

## Mick's Musings

### Seeing The Bigger Picture

When, in 1997, I attended the meeting of that initial group that went on to become MOWS the majority of people around the table that evening had some affiliation with boating on our inland waterways. Indeed, the meeting had come about following a talk given to the Leicestershire Branch of the IWA by local historian Bob Payne, concerning the Melton Mowbray Navigation. At the end someone had asked if anyone was interested in pursuing some kind of restoration plan, and the rest, as they say, is history.

However, nowadays the ratio of boating orientated members to the whole is fewer, and as such the mind-set of the majority is less about restoration of the whole navigation and more about looking after "their" patch. There are exciting things happening in and around Melton, as is documented elsewhere in this issue and, as the place with the highest population (and therefore the best shopwindow for what we do) Melton is the place where most activity is centred, but I do feel that our intense activity there has caused us to lose sight of our initial objective. I think it is worth repeating here our original mission statement of all those years ago.

"Our objective is to maximise the social, economic, environmental and leisure opportunities arising within the Wreake Valley that our full restoration of the Melton Mowbray Navigation will bring and, wherever possible, apply those same criteria to the Oakham Canal".

I ask that as members, you try and take a more holistic view and see the navigation as a whole from Syston to Melton, rather than just your area. Once restored, one of the benefits could be the staging of the IWA National Rally in Melton with hundreds of boats moored around the parks and thousands of visitors pouring in to the area. But to get to that point we need to restore the whole waterway and not just parochial sections. It only takes a bit of (wider) vision.

Mick

Mick Clowes

## Grants

A short while ago, the society has been awarded a £4,000 Community Grant from MBC for a weed-cutter.

Melton Borough and County Councillor, Mark Frisby, revealed at a recent meeting that he is 100% behind what we are trying to achieve. His vision for the Melton ring is to apply for a small £5K grant to sponsor a surveying body (De Montfort University was mentioned) to conduct a full survey of the ring and produce a report detailing the leisure, economical and social advantages of a full overhaul. This would be used to put before the Heritage Lottery Fund to try and obtain the necessary funding to get the job done. His plans also included a brick-built landing stage for trip and hire boats and improved safety measures along the river's edge. As we have detailed before, local MP Alicia Kearns, also supports our aims.

## Article No 85 Melton Urban Council Fined!

The following is an extract from **The Grantham Journal, dated Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> September 1921**, which shows that in the past 100 years nothing has changed regarding sewage going into the River Wreake.

The Prosecution had to show that they had discharged liquid into the river in consequence of which, fish had been killed. The Council totally denied that they had committed any such offence. There were three points at which the Council were able to discharge liquid into the river, the first being near the Midland railway station, which consisted of storm water overflow pipes, which operated only in the case of a violent storm, but the dilution with sewage in such instances was such as to be harmless. The second point of discharge was an old culvert, 50 yards on the lower side of the lock at Eye Kettleby. Formerly the outfall from the now disused disposal works on the Leicester Road. When those works were discontinued, this culvert was allowed to be used as an overflow from the pumping station which still remained at the old works, and this pipe also now served as an emergency exit for surface water in time of flood. From the evidence for the prosecution, it would appear that very foul matter was being discharged from this pipe, alleged to be crude sewage, but he should call the surveyor, who would prove that that the outlet at the receiving chamber there was 4ft 9in above the floor level, and over 200,000 gallons of water was necessary before that pipe acted as an overflow for storm water purposes. The third point was the main outfall from the present sewage works, from which it was also alleged they discharged crude sewage. These works which were constructed in 1908-9, cost something between £19,000 and £20,000. They had the best of advice in their construction, and they were carried out by one of the best firms of engineers in the country, and their treatment was brought thoroughly up to date. The sewage passing through the various beds received a considerable amount of treatment, and the effluent was of a high standard of purity. They, therefore, absolutely denied that the effluent discharged was of a character of crude sewage, or anything like it, simply because it was impossible. On inspection on 13<sup>th</sup> August, he found the water above Kirby was very clear indeed, and there was no smell until he arrived at Kirby. There was only a small stream of water there and he noticed a smell there but could not locate where it came from. He proceeded towards Asfordby where he noticed two points of discharge of what seemed to be crude sewage. One apparently from the Asfordby Hill district, and the other down a ditch from some hosier beds and which appeared to come from the valley. It was very black and stagnant at both points and smelt very strongly. At the mill lower down, there was evidence of a considerable amount of sewage matter in the river. The Bench retired and, on returning, the Chairman said they had considered the case very carefully and had decided to convict the Council, who would be fined the full penalty of £5. Sir Norris Foster applied for costs and the Magistrates allowed £5 to cover witness's expenses.

