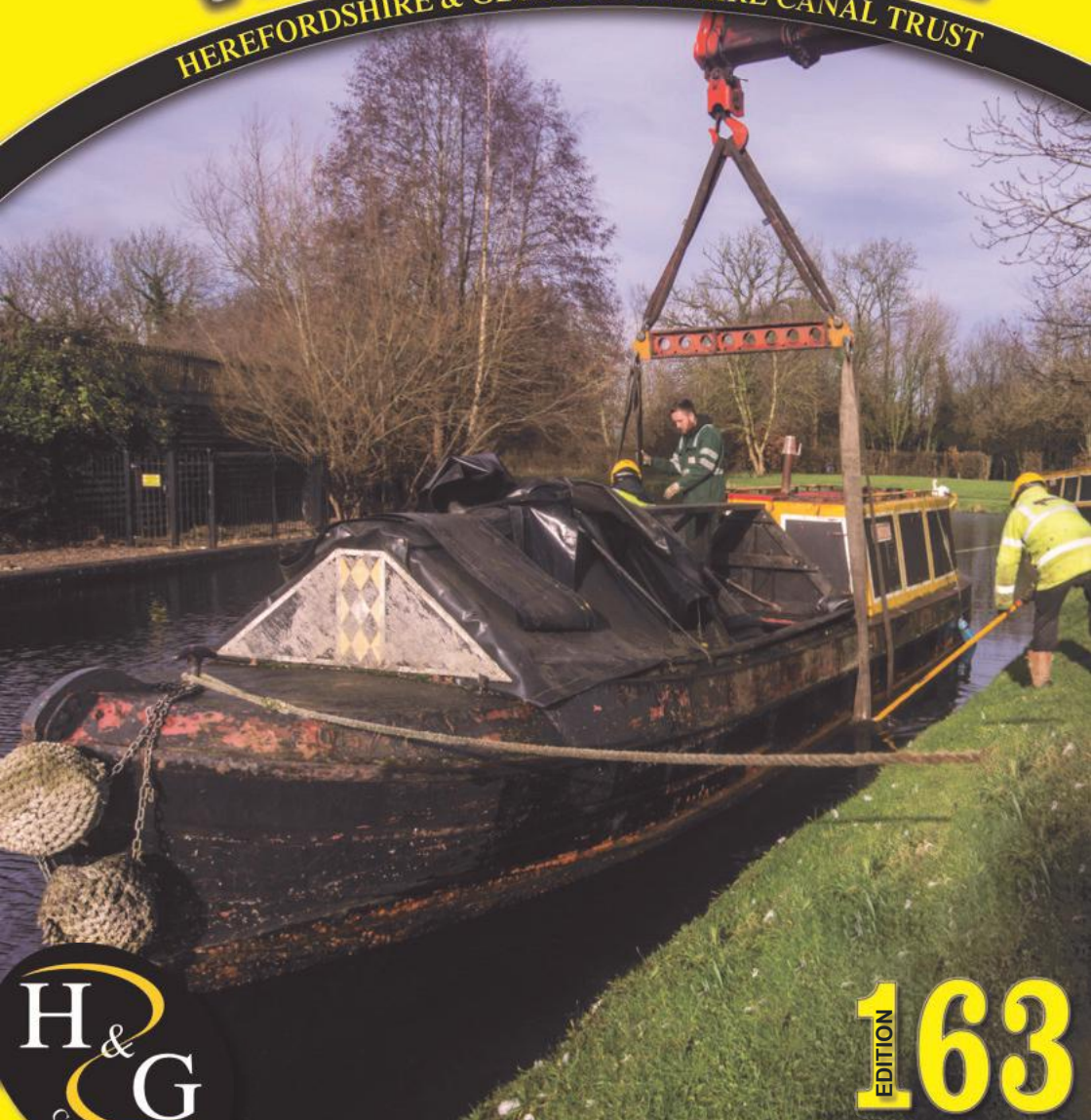


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Spring 2025

# The Wharfinger

HEREFORDSHIRE & GLOUCESTERSHIRE CANAL TRUST



163  
EDITION

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*Front cover image – heritage narrowboat Renton is  
lifted from the water at Over Basin*

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## Canal Walks



Herefordshire & Gloucestershire Canal Trust has produced more leaflets describing walks that explore various parts of the Hereford and Gloucester Canal.

**Staplow, Ledbury  
Withington Wharf, Dymock,  
Ashperton  
Llanthony Lock, Oxenhall,  
Over Basin and  
coming soon, Hereford!**

*All proceeds towards the promotion and restoration of our local heritage canal.*

*More details and ordering options available on the website.*

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# From the desk of the Chairman

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As well as being a member of the H&G canal trust I am also a member of a couple of other canal trusts. It is always interesting at looking at what they are doing, how they are getting the message out and continuing their restoration efforts. A member has also highlighted how one of the other trusts has mapping of their route for all to see. Working with Nick Dymott, our webmaster, we have been looking at developing a better view of the canal for visitors and of course members.

This also came about due to a discussion at the last AGM. Nick has done an excellent job of colour coding the back page of the Wharfinger, but we wanted something bigger. This has gone from Herefordshire to Yorkshire electronically many times and using the idea shared in the last Wharfinger about the Wikipedia map we are getting close. While it started as A3, it has developed, but we are still looking at it being able to fit in the back pocket. Watch this space.

You will see a calendar of events in this edition that has a couple of new events. The main one being the Herefordshire Histories Festival that is on in May. We are planning an exhibition, walks and a minibus tour. Talking of events, we also have the summer boat trips running again from the first Sunday of the month, from May to September. We'll finish the year at the Newent Winter Fayre on 8 November, in time for those Christmas presents if people do not get upset at me mentioning it so early.

You will see lots occurring within the Wharfinger as usual. I was able to get around the sites at the start of the year and watching the changeover of the boats at Over on a cold, wet and somewhat windy day was interesting. My camera (phone) had to dry out and fully charge before I could see the pictures. I dropped in to Malswick and the work that the lone digger has done is terrific. Lots of mud, but also lots of canal and even a towpath is partly in place. Still awaiting that second bit of planning at Malswick East to be accepted.

Talking of planning – last year, and a number of times this year, meetings have been held internally and with the FoDDC planners to look at the canal from Newent Fire station, across Bridge St and through the train station to join up with Oxenhall. Substantial progress on this; as you will see in another article there is a lot of work to do with reports and surveys before we can actually start work on the ground. I also got to Monkhide on their usual Thursday to help with hedge trimming and pulling out some branches.

Thank you to Meyrick Brentnall for responding to our request for extra articles for the Wharfinger. Any others?

I was in a discussion with a fellow member about engines and this moved on to AI. As I was about to start an item, I thought I would give this ago. See if you can see which one, written by myself was created by AI. Do not worry, I think it will be many years before the Wharfinger magazine is created by AI.

Finally, you will find an update to the AGM that occurs on 25 June 2025. I look forward to seeing many of you as possible. The bar will be open.

