



Registered Charity No. 1078752

# **Annual General Meeting**

**November 2020**



**Chairman's Report  
and  
Accounts for 2019/20**

## MOWS Chairman's Report 2019/20

Usually the 12 months between reports flies by, but this year, for obvious reasons, the Covid-19 pandemic has made us slow up a little. But this has given me time to reflect on what, in some ways has been a ground-breaking year.

**Social Media:** We were unable to attend any events or do any presentations to spread the word this year, so with less personal interaction allowed, we have had to look at new ways of communication and wherever social media has been concerned, the effects have been little short of astounding.

I have been aware of the power of the press for donkey's years, but had always doubted somehow that social media was as good in raising awareness of good causes like our own. But I am here to admit that I was very wrong. You only have to look at the small campaign started by the family of Captain Tom Moore and to see the way it snowballed into a multi-million fundraiser to realise that social media is the way to go for societies like us.

In this respect I would like to thank the contributors to our Facebook page who have posted many photographs and articles which have stirred the populous into becoming Facebook members and as a logical progression, some have become society members too.

**Membership:** This has seen our membership rise to a level that makes us look a far more popular unit in the eyes of those organisations whose help or funding we may need in the future.

**Committee:** One of those bodies is the local council at Melton where I am pleased to tell you that we now have our first official representative in many years, Cllr Simon Lumley. Simon has been co-opted on to the committee, where he joins a few new faces to replace those who have, for various reasons, stepped down. Paul and Jan Dadford have decided leave the committee and we thank them for their sterling efforts over many years. In fact, Paul is still somewhat involved and has been busy updating the walks leaflets – see *Wreake Valley Walk Leaflets* (page 3). Jan was our Treasurer and has recently handed over to Lorraine (Lorrie) Forman, who has been a society member for a few years and is now finding her way around the society's finances. The other resignation came a few weeks ago from Linda Hulme. Although no longer on the committee, she will carry on producing the newsletter and the committee meeting minutes. I would like to convey my heartfelt gratitude to all three. So welcome to our new Treasurer, Lorrie, and to Jerry Filor, who has been stand-in Secretary for most of the year and, with your agreement, will now take up their jobs permanently. We also welcomed Glynn Cartwright from Melton Matters, although this turned out to be short-term and he has since left, but I thank him for his input. Dave Andow has also returned on a casual observer basis and contributes a great deal, particular with the H&S aspect. The rest of the committee comprises myself, Mike Handford and Jono Hewitt, but there is always room for others, so please consider it if you are interested.

As I mentioned earlier, Covid-19 has had an effect in many ways, with the AGM cancellation and our committee meetings commuted to internet contact only. At present we hold our committee meetings via Zoom and this has proved to be a boon during the pandemic as we can socially distance ourselves, but still contribute to any ongoing discussion.

**Boats:** You may remember that about this time last year we were dealing with the aftermath of the "Mole" workboat sinking. Well, I am very happy to report that, due to some sterling work by our volunteers, she now has an engine that starts first time, fully serviced hydraulics and sports a fantastic new, all enclosing rigid cover to match that of her sister craft "Badger". It has been noted that this gives it the appearance of one of those floating noodle bars that adorn places like Hong Kong harbour, but we have no plans at present to branch-out into catering just yet.

I think it is worth mentioning that we have a third vessel, which is more hole than boat at the moment, but is in the throes of a complete rebuild and all being well should be floatable next year. As you will be aware, the boats have found a home in the compound at the rear of Grove School, which our volunteers have made secure, tidied and customised to our needs, but the thorny issue of the new double dock build still exists, and with one year of our planning still remaining, I have sought clarification as to what constitutes, in the eyes of the planning department, “making a start” which we must do to fulfil the planning conditions. As I write this, I still await a reply despite being told I would receive one within 14 days.

**Eye Kettleby Lock:** Still on the boat theme you may have seen in the local press that various groups have suddenly woken up to the fact that Melton has a waterway and it can be quite lucrative to hire out rowing boats, canoes and pedaloos, etc. This ties in with our long-term wish to operate a trip boat again, but at the moment our finances will not run to this, so we are looking elsewhere for a sponsor. Which brings me very neatly to the saga of the sale of Eye Kettleby lock and its surrounds, which came up for auction earlier in the year. Despite bidding we were beaten by a mystery buyer, but in a successful last-ditch attempt, one of our committee members managed to secure a condition of the sale that whoever bought it was to allow restoration of the waterway to proceed unhindered. This was a brilliant move and ensures long term security for the restoration plans.

Subsequently, we have spoken to the new owner who is sympathetic to our cause and would like to meet up in the future. They indicated that they would not be averse to hire craft being based there and even talked about the possibility of a trip boat, we will have to wait and see!

**Planning Matters:** Just upstream from Eye Kettleby our antennae began twitching at several reports of destructive activity within the Sysonby Grange Lane development, where many trees had been felled and several sections of riverbank cut through to provide “lagoons” within the site. Enquiries to the planning department determined that the majority of this work was unlawful and retrospective planning has been sought. It is hoped the planners will insist on the riverbank being re-instated and many mature saplings being replanted, but this is another wait and see scenario. Meanwhile, I urge everyone to be vigilant and report anything which adversely affects the waterway.

**Melton Town Estate:** One of the possible hire boat sponsors were the Melton Town Estate with whom we have enjoyed a decent rapport down the years. They recently appointed a new Town Bailiff, William (Billy) Boulding, and I lost no time in wishing him well in his new appointment. This resulted in a telephone conversation between us where he stated that he would be happy if our association could continue as it had done in the past, so I see no reason to change that and look forward to working with them in the future.

