



## Mick's Musings

### Brand Loyalty?

I am always pleased to hear from any of our members, but doubly so if they are exiled in other parts of the country. We have members in all four corners of the UK mainland and all tell me they are delighted to receive the newsletter as a small slice of "home" is brought into their living room.



Therefore, I was happily surprised when I got a telephone call recently from Ian, one of our ex-committee members who now resides in Porthmadog, North Wales, in a house that overlooks the harbour. It also looks down on the reason for his move – his beloved Ffestiniog Steam Railway. Having volunteered with the railway for many years whilst still living locally, it made sense to move closer to the object of his affection, but he also wanted to keep the MOWS connection.

After a pleasant quarter of an hour reminiscing, I put the phone down and began to think about our membership in general, which if I'm honest has stayed pretty static for a while. What inspires loyalty to the society in people like my Porthmadog friend, but doesn't move some of the "try it for a year" members who have subsequently left? Some people buy their first car and, finding it nice to drive and very reliable, support the brand for many years. This is the kind of allegiance we must strive to encourage in our membership, both existing and future, but how to achieve this remains an enigma.

I remember back to a talk given by a husband-and-wife team who started the Manchester, Bolton and Bury Canal Society, and had restoration ideals similar to our own. They had a loyal membership, but a lot of locals were indifferent to their plans, that is until the local authorities got on board, whereby their membership virtually doubled within a few weeks. As they said, "It's taken us 19 years to become an overnight success".

So, the quest for more members must not cease as bigger numbers look better in the eyes of our local authorities and persuades those giving grants that we are a cause worth investing in. So why not show this to a friend and get them to join us?

Mick

Mick Clowes

# Oakham Canal Green Corridor Project

Former MOWS Committee member, Paul Dadford, has now finished the process of setting up a registered charity to drive the Oakham Canal Green Corridor Project forward. Assisted by five other Trustees, Stephanie Ross (publicity), Neil Broad (fundraising), Martin Ball (land/property) and with Gary Berridge and Jamie Mulvany (works), the group continue to work with Rutland County Council, landowners, and the local community to promote and develop an environmental and leisure green corridor to the north of Oakham based on the remains of the Oakham Canal.

The team have set up a website at [www.oakhamcanal.org](http://www.oakhamcanal.org) and have a Facebook page [www.facebook.com/oakhamcanal](https://www.facebook.com/oakhamcanal). They're also hoping to promote their work further on the newly created community radio station Rutland and Stamford Sound.

As well as preserving the remains of the canal for the future, the Project hopes to increase public access to the diverse habitats that surround the short section of canal and develop maintenance strategies to improve wildlife habitats. Paul has managed to get local environmental company Ecology Resources to support them, and they have recently carried out a wildlife survey along the canal with some interesting results. More details can be found on the Project's website.

The team have been working with students from Oakham School who helped design the Project's logo and they have provided some great fundraising ideas for when the current Coronavirus restrictions end.

There are long term plans to provide greater public access along the canal further north, and the Project is working with like-minded groups in the local area to see how they could work together.

If you would like to keep up to date, follow them on Facebook or sign up via the website.



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**STOP  
PRESS!**

The date for the Public Enquiry on the Melton Mowbray Distributor Road to be announced soon! Don't forget to have your say and ask why the line of the Oakham Canal cannot be accommodated at Roundabout 5 of the scheme to allow future use?



A few years ago, one of our committee members had the splendid idea of enlisting people who regularly walked alongside the Rivers Wreake and Eye to become the 'eyes and ears' of the society and report any problems they may encounter. Sadly, for various reasons, contact with these people has waned so it was decided to convene a meeting with all those still interested to ascertain how to move forward and keep this group going.



*Aerial view of river and footpath just beyond Syston*

I am happy to report that by the time of our next meeting, we should have a full complement of Footpath Rangers covering the whole length of the river. In addition, we plan to appoint a 'foreman' who can receive reports of problems on the river and then: (a) report to the society, and (b) notify the correct person at County Hall or within the EA.

## New Membership Secretary

Following our appeal in the Winter newsletter, we are pleased to announce that we now have a new Membership Secretary - Gary Jesionowski. Gary lives in Melton, has joined our committee and has just become our social media specialist, so we welcome him aboard. See his article below ...

## MOWS Goes Social

Most non-profit/charity organisations like us have a website and a Facebook page. But social media in the non-profit world is about more than simply getting clicks or likes. For MOWS, adding Twitter and Instagram to our public presence will help us to engage, not just with our existing membership, but with the wider waterways community.

Social media messages will help MOWS fully engage with its loyal supporters. Hopefully capturing and retaining their attention in a variety of ways. Delivery of content to mobile devices will help us to engage more frequently.

Of course, social media will increase awareness of our aims which will then support fundraising efforts. And, with a little creativity and humour, we intend to establish an ongoing dialogue that helps our donors and supporters feel like more than just cash machines!

Social media is not just about broadcasting information. Social media presents us with opportunities to connect with our supporters by directly responding to questions and comments or creating new online conversations that many more can join.

It will allow us to properly tell our story. And it's a very important story to tell.



Twitter @MeltonOakham



Instagram @MeltonOakham

**Gary Jesionowski**



# Syston Junction

Some of you may remember that about 2 years ago planning permission was sought from Charnwood Borough Council to restore the toll house and build 5 additional holiday lets on land at the junction of the River Wreake and the Grand Union Canal Leicester Line. The more observant of you will have seen that something is stirring in this vicinity. Watch this space!



## Ratcliffe Boat House

Further to the article we featured in the Winter newsletter, some of you may have seen that the boat house at Ratcliffe on the Wreake has sadly now collapsed.



## Canal Boat Planter

Anyone who has recently visited the Council Offices may have noticed the sad condition of the boat 'planter' alongside the path to the reception area. This was built many years ago by JELD-WEN and MOWS sponsored the plants.

We have taken it upon ourselves to affect some repairs to the superstructure, which is now regrettably rotting away. We plan to make it look more like the boats that would have resided in the basin here 200 years ago with a back cabin and front cratch board with a traditional top plank spanning both.



We will liaise with Melton In Bloom when the time to plant up arrives, but obviously this will be something for a time when Covid restrictions have been lifted.



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[www.easyfundraising.org.uk](http://www.easyfundraising.org.uk) and support us!

## Subscription Renewals

A huge THANK YOU to everyone who has paid their subscription, plus a special **THANK YOU** to those who generously gave a donation with their subscription this year. If you haven't renewed your membership or just haven't got around to it yet, could you please do so before the end of the month.

Thank ewe!



*Welcome* to new members ...

Bill Fisher  
David & Gill Simmonds

Viv Warner  
Michael Westall