE hence Geoff's helmet.

I seem to remember he also had a famous trilby, much battered. Perhaps someone from those days reading this will recall more. If you do, please write or email your thoughts to the Cuttings Editorial team. See page [46](#) for contact details. We would love to hear from you.

Jan Johnstone

Places to Visit Near the Shroppie

As we all know, the Shroppie has lots to offer the holidaymaker but what if you want to stretch your legs and visit some of the many places of interest along its length? There follows just a few suggestions, not far from moorings, that might appeal.

Ellesmere Port National Waterways Museum, Cheshire

This seven-acre site – once a transshipment dock – is located at the junction of the Shropshire Union Canal, Manchester Ship Canal, and River Mersey. The museum is home to the country's designated collection of waterways history and offers a rich collection of waterway exhibitions, former working boats and restored Grade II-listed buildings where you can learn about the lives of waterways people. For more information visit tinyurl.com/49fcr78t (C&RT).

Chester, Cheshire

A historic walled city founded by the Romans, Chester sees both the Shropshire Union canal and River Dee flowing through it. With its splendid cathedral, Roman amphitheatre and medieval streets, it offers a lot for visitors to explore, perfect for those wet days. Not to be missed are the Rows, half-timbered shops on two levels, while street entertainment is found nearly all the year round. See tinyurl.com/bdzt7r7n (C&RT) to find out more.

Ellesmere, Shropshire

The medieval town of Ellesmere is on the Llangollen canal and located not far from Oswestry and Whitchurch. It is famous for its nine meres – two of which, Colemere and Blakemere, are also famous for wildlife. Walk into the town away from the canal and you will soon reach Ellesmere, the largest of the meres for which the market town was named. Around its perimeter is an award-winning park where you will find gardens, woodland walks and historic parkland.

Also not to be missed is Ellesmere Boat Yard dating from 1806. Once the office and workshops of the Ellesmere Canal Company, tours take place regularly. Also present from November to March is the last fly-boat Saturn, always worth a viewing. To plan a visit, see tinyurl.com/5xn4h4wx (National Historic Ships).

Gnosall

Mentioned in the Domesday Book, when it was known as Geneshale; walk along its main street to see several ancient buildings including St Lawrence's Church dating back to the Norman era.

Nantwich

Once famous for the production of salt, Nantwich is a pretty medieval market town with old half-timbered black and white buildings and various interesting shops.

Whitchurch

One of the oldest continually inhabited towns in the country which was founded by the Romans. A medieval market town with many half-timbered buildings, the magnificent St Alkmund's church and convenient shops, it also has a Victorian Jubilee Park.

Chirk

Here you will find the 13th-century Chirk castle and its gardens; for full information, see nationaltrust.org.uk/visit/wales/chirk-castle. If you have entered the area via Chirk aqueduct, note the railway viaduct running alongside and also Chirk canal tunnel – one of the first to have a towpath – along with its colony of bats.

Pontcysyllte Aqueduct

The aqueduct was awarded World Heritage Site status by UNESCO in 2009. Take a break to walk across it, high over the River Dee and admire what early civil engineers, William Jessop and Thomas Telford along with their navvies, achieved. See pontcysyllte-aqueduct.co.uk/.

Llangollen

Arriving in Llangollen take a walk into town through which runs the River Dee. Not far away on a hillside high above the town are the ruins of Castel Dinas Bran, ancient gateway into Wales. Horse-drawn boat trips starting at Llangollen Wharf can be taken here on Sundays, see horsedrawnboats.co.uk/special-events. If you fancy a steam engine trip to Corwen you will find Llangollen Railway Station just below Llangollen Wharf, see llangollen-railway.co.uk/llangollen-station for full information.

Market Drayton

A medieval town, Market Drayton is worth stopping to see with its fine 18th-century buildings. Reputed to be the "home of gingerbread", that commodity has been produced for over 200 years in the town. Its Wednesday street market was started 750 years ago and still takes place today. See discovermarketdrayton.co.uk/ for full information.

Shroppie in the News Spring 2015

Society Secretary Sue Ball has the (dubious) honour of currently hosting the Society's physical archives in her garage having inherited them from Rich Hamp. She's gradually wading through the archive and has been recently looking at various documents and magazines from spring 2015. Here's a selection of what she's found...

The results of the Llangollen Canal Survey, carried out by IWA and SUCS volunteers at Grindley Brook locks the previous summer, were published. Lock waiting times were thought to be up to 2 hours 30 minutes at the notorious "bottleneck". In reality, those times were found to be less than 30 minutes, many having no wait at all.

"Granny Buttons" waxed lyrical about the delights of the Shroppie – ravishing views at Church Minshull; Telford's "statement" of Nantwich's aqueduct and embankment; the "most attractive flight of locks in the country" at Tyrley and "spectacular" Woodseaves Cutting that feels like a rainforest – whilst completing the Cheshire Ring.

Workmen abseiled down the 120' pillars of the Pontcysyllte Aqueduct inspecting and removing vegetation in the stonework as part of a wider maintenance programme on the Llangollen Canal including Chirk Aqueduct and all three tunnels. Ponty was judged to be in "excellent condition".

The towpath on the Montgomery Canal between Four Crosses and Carreghofa was upgraded and new canoe access points constructed. Costing £260k, this was the seventh section of towpath upgraded by Glandwr Cymru (C&RT in Wales) and Powys County Council with funding from the Welsh Government's Local Transport Fund.

The Friends of the Montgomery Canal announced "Making Waves", a summer-long programme of events during 2015 to draw attention to the canal and bring it to life. Activities on the water around canoes and coracles, along the towpath and surrounding areas culminated in the Welsh Waterways Festival in Welshpool on 4/5th July. Events were also to be supported by the Montgomery Waterway Restoration Trust, the Heulwen Trust, Friends of Llanymynech Limeworks and Llanymynech Wharf Visitor Centre.

The restoration of the Montgomery Canal was interrupted by the discovery of Great Crested Newts. Natural England said it would take several months to rehome them.

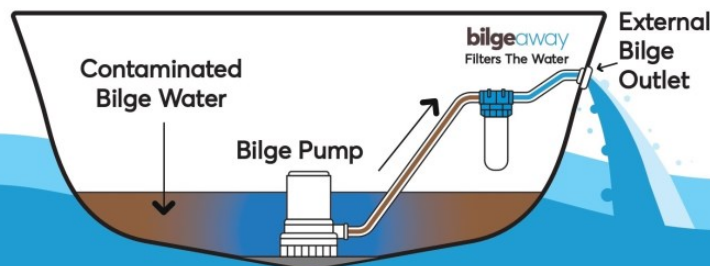
Dredging was completed on a 4-mile section of the Shropshire Union Mainline between Salmons Bridge and Hoole Lane lock near Chester where 7,000 tonnes of silt were removed following long-time complaints of poor navigation in the section.



