



Registered Charity No 1078752

# MOWS Newsletter

Winter 2012/13

**Junction Bridge Completed!  
4-page special attached**

## Mick's Musings

A recent announcement by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), stated that there is to be a public consultation as part of its review of the functions of the Environment Agency and of Natural England. This appears, on the surface, to be a routine review, to check that both bodies are still necessary and functioning correctly. However, there seems to be a hidden agenda to slim the organisations down and save on costs.

The smart money is on the two organisations being merged into a single UK regulator for the countryside and environment, leaving peripheral interests to be passed on to other organisations where appropriate. This neatly dovetails with the government's past idea that the EA's navigation functions should be transferred to the Canal & River Trust, providing that the funding packages associated with them are also passed to the Trust. This is all mentioned in a veiled and roundabout way in the document. The danger here is that leaving the Wreake in the remainder group with less funding has a knock-on effect to all users, resulting in overgrown footpaths, weeded up fishing spots, stagnant water and difficult overall access. DEFRA says it will announce preliminary conclusions in the spring, once it has consulted everyone concerned.

This news is a double-edged sword for MOWS, in that we are pleased that the EA's navigations may be transferred to the CRT, where, in our opinion, the organisation is more pro restoration, but at the moment the River Wreake is not classed as navigable. Although most of the navigation structures: locks, bridges, weirs, etc, still exist, the river is seen as 'once navigable with a good chance of restoration'.

The conundrum here is how to shift the mindset of the powers that be to include an ex-navigation under restoration, in with the existing EA navigations and therefore allow it to be transferred across to the CRT, where more help is available.

At our recent AGM, our star speaker, Lynne Berry OBE, Deputy Chair, CRT, was asked just such a question, but considering the early stage of the organisation's development, could not give a definitive answer.

MOWS intends to respond in the most positive way possible to this consultation document to elicit some sort of response. In the meantime, if anyone can tell us how to change 'under restoration' to 'navigable' without anyone noticing, well, answers on a postcard please ...

Mick Clowes  
Chairman

## 2012 AGM

This year's AGM of the Melton and Oakham Waterways Society was held on Saturday 10 November at Sysonby Knoll Hotel, Melton Mowbray.

The meeting was very well attended and ran smoothly, with the first few items on the agenda moving quite quickly. The chairman's report followed and, saving the best news until the end,



commented on the rebuilding of the new Wreake End Footbridge (aka Junction Bridge). This was followed by the Treasurer's report and presentation of accounts. Four members of the committee were due to retire from the committee but all expressed their wish to stand for another term and were duly proposed and re-elected.

We were honoured to introduce our guest speaker, Lynne Berry OBE (pictured right), who is Deputy Chair of the Canal and River Trust. Lynne first talked to us about how she was approached to join the CRT prior to its transition from British Waterways. Her expertise in social services and social care being their main reason for wanting Lynne to be part of the new organisation.



The biggest difference is the charitable status of the CRT and all that goes with this: funding, no government minister to answer to, volunteers, Friends of CRT, charity partners, donations and fund-raising activities, to name but a few.

You could tell that Lynne was a very driven, enthusiastic person and even her very early years were spent close to the canal at Llangollen, where her mother pushed her in the pram over the aqueduct. Her family then moved to Birmingham and she recalled seeing Gas Street Basin in its grimy working days. Latterly, much of her social services work was based in and around the Camden area of London, where one of the schemes she created encouraged youngsters to be involved with the canals.

Lynne and her husband own a 1950s wooden estuary cruiser which they are restoring, so she has all the right credentials for the CRT, not only through her working life, but also on a personal basis.



# MOWS Archivist

Whilst attending our recent AGM (for report see page 2), well-known local historian, Bob Payne, volunteered to become Archivist for the society. As we have been established for some 15 years, we feel the time is right to begin piecing together a record of what went on in the past, as well as cataloguing what is happening in the present day. Bob would welcome any contributions, old or new, and sees them split into three distinct groups:

1. Those belonging to the period of planning, construction, use, closure and disposal of assets (1785 to 1900 or thereabouts), ie minute books, statement of accounts, letters, bills, receipts and other ephemera of the period, and as photography was just in its infancy by the 1870s, some early photographs may exist.
2. The period from 1900 to the formation of MOWS in 1997 – probably only references to the river and boating and the river improvement society, but photographs of river activity would be interesting and the minutes of the river improvement society may still be around.
3. MOWS own materials – minutes, publicity, etc.

We respect the right of contributors to retain their artefacts, but MOWS would be grateful for the opportunity to make copies.

If you have anything to contribute, please contact anyone on the Society Contacts list (see page 4).

## Melton Tea Towel

We are now able to offer members the newest addition to our range of merchandise.

The tea towel comes in green on a cream background and shows several aspects of Melton Mowbray and its waterway. The price is £3.50 each (plus p&p). If you would like to place an order, please contact Mike Handford on 01455 611508.

*Ladies - give your man a treat for St Valentine's Day!!*





## Winter Work Parties

Over the past few months, we have been dogged by the wet weather and the last three work parties have had to be cancelled as the river levels have been too high to use the boat. Hopefully, things will begin to get better and the river will be back to normal. The photo (right) was taken a few months ago and shows two of our volunteers who have now 'gone round the bend'.



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 contact Mick Clowes or Linda Hulme, tel: 01509 414140, e-mail: lindandmick@btinternet.com.

## The Syston Hub

Development of the waterways throughout Leicestershire is now the responsibility of the RIVER SOAR AND GRAND UNION CANAL PARTNERSHIP on which MOWS is represented by Mike Handford. At a meeting of the partnership on 12 December, our ideas for improvements to the lower reaches of the River Wreake, which are now possible following completion of the new Junction Bridge, were presented. The next stage is to arrange discussions with all interested parties.

## Messing About On The River

An illustrated, light-hearted presentation was given in Melton by chairman, Mick Clowes, on Thursday 25 October. It gave a quick history lesson of the navigation, with several old photographs; how the society was founded, the work society has done, what we're doing now and what the future may hold.

## Welcome To New Members ...

Syd Bell	Derek Pratt
Jean Bell	Dr John Rodgers
James Colclough	Janet Rodgers
Nick Cooke	Vic Roulstone
Philip Hassall	Mary Stewart
Jill Kimber	Max Stewart

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