*Ralph Barber*



## **New grass**

The seeding worked. We have grass!!

I feel it looks good with the granite block edging.

## **Heritage boats**

The team at Over had a plan as described in Edition 162 of the Wharfinger to do a full renovation of the boat Alder, which would have been undertaken at a pace suitable to the time available and also the funds.

This plan involved a full internal and external painting, engine and gearbox servicing and a new cratch cover to fully waterproof the interior.

The problem on Renton has caused a change to the original plan for Alder, with a new one to undertake all external work and as much of the other work before returning it to the water.

A date of 23 of January was fixed with the crane hire company and I am pleased to say we managed to circumnavigate the weather to complete the second and third coats of external



blackening, welding of the sacrificial anodes and some internal hull cleaning and primer painting. Time ran out for the engine service, but a start-up was completed to reassure us all was operational.

Blackening Alder's hull – the hull was stripped to bare metal and a single coat of SML Ballastic epoxy paint applied followed by two coats of SML Ballastic blackening. We decided on this approach rather than two coats of epoxy due to the price, with the cost of approximately £300 for the blackening alone!!

Anodes for Alder – now this is another time when I say to myself “every day is a school day”!! So why do the marine boats have anodes? To summarise, sacrificial anodes are a way of protecting the key parts of the boat from corrosion due to the effects of water and electrical currents.

The two types of corrosion are galvanic and electrolytic, which occur when two parts made from different materials are joined or connected to each other, while in water. When dissimilar metals are in water a voltage is produced effectively creating a battery causing one of the components to corrode. Which part will corrode depends on their relative position in the galvanic series table. Steel will be more cathode in the table compared to the material used for the applied material, in the fresh water instance it is magnesium. The magnesium anode will corrode in preference to the hull.

The next stage was to know what quantity of magnesium anode was required for the boat. The method is to calculate the underwater area of the boat and work with available tables to find the required weight. This was done and then to search for the appropriate items which would align with the existing weld points on the hull.

Four 2.5kg items were purchased for the hull with the additional required 2kg weights bolted to the stern. These items that required assistance from the welder were approx. £250. You can see the anodes on one of the photos.

Internal hull work. The team was able to clear the rust build up on large areas of the hull and bilge primer, applied to prevent further corrosion of the metal which to remind you all is from the 1930's. More work to complete this is still to be done.

### **Boat swap on 23 January**

The date arrived and we had concerns that Storm Eowyn could scupper the event, but I am pleased to say the predicted winds did not arrive, however the rain did!

On a very wet day we did achieve the swap, leaving Alder in the water awaiting further works as described and Renton sat on the sleepers.

Renton's legacy diesel tank and as much ballast as possible was removed first before the lift, which was not as easy as hoped.





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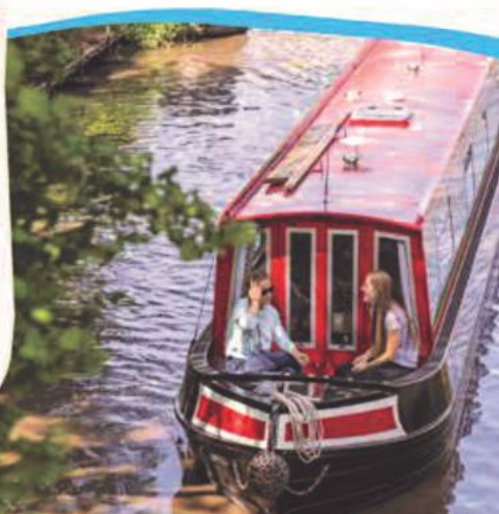
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The weight limit on the crane and jib lengths was a challenge, but some amazing operator ingenuity offered a successful outcome.

The first look at Renton out of the water was to try to see where the hull leakage may be. We had an area to investigate and it looks like we were correct in our assumptions. There seems to be a leak on an edge angle metal strip which is riveted between the hull floor and the hull sides. Obviously further investigations are required, but we may have a positive outcome. We will be able to give an update in the next edition.



### Site Maintenance

During this winter quarter we have had a lot less site maintenance to undertake, but there was still much to be done with tree, bush and hedges to be attended to as well as equipment servicing.

Despite Alder and Renton needing our attention, we have still found time to achieve these I am pleased to say.

*Dave Goff*

# Monkhide Update

The Yarkhill Team continue to work on the Monkhide section and, despite the cold and frosty weather, we have only missed one work party since I last wrote.

Following a number of work parties a sequence of debris removal from the canal has been adopted:

For near bank items:

1. rakes are used if “small”;
2. middle size lumps, a rope is attached and manpower applied;
3. larger items have either a small or large winch put to use.

For items further out, a grappling hook is thrown out, but only with moderate success.

The two photos, with Bob and Paul in, show the result of mis-directed hook having been pulled back “empty”.

On the return the hook trawls the canal bottom and sometimes unintentionally locates and attaches itself to hidden debris and is therefore pulled in not quite so empty.



When all this fails, a volunteer is helped into the boat and they move the boat out such that a rope, hook or winch hawser can be accurately attached to the debris. The bank team then apply methods 2 or 3 to bring the debris to the towpath.

The boatman has a very cold, wet and tiring job, so I am very grateful to Paul and Ralph for their efforts.



The length of the canal that the team have clear of major debris is slowly increasing and luckily at a rate that rewards and motivates us to do more.

*Chris High*

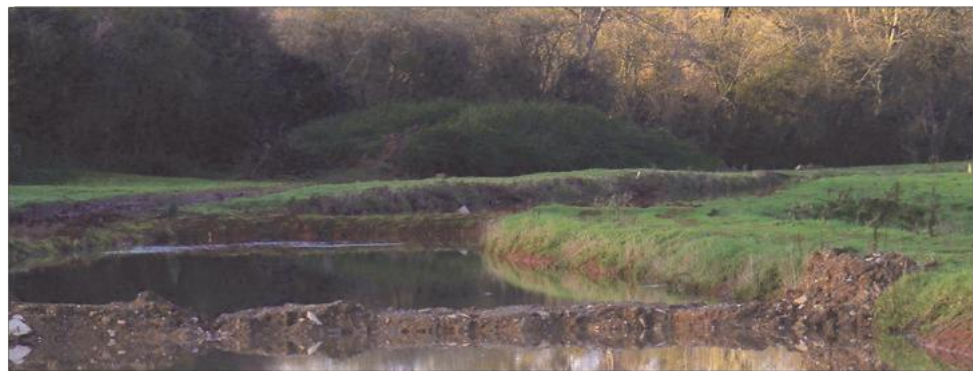
# Malswick Update

Piles of mud aren't generally considered to be very photogenic, but to the Malswick team they are a sign of progress. Despite the appalling weather, digging, dumping and profiling the cut has continued apace. This time the (much smaller) "Malswick Mountains" were made of spoil from digging out the line of the canal.