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Insect Life on the Canals

Another in a series of articles on the wildlife and nature that can be seen on the SU network...

Mayfly

Providing food for a variety of species including bats and amphibians, there are fifty-one species of the mayfly in Britain. May is the ideal month to see them over waterways (hence the name) although they can be seen as early as April and as late as September. Found in shades of brown and cream, they can be identified by up to three long tail bristles, short antennae and clear lace-like wings held vertically over their bodies.

After mating, females lay their eggs by dipping their abdomens into the water whilst flying and releasing a few eggs each time. Alternatively, they may deposit them on the water where they sink into aquatic plants.

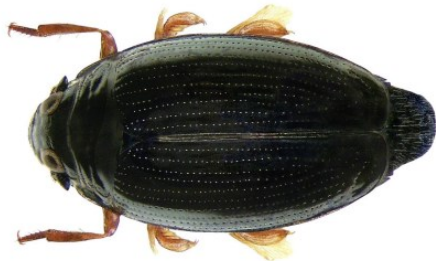
Mayfly larvae then spend their lives underwater where they feed on algae and plants until in summer, the adults hatch out. You will often see hundreds in the air as they search for a mate. Their lives are short, just hours in some cases, as they are predated by dragonflies, water beetles, birds and fish.

Mayflies prefer ponds but have been known to inhabit unpolluted canals such as the Monty.

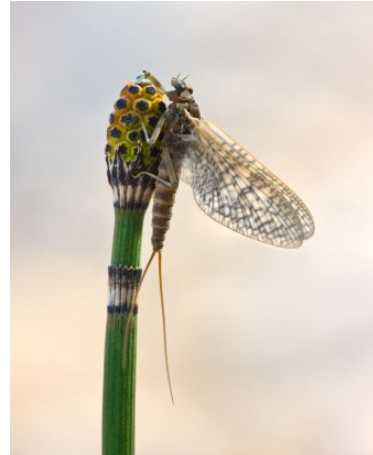
Whirligig Beetle

Widespread in Britain, the oval Whirligig Beetle is a shiny black in colour with orange legs the back pair of which have developed into short, flat paddles. Its circling behaviour is how you can identify it and it is to be found in at least twelve different species.

Whirligig Beetles are equipped with two pairs of compound eyes, one pair for seeing over the water's surface whilst the other can look underwater. It



(Photo: U Schmidt,
[CC BY-SA 2.0, Link](#))



(Photo: [R Bartz](#),
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can also dive underwater and has wings enabling them to find alternative homes if necessary.

Favouring streams and ponds, they can sometimes be seen on canals where the water is clean and still skimming rapidly in groups as they search out their prey consisting of small invertebrates. They have also been known to jump a metre when hunting.

Reproduction takes place in spring after hibernation. Females choose underwater plants where they lay clusters of eggs in rows which are later fertilised by males. The resulting larvae are large and feed on midge larvae until emerging as adults in summer.

Water Boatman (or Common Backswimmer)

Mainly brown in colour, Water Boatmen have two long oar-like legs which are used as paddles when it swims. You might spot them when on towpath walks in ponds and ditches where still water is present. Female Water Boatmen lay their eggs on the underside of water plants.

A vegetarian, it eats algae and needs to breathe at the water's surface. A trick the beetle has developed entails hanging upside down collecting air before carrying it as a bubble on their body giving it a silvery appearance and enabling it to spend more time underwater. In warm weather, the Water Boatmen is also known to fly and is distinguishable by its boat-like shape.

There are four types of Water Boatman. Light brown with reddish eyes, it swims on its back and also can be seen carrying air bubbles. Its preferred diet consists of tadpoles, insects and small fish.

Some males are able to make grasshopper-like noises to attract mates calling during summer at night. The species mates between December and May and the female lays its eggs on leaves from February onwards. Larvae then go through a number of moults before reaching maturity.

A word of warning, Backswimmers can leave a painful bite as their saliva is toxic!

Grasshopper

Grasshoppers prefer long grass and areas where they might conceal themselves from predators. In the UK, there are eleven species, each with its



(Photo: H Gröschl,
[CC BY-SA 2.0 DE, Link](#))

(Continued overleaf)

own distinctive pattern. To blend in with their surroundings, they can be varying shades of green or brown making them difficult to see and you are more likely to hear them than see them, particularly during warm, sunny days when they are in the full flood of courtship.



(Photo: Faunagalaxy, [CC BY-SA 4.0, Link](#))

To make the churring noise and attract a female, grasshoppers rub their long hind legs against their wings. The female later lays her eggs in a few inches of soil with nymphs emerging around April or May the following year. The nymphs go through several moults until reaching adulthood, usually around July. Life span is until November when winter weather sees them off.

With the exception of the meadow grasshopper, the species, all of which have short antennae, are able to fly and interestingly the grasshopper's ears are situated at the base of its abdomen.

Food sources are grass, leaves and other vegetation and if you stand still long enough and listen you can often identify the whereabouts of the "singer".

Cricket

Distinguishable from grasshoppers by their (usually) smaller size, crickets have very long antennae and are to be found in various shades of green and brown. Favouring woodland and hedgerows, a cricket's diet is varied and can include insect larvae, aphids, flowers, seeds, fruit, grasses and leaves. It is quiet during daylight and, unlike the grasshopper who "sings" during the day, its loud chirp to attract a female can be heard in the evening as dusk falls.



(Photo: S Wallace, [CC BY-SA 3.0, Link](#))

Crickets, unlike grasshoppers, rub their wings together to attract a mate and the female lays her eggs mainly in plant stems. These hatch around two weeks later in the shape of a nymph which will go through eight to ten moults until fully grown.

Unlike the grasshopper, their ears are to be found on their front legs.

Groundhopper



(Photo: Olei, [CC BY-SA 2.5, Link](#))

There are three species of Groundhopper in Britain. Found mainly close to still water where vegetation and grass is short, towpaths in quiet areas are ideal especially if ponds, small streams or ditches are nearby. Its preferred diet consists of mosses and algae.

Very similar to grasshoppers but much smaller (8-11mm) makes them hard to spot. They favour dry, grassy areas.

Look for small brown insects with a hard shell and be careful not to step on them. Just two of the species in Britain are able to fly due to their large hind wings the third having under-developed wings. All of the species are known to be strong swimmers should the need arise.

Groundhoppers do not "sing" to attract a mate and after fertilisation, the females lay their eggs directly into the ground, its young (nymphs) going on to survive the winter emerging again fully grown the following spring.

