

Mick's Musings

Red Herrings Tape

I recently watched a report on our local midland news concerning some flooding that had taken place around Matlock, where many of those massive round straw bales had been washed into the river upstream, floated down and were now adorning the trees along the banks, left there, no doubt as the water levels receded. Most weighed several hundredweight, and the problems were exacerbated by the metres of black plastic wrapping that was falling off as the bales disintegrated. Some locals became concerned, and contacted the local council, who sidestepped the issue by passing them over to the National Farmers Union to attempt to trace the farm from which they had come. They in turn fobbed them off, claiming that as the debris was affecting a local footpath, the Footpaths Officer at County Hall and Ramblers group should become involved. They in turn referred them to the Environment Agency who said it was pollution and could Severn Trent Water deal with it instead? In the end the frustrated locals set up a canoe based clean up service and dealt with it themselves. It appears that each of the agencies concerned couldn't face filling out the pile of paperwork that would ensue, and merely passed the buck.

But what if we mere mortals did the same? Tax return – no problem, my employer pays my wages so he should fill it in! Ten-year census forms – easy peasy, the Government want to know who lives in our house, so let them come and look for themselves, and then they can fill the forms in.

Unfortunately, life isn't like that, and sadly most official forms tie everyone in knots, illustrated by the recent trouble our secretary had when sending in our annual return to Companies House.

However, not every official body is driven to confuse us. I go regularly to blood doning where their health questionnaire requires a tick in a Yes or No box – simples!

So, let's hope that when the next fallen tree/waterside development/pollution outbreak/occurs we can find out who to report it to, that we don't get passed from pillar to post and that their paperwork has a Yes or No box system. Pie in the sky? Hmmm ... tick the 'Maybe' box!

Mick

Thrussington Lock Update

A friend of the owner of Thrussington Lock Mill House came across the original article from the Leicester Evening mail of Monday 27 of June 1938. It's too small and blurred to read, but the key points are:

- The article says that the lock wall was destroyed at the behest of Leicestershire Council as part of a plan to improve the footpath, put up a new bridge and help ease flooding, but this could easily be what they wanted the public to believe at the time.
- The demolition was done by the 212th Field Company of the Royal Engineers from Smethwick.
- They took down one side of the lock and a wall that ran across the lock to prevent navigation.
- There were several explosions over a weekend – “it was a tough old wall”.
- The occupier of the Mill at the time was Jim Smith.



Meanwhile, back in the present day, volunteers have been pointing up brickwork in an attempt to get the whole structure weather tight, before the winter rains begin. Some of the brickwork that houses the guide post for the ground paddle rod, was either damaged or missing altogether, and is being replaced with bricks recovered from the chamber excavation. Meanwhile the quoin post on the towpath side is being rebuilt, but will need reinforcement alongside to keep the stack stable. It made sense to get this work completed before further excavation takes place, as the deep layer of silt still present provides a base to work from without the use of scaffolding or ladders. Once this phase is completed the mouth-watering prospect of clearing the rest of the chamber presents itself, as we uncover what 144 years of abuse and neglect brings. If it is anything like other neglected sections of waterway locally (Play Close in Melton is a good example) once abandoned, the locals were encouraged to dump their household rubbish to fill up the dry hole, so as well as silt, mud and bricks, we expect to find artifacts from a bygone age.



Previous digs I have worked on revealed coins, candle stubs, pottery and clay pipes, so who knows what we may find?

Hopefully, this will reveal the bottom half of the towpath side wall, and the invert (curved brick bottom) of the chamber. Further plans involve fencing to the footpath/towpath side, further clearance of vegetation to improve sight lines and an interpretation board alongside the path.



Passers-by often ask if it is to be completely rebuilt – well, the answer is yes, but don't hold your breath, as what we are doing now will hopefully keep the chamber safe until future generations finish the job.



Hope he's not on piece work!!!



Double Trouble at Syston

The double-arch bridge adjacent the A46 at Syston is looking like it needs some TLC (probably an understatement). The brickwork is certainly in desperate need of repair. Not a lot can be said of the graffiti either, not to mention it could do with a spot of weeding! The bridge was repaired about 15 years ago and, as a footpath and bridleway cross it, it should be high on the priority list this time. If I remember back then the British Horse Society became involved and it may be worth putting them in the picture again.



The bridge is a listed structure, but if the funding is not there, everything has to wait its turn, but we may be able to bring it to the public's attention as this newsletter gets sent to the Editor of the Syston Town News.

Oakham Green Corridor Project

Much activity is happening with the OGC. You can read about all their projects and activities in their newsletter and I've attached a link on this email (apologies to those who receive this by post).

Just to give you a flavour of what's in the newsletter:

- BBC Escape To The Country
The programme will be broadcast later in the Summer.



Presenter Ginny Buckley chats to a few volunteers during a gap in filming

- Guided Walks
- Volunteers Needed – Rangers and a Trustee

Their first work party was on Thursday 8 July and they have started their first major project to re-set the old stone steps (*see photo right*) on 15 July.

Paul Dadford says that they are hoping to reach agreement with a local landowner to formalise some of the informal footpaths soon and have recently met the Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust and Environment Agency at the canal who are supportive of the Green Corridor Project.



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Oakham Canal Aqueduct

While conducting an environment survey, the Monitoring Officer for the EA, visited the aqueduct where the Oakham Canal was transported over the upper River Eye near Saxby (NGR: SK8210919401).

He noted the construction was unusual with vaulting; however, he reported that it is in a poor state of repair and a possible flood risk.

This section of river is governed by Leicester County Council in relation to flooding and he has made them aware of the potential flood risk from this structure.

It would be a shame if structures like this were allowed to fall into disrepair.

Another work party anyone?



Welcome to Two New 'Members'

Duncan and Banksy ...



our latest mechanical recruits!



Welcome to new members ...

Tina Claydon
Derek and Joan Edwards
Jane Wright

... And welcome back to:
David and Heather Young



Committee News

A vacancy for Society Secretary will exist after this year's AGM. The pay is way below minimum wage (ie. non-existent), the working conditions are poor, but the sense of achievement to be involved with a forward moving project like ours is indescribable. Would those interested please form an orderly queue please!

Seriously though, if you are interested in this or being on our committee in any capacity, please contact one of us – details below.

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