As our part of the canal lengthens, we have sectioned it off using small dams. This enables us to check for any leaks/seepage caused by hidden land drains or porous substrate. Some sections were found to be gradually losing water, these were over dug and lined with much less permeable clay.

The latest section to be lined and profiled is just behind the site hut and seems to be holding water well.



We'll no doubt be hoping for rain in the summer, but in December it was filling a partially dug out section making it difficult to work to the correct level.

Fortunately, we have a very reliable pump (donated by one of our long standing volunteers) and Malcolm has the knack of starting and priming it with ease.





The pump was also used at the far end of our site. The section that was dug out and profiled to above the final level was to be left until the spring for levelling and rolling.

We hoped to leave a few inches of water in the section to prevent drying out and cracking. However, the very wet months over autumn and early winter resulted in much more water than needed, so the level was reduced by pumping to the adjacent section.



At the end of January, the whole of Malswick West cut was dug out, but much work remains to be done...

- ... some of the sections have been over-dug to allow for lining with more waterproof clay;
- ... the intermittent dams need to be removed;
- ... and some sections need rolling.

A glimpse of what our whole site could look like came in early Autumn; a great motivator for our volunteers to endure the piles of sticky mud that have been with us for so much of this year ... almost there!

*Words and pictures by Alan McBride*





## Flooding

This image shows what a good job the team did when they repaired the Ell Brook aqueduct a number of years ago. Just as well, as it had to contend with some seriously heavy weather conditions this winter.



The storms at the end of November created some flooding in the Oxenhall area. Luckily the team didn't have to go through this 'little puddle' on the road to get to site.



See how high the water reached up the repaired aqueduct which suffered no ill effects. Unfortunately, the force of the water undercut a previous bank repair. Now that the water has gone down this is on the list of things to do.



## Leaks and Trees

A lot of discussions have taken place around the leaks in the pound below House Lock. Also, the bank on the wildside is a bit low. Both jobs will require a digger to remove material and refill with clay.

As at Malswick, we prefer to use locally available material – a source has been found on the line of the canal, but unfortunately this meant felling some trees, although these would have had to come down eventually – as mentioned elsewhere, H&G are in the process of getting a planning application that will enable restoration of the canal channel along this length within a couple of years.

Early in the year is the best time of year to do the felling –





before the bird nesting starts.

Due to the tree surgeon's availability the work started bright and early on a Monday.

It was a pity that the weather wasn't brighter for picture-taking, but that didn't hinder the work.

*Martin Bolton*

## Planning for Progress at Newent



For many years the H & G Canal Trust has nurtured a strategy for the restoration of Newent Station along with the extension of the canal from both eastern and western directions. These plans include a significant new stretch of water from Oxenhall up to the old station platforms, a distance of nearly a third of a mile (nearly half a kilometre).

November 2024 saw a significant move by the Trust in this direction with a request for advice from FoDDC (Forest of Dean District Council) about a future planning application. FoDDC have provided a positive, yet challenging, response with a list of pre-requisites to be addressed before a planning application can be made.

The Trust will now address the following:

- Arboricultural assessment
- Biodiversity net gain
- Arboricultural Method Statement
- Tree Protection plan
- Archaeological assessment
- Heritage statement
- Lighting Impact assessment
- Land contamination statement
- Landscape assessment
- Waste minimisation statement
- Footpath Diversion Application
- Flood Risk
- Ecological Impact (to include bats, dormice, great crested newts, otter, water voles and reptiles)
- Construction plans / drawings detailing the five phases of development:
  - Extension of the canal east from Oxenhall
  - Reconstruction of the Newent Station buildings and surrounding landscape
  - Canal and winding pool east of the Fire Station
  - Bridge over the B4215 Dymock road
  - Reconstruction of Lock No.2 at Oxenhall

The target for the submission of a planning application is 2026.

An open communication meeting has been arranged - see upcoming events below - at which the development plans for the old railway station will be displayed and public input invited.

In the meantime, repair work to the canal banks at Oxenhall, south of House Lock Cottage, is planned for 2025 to prevent water leakage onto adjacent properties.

This will require earth moving equipment to operate in the area, the transport of clay through the existing access at Oxenhall from Horsefair Lane, and the removal of a tree obstruction at this access.

*Richard Delahay*

## Upcoming Events



Whilst we are still hopeful that someone will step up forward to assist with a new programme of regular social gatherings at The Royal Oak we do have details of some new events to share with you.

### **Thursday 20 March 2025 at the Royal Oak, start time 7:30.**

An opportunity to hear a presentation from Roger Morgan who has been working on the Strategy for the H&GCT. The Strategy document will be on the web site in March so you will have a chance to read it in full prior to the meeting. Come and give your input and feedback on the strategy going forward.

### **Saturday 10 May 2025**

Minibus Tour of locations featuring the canal in Herefordshire. Starts at Aylestone Park.

Part of the Herefordshire Histories Festival



Tickets (£26.00 incl lunch) will be available on the website shop page in due course

### **Thursday 15 May 2025, at Yarkhill Village Hall, 10:00am to 4pm**

The event is also part of the Hereford Histories Festival. Please note the change of location and time. There is plenty of parking and we will be showing as much of the history we can find about the canal within the hall. We are also planning some walks which will enable you to see the canal in the area.

### **Saturday 14 June 2025**

Come and see our plans for the five-part Newent Station Project which will be on display at Newent Memorial Hall between 10am and 3pm. See more on this on page 17.

### **Wednesday 25 June 2025 at the Royal Oak, start time 7:30.**

The AGM is almost upon us again ... See page 16 for agenda.

The bar will open after the official business concluded followed by a presentation of the work done in the past year.

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# Update from the Board

---



Since the last Wharfinger the board have continued to meet monthly, other than for a break in January.

With changes that occurred in the summer to the board, focus was on several of our policy documents. Updates and new issues approved in the autumn covered Social Media policy and procedures, along with Equal Opportunities, Work Equipment / Volunteer Owned kit and Canal Maintenance Policies.

While on the subject of social media, please do check out the YouTube site, some excellent updates on Malswick and the boat changes at Over have recently been added. Thank you to Mark Atkin for creating these.

Recently we received a Restoration Update from the IWA (Inland Waterways Association) and within many sections was a comment about the further requirements of the EA (Environment Agency). These required entries into an exemptions register. Ed Helps, Health and Safety Trustee, spent a number of hours investigating how we could met this requirement.

After several communications, needed as we do not fit the normal expectations, Ed was able to register the work sites, which again took some time. What does this mean? Well, all our current sites now have a "D7 Exemption". What is this for – the ability to have bonfires. Yes, I know we have been doing this for some time, but the regulations have changed and now we must have an entry in the register. This is valid to the start of Jan 2028, so will need more work in three years time.

The board have spent a lot of time reviewing strategy, and as part of this looking at the land at the Hereford end of the canal – we still await the land transfer on the Holmer Estate. Tony Higgins is keeping a close view on this; meeting the builders who have taken over the site almost weekly, after the previous builders went into receivership.