Shield Bug

Look out for the little Shield Bug when walking along the towpath, either on ground-level plants or, depending on the species, perhaps the bark of trees. Favouring brown or green shades, they are shaped in a flat oval or shield shape hence their name. Careful observation of plant life to be found alongside canals will sometimes reveal these creatures. Take your time though as they are very good at concealing themselves to avoid predators.



Shield bugs feed on plants and in spring, April/May, they lay their oval, green/yellow eggs in clusters on the underside of leaves and stems. The eggs hatch out around May as nymphs and Shield Bugs will defend their young (nymphs) by releasing a smelly liquid to deter any predators.

Nymphs then undergo five moults during summer until in autumn, it emerges as an adult with wings. They will then hibernate over winter until the cycle starts again.

Restoration Update

There have been three work parties since the last report covering the period from March to May. In complete contrast to the cold, wet and stormy winter period the spring work parties have been consistently dry and sunny. As a result, excellent progress has been possible.

With the completion of the winter environmental programme, reported on in the last issue, all attention transferred to the channel where lining and blocking commenced. The section involved is a continuation southward from last year's re-watered sections towards Schoolhouse Bridge – a further 130 metres. Work started at the far end, where there is a temporary clay dam, progressing back towards the restored area. There is no haul road access along the bank, instead access is achieved via the adjacent field with permission from the farmer. One consequence is that we have temporarily waved a fond farewell to the "block delivery chute" that is used to deliver blocks from haul road to channel. Instead, the blocks are delivered directly to the work area along the bottom of the channel.



Progress has been rapid, helped by the favourable weather and also a relatively narrow channel to begin with. However, the channel widens considerably as we work back towards the re-watered section requiring much longer lengths of liner from one side of the channel to the other and, of course,

far more blocks. But we are now within reach of the previously re-watered section. This will be pumped out at the next work party and the temporary dam separating it from the current work area removed enabling work to connect the two sections. There is still much to do but we expect to finish during the second half of summer at which point we will relocate our works compound to the Schoolhouse Bridge site.



Temporary dam now ready to be removed

badger setts. These have been surveyed and monitored over the last few years. An application for a badger licence has been submitted and we now await issue of the licence from Natural England with its associated licence

A defining feature of the channel nearer Schoolhouse Bridge are

conditions. As a minimum, these will involve exclusion fencing which will be installed by licenced ecologists. There may well be further conditions. Signs will be erected by the towpath explaining that the works are being undertaken under licence and managed by licenced ecologists. Work will commence in July – how long it takes will depend on how co-operative the badgers are!

The April work party provided an opportunity to celebrate our achievements with a topping out ceremony for the re-watered sections of the Crickheath South project completed last year. This project, which started in January 2023 with preparatory activities, was aided substantially by a Rural Prosperity Fund grant in 2024-25 and has already reduced the remaining Shropshire Gap by 10 per cent. More will follow this year.

David Carter welcomed Lezley Picton, retiring Leader of Shropshire Council and Hen Breukelaar, C&RT Regional Director for the West Midlands to mark the event by cutting a ribbon across canal. Volunteers were joined by other councillors, both county and parish, with further representation by Shropshire Council, C&RT, the Montgomery Waterway Restoration Trust and The Inland Waterways Association. Tom Fulda expressed gratitude to the funders and all who supported in a multitude of ways: C&RT, local businesses Tudor Griffiths, Monty's Brewery and Henstone Distillery, corporate volunteers and of course huge thanks to the Society's own volunteers. Hen Breukelaar thanked everyone involved saying "What a truly amazing achievement. This wonderful waterway deserves to be restored and cherished by all".



The re-watered sections are greening up:



Tom Fulda

Montgomery Canal Forum

Holding this year's Montgomery Canal Forum on 4th April, just hours after the Society's celebration at Crickheath, was difficult timing. Unfortunately, this meant that some at Crickheath were not able to attend.

The venue was Hafan yr Afon in Newtown. We had hoped to use this building the last time the forum was held in Newtown three years ago but contractors did not complete it in time. This time, we were able to use it. The new building has been developed by Open Newtown, a local community trust. They have created a real riverside asset for the town and it is well worth a visit.

My message to Newtown was that the canal route from there to London would be 278 miles and 276 locks; from there to Manchester 116 miles and 55 locks. The canal could bring recreation, tourism, history, nature conservation, built heritage, volunteering, navigation, paddle-sports and community benefits to the area.

A newspaper has recently advertised a tour to Edinburgh, the Falkirk Wheel and the Kelpies. At one time Falkirk was best known for iron foundries and cattle sales but now, it is a destination for coach tours. Could the canal help Newtown to be a destination like that?

Today's focus is on the Shropshire Gap and re-opening the Montgomery Canal to Welshpool and Berriew. However, we should remember that the Society has restored locks south of Berriew and our heritage group is giving attention to Brynderwen warehouse and Dolfor lock hut as part of a move to ensure that canal structures "at risk" can be saved.

C&RT's repair work has saved Aberbechan Aqueduct as part of the Levelling-Up programme. This was one of the projects in Jason Leach's Levelling-Up report. The aqueduct had been a worry for some time: like any aqueduct, failure would have interrupted the water supply and here this would have affected protected plants and wildlife.

Jason started by showing some of C&RT's environmental achievements on the Rochdale and Droitwich restorations. He then described the plans for Carreghofa Lane bridge, the replacement for Walls Bridge, for which the start of work is imminent, Williams Bridge and two open water and wetland habitats: a riverside one by the Vyrnwy Aqueduct (a section rich in floating water plantain) and the other below Bank Lock to be known as Wern Pond (which has to be distinguished from the reserve area at The Wern itself). Unfortunately, there will be no provision for car parking or public access to Wern Pond (which I suppose saves expense).

The other main presentation was from David Struckett of the Inland Waterways Association (IWA)'s Sustainable Boating Group. The group has

been looking at how boaters can meet the challenge of Net Zero and on the Montgomery, enjoy the canal while protecting its plants and wildlife (which are protected by law). Electrical power can be more efficient for a canal boat than the more normal diesel engine. Already, there are private and hire boats using electric power but they all need to charge their batteries. Most boats cannot generate sufficient power from roof panels alone and a diesel generator would not meet net zero objectives and so the obvious answer is canal-side charging (like those now found in car parks).

Could hydrogen be an alternative power for boats? I read of developments with hydrogen-powered buses and trains in the West Midlands but the carbon-neutral value of hydrogen is only realised if it is produced without the use of fossil fuels.

