



Mick's Musings

Charity Begins At Home? Apparently Not!

With the Melton Local Plan in the news, I took the time to look back to see how the Rivers Wreake and Eye have fared in previous plans. Well, if my historical findings are anything to go by, and despite a good response to the comment forms from our members, I fear the waterway will not feature in the latest incarnation.

The Grantham Canal, however, seems to have become the apple of local government's eye appearing prominently in recent local plans, receiving regular project grants from Melton council and listed in the Melton Local Plan "issues and options" as the "Borough's main waterway" - Oh really?

But which is best? Well as TV's Harry Hill would say, there's only one way to find out Fight! So;

Laydeez and Gentlemen; for the waterways championship of the East Midlands, a contest over 7 rounds. In the red corner weighing in at 33 miles and 18 locks, I give you The Grantham Canal! And in the blue corner, the challenger weighing in at 15 miles and 12 locks - The Melton Mowbray Navigation! Let's get ready to rumble!!! Seconds out, ding, ding. Round 1

	Grantham Canal	V	Melton Mowbray Navigation
Round 1: Location	Only one-third is in Leicestershire.		Wholly in Leicestershire.
Round 2: Proximity	Nearest point, 9 miles from Melton.		Runs through Melton town centre.
Round 3: Obstructions	Major obstructions at A1 link into Grantham and A52 low level into Nottingham at Gamston.		Minor obstruction at Ratcliffe, needing diversion along original river route. No other major obstructions.
Round 4: Water Supply	Knipton Reservoir with additional back pumping at locks.		Continuous water supply (river fed).
Round 5: Current Status	Some sections in water with dry sections in between. Good section with locks at Woolsthorpe.		Fully in water at all times.
Round 6: Locks	Locks require work, first lock missing.		Locks require work, first lock missing.
Round 7: Entrance	No entrance from River Trent, original line blocked, costly diversion envisaged.		Superb new entrance bridge from the Soar Navigation with navigable headroom.

So, a win on points for the Melton Mowbray Navigation by five rounds to nil, with two drawn, and what do points make? Prizes, or in our case, b*****r all!

Mick

Mick Clowes

Winter Work Parties

The rain Gods have smiled on us this winter with only one scheduled work party falling foul of the weather. In addition one or two *ad hoc* efforts have been made during the week and I am pleased to say the whole watercourse from Eye Kettleby Lock to the furthest point on the ring is looking in the best shape for many years.

There are, as always some sticking points to address, namely the reed growth around Wilton Bridge and the encroaching silt island building up on the corner between the slipway and the school footbridge. What people may not appreciate is that winter water levels are higher, such that the outrigger feet on "Mole" cannot touch the bottom, resulting in an unstable and dangerous situation. These jobs will have to wait for summer water levels to return.

A pre-Christmas "clear the cobwebs" work party, down at Eye Kettleby Lock, saw a hardworking crew uncover the overgrown copings and top part of the lock chamber. This lets the general public see what is there and awaits the day when it wakes from its long slumber and again becomes part of a working navigation (EA please note).



A further "three bash" work party was held about half a mile downstream of Sysonby, where felled willow limbs had been cut, and simply dropped in the water where they have taken root.



The resultant two or three years growth had all but blocked the river resulting in reduced flow and silt dropping out of suspension, causing further blockages. This is very evident on the latest edition of Google maps, but I am pleased to say they are behind the times, because due to the hard work of our volunteers it looks nothing like that now!

Fancy a dirty weekend? Become a work party volunteer - ring 01509 414140 and get your details on the work party database. Any age, either gender - anyone can join in!

Oakham News

The Society's activities cover both the Melton Navigation and the Oakham Canal. Whilst much of the "Oakham" to the east of Melton has long since disappeared, large sections of the canal are still visible in the landscape and many remain in water. These two photos taken near Edmondthorpe and Ashwell last summer show how attractive the Oakham still is! We have cleared a section of canal at the Rocks by Rail site between Ashwell and Cottesmore and are investigating the possibility of a Nature Walk from here to Oakham.

With the canal in the possession of multiple private owners there is little public access to much of what remains. Only the section between Oakham and Ashwell retains a public footpath and our friends at the Oakham Angling Society have done a great job in improving a large section for the benefit of all users.



Paul Dadford, who has recently joined the Committee, is actively pursuing a number of projects aimed at conserving the Oakham canal as well as increasing local awareness and improving the profile of MOWS in communities through which the canal passes.

Paul aims to rekindle our former "Oakham End" group, so if you have an interest in the Oakham Canal and can spare some time, Paul would very much like to hear from you, particularly if you can contribute to any future "hands on" activities.

Paul can be contacted by email at pdadford@yahoo.co.uk or by telephone on 07870 238688.

East Meets West? The Sooner The Better!

MOWS Committee has long debated the best way to move our vision forward to a full restoration of the Melton Mowbray Navigation. We are now in the process of forming Eastern and Western waterways partnerships to solve the problems and find funding opportunities simultaneously at each end, and working to meet in the middle as soon as possible! The Eastern partnership is to be chaired by County Councillor Pam Posnett who represents Melton, whilst at the other end we are actively seeking a Charnwood councillor to do the same. News of the initial meetings should make the next issue.

We're Making News!

Andrew Denny, Assistant Editor of Waterways World Magazine spent Sunday 15 February looking in detail at the Melton and Oakham Navigations accompanied by committee member, Hugh Butler. The end-product will be a three page article in a forthcoming edition of the magazine. Andrew scoured the waterways for photography opportunities and even dropped in to say hello at one of our regular work parties. The current edition has just hit the shelves so look out for it in the April or May issues. When we can scan a copy we will endeavour to get it on to the website.

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As an adjunct to the above, Andrew Denney said that at a recent meeting he had attended, CRT Chief Executive, Richard Parry, admitted he wasn't aware of MOWS existence! However, to redress the balance, our Chairman met with both Sir Peter Soulsby and Midlands Canal & River Trust Enterprise Manager, Simon Papprell, who both assured him we were "very much on their radar". Mixed blessings or what?

Subscription Renewals

It's that time of the year again and subscription renewal reminders have gone out to members. Thank you to those who have paid promptly and especially to those who have given a donation along with their annual subs. And just a gentle reminder to those who have not yet got round to it. A sign of the times too, that a few are now making their payments via bank transfer. Of course, there's no doubt that we are aiming to get everyone paying by standing order, although we greatly appreciate membership renewals in any shape or form!

Welcome To New Members ...

Kim Etherington
David Etherington
Michael Hipwell

Chris Hassall - who has been a member for several years and is now a life member

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