

Mick's Musings

Do As I Say, Not As I Do

You may/may not know of the long-running saga about the Environment Agency's insistence that any silt removed from the shallows in the river has to be spread close to the water's edge for a 24-hour period (to allow the creepy crawlies to get back into the river) and then either taken off site or moved a minimum distance back from the river and spread out on the surrounding ground at a measured depth. Very precise!

The Environment Agency also insist on a vole survey and a Water Framework Directive (don't get me started on that one) before a propeller can be turned.

Permission from the riparian owner at these pinch points is required to carry out these tasks and any delay on their part will impact on both our contractor, who is waiting to get started on the job, and the terms of our grant which requires us to spend the money within a certain timescale.

So, imagine our surprise to see several Environment Agency workers doing a similar job at the other end of town and seemingly paying little (if any) regard to the same rules and regulations that we have to adhere to.

A chat with one of 'the lads' (who shall remain nameless) revealed that no surveys were done and the silt was just spread willy nilly wherever they could find a hole to fill. Not very precise!

I do feel in this day and age where money is tight and grants hard to come by, that relatively small societies like ours are being walked all over by many government agencies, who brandish the red tape at the suspicion of anything out of place. This, despite the fact that left unattended, the river through the town would have been blocked many years ago, resulting in the Environment Agency getting a rocket, by endangering the town through flooding.

When I think back over the amount of fallen trees, bushes and rubbish that MOWS has removed from the river (in lieu of the Environment Agency and local landowners) in the last 29 years, it seems scant reward to be presented with a set of rules to work by, that even their own workers cannot stick to.

Mick

Work Parties

Recent work parties have seen our small band of volunteers (always room for more!) carrying out various tasks around the ring in Melton.

The latest task was to take our new work boat, Toad, up to Wilton Park to remove the security camera from its midstream mounting. The camera had ceased to function recently and, upon removal and connecting to a mains supply, showed that it was functioning correctly, but not charging and therefore we suspect the solar panel maybe at fault.

The crew then continued past the swimming baths and onto the canal section where, with the trees bare, it was easy to see what needed cutting back. This highlights the perennial problem of pruning the waterside foliage to allow easy passage before the birds start nesting in the Spring.



The pictures show several of the previous work parties carrying out tree and undergrowth management at various points around the waterway as far as Eye Kettleby Lock.

This essential work may have to be curtailed soon as we prepare our rowing boats for the new season with a plan to open on the '40s Weekend' in the park.



It never fails to surprise me what people will throw into the river. Besides the usual plethora of shopping trollies and pushbikes, we recently found an ancient VCR recorder and who can forget the carpark ticket machine and even, several years ago ... a safe.



Walks with Brian

Local historian, Brian Fare, was out and about early December doing one of his free 2-hour guided walks of the Melton Mowbray Navigation around the town. In October, he gave a talk on the history of the navigation at the Carnegie Museum and will be doing further talks and walks in the new year.

Brian's guided walks (and talks) are able to be offered free to the public by MOWS, courtesy of a grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund.



For further information take look at his website and book yourself into a forthcoming event: <https://historyfare.co.uk>.

Taking the Bait!

The Problem ...

Plugs, spoons, wigglers, spinners, wobblers, call them what you will, these artificial fishing lures seem very popular with the angling fraternity in Melton.

However, at one popular spot we retrieved this haul (below) which were dangling from a tree on the opposite bank. This proves very dangerous for those passing close to the tree on our work boats, with the treble hooks dangling in the breeze at around head height.



... And Perhaps the Solution?

We have recently been shown these fishing line disposal bins, which looks like a very neat idea and may avoid the problem (opposite) and the entanglement of wildlife shown on page 4. However, they are on sale at The Angling Trust at £42 for the small size and £82 for the large size. They appear to be made from 110mm/ 160mm downpipe, with a 90° angle at the top and a blanking plug at the bottom.

Any handyman fancy having a go?



Trip Boat Outing

The recent high water encouraged us to take 'Wreake Voyager' out onto the main river. The water levels allowed us to avoid the silt and sandbanks which normally prevent access, but only provided us with a couple of inches headroom under the school footbridge. I can report that the boat swims wonderfully!

Seagull Rescue

At one of our recent work parties, a couple of the volunteers noticed a seagull in distress. It had become entangled in fishing line and was obviously unable to free itself, so ... MOWS volunteers to the rescue! After capturing the bird and making sure it wasn't injured, they set about untangling and cutting the fishing line and after several minutes, the seagull was free.



Let's hope he/she got home OK without any further incidents ... and in time for a chippy tea!



Membership Renewals

If you are not a Life Member or don't have a Standing Order, please remember to renew your membership on 1 February. It would help us greatly if you would consider setting up a Standing Order. To pay by Bank Transfer, our bank details are: Account No. 41280783, Sort code 40-32-14.

Welcome ...

To our newest Footpath Rangers, Carol & Veronica Peters and Chris Elliott.



If you regularly walk alongside the river and think you may like to become a Footpath Ranger, please contact the society to find out more.

Welcome also to two new Life Members:

Diane & Nick Geeson

Society Contacts:

Chair: Sharon Butcher
e-mail: sharonbrown987@icloud.com

Secretary: Jerry Filor
(Acting) e-mail: jfilor@talktalk.net

Treasurer & Diana Patterson
Membership e-mail: dj.patterson@btopenworld.com
Secretary

Website: <http://www.meltonwaterways.org.uk>

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