Another alternative is Hydro-treated Vegetable Oil (HVO), a second-generation diesel fuel created from used vegetable oils. As HVO is 90 per cent carbon neutral and cleaner burning than mineral diesel, it would be a perfect interim fuel for existing diesel engines. Unfortunately, complicated legislation and regulations have hitherto made it impossible to supply HVO to boaters. However, IWA has been discussing the difficulties with the Department for Transport and has achieved some success as boaters can now use the same fuel for domestic and propulsion purposes. You can read more about HVO at waterways.org.uk/waterways/sites/hvo-overview.

(After the forum, the BBC reported on fraud in the raw material supply chain, damaging the carbon-neutral status of HVO. The Government announcement that it would investigate was welcomed by IWA working jointly with the Royal Yachting Association, British Marine and the Cruising Association. See tinyurl.com/yc2x4rcx (IWA).)

As well as power, David touched on propeller size and speed, canal configuration and maintenance. These can all cause water disturbance which in turn can affect protected plants. Under the Conservation Management Strategy of 2005 (now under review to bring it in line with current legislation), the effect of passing boats on underwater plants can influence the way C&RT will allow boaters to use the Montgomery Canal in Powys. As David pointed out, canals were built for loads of 20-25 tons to travel at 3 mph using just one horsepower.

The forum highlighted what the canal could mean for mid-Wales, the investment in safeguarding its valuable ecology and the serious interest in low-impact boating.

Next year, the forum should return to Oswestry: no date has been fixed yet.

Michael Limbrey

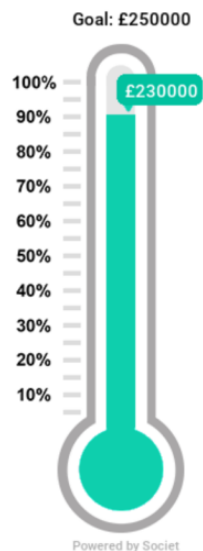
Restore the Montgomery Canal!

Fund raising

As of 25th April, the public appeal being run by the Restore the Montgomery Canal! group (of which the Society is a member) has now reached £230,000, about 90 per cent of the target of £250,000. That's about a £25,000 increase on the amount reported in the last issue of Cuttings. The funds raised will help towards the cost of the next phase of the restoration in Shropshire – closing the Shropshire Gap and reaching Llanymynech on the Welsh border.

Recent donations include £1,000 from Llanymynech & Pant Parish Council (LPRC). This was handed over at a recent presentation to LPRC.

A further £1,000 donation has come from the Historic Narrow Boat Club – a welcome addition to the approx. £350 that was raised at their raffle at the Audlem Festival last year.



Councillor Alice Bond, chair of LPRC, presenting a cheque to Tom Fulda, Society Restoration Project Manager, and John Dodwell, chair of the Montgomery Canal Partnership (photo: Sean Bish)

Separately, thanks go to Oswestry Rural Partish Council (ORPC) for another donation for towpath improvement work – this time £1,500 direct to the Society. The work will take the restored towpath closer to Schoolhouse Bridge. (For those not in the know, the boundary between LPRC and ORPC is at Schoolhouse Bridge.) This is the second grant that ORPC have given to the Society for the Crickheath South restoration project. They awarded us the same sum a couple of years ago and this was also used for towpath improvements, that time closer to Crickheath Bridge.



Improvement works in progress close to Crickheath Bridge.

About £38,000 of the money raised from the public appeal has already been put to good use. The recent channel and other works at Crickheath cost about £253,000. Canal & River Trust (C&RT) were successful in obtaining a £177,000 Rural Prosperity Fund grant from Shropshire Council on the basis that match funding of 30 per cent of the total – about £76,000 – was raised separately. Half came from the public appeal and the other half directly from the Society's own funds. This means that £253k of work is

being done for a contribution from RtMC! and the Society of only 30 per cent. See page 22 for an update on the work being done.

Up to a further £35,000 has been provisionally allocated from the appeal funds for the Society's restoration costs in the year to 31st March 2026 with the Society providing the same sum. This assumes no grant funding and so ensures the volunteers can anyway continue with their great efforts. However, a further round of the Rural Prosperity Fund has just been launched and via C&RT, as before, another application has been submitted for spending by 31st March 2026. This time, the match funding requirement is only 20 per cent. The application not only covers the Society's restoration costs from June 2025 but also the design costs for the farm access bridge which needs building at Crickheath. Watch this space.

Members can see that donations are being put to good effect. The money has been used to buy materials and to hire equipment for the volunteers so enabling them to continue their excellent work.

Some members make monthly donations and this is very much encouraged. We always need to plan ahead and knowing we have monthly income helps us to do that. Both one-off and monthly donations can be made online at localgiving.org/charity/restorethemontgomerycanal. Alternatively, donations can be made by sending a cheque (payable to "Restore the Montgomery Canal") to Tixall Lodge, Tixall, Stafford, ST18 0XS.

Larger donors will receive a framed certificate – Gold for £1,000 or more; Silver for between £500 and £999.

Progress in Powys

There are six main projects being funded by the UK Government (previously called Levelling Up). Here follows an update.

(Continued overleaf)



Montgomery Canal

Planning permission has been granted for Carreghofa Lane Bridge to replace the causeway across the canal at Walls Bridge. Thanks to all those who wrote in to support the application. Site clearance work has taken place and serious construction work was expected to start in May and be completed by the end of the year. In addition to the new bridge, a new section of road is to be built.

The new open water and wetland habitat at Wern Pond has also been granted planning permission. Again, thanks to all those who wrote in to support the application. About 100 people did so and the application was unanimously approved by the Planning Committee. Construction work was due to start in May and to be finished in the autumn.

A planning application to build Williams Bridge was submitted in April. See page [30](#) as to how to support the application. If planning permission is granted, work should be finished by December. It should be quicker than Carreghofa Lane Bridge as there are no associated new roadworks.

Progress is being made towards submitting a planning application for the new nature reserve at Vyrnwy later this year. The required pre-submission public consultation was due to start in May.

Aberbechan Aqueduct – a little north of Newtown and critical to allow the water to flow down the Canal from the Penarth Feeder – was restored last autumn with minor finishing works due this summer.

Dredging is the sixth project. Work has taken place from Maerdy to Carreghofa Locks, from Llanymynech to Walls Bridge and on the Tanat Feeder. The last stage will be next winter on the section between Carreghofa Locks and Walls Bridge as the removal of the causeway at Walls Bridge will provide access to a disposal point.

So.....significant progress is about to happen! Who would have thought four years ago that by the end of 2025, we would see the removal of three of the road blockages (Carreghofa Lane Bridge, Williams Bridge and Schoolhouse Bridge) between Crickheath and Welshpool?!

