

Mick's Musings

Déjà vu in Reverse?

As a long-time past chairman of this society, I remember that during my time in office, we never had enough money to bring our dreams to fruition.

We had the manpower, and permissions in place for quite a few projects, but sadly the coffers were somewhat empty, and we were left scratching around doing anything that didn't cost much.

Contrast that if you will with the situation today, whereby many grants have been forthcoming, due to a couple of members working their socks off (thanks guys), bolstering our finances to unheard of heights, but are unable to use that money due to the many permissions we need and the technical hoops we will have to jump through to gain those permissions.

Yes, there have been some successes, notably with our new security cameras and grant to build another workboat (complete with new outboard) but still the big prize remains tantalisingly close, but in reality, so far away. Let me explain ...

We have a trip boat being prepared to take its first passengers in the spring. However, before it can take its maiden voyage several things have to happen. We need to construct a turn-around place (winding hole, nearly finished) to allow us to get it facing the right way, and then all the shallow places it will travel over, need silt removing to allow free passage. We have a large grant in place to get the silt removed professionally, and all we need is permission from a certain government agency to carry out the work. This is where everything grinds to a halt, as they do not seem able to agree on the way to proceed, and are demanding several surveys – vole, crayfish and for all I know grizzly bear, plus a water framework directive too. Surveys are expensive, time limited and seasonally dependant, so these will take over half the grant money available, not be done before October this year, and in the end, may recommend that the situation is too sensitive to do the work anyway.

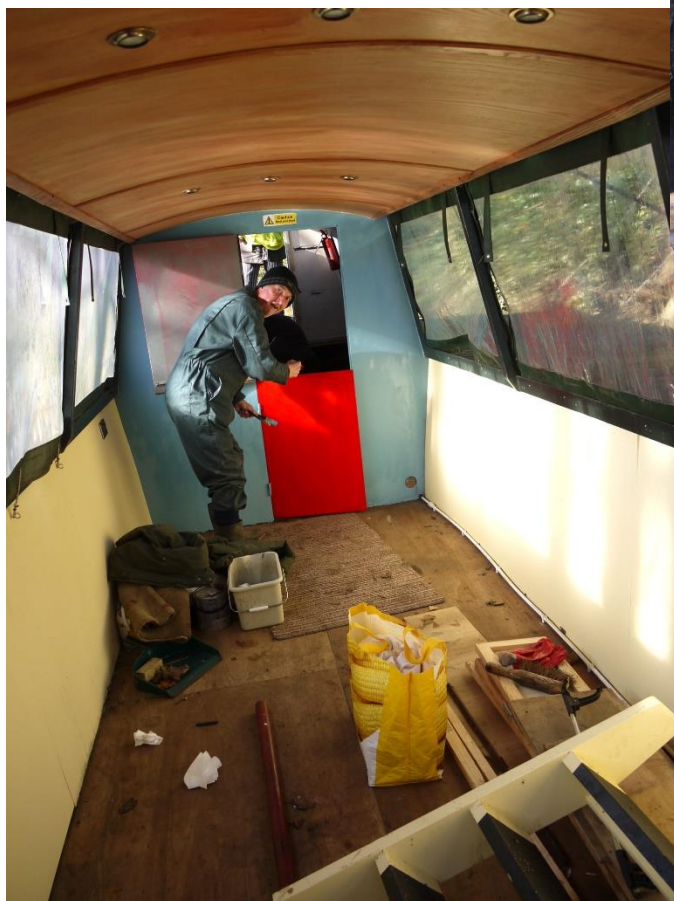
So, we are left scratching around doing anything that doesn't cost much. Wait a minute! Isn't this where we came in?

Mick

Boats

Our new workboat (yet to be named) is currently in work at a steel fabricators on the outskirts of Melton. The new vessel will be approximately the same size as 'Badger', but will include many features which we have found useful and have added as an afterthought to the present boat. A deposit has been placed on a brand new 6hp Honda outboard engine and the whole package could be in the water as early as April. This has all been made possible by a grant.