No news on Ledbury, we are in continued discussion with developer Bloor Homes and Herefordshire Council. This needs to be concluded before some of the money is released for further engineering drawings to created.

The board meeting in February took place on Zoom, apart from one Trustee a drift in the Atlantic due to the cruise ship losing power (very conveniently!) at the time of the meeting, and another who was unwell. I hope he recovers quickly.

There has been a lot of discussion about Newent Station and the work that Richard Delahay is doing with the planning application needed for our plans to progress. As detailed elsewhere, a meeting will be held on 14 June at the Memorial Hall (same location as the Newent Winter Fayre) by the Co-op car park. 10am to 3pm. The event will be open to the public and will showcase the plans we have for The Willows (around 450m of restored canal), Newent Station, The Fire Station Basin, The Ledbury Road Bridge crossing and Oxenhall Lock No 2.

Whilst on planning, we are awaiting some further wildlife surveys at Malswick that can only take place when the creatures are active (in the spring), and the results will be submitted to the planning officer thereafter.

I also reported that our Talk Presentations have started again, the first one to the Highnam History Group. Several people bought the *Rescued from Obscurity* book and the pack of eight walk leaflets, which all helps with the adding to our funds. A second talk took place in the Forest of Dean, after which a couple of people approached me and mentioned they had heard about it before but were very pleased to see our updates including the new videos and pictures from earlier in the year (2025).

*Ralph Barber*

## Annual General Meeting

---



**The 2025 Annual General Meeting of the Herefordshire and Gloucestershire Canal Trust will be held on Wednesday, 25 June 2025 at 7:30pm in The Royal Oak, A449 Ross Road, Much Marcle, Ledbury HR8 2ND**

**This meeting will be open to Members only.**

Further details will be in the next Wharfinger as well as how to pre-submit questions. The Accounts will be on the website after 30 April 2025, please do check the website after this date.

### Agenda

1. Welcome
2. Apologies for absence
3. Approval of minutes from 2024 AGM
4. Chairman's remarks
5. To receive the report of the Trustees and financial statements for the year ending 31 December 2024.
6. To approve the appointment of an Independent Examiner of all the Trust's accounts.
7. To re-elect Trustees standing down by rotation and nominations of new Trustees
8. Questions from the Audience.
9. Close of formal business.

### Presentation of Strategy

After a break of 15 minutes to enable you to get a drink before a slide show will be presented covering the past year and what next.

# Come and see the plans for Newent Station

As described on pages 12 and 13, our Newent Team is working up plans to recreate the railway station at Newent, but with a difference.

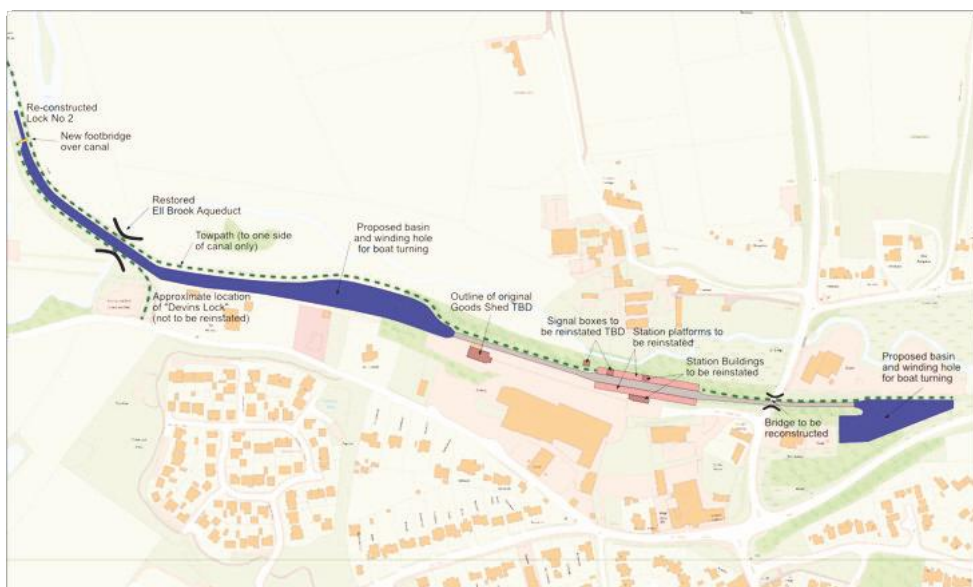
... not with trains, as they last travelled along the track in the 1960's, but going back to the 1790's, with a route for boats!

The scheme will be divided into a number of sections ...

- Initially work will cover the restoration of the canal from the site of Lock No 2 below Oxenhall House Lock through The Willows to the start of what we call the Station Section.
- The second stage will focus on the restoration of the station buildings, the platform and the surrounding area.
- Work will then continue on the east side of Bridge Street (Ledbury Road) alongside the fire station
- The two sections each side of Bridge Street will then be connected with a new bridge.
- Finally, this complete section will be re-connected to the canal remaining in water at Oxenhall by the recreation of the missing Oxenhall Lock No. 2.

Come and see the plans at Newent Memorial Hall on 14 June 2025 between 10am and 3pm. Volunteers from the Trust will be available to provide more information on the scheme.

This is an important project and we need volunteers at all levels to help make it happen.



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# The History of Maps

## Tracing the Evolution of Cartography

Maps have been an essential tool for humans to navigate and understand the world for millennia. From rudimentary drawings on cave walls to sophisticated digital representations, the history of maps is a fascinating journey through time, revealing the evolution of human knowledge, culture, and technology.

### Early Beginnings: Prehistoric and Ancient Maps

The earliest known maps date back to prehistoric times. These primitive maps were often etched onto cave walls, depicting rudimentary sketches of local terrain, hunting grounds, and routes. One of the oldest known maps, found in the Lascaux caves in France, is estimated to be over 16,500 years old. It features star patterns, believed to be a representation of the night sky.

In ancient Mesopotamia, around 2300 BC, clay tablets were used to create maps. The Babylonians, renowned for their astronomical expertise, produced maps that illustrated the world as they perceived it—a flat disc surrounded by water. The Babylonian World Map, dating back to the 6th century BCE, is one of the oldest surviving maps and provides valuable insights into their cosmology and geographical understanding.

### Classical Antiquity: Greek and Roman Contributions

The Greeks and Romans significantly advanced cartography. In the 5th century BC, Greek historian Herodotus produced one of the first known maps of the world, which included regions of Europe, Asia, and Africa. However, it was the Greek scholar Eratosthenes who revolutionised the field in the 3rd century BC. He was the first to calculate the Earth's circumference with remarkable accuracy and created a map that reflected his findings.

Claudius Ptolemy, a Greco-Roman scholar of the 2nd century CE, made monumental contributions with his work "Geographia." This comprehensive treatise included instructions for map making and a collection of maps that depicted the known world. Ptolemy's work remained influential for centuries, serving as a foundation for future cartographers.