Legacies

There have been articles in the past about the value of legacies – nationally, they are a major source of income for charities. You will probably be aware of the appeals for legacies if you watch certain TV channels!

We have mentioned in the past that wills can be varied within two years of a death (with the consent of the beneficiaries). This enables money to be given to a charity without waiting for the demise of the beneficiaries and the donation to the charity is excluded from the amount subject to Inheritance Tax.

If 10 per cent of the value of an estate is given to charities, the rate of Inheritance Tax falls from 40 per cent to 36 per cent on the value of the rest of the estate. (This applies whether or not a will is varied.)

Montgomery Canal

We have recently heard about another variation. A supporter who spent part of his working life in Welshpool before moving away has generously decided to leave a portion of his estate towards the restoration of the Canal. He is considering an alteration whereby he donates a sum now so he can see the benefit of his gift in his lifetime.

Another supporter has advised us that he has left a sum in his will with a non-binding wish that the sum be used to improve towpath accessibility. “Non-binding” because it might not be possible to spend the money in that way and so discretion has to be given to the charitable Trustees.

Members wishing to know more about leaving money in their wills to the Society should contact the Society’s Treasurer, Clive Robertson at treasurer@shropshireunion.org.uk or by calling him on 01978 861510.

John Dodwell

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Williams Bridge Planning Application

As part of the Levelling Up Project, Canal & River Trust (C&RT) submitted a planning application to replace **Carreghofa Lane Bridge** on the Montgomery Canal. We asked you to support this planning application, many of you did and it was approved. Construction works are expected to start soon and be finished by the end of the year.

C&RT also submitted a planning application to create **Wern Pond** near the Montgomery Canal. We asked you to support this planning application, many of you did and it was approved. Construction works are expected to start soon and be finished by the end of the year.

C&RT have now submitted a planning application to replace **Williams Bridge** on the Montgomery Canal. Once again, your support for this planning application will increase the chances of it being approved.

Williams Bridge is located close to the Vyrnwy Aqueduct in north Powys. You may remember that the old bridge was demolished in 1980 when a causeway was built across the canal – despite vigorous protests. Now, at last, a new bridge is to be built – this time, a vertical lift bridge in order to cope with practical construction and highways matters.



Williams Bridge before demolition in 1980 (photo: Waterways Images)

Schoolhouse Bridge has already been rebuilt and once Carreghofa Lane Bridge and Williams Bridge have been built, three of the five public highway obstructions between Crickheath and Welshpool will have been dealt with. Who would have thought that only four years ago?!

You can support this planning application online as follows:

- Click here to go to the "Make a comment" page for the above planning application on the Powys County Council website: [tinyurl.com/3re49te7](https://www.powys.gov.uk/3re49te7).
- Enter your contact details.
- Specify an appropriate "Commenter Type".

- Select the "Support" stance.
- Ignore the "Reasons for Comment" section as this relates to objections.
- In the "Your Comment" section, put your own reasons for supporting the planning application.
- Click on "Submit".

Or if you prefer, you can write to Planning Services, Powys County Hall, Spa Road East, Llandrindod Wells, Powys, LD1 5LG quoting planning application number of 25/0544/FUL.

Your own reasons for supporting the planning application could be:

- Restoring the canal is good for the local community and rebuilding of the bridge is part of the restoration strategy.
- This application complements the recent planning permissions given for Carreghofa Lane Bridge and Wern Pond.
- Restoration (of which this bridge rebuilding is part) will help improve the local economy and add to people's well-being.
- Restoration will enhance the built and natural heritage of the canal and its corridor.
- Restoration of the Canal is in accordance with the Council's Local Development Plan (paragraph TD3).

You may see reference to comments needing to be made by a certain date but these can be ignored as all comments will be considered up to the time the Planning Committee meets. However, the sooner the better is a good maxim!

If you live outside Powys, you can still give your opinion and you could emphasise that this is a matter of more than local interest, in fact, it is of national interest.

John Dodwell



An illustration of what the new Williams Bridge will look like (photo: Canal & River Trust/Arcadis)

Early Cross Mersey Tugs

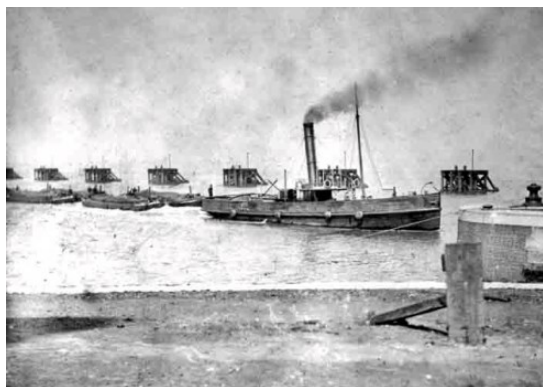
The Daniel Adamson Preservation Society (DAPS) recently received a bequest from the estate of a former volunteer who had been an avid collector of anything related to the Manchester Ship Canal.

Volunteers from DAPS spent hours sorting out an enormous volume of books, notes and photographs resulting in book sales by DAPS and the World Ship Society. However, included in the donation were interesting historical photographs, some of which may have never been seen in public before.

This material, dating back to the 1950s has been retained and it is planned that it will form part of a new presentation by the team at DAPS called "The Port of Manchester, its People and Ships". Discussions are also ongoing with Warrington Museum to stage an exhibition with the collection as well as other historical artefacts owned by DAPS.

The most interesting item in the collection is the focus on tugs on the canal and River Mersey with historical shots of those vessels built in the mid-19th century and early 20th century for carriage on the canal and into Liverpool Docks. There was extensive trade up the Mersey to river ports such as Runcorn and possibly West Bank in Widnes.

Paddle tugs were built on account of their ability to work in shallow waters and manoeuvrability. Pictured below is the 'George Stanton' entering Eastham Locks, possibly bound for Ellesmere Port and the Shropshire Union Canal.



Built in 1880 and registered to SURCC at Chester, 'George Stanton' was involved in the transshipment of goods on the Mersey, and from the Ship Canal ports to Liverpool Docks. She was a sister ship to the "Ralph Brocklebank" (built 1903), now much better known as the "Daniel Adamson" and splendidly preserved by DAPS.

Les Green



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Legends of the Waterways

John Smeaton

John Smeaton was born at Austhorpe Lodge, Whitkirk, Leeds on 8th June 1724 to parents William and Mary. Aged eighteen, after attending Leeds Grammar School, he was sent by his father, a lawyer, to Gray's Inn as it had been anticipated that reaching adulthood John would follow his father's chosen career.

John had other ideas and after a spell in his father's firm he left to train as a mathematical instrument maker. By 1750 he had set up his own business working from premises in Holborn and in 1756 married Ann Jenkinson.

