

Mick's Musings

I recently attended a 'think-tank' to bring together ideas for the regeneration of Melton Town centre (see page 3) and was thoroughly disappointed to discover that the local waterways were not even on their radar! Nothing in the preamble or any of the power point slides mentioned the canal or river, or the potential value that they could bring to the town.

I am not suggesting that putting a few rowing boats or pedaloes back on to the water will bring businesses clamouring to relocate to the town, but a fully restored waterway could do everything, and more, that those attending the meeting craved for. Melton's waterways provide a circular, green corridor, that allows the town to 'breathe' and I can think of nowhere else in this country that has a similar scenario. This is our USP (unique selling point). Our second attraction is the fact that the waterway runs through lush parkland which would make it a lucrative stop-over for future visiting boats and a nice, safe environment for families to come and look at the flotilla which will surely arrive daily, once Melton is connected back into this country's main waterway system.

It is a well-known statistic that each £1 spent on a waterway restoration comes back seven-fold once that waterway is up and running, in terms of savings on public health, the jobs created during the restoration and the many jobs created by the business that inevitably spring up along the route, running alongside the expansion of existing businesses to cope with the increased demand that boat traffic brings. Add to this the upturn in footfall that a popular tourism destination experiences and you are on to a winner.

It will not be easy, as a general figure for waterway restoration is £1M per mile, but that is a quote for waterways that need digging out, have no water supply and need bridges and all the other infrastructure relocating or rebuilding. The Melton Mowbray Navigation (to give its correct title) has water, navigable headroom under most bridges, a front door at Syston and a terminus here in the town, and all the lock chambers (save for No 1) are existing. So, the 14 miles / £14M can be halved to £7M, and to put this in perspective, it is just about the price of Harry Kane's right big toe! So, what are we waiting for?

Well, what we are waiting for, and have been for the past 24 years of the society's existence, is a sea change in attitude by those in power that will see other future attendees at town centre regeneration meetings told that the local waterway is seen as a major asset, and that since restoration has contributed enormously in putting Melton back on the financial, business, tourism and waterway map.

Mick

Mick Clowes

Raising The Roof!

Many moons ago we realised that both of our work boats were in dire need of weather protection, as the tarpaulins we employed were wearing rather thin and were ravaged and torn by the winter weather.

Step forward one of our volunteers, Stuart who built the rather natty top that keeps 'Badger' dry these days. In addition, he (aided by Mark) designed and built the matching full cover and sides for Mole that has had many describing it as a "floating noodle bar" often seen in harbours in the far east.

However, having helped to lift the original frame into place, I can attest that whilst the weight is not massive, it is extremely awkward to manoeuvre, and the addition of the roof panels and side walls makes it even more so.

So (and wouldn't you just know it), it was Stuart and Mark again who set to and began to construct a lifting gantry for the unwieldy top. After a lot of head scratching a plan was devised and an appeal was sent out to our members for additional scaffolding poles and other bits and pieces to make the plan come to fruition.

Poles were obtained and thanks to one of our members, Vic, a winch and several lumps of brass (for the bearings) were donated. After many hours of welding and slaving over a hot lathe, all the pieces of the jigsaw were completed and shipped down to the compound where over the next weeks they were assembled and, where necessary, modified to produce the structure shown in the photograph below.

A further pole was attached to the ridge to ensure an equal pull when lifting the roof. The great moment arrived and, despite the blustery conditions, the roof lifted clear and allowed us to steer the boat from underneath and complete an inspection tour of the ring. Coming down the final straight, we were all relieved to see the roof still securely suspended and were able to locate it back in its correct position with very little trouble.

Many thanks to all those who offered poles, ladders and equipment, but a special mention to Stuart and Mark for their, literally, hundreds of hours of endeavour.

*Hooray and
up she rises
... winch by
winch!*



Mick's Melton Meetings Miscellany

My front-page musings this time, refer to the town centre regeneration meeting I recently attended which carried no mention of the town's waterways.

Maybe I have painted a grim picture of officials trying to repress any ideas people may have and so on, but in actuality there are occasionally signs of realisation dawning on people's faces that, in terms of the Melton Mowbray Navigation, we may have a point.

Unfortunately, the meeting in question was run by an outside agency who had no knowledge of the local area, and were just there to compile a list of people's ideas and then report back to the relevant authorities.

However, myself and Jerry, our secretary, who also attended, left them in no doubt that the canal and River Eye were valuable assets to the town and should always be regarded as such!

Contrast that with a rather enjoyable evening spent giving a presentation to our friends at the Melton Belvoir Rotary Club.

My usual 20 minute "death by power point" slide show was shortened to allow me time to show the excellent "Water Adds Value" promotional film produced by the Canal and River Trust, which shows the enormous benefits that come from a waterway restoration. An upturn in jobs, businesses clamouring to take up residence in waterside shops, a 20% increase in property prices for waterside housing and thousands of people coming to see the painted boats and enjoying free public health by walking, jogging or cycling alongside the newly-developed navigation.

My audience that night was knowledgeable and appreciative of the message I was trying to get across, in that Melton doesn't realise what a sleeping giant it has right on its doorstep.

Maybe I should have forced the first meeting to watch this film?

Wombling MOWS

We joined forces with Melton's Wombles one cold September Saturday around the waterway in the park. As you would expect, many bags of litter were collected, but nothing out of the ordinary worth reporting ... and only one bike!



"Mmm, I don't think you're going to win the Tour de France on that Lorrie"

... And Finally

... a story to warm the cockles of your heart.

While at a previous work party moving many paving slabs (kindly donated by Peter), one of our volunteers, Jane, was litter picking and found a jar stuck in the mud at the river's edge. When we were finally able to unscrew the jar, it had remained bone-dry inside and was found to contain lots of small items along with a note giving the name and address of a young girl.

Her name was Charlotte and the jar contents had been given to her by Grandad Keith in (according to the note) 2007! One of our volunteers recognised the name and contacted her, where we were pleased to discover that yes, she was the right person and has a grandad called Keith. We hope to reunite the jar with its owner and donator soon.



To be continued ...

2021 AGM

This year's AGM will be held on Saturday 13 November. As usual the venue will be Sysonby Knoll Hotel, Asfordby Road, Melton Mowbray, LE13 0HP. Proceedings start at 10.00am. Tea and coffee will be available on arrival. All welcome.

Thank you ...

Over the past several months, we have put out a few appeals for various pieces of kit and equipment and you have responded magnificently.

We were recently inundated with offers of ladders and if we could have put these on top of each other, we would have been able to clean the pigeon poo off Lord Nelson's hat! No shortage of offers of scaffolding poles either. We also put in a request for a winch to lift the roof off 'Mole', which we thought it would be a big ask and a long shot ... but one of our members came to our rescue and, not only had a winch to offer, but had various other pieces of equipment and materials that he kindly donated.



Thank you very much to everyone who responded.

Who was it who said ...

*'Tis due to pigeons which alight
on Nelson's hat that make it white*



Welcome to new members ...

Gary & Rita Bridgman

Eric Brown

Jason Davies

Andrew & Linda Mills

Rob Nash & Marie Feeney

... and a new Life Member:

Gordon Sobey

Let's Go Green!

Most of our membership receive their newsletters and other information by email, but we still have a few who receive their newsletter by post. I am therefore trying to reduce this, so have put a request in with the posted newsletters to please let me know if they are now online by sending me a confirmation email: lindaahulme@gmail.com. Thank you.



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