### The Middle Ages: Preservation and Transformation

During the Middle Ages, cartography in Europe experienced a period of preservation and transformation. Monastic scholars and Islamic geographers played crucial roles in maintaining and expanding geographical knowledge. The Islamic Golden Age, spanning the 8th to 14th centuries, saw the creation of detailed and accurate maps. Al-Idrisi, a 12th-century Arab geographer, produced the Tabula Rogeriana, a world map that combined classical knowledge with contemporary observations.



In medieval Europe, the T and O maps became prevalent. These maps depicted the world as a circular disc with Jerusalem at the centre, divided into three continents—Asia, Europe, and Africa—separated by a "T" of waterways. Despite their religious symbolism, these maps served as valuable navigational tools for pilgrims and traders.

### **The Age of Exploration: New Worlds, New Maps**

The Age of Exploration in the 15th and 16th centuries marked a turning point in the history of maps. European explorers, driven by the desire for new trade routes and territories, ventured into uncharted waters. Their discoveries necessitated new maps that more accurately depicted the expanding world.

Portuguese cartographer Pedro Reinel and his son Jorge Reinel were among the pioneers in creating portolan charts, which were highly detailed and used for maritime navigation. These charts marked coastlines, ports, and hazards with unprecedented precision, revolutionising seafaring.

The publication of Gerardus Mercator's world map in 1569 introduced a new projection method that allowed sailors to plot straight-line courses. The Mercator Projection, although distorting landmasses at higher latitudes, became the standard for nautical maps and remains influential to this day.

### **The Enlightenment: Scientific Advances and Accuracy**

The Enlightenment era brought scientific rigor to cartography. The invention of the chronometer by John Harrison in the 18th century solved the problem of determining longitude at sea, leading to more accurate maps. French cartographer Guillaume Delisle and his successors, such as Jean-Baptiste Bourguignon d'Anville, produced maps based on extensive surveys and astronomical observations.

In the late 18th and early 19th centuries, the British Ordnance Survey initiated a systematic mapping of the British Isles. Their detailed and precise topographic maps set new standards for accuracy and became a model for national mapping agencies worldwide.



### **The 19th and 20th Centuries: Technological Innovations**

The 19th and 20th centuries witnessed remarkable technological innovations that transformed cartography. The advent of photography, aerial surveying, and later satellite imagery revolutionised map making. During this period, maps became indispensable tools for

military strategy and urban planning.

The United States Geological Survey (USGS), established in 1879, played a pivotal role in mapping the vast and diverse landscapes of the United States. Their topographic maps, known for their detail and accuracy, continue to be valuable resources for geologists, engineers, and hikers.

The development of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) in the latter half of the 20th century marked a paradigm shift in cartography. GIS technology allowed for the digital representation and analysis of spatial data, enabling the creation of interactive and customisable maps. This innovation revolutionised fields such as urban planning, environmental management, and disaster response.

### The Digital Age: Maps in the 21st Century

The digital age has brought unprecedented advancements in cartography. Online platforms like Google Maps and OpenStreetMap have democratised access to mapping tools and data. These platforms allow users to explore the world, plan routes, and contribute to map updates in real-time.

Satellite imagery, coupled with advanced data processing algorithms, has enabled the creation of highly detailed and up-to-date maps. Applications such as weather forecasting, navigation systems, and location-based services rely heavily on these digital maps.

Furthermore, the integration of virtual and augmented reality technologies has opened new frontiers for map visualisation. Virtual tours, interactive 3D maps, and immersive geographic experiences are transforming how we perceive and interact with the world.

### Conclusion

The history of maps is a testament to humanity's enduring quest to understand and navigate the world. From ancient clay tablets to cutting-edge digital platforms, maps have evolved alongside human knowledge and technology. They continue to be indispensable tools, guiding us through the complexities of our planet and beyond. As we move forward, the future of cartography promises even greater innovations, shaping how we explore, plan, and connect with our world.

### What has this to do with the H&G?

Our volunteers and partners refer to, use and adapt maps all the time, whether from Google Earth, or the Ordnance Survey, the results of topographical surveys, as part of devising the next canal walk, trying to see the land levels for our sites, to document features as part of planning for restoration or just to understand how the canal existed in the past.

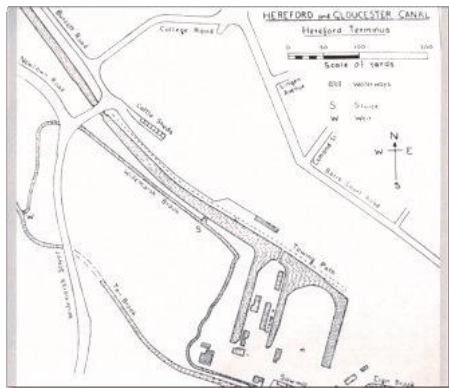
The current planning application submitted for Malswick by the Trust to Forest of Dean



District Council features a number of maps or plans, and can be seen on the FoDDC Planning Portal webpages.

Also worth a look is 'Cataloguing Our Environmental Heritage' from the Gloucestershire Heritage Hub – who are cataloguing over 9,000 individual maps and plans.

An online exhibition, also from Gloucestershire Archives, called the Gloucestershire Cuts has a fascinating history of the county's canals, from their rise during the canal mania to their modern-day revival. Yes, the Herefordshire and Gloucestershire Canal is mentioned.



The web address is <https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/archives/learning-for-all/online-exhibitions/the-gloucestershire-cuts/> which is a bit long to type in, but if you look up/search for Gloucestershire Cuts, you get another sort of cut coming up, well to be fair the second entry when tried was the item on the canals.

More details of accessible mapping depicting the Hereford and Gloucester Canal were included on page 37 of Wharfinger Edition 162.

*Artificial Intelligence*

## Alney Island Walk



I suspect most readers of the Wharfinger will be familiar with Over Basin, and some may be aware of Llanthony lock and cottages – they are after all H&GCT assets. However, I suspect few are familiar with the chunk of land between them. I am talking about Alney Island – that flood-plain landscape on the doorstep of Gloucester. This article will deal with the southern part of the island, owned predominantly by Gloucester City Council and managed as a local nature reserve. It's an interesting site, rich in history and wildlife, and although being a dumping ground for the city's waste, electricity and transport infrastructure it has retained a landscape and character that is well worth a visit.

I work for Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust and part of my job is to promote the area adjacent the River Severn as it flows past Gloucester for Biodiversity, Landscape, Access and Climate Resilience – see <https://www.gloucestershirewildlifetrust.co.uk/gloucester-nature-park>.

My challenge to you therefore is when next at Over Basin, treat the senses to a little walk around Alney Island and soak up some history and wildlife.