Meanwhile, our trip boat, 'Wreake Voyager', continues to be fettled in readiness for the coming summer. The new flooring is the next item to be installed following some re-painting work that was needed after the recent vandalism. The engine is now fully serviced, running sweetly and has the addition of one or two modifications we thought necessary.



The engine room is being tidied with much needed woodwork and the reinstatement of the side room door and frame. Externally, the roof has been cleaned and the whole vessel will be power-washed before installation of the new top cover, seats and tables.



Wreake Voyager trips starting soon

Galliford Try Update

As mentioned in our last edition, the builders of the MMDR have agreed to lend a hand with our plans to extend our moorings. However, they have asked, quite rightly, that any work we propose is agreed by all the relevant authorities.



Sadly, due to the pedantic character of the Environment Agency (see front page), we are unsure at the moment how much of the proposed work can be accomplished due to constraints that the agency may apply. We will, as always, attempt to get as much done as we can and will keep you posted by Facebook and this newsletter.

Work Parties

When arranging work parties during the winter, we always have to consider the weather forecast. Most times it can be cold and overcast, but just occasionally when the wind drops and the sun comes out it can be magical!

So it was recently, when on our expedition up to the footbridge that joins the two railway embankments, we were joined by two new volunteers, one of whom (and we should have realised) introduced himself as Tim Webster, the Major of Melton! The other was Jacky and both were not afraid to get their hands dirty.

The obstructions up at the footbridge are an overhanging tree, preventing access to the right-hand side of the central cutwater, massive amounts of debris actually on and around the cutwater and on the left-hand side a self-set willow tree and an enormous bush that would prevent the trip boat sailing straight through.

A couple of hours later, the obstructing tree had been pruned back, a fair amount of rubbish removed and a good start made on getting rid of the bush. Further work parties should see the area completely free. Both new volunteers declared that they had enjoyed themselves and vowed to return when available.

Eye Kettleby Lock Feasibility Study

Since the Society's formation, back in 1997, the main aim has always been the restoration of the Melton Mowbray Navigation from Syston to Melton. We knew at the outset that this would be a costly operation, so recent years have seen much activity in the Melton area that is aimed principally at raising funds.

The recent changes to our committee have resulted in bringing forward personnel who seem to recognise the criteria for successful grant applications. Following several notable awards, we now have irons in the fire for a much larger grant via the Heritage Lottery Fund for a feasibility study into the full restoration of Eye Kettleby Lock. Notifications of any award are expected soon. Please watch this space for further updates.

Every Cloud, etc

The recent spate of floods around Melton resulted in a fallen tree blocking the weir at Eye Kettleby. Every scrap of rubbish coming down the river has now built up a dam against the tree, proving an effective barrier to the water flow. This is both unsightly and dangerous should it give way suddenly and, as such, has been reported to the Environment Agency. In the meantime, however, the blockage (pictured right) has resulted in raised water levels around the ring in Melton, allowing our flotilla of boats to move about unobstructed. So ... every cloud does have a silver lining!!



An Exhibition about the Melton Navigation is currently running in the Melton Carnegie Museum until the 26th April, including a looped slide presentation. It's worth taking your children/grandchildren as it's a part of local history.

Security Cameras

A second security camera has now been purchased and was installed in a secure position to keep an eye on the floating pontoon used in the rowing boat hire operation. Unfortunately, the battery didn't seem to be charging sufficiently and it was removed for testing. We assumed that, as it was situated beneath trees, it was not getting sufficient light to be working effectively. However, following tests it was found that the battery was not holding enough charge and was replaced by the manufacturers. It is now back in place, working well and even on dull days, showing 90%+ charge.

Wanted!

Footpath rangers wanted. Do you regularly walk along any of our waterways? If the answer is yes, then you could be one of the people we are looking for. All we ask is that you report poor footpaths, excessive rubbish, broken stiles or gates and encroaching trees or vegetation anywhere between Melton and Syston. Even if your walk is only once a month, it would be enough to give us an idea of what is happening along the navigation line.

AGM 2024

The meeting took place on 2nd November. The numbers were slightly down on last year's AGM, but it was still a positive and lively meeting. The minutes can be found on our website.

Welcome to new members ...

Elizabeth Sanders - new life member

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