His interests then turned to civil engineering (John is reputedly the first person to use the term "civil engineer") and during his career he designed wind, water, and horse-drawn mills at the same time pioneering the use of cast iron mechanisms. Other projects undertaken included harbours, examples located at St Ives, Aberdeen, and Charlestown, land drainage schemes, dams, bridges, steam-powered engines, new canal navigations and numerous other projects.

John is most well-known today for the Eddystone Lighthouse which he constructed from granite and limestone. He also pioneered the use of hydraulic lime concrete that cured underwater. Physically involved in the construction work of the lighthouse, known as Smeaton's Tower during its construction, he is known never to have requested anyone to do a task he couldn't do himself.

By 1877 due to damage to the rock on which it stood causing the lighthouse to shake, the top four rooms and the lantern were removed to a new location on Plymouth Hoe a new construction replacing it.

The Eddystone project led to a very successful career as a consulting civil engineer John producing some eighteen technical papers which were published by the Royal Society, the oldest independent scientific academy in the world.



*Portrait of John Smeaton
by Mather Brown, c. 1788.
The Eddystone lighthouse
is in the background*

John earned the title of "father of civil engineering" gaining general approval by stating that civil engineering was not only for the military but also for "the good of the people". He went on to found the Society of Civil Engineers in 1771, renamed after his death to the Smeatonian Society of Civil Engineers.

John Smeaton and canals

John visited Holland and Belgium in 1754 where he studied flood defences and canal construction. Returning to the UK, knowledge he had acquired came in useful when his advice was sought on canal and river projects and he went on to pioneer waterway design for both canals and rivers.

Projects included improvements to the Lee Navigation (building locks and a new outlet to the River Thames), the Fosdyke Canal, the Birmingham and Fazeley canal, the Forth and Clyde canal (connecting the Atlantic and the North Sea), the Ripon canal, the Aire and Calder Navigation and Brindley's canal at Smethwick where John cut a new line parallel to the original waterway eliminating six locks and greatly improving previous congestion caused by both water supply issues and queueing boats.

During the construction of Eddystone Lighthouse, John had acted as both guardian and mentor to William Jessop who continued to support John in many of the latter's projects in future years. Jessop went on to become a respected civil engineer working with such well-known names as John Rennie and Thomas Telford.

John was described during his lifetime as a retiring man who concentrated on improvements for the greater good rather than fame. He is remembered for trying to improve conditions wherever he could and was always ready to share his knowledge freely with others, his blueprint for the Eddystone Lighthouse an example. John is quoted as saying "when a new method of operation or a new idea is set forth it is impossible to say, to how many good purposes it may by ingenious men be applied".

He recognised the skills of those he worked with too including his daughters Mary and Ann whom he involved in producing some of his technical drawings

In John's old age he was living at Austhorpe and spent his time writing reports and letters and studying the stars using a telescope he built himself. On 28th October 1792 aged sixty-eight he died and was buried in Whitkirk's St Mary's Church where a stone tablet on the north wall of the church given by his daughters in his memory, portrays the Eddystone Lighthouse.

He is also remembered by a memorial stone in the north aisle of Westminster Abbey unveiled on 7th November 1994 by the then president of the Smeatonian Society, Noel Ordman.

'Duchess'- the First Gas-driven Barge

In February 1906, reports were appearing in newspapers concerning a gas-driven canal barge the 'Duchess'. 'Duchess', seventy-one feet long with a seven-foot beam and three-foot three-inch draught, had just completed a five hundred and sixty mile journey travelling from Chiswick to Manchester. By the time she returned to Chiswick, mileage totalled 1,120 miles.

The aim of the trip was to demonstrate the possibility of improving carriage on the waterways by using a Thornycroft (see note below) suction gas engine to power the boat. The gas-producing plant used the Capitaine system patented in 1905 by German Emil Capitaine whereby gas for the internal combustion engine was made and cleansed automatically as it was required from steam passing through a coke or coal furnace.



*'Duchess' at Brentford on the Grand Junction Canal.
(Photo: courtesy of National Waterways Archive, Canal and River Trust)*

During the journey, loaded with eleven tons, 'Duchess', carrying the legend "Thornycroft Gas Motor" on its cabin-side, acted as a tug for several other barges this proving very successful and showing that in the case of cost, it could easily compete with horse traction and carriage by railway. The new gas producer plant also promised to effect a revolution in barge traffic both in speed and economical working and along the journey demonstrations had been given to barge owners and engineers in Birmingham and Manchester.

The following year in 1907, lessons from the trip were being debated before the Royal Commission on Canals and Waterways, Lord Shuttleworth presiding. Mr J Dunell, an engineer with Messrs John Thornycroft, described the trial trip he had made in January and February 1906 in the 'Duchess' from

Chiswick to Manchester. The barge had also been taken along the Grand Junction Canal, the Shropshire Union Canal and the Manchester Ship Canal.

Referring to haulage, Mr Dunell said there was a saving by the use of a gas engine of three feet in machinery space and four tons in weight. Also, a saving in running costs due to the use of suction gas rather than steam.

He went on to say that the chief annoyances experienced during the trip were due to the propeller coming into contact with ropes, sacks and general rubbish in the canals. He commented that there was an urgent need for dredging. Sharp curves which needed to be negotiated on the route of the canal had also caused delays.

Asked what were the results of the trial, Mr Dunell said that generally speaking, suction gas engines were the most economical. Traction by electric motor locomotives towing vessels from the bank had been suggested but he thought the cost would be too great and that difficulty would be experienced when boats needed to pass each other.

Professor E W Marchant, Professor of Electrotechnics at Liverpool University then gave evidence on behalf of the London Chamber of Commerce and in reply to the chairman who asked why electric traction had not been much used on canals in this country, said there was difficulty in raising the necessary capital for the improvement of canals.

He went on to say that a satisfactory system of electric haulage had only been developed over the last ten years instancing a canal in Germany where electric haulage had been found to be economical but only when the tonnage carried exceeded 2,000,000 tons per annum. Tractors had however been used on the canal between Liverpool and Blackburn where heavy traffic justified electric traction.

As we now know the idea never took off, but does anyone know what happened to 'Duchess'? The internet is very quiet on her fate. It's also interesting to note some things don't change and canals were considered a good place to dump rubbish even if they were still in use. Finally, even in the 1900s, one hundred and twenty-four years ago, funding was difficult to acquire for canal improvements,

Note: Sir John Isaac Thornycroft FRS born 1st February 1843 in Rome died aged 85 on 28th June 1928 on the Isle of Wight. An English shipbuilder and the founder of the Thornycroft Shipbuilding Company set up in 1866 in Chiswick alongside the River Thames. In 1908, the company moved to Southampton. In 1966, a merger took place and the company is today known as Vosper Thornycroft.