Can I invite you therefore to turn left out of Horseshoe Drive and follow the footpath under the A40? This will bring you on the southern side of the main road where you will be confronted with the first wonder of Alney Island – Telford's Bridge. Designed by the famous 19<sup>th</sup>-century engineer, the all-stone bridge was completed in 1829 and finally opened in 1832 at which point it was then the lowest road crossing of the River Severn until the Severn Bridge (M48) opened in 1966.





*Railway bridge viewed from Telfords road bridge*

Be warned that the river level continues to rise after the wave has passed and can come over the bank. If river levels are high, be prepared to beat a hasty retreat. If in doubt, view from Telford's bridge.

Check [www.severntales.co.uk](http://www.severntales.co.uk) for when to see the Bore.

At the interpretation board follow the river round to the left and continue on the footpath. Walk as far as the wind turbine and go through the wooden gate and on to Llanthony Lock. The lock now owned by H&GCT was built in 1871 to get around the weir and provide a competitor to the Sharpness canal. It was in use until 1924 when the walls began to move inwards, it was deemed too expensive to repair and was never used again.



*Port Ham towards wind turbine*





# Summer Boat Trips on the H&G Canal

**Q. Want to do something different?**

**Q. Need some fresh air?**

**Q. Like to enjoy some time on the water?**

**Q. Learn something new and entertain the kids for a while?**

**A. Come to Over Basin and see how the Herefordshire and Gloucestershire Canal Trust are restoring the former Hereford and Gloucester Canal and take a twenty-five minute trip along a re-created section of canal.**

**See our restored heritage narrow boats, other craft, wildlife, historic sites and learn more about canal restoration on towards Hereford.**

**Trips on each boat will operate at 30 minute intervals on selected Sunday afternoons in 2025;**

**4 May ✧ 1 June ✧ 6 July ✧ 3 August ✧ 7 September**

**starting at 2.00pm with Mister Maysey and at 2.15pm with Charles Morrison. The last trip will embark at 4.15pm.**



**Wheelchair users are welcome on Sailing4Disabled's Wheelyboat Sir Charles Morrison.**

**More information on the Trust and the Canal at [www.h-g-canal.org.uk](http://www.h-g-canal.org.uk)**



**TICKETS**



**OVER BASIN**



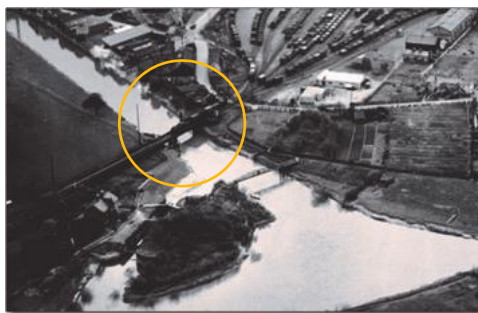
**FACEBOOK**

**As places may be limited we recommend that tickets be purchased online in advance –**

**[www.h-g-canal.org.uk/shop](http://www.h-g-canal.org.uk/shop)**

**Terms and conditions apply.**

Beyond the lock and to your right, you have the second wonder of Alney Island, Brunel's Docks Branch Swing Bridge (circled on image right). Constructed in 1850, it was a rail bridge that swung open allowing navigation for large boats. The county council wanted to remove it as part of the Southwestern bypass flood mitigation works, thankfully the city council realised its importance and listed it. Hopefully it will be re-opened as a cycle/footbridge.



*Brunel's Docks Branch Swing Bridge (circled).*

Continuing along the river you will go past Castle Meadows car park which until 1966 was the site of a coal-fed power station, not dissimilar in design to Battersea. As you reach the footbridge you can still see the quay and causeway that brought coal to the site. If you fancy a look around Gloucester docks and a coffee go over the footbridge, otherwise carry on through the kissing gate to 'Castlemeads'.

As the name suggests it was part of Gloucester Castle, which was built after the Norman invasion. Castlemeads itself was the site of numerous agricultural shows including in 1909 the Royal Show. Nearly 90,000 people attended, necessitating 23 km of new roads, a temporary bridge and its own gas and water supply.

Follow the river round on the footpath you will go past the site of the old Westgate Bridge (see interpretation board). Following that turn left and go under Castle Meadows Way and through two linked kissing gates. Follow the path up to the cycle path and turn right.

The cycle path follows the route of the Old Docks Branch railway that connected the main line to the docks. It was closed in the 1960s and the embankment removed as flood compensation for the Southwestern bypass.

After a drop (a flood channel) you will find the old sidings now covered in alder trees. At the end of the sidings follow the route round to the left and at the substation go through the kissing gate.



*Looking towards Highnam from Old Docks Branch line*

Continue along the path and then follow the route under the railway and back to Over. The route is about three miles (4.5 km) check before setting out with regard to flooding. High tides are around the end of March/early April and late September/early October. There are grazing Gloucester cattle on site. Although they have horns, they are very docile, just make sure you keep dogs on a close lead.

*Meyrick Brentnall*



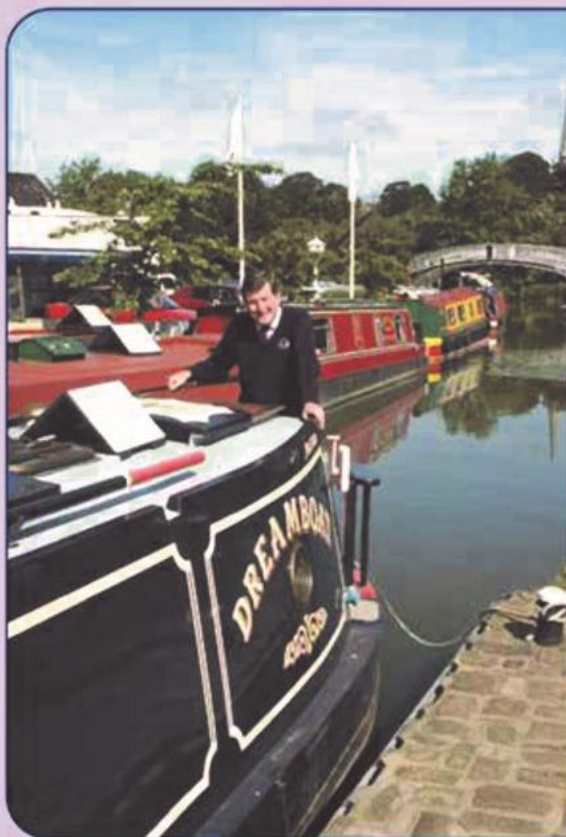
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# Long Term Strategy for the Trust

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As Members may be aware, the Trustees have been working to develop a long-term strategy for the Trust and after a series of on-line and in person discussions approved a final version at their meeting on 4 December 2024.

Below is a short summary of the strategy. The final version will be presented to Members at the AGM in June.

The strategy states that over the next ten years, the Canal Trust will focus on six main areas

## **1 Protecting and Restoring the line of the canal**

Unless the line of the canal can continue to be protected and preserved, full restoration of the canal from Gloucester to Hereford will not be possible. It is vital that the Trust maintains its vigilance to protect the line of the canal against potentially damaging developments and/or changes of use.