Thank you to member, Vic Roulstone, who came across this article whilst researching his family tree and sending this to us. Many of his family lived in and around Asfordby, hence the local connection.

## Work Parties

We were contacted by Peter Hill, who is the editor of *Aegre*, the Inland Waterways Association's magazine for the East Midlands region. He wanted to do an article on the work that some of our volunteers have been doing in and around the boat compound with the roof for 'Badger' and the lifting device.

*Copy of the relevant page (opposite) by permission of Aegre magazine. (For those of you who receive a printed copy of the newsletter, you may need to get a magnifying glass!).*

### Melton and Oakham Waterways

*In the past we have reported several times about Melton's very useful work boats Mole and Badger. However the ownership of boats always comes with responsibilities and work. Mick Clowes reports on events last year with the boats and their TLC:*

"The initial problem was the large unruly tarpaulin which, as its first covering was getting rather aged and threadbare. Following the sinking during flooding, and subsequent revival, it was decided to fit a semi-permanent top, which grew into the structure you see today. This has given it a memorable profile and character and it has been likened to the "floating noodle bars" that adorn harbours of the Far East.



"The structure is an angle iron welded frame topped with recycled plastic board that, if you could but see the underside, obviously started out life as shop signs for a bathroom and plumbing centre! Although relatively thin, the whole structure was a problem to remove even for four strong people, so the constructors, Stuart and Mark, set about constructing a gantry, with a swing out support arm, holding a pulley and cable connected to a small winch which removes the whole top all at once.



"Other things that may be of interest are a new MOWS fleet of 7 rowing boats for the river in Melton (arriving shortly), which could be a joint venture with the riparian owners – The Melton Town Estate, but this is still under negotiation. We also have bids in for a trip boat, bank-side interpretation boards, extra signage, and the reprinting of our revised walk leaflets in book form, and a possible 2023 calendar.



*Aegre 162 - March/April 2022 Page 23*

## I Name This Boat ...

The society is now the owner of seven rowing boats. Two of our committee (including newest recruit, Geof Malone – see page 4) went to collect these a couple of weeks ago, all the way from Brecon. They were loaded on the back of Jono's trailer and brought to their new, temporary 'home' in Melton for some TLC before they can be put to use. Once these have had their makeover and are shipshape, they should be ready to hire.

We are now looking to our members to come up with names for these boats (... and no, we shall not be naming one of them "Boaty McBoatface"! ). We did think that a lot of things in this world come in sevens though – seven wonders of the world, seven deadly sins, the seven dwarves – although the latter may cause legal problems with the Disneyland franchise, but can't help thinking that these names would have been brilliant.

**Below:** Up for sail ... er, sorry, sale, seven rowing boats now belonging to MOWS!



**Above:** Loaded up on the trailer and ready to be towed to Melton



**Left:** Ready for their transformation in their temporary new home

## New Committee Member

Following our appeal for more committee members, we welcome Geof Malone as the latest member of our committee.

*Geof moved to Melton two years ago from London after spending most of his working life overseas as a journalist and in media-related roles. He's had a long-time interest in the inland waterways with holidays spent on rivers and canals in England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales. He has a boat moored on the Thames and is looking forward to sailing into Melton when the Navigation eventually opens.*

*Geof has recently worked on producing the Society's new walks leaflets for the 16 miles of footpaths along the Navigation and these will be published shortly.*

*He hopes to assist in raising the MOWS profile and says: "The Society has quietly been working on its plans to re-open the Melton Navigation. There's lots to talk about and I hope more people will be encouraged to get involved and make the dream become a reality."*

Geof has volunteered to be our press/publicity officer ... and, as you can see from page 3, he's certainly making the news ... well, in our newsletter anyway!

## Work Parties

Work parties that have seen much cutting back and clearance during the winter months have now ceased due to the bird nesting season. From now on the volunteers will be concentrating on dredging and are looking forward to returning to Thrussington Lock, where there is still much to do ... weather permitting, of course.

## Membership Renewals

**Thank you to those members who have paid their annual subscription ... and a reminder to those who haven't yet.**

## Welcome to new members ...

Melanie Byrne	Alison Heard
Caroline Capel	Indigo Kelly-Forest
Nick Fox	Belinda Maclannan
Peter Gatehouse	

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