



Registered Charity No 1078752

MOWS Newsletter

Spring 2012

Mick's Musings

Our twice monthly Sunday work parties using the Mole river clearance vessel have unearthed some 'treasures' around the Melton ring. Pottery, brickwork, unidentifiable wooden structures and tons of silt have all emerged from the depths. Ancient bicycle frames and the odd shopping trolley are all to be expected, but a couple of our recent expeditions have revealed something a little more sinister.

Working in the area of the Asfordby Road rainwater outfall produced foul smelling black silt, which made us curious as to what was going on. Our questions were soon answered by a local householder standing in his riverside garden. He informed us that he has regularly seen evidence of raw sewage in the river to the extent that he now refuses to allow his daughters to play at that end of the garden. We immediately made further enquiries and a letter was duly sent to the Environment Agency who manage the river. Their reply was somewhat perturbing as it informed us that at times of high rainfall, they are **allowed** to discharge sewage through this and several other local outfall drains.

The wider implications of this were not apparent initially, but given some thought, they do affect a rather large section of the population. Firstly, the Rivers Wreake and Eye flow into the River Soar at Cossington, the Soar in turn flows into the River Trent which enters the sea at the Humber estuary. The catchment area for this polluted water must be at least a linear 100 miles.

Locally, in the shallower stretches, children have paddled and played down the years, and anglers have fished the river from time immemorial. Livestock has slaked their thirst at the water's edge and, no doubt, during a hot summer, people have swam in it.

In this day and age, we can put a man on the moon, make a telephone call from the top of Mount Everest, perform organ transplants and train an athlete to cover 100 metres in less than 10 seconds - we can do all this, but why can't we deal effectively with our own waste?

MOWS represents, not just our own members, but the wider society and as such opposes the discharge of any noxious materials into our rivers and canals. We intend to pursue this matter as far as we can within the law.

Mick Clowes
Chairman

2011 AGM

The 2011 AGM of the Melton and Oakham Waterways Society was held on Saturday 26 November at Sysonby Knoll Hotel, Melton Mowbray.

The well-attended meeting heard the Chairman review the past year's activities and outline the society's aspirations for the future. He stressed the importance of getting the correct form and function for the soon to be rebuilt (in 2012) Wreake End Footbridge at Syston, which will create the waterway's "front door."

The attendees heard how the plans to convert the "Mole" workboat into a river clearance vessel had gone so well that other canal restoration groups were now keen to borrow it and that a loan deal was in the offing.



The Chairman described 2011 as a year in which the society had spread its wings attending festivals and meetings far and wide, whilst closer to home the many and varied work parties had seen volunteers trained to use the new workboat, clear vegetation, silt and debris around the Melton ring and worked on two sections of the Oakham Canal. The Melton ring was important as, once cleared, the basics were then in place to apply to stage the Inland Waterways Association's annual Trail Boat Rally, sometime in the future.

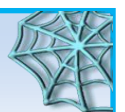


The Oakham Canal work had resulted in co-operation with local residents from the housing estate through which the waterway passes, while at the Rutland Railway Museum "Rocks by Rail" project, the society had joined forces with staff to clear a culvert and put the canal there back in water.

With the new website up and running, more volunteers coming forward and some members taking out life memberships the Chairman said that we are right to be optimistic about the future of the waterway and the Wreake Valley river corridor. All in all a good year.

The meeting concluded with a talk by historian, Mr John Plumb from Stamford who, as a former Meltonian, recalled how local and national pride and prosperity had waned over the years.

New Website Reminder



Remember we now have a new site: <http://www.meltonwaterways.co.uk>.

Winter Work Parties

Over the past few months, we have held several work parties in and around Melton. These have mostly been on the river clearance and work boats 'Badger' and 'Mole'. We have also been busy at the "Rocks By Rail" site at Cottesmore and on the small stretch of canal in Oakham (see next item below).



"Rocks by Rail" site at Cottesmore



"Excuse our backs!"

Litter Pick Around Melton Ring

On a glorious Sunday morning in November, we (7 society members) had a wonderful walk around the river/canal in Melton, picking up litter as we went.

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Rundown Oakham canal could be restored

Ron Francis on 'Midlands Today'

On 4 January, Midlands Today ran an article on the Oakham Canal.

"A run down canal which runs through Rutland and Leicestershire could be restored to its former glory. The Melton and Oakham Waterways Society wants to tidy up a quarter mile (400m) stretch of the canal at Oakham which is now overgrown and full of rubbish."

If you missed it, you can still catch it on the Midlands Today website:
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-leicestershire-16409805>

Ron said: *"It's beginning to look a bit like a tip with all sorts of refuse thrown in there. We'd like to sort it out and get rid of the debris and make it an area to be proud of."*

Talk and Slide Show Presentation by Chairman at IWA Social

A presentation entitled "MOWS: Past, Present and Future" was given by the chairman on Thursday 12 January at "The Gate Hangs Well" at Syston. This excellent presentation was second on the agenda and was preceded by a slide show and talk about the Foxton Inclined Plane Trust.

This was at one of the regular social events run by the Leicestershire Branch of the Inland Waterways Association. These are held on the first Thursday in the month from September to May. Most events are at "The Gate Hangs Well" at Syston and are usually talks on various waterway subjects. The association also hold outdoor events, such as the one run in September last year, which was a bell boat trip around the backwater of the River Soar. They also have skittles evenings and last year's Christmas meal was a very festive affair.

If you would like to know more about forthcoming socials or the IWA, the branch website is:
http://www.waterways.org.uk/branches_regions/east_midlands/Leicestershire/leicestershire.

Feasibility Study

With the rebuilding of Junction Bridge in 2012, the society intends to apply for an LCC Big Society grant for a feasibility study looking into improving the footpath between the bridge and The Gate Hangs Well pub. This is part of footpath 163a, SK51SE, SK61SW and was originally on the line of the old Melton Mowbray navigation towpath. Walking upstream from the bridge, the first half mile is narrow, undulating, perilously close to the water's edge and in need of repair. It then dives under the A46 road bridge, emerging adjacent the first of the double-arch bridges, which are unique to this navigation and were chosen as the society's logo. A relatively straightforward centre section passes under the Midland railway viaduct and into the woods, where fallen trees and new growth has forced walkers to take detours, moving the path, albeit slowly, further and further from the water's edge.

The feasibility study will look into the possibilities of repair and realignment on to the original line, whilst providing a safe and level path for all. The study may be broken down into smaller, more manageable sections which may lead to a slightly longer timescale. Once the study is complete, the society will seek out more funding sources to get the work done.

Forthcoming Work Party Dates

Work parties are held on the 1st and 3rd Sundays in the month - weather permitting. If you wish to participate in any of these, please place your details on the Work Party Database by contacting Hugh Butler, tel: 01664 434549, e-mail: 2butlers@tiscali.co.uk.



Are You On e-mail?

If you are new to the internet and have not yet given us your e-mail address, please consider doing so. It would certainly cut down our costs on photocopying and postage, not to mention saving a few trees! It would also allow us to notify you quickly of any breaking news, events and work parties.

Could I also remind members that have changed their e-mail address to let us know their new one.

Welcome To New Members ...

Patricia Burke
Michael Hipwell
Terry Moore
Mo Murray

Liam Nash
Geoff Oval
Kerry Quy
Maggie Young

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