**Work Parties:** However, our work parties (usually around 6 people and always outdoors), have continued unabated albeit until recently. We have worked mainly around the town, but at the request of the owners, who we thank for their continuing hospitality, recent work parties have found us down at Thrussington Mill where partial restoration of the lock chamber has been the job in hand. The idea was to put things back into a good state of repair and re-instate a former Leicester Line lock gate to show passers-by on the on the Leicestershire Round footpath what used to be here and how it all worked. The last thing to do would be the installation of an interpretation board alongside the path. This has been a voyage of discovery as each piece of the lock structure was released from years of silt build-up and damage, letting us see what the craftsmen of the 1770’s had built. As I write this the project is on hold, due to bad weather and the threat of another lockdown, but rest assured we will be back as soon as we are allowed.

**Wreake Valley Walk Leaflets:** Talking about getting out and about reminds me to tell you that after many years of using the same Wreake Valley Way walk leaflets, Paul Dadford ably assisted by Geof Malone, has been out and about reassessing the newer conditions on the ground that have changed since the first leaflet was put together all those years ago. Once compiled, these leaflets will be made available for free download from the website. The popular guided walks run by Paul will continue as and when the pandemic allows, but certainly not before next year.

**Oakham:** Paul was also instrumental in setting up the Oakham end group, which is mainly drawn from the households on the local estate, who are the main users of the path emanating from Oakham. He has now managed to persuade them to become a self-sufficient group to work freely on that section as they see fit. In a similar vein, the Ashwell Angling group, who are looking into deepening one of their canal sections, have become a separate entity, who know they can call on us if they need any assistance with dredging etc and we look forward to working with them in the future.

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**Thank You:** As always there are many people to thank, and for once I would like to begin with you lot out there, our loyal members, many of whom are new, but many who have been with us from the very beginning in 1997. Thank you for your patience and unwavering belief that one day Melton will be joined to the main waterway network of this country, and boats will be back in the town.

We also thank the 850 odd souls who have joined our Facebook page, and hopefully have become more interested in the full restoration of the Navigations. Your comments there are very encouraging and just what we need for morale.

Amongst this myriad are our volunteer workforce. It takes a very dedicated person to get out of a warm bed on say, a freezing Sunday morning, and work for several hours in all weathers, to return home dirty and tired but with a great sense of wellbeing, having done something very worthwhile. I thank every one of you most sincerely.

The Grove School and all connected with it deserve a massive thank you for allowing us to use the boat moorings, compound and container.

To our hardworking committee, a big thank you and hopefully continued success in the coming year.

Many thanks too to the Town Estate for their help and understanding and to the Melton council with whom we hope to establish an expanding rapport. Also, to all the parish councils along the two waterway routes I say thank you for your contributions, however small.

To the owners and staff at Sysonby Knoll Hotel, our spiritual home, I say thank you, not just for the help at present but all your efforts in the past.

A quick mention too for Tom Coward who maintains our website - we couldn't function without people like yourself.

In conclusion I have to say that the last 12 months have been, considering the effects of the pandemic, a remarkable effort by everyone concerned. Sadly, it has left me less to crow about, but I am pleased the way that restrictions have pulled us into a tighter but more responsive unit.

So, roll on 2021, stay safe everyone and have a peaceful and happy Christmas.

Mick Clowes  
Chairman

**Melton & Oakham Waterways Society**

Accounts Year Ended 31st August 2020

Company No. 03807253

Reg. Charity No. 1078752

|                                  | 2019/20                 | 2018/19                 |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| <b>Income</b>                    |                         |                         |
| Subscriptions                    | £1,217.06               | £949.00                 |
| Donations                        | £255.00                 | £460.60                 |
| Merchandise sales                | £142.50                 | £68.50                  |
| Less costs                       | -£99.88                 | -£177.06                |
|                                  | £42.62                  | -£108.56                |
| Building Society interest        | £20.91                  | £20.78                  |
| Gift Aid tax refund              | £80.69                  | £364.00                 |
| Amazon donations                 | £16.07                  | £0.00                   |
| Parking fine refund not claimed  | <u>£60.00</u>           | <u>£0.00</u>            |
|                                  | <b>£1,692.35</b>        | <b>£1,685.82</b>        |
| <b>Expenditure</b>               |                         |                         |
| IWA Subscription                 | £54.00                  | £54.00                  |
| Meeting expenses                 | £0.00                   | £77.45                  |
| Insurance                        | £842.86                 | £901.10                 |
| Boat expenses (inc. fuel)        | £83.27                  | £14.99                  |
| Admin/printing                   | £0.00                   | £74.71                  |
| Planning application             | £0.00                   | £234.00                 |
| Bench                            | £0.00                   | £205.45                 |
| Website domain renewal           | £0.00                   | £23.98                  |
| Hall Hire                        | £50.00                  | £65.00                  |
| Parking charges                  | £0.00                   | £120.00                 |
| Keys                             | <u>£29.14</u>           |                         |
|                                  | <b>£1,059.27</b>        | <b>£1,770.68</b>        |
| Net profit/loss for year         | £633.08                 | -£84.86                 |
| Retained profits brought forward | <u>£8,249.63</u>        | <u>£8,334.49</u>        |
| Retained profits carried forward | <b><u>£8,882.71</u></b> | <b><u>£8,249.63</u></b> |

**Balance Sheet as at 31st August 2020**

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|--------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| <b>Current Assets</b>    |                         |                         |
| Bank and cash in hand    | £3,363.05               | £2,651.00               |
| Building Society balance | £5,237.07               | £5,216.16               |
| Stock of merchandise     | <u>£282.59</u>          | <u>£382.47</u>          |
|                          | <b><u>£8,882.71</u></b> | <b><u>£8,249.63</u></b> |