



## Mick's Musings

### No Answer was the Reply

I recently attended the Leicester Riverside Festival with our ukulele band, who were booked to play in the Castle Gardens area of the festival site.

In the break between sets, I had a wander around the park and found that we were close to a stand representing the Canal and River Trust. I introduced myself as MOWS Chairman and had a discussion with the CRT officer there. These chats are usually along the same lines, whereby I ensure that the listener is aware that at some point in the future EA's navigable waterways will be handed over to CRT, along with the dowry that comes with them from Government, before asking them what will happen to waterways like ours, which are EA administered, ripe for restoration, but not yet navigable?

As the heading states "no answer was the reply" because, frankly, no-one high enough up the chain of command has ever asked the question, so if you are someone who is in that position and reading this, I implore you to ask and let us know the answer, so that we can move forward with confidence.

During CRT's formation, following on from the old British Waterways concern, it was a bit of a lottery as to which administration (CRT or EA) your waterway was to be put under, and some benefitted immensely as the remit of CRT is to be pro restoration.

Our nearest neighbour, The Grantham Canal did well out of this and is now seemingly on course for reopening in the future. However, and this is not meant to be a swipe at our friends on the Grantham, if when divvying up the waterways, the ease of future restoration was taken into account, the Melton Navigation would have surely found itself in the CRT gang and by now possibly open again for everyone to enjoy.

We have no water supply problems as the Wreake is a river, no major obstructions, all locks bar the first are still there, and an entrance off the British waterway system at Syston and a superb terminus with the waterway ring around the beautiful parkland in Melton. Being wholly in Leicestershire we have only one County Council to deal with, and just two borough councils - Melton and Charnwood.

Compare that to the Grantham's lack of water, numerous dropped bridges, no entrance yet from the Trent, and the natural terminus cut off by a road, plus three different county administrations and numerous Boroughs too.

Being a natural choice for restoration, but then being ignored, no wonder we are all so frustrated!

Keep cool.

Mick

Mick Clowes

# Discover the MMN with these New Walks

The Society has published a new book of walks to encourage more people to discover the Melton Mowbray Navigation. The 6 walks along the River Wreake follow, as closely as possible, the original route of the Navigation, from Melton Mowbray to Syston, a distance of just over 16 miles.

They are based on the original Wreake Valley Way route, which was compiled shortly after the Society was formed in 1997, but they have been updated and expanded and now include information about the villages and other points of interest along the way.

Most of the walks take around a couple of hours for both the outward and return journey and some include a circular route.

It is no longer possible to walk alongside the river all the way because, when the Navigation was abandoned in the late 1800s, the towpath reverted to private landowners. It is, however, possible to see many of the 12 original locks, some of which are in remarkably good condition.

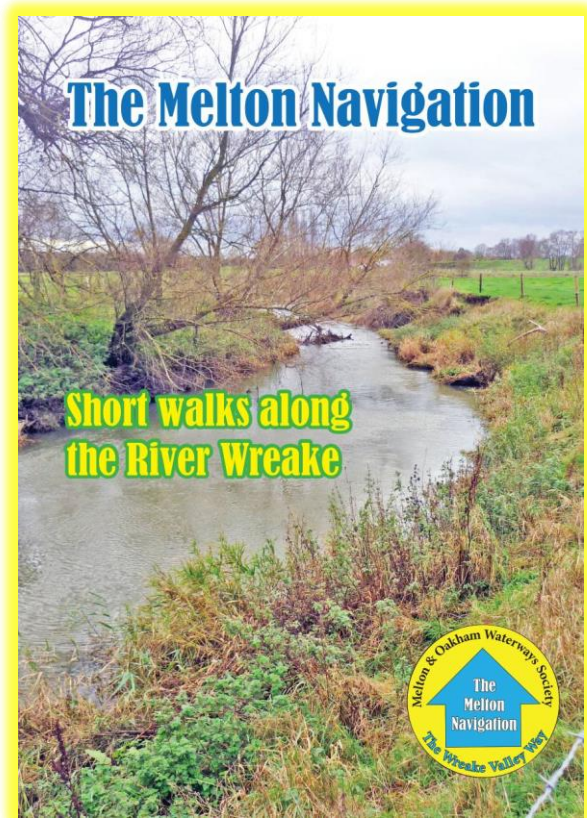
Following are the individual walks:

