

Mick's Musings

“We Have Nothing to Lose But Our Chains”

So, as many of you will be aware I recently stepped down as society Chairman and handed over the reins to Glynn, who I know has all the attributes to make a real difference in the future. But due to other current commitments Glynn has asked me to continue with this regular diatribe until he has both a little spare time and also feels the need to speak out. The problem is, as Chairman you cannot really voice your opinion as you would like to because the position determines that you have to always remain sitting on the fence, a neutral figure, rather like a football referee at the start of a match. However, now I am no longer the incumbent of the MOWS hot seat, this new found freedom, as depicted in the quote from the Marx & Engels manifesto in the headline, will allow me to say, within the bounds of decency and good taste, what I really feel is wrong with our little corner of the waterway world.

In the spirit of leaving no stone unturned, and I make no apologies for what follows, let's start with one of my pet dislikes – Facebook ‘members’ vs actual paid-up members, or to paraphrase that, keyboard warriors vs the real caring custodians of the work we are trying to do.

Don't get me wrong, Facebook is a wonderful tool for spreading the word and garnering initial interest but a recent trawl through the lists revealed that only a handful of our paid-up members actually subscribe to our Facebook group, and I assume that the increased benefits of regular newsletters and voting rights, etc, are more than enough for most.

Let's face it some people subscribe to many Facebook groups in much the same way as others collect Pokémon characters or designer clothes because it is ‘trendy’ to do so, and therefore will not pay a subscription because they probably don't have the same burning desire we do to see our local navigation connected to the national system. But if they did, and we could convert just 10% of our Facebook members into ‘real’ members then overnight we would double our current membership. Those membership figures are vitally important as one of the first questions we are always asked by the movers and shakers we need on our side to get this restoration completed is – how many actual members do you have? Well not enough apparently.

With the cost of a yearly membership roughly the same as one hour in our soon-to-be-launched rowing boats, why not put your hand in your pocket and show MOWS that you really do care? Rant over – for now at least ...

Mick

Mick Clowes

New Trip Boat Launched

The Society has taken delivery of its first trip boat since 'Water Rat' (Richard Booth's Wilderness boat). Currently named 'Daydream', it will soon be operating regular cruises around the Melton Ring and along the two local rivers. It is the first narrowboat on the Eye or Wreake in more than 20 years.

With room for 12 passengers, the 30ft boat is designed for operating sight-seeing trips with roll-up side windows making it ideal for the summer months.

The boat has previously operated cruises from a marina at Burton-on-Trent along the Trent & Mersey Canal. When it became available, it was purchased thanks to an interest-free loan on very generous terms from a long-time supporter of the Society.

It was lowered into the water at Eye Kettleby on Thursday 6 April and then cruised to the MOWS maintenance compound opposite Egerton Park. Final details of its operating base, at the rear of the park café, are now being discussed and will be announced shortly.

Before the boat can enter service, there will be some dredging work on shallow stretches of the Melton Ring and also some overhanging branches will need to be cut back.



Arriving at Eye Kettleby Lock



'Launching ceremony'



Safely afloat

New Trip Boat Launched (cont'd)

It is hoped that the coming months will see, not only the trip boat becoming a familiar sight in Melton, but also our seven rowing boats, which will be hired out from the same base.



The introduction of the boats is part of the society's efforts to enable more people to appreciate the local rivers which we believe is an under-appreciated attraction. They also have the potential to attract more visitors to the town.

Geof Malone

New Chairman Announced

You may have all read the email sent out by the MOWS Committee regarding appointing a new Chairman. Glynn Cartwright was elected at the committee meeting held on Wednesday 29 March 2023.

We've been without a Chairman since Mick Clowes tendered his resignation at the AGM held in November after many years of unstinted support for the society. Mick was one of the founder members back in 1997 and during the next 25 years served long periods as both Vice-Chairman and Chairman (there have only been 3 Chairmen since the start).

As well as keeping things moving wearing his Chairman's hat, Mick has been a regular on work parties and has also actively promoted the Society, giving talks to numerous local organisations, keeping contact with the local authorities and maintaining links with other groups involved in waterways restoration projects.

The Society owes him big thanks but we're delighted to know that, while he steps down from the Chairman's role, he will still be a regular at work parties as well as continue to provide his knowledge on the committee (and has in fact been keeping things ticking over since we've been chairmanless!).

Glynn set up the Melton Matters Facebook Group and is active in several other community groups. He has been a MOWS member for several years but only joined the committee in November and has already been busy taking over responsibility for our membership and social media output (do remember to check into our Facebook page and keep up-to-date with the latest MOWS news).

The committee is delighted to have Glynn in the chair and look forward to him bringing a new perspective to the role.

There's a lot of exciting things happening in the coming weeks and we will keep you in touch.

MOWS Committee

Mark Percival

It is with great sadness that I report the death of personal friend and MOWS volunteering stalwart, Mark Percival.



Mark was never happier than tackling the jobs that being a MOWS volunteer presented, be it chopping back riverside overgrowth (usually whilst balancing precariously on the front of the workboat!) or bigger jobs such as felling overhanging trees which were dispatched with almost surgical use of his chainsaw.

He was instrumental in raising the workboat Mole from her watery resting place following a flood, and then following the boats complete submersion, proceed over the next month, to refurbish the diesel engine and all its controls! It is true to say that there wasn't anything Mark wouldn't have a go at, as evidenced by the unique lifting gantry for Mole's roof built by him and good friend Stuart. He would turn out no matter what the weather and put in many extra hours when a project needed finishing. He was one of a kind really.

I will miss his cheery smile, his generosity of spirit and the amusingly quirky way he used to look at life.

Our thoughts are with Margaret and the family at this sad time.

Mick Clowes

News from Footpath Rangers

Mike Patterson, one of the Footpath Rangers, has just taken on responsibility for this group.

He is seeking new Rangers to join the existing team to walk small sections of the River Wreake and keep an eye out for any problems or maybe trim back a bit of vegetation, etc.

Keep a look out on our Facebook page for details of what Mike is planning.

The Melton Navigation Walks Book is still selling well. We are now awaiting delivery of our THIRD print run and we have new distributors coming on board.

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