## **2 Volunteers**

With little or no funds to pay for a professional workforce, the building of a bigger and enthusiastic volunteer force will be essential to a successful restoration of the canal. This is particularly urgent given the average age of the existing volunteer cadre.

## **3 Maintaining the current sites**

The fourteen current sites represent tangible progress towards the full restoration of the canal. As such, they should be used to positively publicise the Trust's progress as well as being a vehicle for generating funds and recruiting volunteers.

## **4 Green, health and well-being**

There is a trend for people to go out into the countryside and green spaces for walks etc for the benefit of both their physical and mental health. Where towpaths have been restored, but particularly in locations where canal restoration is not imminent, the development of walks of a reasonable length (say greater than a mile) along the canal would provide a pleasant facility for people but also be beneficial in enhancing public opinion of the benefit of the restoration of the canal.

## **5 Fundraising**

The Trust should identify potential sources of large funds such as the Heritage Lottery Fund and establish a strategy on how to approach such funds and start to develop relationships with those funds. They should also develop expertise on all levels of suitable funding, building credibility through successful bids and subsequent project execution.

## **6 Getting boats onto the canal**

Canals were built for boats and there are also significant advantages in prioritising projects which would support boats using stretches of the canal, not least as the restoration projects across the country which have been most successful in attracting funds tend to be those focused on extending the cruising range of the canal for navigation.

*Roger Morgan*

# Help Needed Please

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## Renton

Renton is now safely out of the water and work is ongoing to ensure the hull is sound. Once this work has been completed, the plan is to turn Renton into a passenger boat.

To do this the Over Team need extra help. Clearing the boat up, wire brushes at the ready, then painting, both internal and external. We need to get Renton back to looking great in H&G house colours: Yellow and Black. Furniture will be required for the passengers to sit on as they enjoy their leisurely trip along the canal.

Would you like to help with the woodwork or a bit of painting? Please contact us and we can get you involved.

Please contact Dave by email to [overbasin@h-g-canal.org.uk](mailto:overbasin@h-g-canal.org.uk)

## Summer Boat Trips at Over Basin

Would you like to help operate the boats when they are on the water? We are running the Summer Boat Trips again this year – see info on page 24. The first Sunday of each month in Mr Maysey this year and, hopefully, Renton next year.

Full training in boat handling will be given. If that is not for you, you could get involved in welcoming the passengers, booking them in and getting involved.

Please do consider if you can help or you know someone, should it be onshore or on the boats, it is great fun.

Please contact Ralph by email to [chairman@h-g-canal.org.uk](mailto:chairman@h-g-canal.org.uk)

## Talks

On the inside front cover you will see that we have volunteers who do talks. Last year talks were given to 19 different organisations, with over 700 people in the audiences.

The talks consist of a brief history of the canal, about the Society and then moving on to become a charitable trust, and the work that has happened from 1992 to the present day. The presentation is updated most months as the sites change, with lots of pictures and some videos.

The audience has the opportunity to purchase the pack of walk leaflets and Dick Skeet's book *Rescued from Obscurity* (credit card payments can be taken). There is a charge for the talk which goes to H&GCT.

Should you know of a group who would like a talk lasting about 45 minutes to an hour (timings can be adjusted) please do get in contact. The best way is via the email to [speaker@h-g-canal.org.uk](mailto:speaker@h-g-canal.org.uk).

**Ralph Barber**

# Grand Holiday Draw 2025



Friends and colleagues will be eager for the chance of a great holiday for just £1! Once again we have some great prizes, so let's make this another successful fundraising event!

**1<sup>ST</sup>  
PRIZE**

## **NARROW BOAT HOLIDAY for FOUR**

ONE WEEK PRIOR TO 31 May 2026 excl Bank Holidays. *Donated by Black Prince Holidays*

**2<sup>ND</sup>  
PRIZE**

## **One Day's BOAT HIRE on the MON & BREC CANAL**

March – October 2026 for eight people from Llangattock *Donated by Beacon Park Boats*

**3<sup>RD</sup>  
PRIZE**

## **ONE NIGHT BED & BREAKFAST for TWO**

at The Lock Keepers. *Donated by The Lock Keepers at Over Basin*

*Ticket printing kindly sponsored by a generous donation  
and... yes, yet again – tickets are still just **£1.00** each!!*

The prize winners will be drawn on 9 October 2025.

Our thanks to our friends and supporters at **Black Prince Holidays**, **Beacon Park Boats** and **The Lock Keepers** for donating the holiday prizes – every pound raised is a pound towards restoration of the Canal.



As usual, members are being sent two books of tickets to sell to family and friends. Thank you again for your continuing support with this. If you would like more books or as a non-member wish to purchase some tickets please contact Debbie Barber via the Contact Us page on our website.

**Thank you.**

*Debbie Barber*

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# Promotion Events



Thank you to those who sent in suggestions for different events the Promotions Team could attend this year. They were all looked at, but it does depend on who is available to help out.

Herefordshire Histories Festival is brand new to the county this year, so we are happy to join in. Details will be on the H&G website for our events.

We do have some other events that are possible but need to work with our volunteers' availability. The more volunteers the merrier – are you going to put your hand up?

We will provide updates in the Wharfinger and on the email newsletter. As they say – watch this space!

## Diary to date – as far as we know it!

Spring Fayre in Newent	22 March 2025
Herefordshire Histories Festival – 2 days for H&G	10 – 18 May 2025
Minibus Tour of canal in Herefordshire	Saturday 10 May 2025
Display at Yarkhill Village Hall and Walks	Thursday 15 May 2025
Ledbury Community Day	7 June 2025
Newent Canal Projects Showcase Event	14 June 2025
Braunston Historic Boats	28 – 29 June 2025
Hereford Waterworks Steam Day	27 July 2025
Severn Vale Vintage Show, Fiddington, Tewkesbury	9 – 10 August 2025
Heritage Week – displays in Ledbury and Newent	12 – 21 September 2025
Newent Winter Fayre	8 November 2025

**As always – volunteers to assist us with promoting the work of the Trust at these events will be very welcome.**



Over Boat Trips – these are planned for the first Sunday of each month from May to September inclusive.

We will see if the change of day proves more popular than the Saturdays we did last year.

Tickets for the Minibus Tour and Over Boat Trips will be available on the website soon.

*Debbie Barber*

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... you can print off a free postage label or get a free postage box (you need to collect a lot to fill one of these) to send them off and earn credit for H&G funds.

Do your bit for the planet and help H&G at the same time!

*Debbie Barber*

**Recycle 4 Charity**



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## Stamps

A big THANK YOU to all members who responded to the appeal in the last issue and have sent in stamps since Christmas, they're all very much appreciated, and now that the festive season has come and gone, let's all make a new resolution to look in those drawers, cupboards and attics and keep those stamps a-coming and we'll soon break the next barrier of £6,000 raised for the H&GCT.