- Walk 1: Melton Mowbray to Eye Kettleby Lock
- Walk 2: Eye Kettleby Lock to Kirby Bellars
- Walk 3: Kirby Bellars to Frisby on the Wreake
- Walk 4: Frisby on the Wreake to Hoby
- Walk 5: Hoby to Thrussington or Ratcliffe on the Wreake
- Walk 6: Ratcliffe on the Wreake to Three-Way Bridge & the River Soar

The book contains details of how to get to the starting points (and return) either by car or bus and walks can be undertaken individually or linked together.

MOWS committee member, Geof Malone, who compiled the book for the Society said: “I’m hoping the book will help make more people aware of the Navigation’s history and what MOWS are doing to restore it. These are delightful walks through some beautiful countryside and lovely villages and there’s some fascinating history.”

Costing £3.95, the 40-page book is currently available at Melton Sports in King Street, Melton, Grange Garden Centre at Asfordby Hill and the Country Park Café and will shortly be on sale in other outlets.



## Melton Mowbray Trumpton's Annual Giveaway

MOWS was one of the community and charity organisations to receive a donation from Melton firefighters' Christmas Trumpton appeal.

The annual fundraising effort has been held since 1979 and has seen thousands raised for good causes. In what is now a town tradition, Santa tours the area on the back of a brightly decorated fire engine resembling the vehicle used by Captain Flack and his crew in the 1960s children's television series set in the village of Trumpton.

This year, despite limitations on the fundraising because of Covid restrictions, the firefighters still raised more than £8,000 with the result that 21 local organisations benefited.

MOWS received £450 which has been used to buy buoyancy aids and lifejackets which will be available for users of the Society's rowing boats when the service is launched (see below).



Committee members, Jane Martin and Geof Malone, received the cheque on behalf of the MOWS and had the opportunity to tell more than 100 guests about the history of the Navigation and what the Society is doing to keep the waterways around Melton maintained, as well as the long-term plans for reopening the Navigation.

## Rowing Boat Restoration Nears Completion

Work is nearing completion on the restoration of the 7 rowing boats which MOWS has acquired to hire out on the River Eye.

As reported in the last newsletter, the boats were bought from a hire business in the Brecon Beacons where they had been used as part of a large fleet on a large lake.

With a length of 14ft, they are of a traditional design and made by Salters of Oxford. Salters run a large hire fleet from various bases on the River Thames and little has changed since they started making them in the 1800s.



Our GRP boats had, however, seen long service in South Wales and, while still safe and seaworthy, were in need of extensive repairs and restoration.

As well as being an opportunity to introduce more people to the Melton waterways and raise funds for the Society, the boats will also be an added attraction for residents and visitors and MOWS is working with the Town Estate and the Borough Council to ensure the hire service has widespread support.

Discussion are now underway about a landing stage and the plan is to build it in Wilton Park, close to the Pavilion café. Planning permission will shortly be applied for.

*Work continues on the rowing boats and in the foreground are the buoyancy aids and life-jackets which have been bought with the £450 donation from the Trumpton Christmas appeal.*

## Braunstone Boat Show

A few of the committee attended the above event over the weekend of Saturday 25 and Sunday 26 June, with Lorrie and Bill on the Saturday and Gary and Jerry attending on the Sunday.



The photograph shows well-known actors and boaters, Prunella Scales and Timothy West, presenting the MOWS cheque to Lorrie and Bill (standing between Tim and Pru).

## New Boat for Melton In Bloom



Some of our more local members may have seen the new planter which was completely refurbished by a member of the MOWS Committee, Gary Jesionowski, ably assisted by his dad. The work was completed for the Melton in Bloom for judging day on 4 July.

## Work Parties

Treasures of the deep .... well, perhaps not so deep .... but definitely treasures!!



*Stuart and Jerry after a Sunday morning's work party on the navigation around Melton.*

*Welcome to new members ...*

*Emily Wright and Richard Everley*

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