Northern Canals Association meeting

On Saturday 22nd March, members and friends of the Northern Canals Association (NCA) met in Langley Mill, Amber Valley, Derbyshire, for their spring 2025 meeting. Hosted by the Friends of the Cromford Canal (FCC), the usual welcomes and “housekeeping” were given by Ivan Cane, NCA Chair and David Martin, FCC Chair. Richard Handley, Trustee, Executive Secretary and Chair of the Boat Committee then commenced proceedings with an overview of how the FCC use and organise volunteers.

Across two “separate” areas of activity, Restoration and Trading, there are approximately one hundred volunteers who are supplemented by experts, paid trainers and bought-in services. Trading (trip boat, shop and online sales) is totally run by volunteers. Reports of a constant supply of “new blood” to the “happy ship” making “great strides since Covid” were welcomed although not without pangs of jealousy in places perhaps? Although the takeaway reference, something few in the audience ever expected to hear in relation to canal restoration but one we will always remember was, fifth columnists!

Dave Ratner, Trustee and stalwart of trip boat ‘Birdswood’, followed with a detailed history of the Cromford Canal. It opened in 1794 and the usual pattern of boom and bust followed. A serious collapse of Butterley Tunnel in 1900 effectively split the canal in two and the canal was eventually abandoned in 1969 despite a minor revival in trading 1939-1945. Early restoration during the 1970s/1980s focused on the northern, scenic section from Cromford to Ambergate. Current restoration on the southern section dates from 2002 and the foundation of the FCC. Restoration and maintenance continue on both halves of the canal amounting to 3,903 working party volunteer hours in 2024. The 1938-built ex-buttly ‘Birdswood’ (now converted to electric) runs between Cromford Wharf, site of the Weighbridge Shop, and Leawood Pumphouse/High Peak Junction. Since 2013, 70,000 passengers have been carried.

Bringing the story of the canal into the present was Chris Broome, FCC Water Engineer, who spoke on achievements from 1973 and plans for the future. A detailed account of the trials and tribulations facing the FCC in getting these plans approved by all authorities over the previous six years and enabling works to begin occupied the remainder of the morning session and laid the foundation for the afternoon’s site inspection.

Following lunch, everyone reassembled for a “Walk through Time” with David Martin viewing various restoration projects from the first lock (1973) to the latest extension awaiting permission from C&RT for a bridge to the boatyard.

Chris Broome then extended the walk to the land drainage/flood storage compensation scheme currently nearing completion beyond the site of the proposed new staircase locks. Necessitated by the proximity of the River

Erewash to the canal and the undesirability of yet more flood water making its way, unimpeded, down to the Erewash/Trent/Soar River confluence. Impressive mounds of earth and drainage outfalls currently mark the spot but will, in time, blend in with new surroundings.

Fortunately, the promised rain held off until attendees were back at the hall and the afternoon continued in the now normal fashion: NCA Diggings and Restoration Group Updates.

For the NCA, Ivan Cane announced that applications to host the Wilderness Boat Owners’ Club (WBOC) AGMs up until 2028 had been received – WBOC host their AGMs on a remote canal each year alongside a trail boat rally. However, WBOC are more than happy to provide craft for smaller events where boats would help to enhance an event. Weeping Cross Grants were now closed with Keith Gibson announcing successful applicants for 2025 in April. Ivan then asked for volunteers for a new chair for the NCA from 2027.

A quick summary of restoration updates:

- Manchester Bolton & Bury Canal – the major focus is on the housing, hotel, leisure and cultural facilities that are being put into development alongside the section of restored canal off the River Irwell; the breach that caused the canal to be closed is being repaired with bunds either end; boats are encouraged to visit via the Irwell entrance.
- Hereford & Gloucester Canal Trust – five hundred yards of canal is being used for yoga on paddle boards and fire service pump testing and by scouts in self-made boats.
- Lapal Tunnel, Dudley No 2 Canal - twenty locks are needed to replace the tunnel which collapsed in 1917.
- Sleaford Navigation Trust – trials and tribulations of obtaining, launching and running a trip boat.
- Lichfield & Hatherton Canal Trust – the local council brought work to a stop but now almost good to go again.
- Chesterfield Canal – installing a forty-ton bridge in two pieces to carry the Trans Pennine Trail over the canal in Renishaw.
- WRG – eleven confirmed and six potential camps in 2025 together with training and working weekends.

Next meetings: Shrewsbury & Newport Canal on 5th October 2025; Chesterfield Canal on 22nd March 2026; Avon Navigation Trust on 4th October 2026.

The event closed with delegates beginning a long haul home in pouring rain. The FCC can be proud of organising an event giving a good insight into their organisation, past, present and future, whilst being applicable to the restoration world as a whole. And we’ll all remember the fifth columnists...

Canal & River Trust News

Investing in Boater Facilities

C&RT will be investing £4.5M over the next five years to upgrade and standardise Elsan points, pump-out facilities and water points across the charity's canal network. Detailed plans will be developed over the coming months. The investment is in addition to the annual cost of maintaining and looking after the above facilities with the money coming from the sale of investment assets owned by C&RT. Savings associated with the provision of better facilities are expected to offset the income lost from the sale of the assets. For more details, see tinyurl.com/yyxbj7ux (C&RT).

Better Boating Plan — Progress Updates

C&RT has started issuing progress updates on its Better Boating Plan. Details of the plan can be found at tinyurl.com/bden4vum (C&RT) and on the same page. Links can be found to progress reports on boater facilities, communication & customer service, getting the basics right and keeping C&RT's canal open for boating.



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Follow and Contact C&RT

	Home page	canalrivertrust.org.uk
	Notices and stoppages	canalrivertrust.org.uk/notices
	Telephone	0303 040 4040

Dates for Your Diary

Date	What	Where	Notes
Jun 8	River Canal Rescue 25th Anniversary Celebrations	Stafford Riverway Link site, Baswich Lane, Stafford, ST18 0YJ	See tinyurl.com/2ysbmt7f (RCR). SUCS plans to have a stall
Jul 18–20	Gnosall Canal Festival (C'Fest)	Gnosall, Staffordshire	See the poster on page 35 and gnosallcanalfestival.co.uk . SUCS plans to have a stall
Jul 26&27	HNBC Audlem Gathering of Historic Boats	Audlem, Cheshire	See page 17 in Spring 2025 Cuttings for more details
Aug 30–31	Whitchurch Canal Festival	Whitchurch Arm off Llangollen Canal	See whitchurchwaterway.uk . SUCS plans to have a stall
Sep 6	Montgomery Canal Triathlon	Newtown to Crickheath	See the poster on page 45 and tinyurl.com/mwtd5fps (MWRT)

Before travelling, you are advised to check with the event organisers that there has been no change.