All stamps, albums, postcards, coins, banknotes and medals can be either sent directly to me, Steve Bence,

at: H&G Stamps, 35 Lime Road, SOUTHAM, Warwickshire, CV47 1EQ

or email to [information@h-g-canal.org.uk](mailto:information@h-g-canal.org.uk) to arrange for collection or delivery.

*Steve Bence*



Gloucester Model Boat Club sailing during the winter quarter has been much curtailed by the 2024 weather pattern. Wind, lack of, at times overpowering, rain and the continual duck weed – it is a natural food for the swans, but they are not devouring enough. Club members, along with Monica, who managed the portable weed-retaining wall kept the basin as weed free as possible.



The photographs are of a weeding party rewarded a few days later with a relaxed sail.

In early Autumn one of our long serving members passed away, he had a very skilled background which he put to good use as a model boat builder. South African by birth, his models could not be shipped home and so were donated to the club.

Within his varied collection was a prized working model of Bluebird of Chelsea. The actual cabin cruiser is moored on the Thames at Chelsea yacht club, she was originally owned by Donald Campbell of speed fame, who sold her to finance his attempts at several speed records.

Bluebird is registered as one of Dunkirk's Little Ships. She did not return for many years; it is worth scouring the internet to find the true story. Chris Lane photographed smiling is now the proud owner of the model. It is pleasing to record that all of Barry's models were retained by club members.





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Horseshoe Drive, Over, Gloucester, GL2 8DG



We must not forget our model yacht racers, hum, hum! I hope the photograph, taken on Friday 15th of November when there should have been at least a breeze shows the mirror like water. The yachts, eleven in total, are heading in a north-east direction, the buoy they are aiming for is above and to the right of the white yacht, concentration is for an indication of a breeze.



So, who is in the desired place with the sail set to catch that breeze? The green yacht on the left-hand side of the fleet is in the middle of the canal and just catches that breeze, off she goes to the marker buoy, slowly the fleet moves forward, but she has clear water to the buoy and turns in clear undisturbed air. She was followed around the buoy by one of the middle yachts in the fleet; once you have a cluster as shown the word lottery comes into play.

So, to this year, we have several ideas on the stocks and hope our enthusiasm will realise them.

*Ted Tedaldi*

## Sailing4Disabled / Rowing Pirates



Hi everyone, what a start to 2025! Weather has been a sore point; we've only managed one sailing day in January. Let's just hope the rest of the year is more in our favour, all things crossed.

Our sailing days for this year have been set with every Tuesday until the 9th December 2025, Mondays from 5th May if the clients require or until clients dwindle. We will be part of the Over Canal Boat Trip Sunday sessions from May 4th until the 5th September, hope to see some of you there?

The services we offer are still in demand which is an incentive to make our service as exciting as possible, as without them we would have to do all the remedial work around the house.

For everyone that sent me wishes for my 80th birthday many thanks, and sincere gratitude to the volunteers who presented me with a M&S envelope containing a voucher for a £100, a very thoughtful gesture, and I was really grateful, and the envelope was mine to keep!

I offer any of the readers of my ramblings an invite to come and visit on our sailing sessions and give us some feedback as to how we are doing.

Till next edition take care, see you soon. Pirate Pete, Ade, Alan, Andy, Eric, Martyn, Mike. Vince. Mike and John (new starters as Helmsman)

*Pirate Pete*

## Regular Volunteer Work Parties

Volunteer work parties regularly convene at restoration sites as listed below. Please contact team leaders to check for latest situations.

### Tuesdays

Malswick

Robert Heigham

[malswick@h-g-canal.org.uk](mailto:malswick@h-g-canal.org.uk)

Oxenhall/Newent Station

Martin Bolton

[oxenhall@h-g-canal.org.uk](mailto:oxenhall@h-g-canal.org.uk)

### Thursdays

Over Basin/Vineyard Hill

Dave Goff

[overbasin@h-g-canal.org.uk](mailto:overbasin@h-g-canal.org.uk)

Yarkhill

Chris High 01568 615 575

[yarkhill@h-g-canal.org.uk](mailto:yarkhill@h-g-canal.org.uk)

### Second Sunday each month

Herefordshire Roving Team

Ralph Barber 07836 347427

[hereford@h-g-canal.org.uk](mailto:hereford@h-g-canal.org.uk)

### As Required

Hereford City Team

Tony Higgins 01432 850408

[herefordcity@h-g-canal.org.uk](mailto:herefordcity@h-g-canal.org.uk)



Please submit your copy for Edition 164 to the magazine editorial team no later than 25 April 2025.

Ideas, text and images by email to [editor@h-g-canal.org.uk](mailto:editor@h-g-canal.org.uk).

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## Hereford City Team Leader – Tony Higgins

01432 850408

[herefordcity@h-q-canal.org.uk](mailto:herefordcity@h-q-canal.org.uk)

## Want to Help?

The Canal Trust is always in need of new volunteers as our activities continue to expand. We can normally find a use for any skill from gardeners to first-aiders, brickies to those willing to help with a shovel, pen, laptop or phone!

The H&G CT also welcomes offers of gifts of good quality used tools and machinery from those who no longer need or cannot use it.

## Want to Join?

Please support our voluntary work by becoming a Member of the H&GCT. A membership application form is available online or from our Membership Secretary.

Membership Rates	Annual	Life
Individual	£15.00	£300.00
Joint/Family	£20.00	£400.00
Electronic	£10.00	-
Corporate	£40.00	-

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greatly assists us and payment remains under your control.

All application forms and payments by cheque please to:  
Herefordshire and Gloucestershire Canal Trust  
6 Castle Street, Hereford, HR1 2NL

## Visit our website:

**[www.h-q-canal.org.uk](http://www.h-q-canal.org.uk)**

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The Queen's Award  
for Voluntary Service



The site can be found at Over, off the A40 just west of the A40/A417 roundabout – use postcode GL2 8BZ or What3Words [///branching.skirt.cringe](https://www.what3words.com/branching.skirt.cringe) – and follow signs for the Lock Keepers. Please do not block access to the site or The Lock Keepers when visiting. It should not be assumed that Rights of Way exist.

We work on the Canal with the cooperation of land owners and their neighbours.  
Please help us maintain good relations with them - thank you.

## The H&G Canal Trust

The Canal Society, formed in 1983, became the Herefordshire & Gloucestershire Canal Trust, a registered charity, in 1992. Our objective is to rebuild the 34 mile Canal linking the centre of Hereford to Gloucester and its connection with the 2,500 mile inland waterway network. We have major restoration sites in each county, together extending to some 4 miles. The intention is to provide a financially sustainable independent Canal which does not require regular financial support from public bodies for its future operation and maintenance.

Work on the original canal started in 1792 from Gloucester, reaching Ledbury by 1798, and Hereford in 1845 using 22 locks and 3 tunnels. It closed in 1881 to allow construction of the Ledbury-Gloucester railway which itself closed in 1964.