

Mick's Musings

Glass Half Full?

I am certain that everyone reading this has been affected by the Coronavirus pandemic in some way or other and I hope this finds all of our readers safe and well. As a society the virus has affected MOWS too, with all work parties and committee meetings cancelled until the government says it is safe to socialize again. It would be difficult to social distance with seven volunteers in a 23-foot boat!

However, I am a glass half full sort of chap, and have made the following observations, which may cheer you up a little during lockdown.

- ☺ With no planes flying and few cars, the air quality has improved immeasurably.
- ☺ Likewise, the sky is not filled with vapour trails and noise has dropped to a minimum.
- ☺ Virtually no road traffic accidents.
- ☺ No muggings, house breaking, burglary or drug dealing (everyone is at home).
- ☺ No passengers are able to smuggle stuff through airports or docks, because they are closed.
- ☺ My Andrex shares have gone through the roof!
- ☺ My lawn looks immaculate and all my gutters are clear.
- ☺ No window cleaner to pay.
- ☺ No cold callers at the door and hardly any junk mail.
- ☺ No bother from tele-sales.
- ☺ Less dog mess in the road.
- ☺ Lack of toilet rolls makes you realise what a great paper The Times is - large and very absorbent.
- ☺ We all now know what is in the tins lurking right at the back of our cupboards.
- ☺ Less episodes of soaps on TV - although more handwash at home (when you can get it that is) ...
- ☺ Therefore, my hands have never been so clean.
- ☺ We are looking forward to going to Argate for our holidays.
- ☺ It is perfectly acceptable to have a lie-in.
- ☺ The situation has brought out the best in people.
- ☺ This has proved what I have always known - our NHS staff and volunteers are the best in the world.
- ☺ Most breweries are automated and need few staff (hooray).
- ☺ If you run out of hand sanitiser you can always use vodka (apparently).

Does the present (virus apart) seem like the gentle, less troubled time of the 1950s to you? (those of you old enough). Let's hope lots of these values remain when this is all over and the government spend less on missiles and much, much more on our wonderful NHS.

One thing is certain, the world will be a much different place on the other side of this situation, but rest assured MOWS will be back doing what we do best as soon as we are allowed to do so!

Mick

Mick Clowes

Going, Going, Gone ... Again!



As some of you may know, Eye Kettleby Lock, weir and the surrounding area was auctioned off by the Environment Agency a few weeks ago (16 March). As yet, we are not aware who bought it, although we do know the hammer went down at the price of £13,000.

Ironically, the society wished to purchase it several years ago, but was told by the EA that we could not do so.

Since that time, the EA have altered this historic landmark so much that it is unrecognisable from the original structure. The first act they performed was filling in the lock. Soon after they took the guillotine gate away, along with the roof. Then they decided to demolish the sluice gates and weir, which is now a boulder-strewn downfall and an eyesore and only collects rubbish. It was regularly flushed through when it was a working gated weir.



Going, Going, Gone Again ... Addendum

Prior to the lock site auction, and unknown to most of you, much work went on behind the scenes.

The terms and conditions put on the intended purchaser included a veto on applying for planning permission, presumably to prevent development in an ecologically sensitive area, that was also prone to flooding.

This condition, if left unmodified, would prevent MOWS applying for permission to restore the lock chamber and its surrounds. One of our members began to lobby the Environment Agency to get the condition altered and after many attempts, at the eleventh hour, the wording was changed in our favour. There can never be any development there, save for the lock restoration which suits us down to the ground, and for his outstanding efforts I, and the society, will be forever grateful. I am reluctant to name this individual, but you know who you are, and come the day when the first boat gets to Melton, it will be due in no small part to your timely intervention.



At one of our previous Eye Kettleby work parties

So, you see, if one person can make that much difference, imagine what lots of us could do! Get your friends to join now and make the restoration happen sooner rather than later.

Work Party Update



Just before the work parties were cancelled for the foreseeable future, a few of the volunteers were in the throes of constructing a new all-weather cover for 'Mole'. We were concerned about how much water the boat was taking on and didn't want a repeat of last year's sinking.

So, flushed with his previous success on 'Badger' (right of picture) Stuart set to, and ably assisted by Mark, modified the original

triangulated cover support to accept the new roof panels, as shown. After extensive measuring and cutting of the angle iron supports a session with the welder saw the structure completed, allowing the new panels to be tried and fitted.

The following Sunday's work party saw volunteers manhandle the roof into place and left the boat looking like a floating noodle bar which wouldn't have looked out of place in Hong Kong Harbour! Subsequently, and just before lockdown, the sides were fitted leaving us with just the lifting gantry to be constructed, which will lift the roof allowing the boat to be sailed out from underneath. How ingenious eh! Just like in the article above about the lock sale, I am beyond grateful for the work put in by our members Stuart and Mark, and assisted by many more.



Watery Quiz

To help relieve the boredom (and keep the brain cells ticking over), take 10 minutes to answer the following.

1. Who wrote 'Three Men in a Boat'?
2. The Vikings named the river 'Wreake', but what does 'Wreake' translate to in English?
3. Who sang about the 'Ferry Cross The Mersey'?
4. Which lock is the only one missing from the Melton Mowbray Navigation?
5. Name the three engineers involved in the building of the Melton Navigation.
6. Which canal and hat share the same name?
7. Who wrote 'The Wind in the Willows'?
8. Name the new bridge at the junction of the Grand Union Canal (Leicester Line) with the MMN.
9. Who sang 'Messing About on the River'?
10. Where on the MMN is this anagram? Look! Still munch string? [Answers at the bottom of the page.]

New Treasurer Wanted

Is there anyone out there who is a whizz with accounts?
We are looking for a new Society Treasurer.

This role does not necessarily have to be performed by a committee member. It would not be essential to attend every committee meeting and would only need to give the current bank balance just before each meeting. The task of keeping the books is not onerous, but it would be advantageous to live in or near Melton.

If you think you may be able to help us or would like to know more, please contact the chairman, either by e-mail or phone – contact details below.



Welcome to new member ... 

Jane Martin

Membership Subscription Reminder

Thank you to those who have renewed their memberships, but there are still a few members whose 2020 subscription is still outstanding. If you are one of these, you will have received a reminder in the past month (or in with this newsletter if sent by post). We would be grateful if you could send your remittance as soon as possible please, either by cheque or by bank transfer.

A special thank you to those who also donated a little extra with their subscription ... very much appreciated.

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Treasurer: Position to be filled.

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