Visiting The Danny

Talks, tours, tea & steam cruises for groups

The Daniel Adamson is a 1903 Steam Ship boasting a unique Art Deco interior which was saved from being scrapped by a team of enthusiastic volunteers, who bought the ship for £1 and then secured £3.8 Million from the Heritage Lottery Fund to save the significant ship, which is 15th on the Register of National Historic Ships.

Talks to groups of 15-20 in the Art Deco Saloon

Talks and Tours of the boat when static start at £5 per person.

Talks to Societies

A 45-minute presentation on your premises sharing images of the Danny and Manchester Ship Canal right back to its building. We also share an insight into the Restoration of the Danny and the work of the Volunteers.

Cruising Groups

On cruises, groups of up to 80 can be accommodated. The vessel is also available for Private Hire.



To make an enquiry for more details, email enquiries@danieladamson.co.uk or go to thedanny.co.uk.

To book a talk at your venue, contact sheila.leonard@danieladamson.co.uk.

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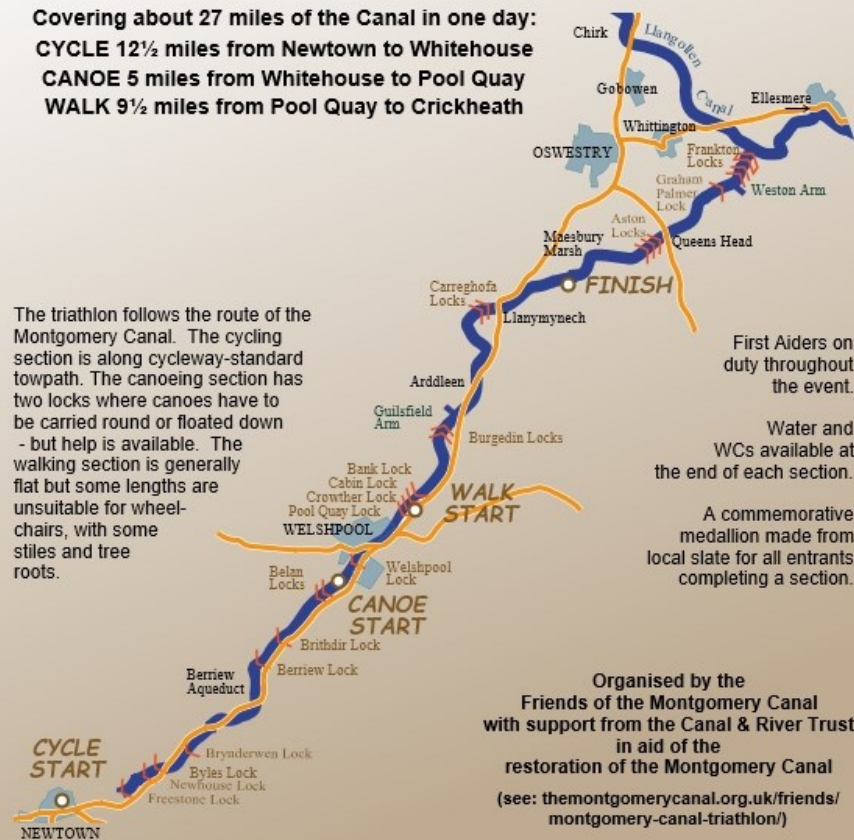
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2025 Montgomery Canal ^ Triathlon

Marathon
Saturday 6th September 2025

Complete all three sections in a day!

Covering about 27 miles of the Canal in one day:
CYCLE 12½ miles from Newtown to Whitehouse
CANOE 5 miles from Whitehouse to Pool Quay
WALK 9½ miles from Pool Quay to Crickheath



The triathlon follows the route of the Montgomery Canal. The cycling section is along cycleway-standard towpath. The canoeing section has two locks where canoes have to be carried round or floated down - but help is available. The walking section is generally flat but some lengths are unsuitable for wheelchairs, with some stiles and tree roots.

First Aiders on duty throughout the event.

Water and WCs available at the end of each section.

A commemorative medallion made from local slate for all entrants completing a section.

Organised by the Friends of the Montgomery Canal with support from the Canal & River Trust in aid of the restoration of the Montgomery Canal (see: themontgomerycanal.org.uk/friends/montgomery-canal-triathlon/)

Friends of the Montgomery Canal is the membership section of the Montgomery Waterway Restoration Trust, a non-profit distributing company limited by guarantee registered in England and Wales No. 1608017; registered Charity No. 810446; Registered Office: 20 Bentley Drive, Oswestry SY11 1TQ



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We are always pleased to receive contributions for Cuttings. Text, photos etc. can be submitted by post or by email. If you are 'no good at the words', simply send us the basis of your idea with all the relevant details and we will gladly put an article together for you. Note that the editorial team reserves the right to edit or exclude any material submitted for publication.

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Disclaimer

The views expressed in Cuttings are not necessarily those of the Shropshire Union Canal Society. We make every effort to ensure all dates and details are correct as at time of going to press but please check before travelling to any advertised event as changes may have been subsequently made.

Editorial Team

Sue Ball, David Carter, Steve Clews, Richard Feeney, Jan Johnstone.



Shropshire Union Canal Society – Membership Application/Renewal

Application:

Complete the below form or you can apply for membership online at shropshireunion.org.uk/membership



Renewal:

No need to complete the below form. Simply set up a standing order or make a bank transfer as per the below, post a cheque to the address specified below or pay your subs* online at shropshireunion.org.uk/subs



PLEASE USE BLOCK CAPITALS

I/we hereby apply for membership of the Society and agree to abide by the rules of the Society. I/we consent to the personal data contained in this application being retained by the Society for the purposes of membership.

Title and name(s) _____

Address _____

Postcode _____

Telephone _____ Email _____

Please tick and complete one of the following options:

- I/we enclose subs of £ _____ * and a donation (optional) of £ _____
- I/we have set up a standing order or made a bank transfer:
- Please send me/us a standing order form.

Please tick here to receive Cuttings magazine by email rather than by post

Signed _____ Date _____

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The Shropshire Union Canal Society (Registered Charity No. 245875).

I want to Gift Aid all donations that I have made in the past 4 years and all future donations to the above charity. Donations include my membership subs.

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*Subs: Single, Joint, Family: £15/year; Life: £300.

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Cheques: make payable to Shropshire Union Canal Society Limited.

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