

Chairmans Notes

March 2010

In the November Weaver News I talked at some length about our aims and I certainly do not wish to repeat myself now, except to say, as I hope you are all well aware, that we held our first working party with British Waterways support, which took place at Vale Royal Locks on 11th March. The lock chamber and island renovations at Vale Royal certainly appears to have been completed to a very high standard, as I viewed the works prior to their re-immersion, but, surprisingly, now the system is again in water, there is little visible evidence of the vast expenditure that was needed to rectify the damage.

We have now helped to paint the lock furniture, so that the uninitiated will appreciate the improvements that have taken place.

In November, the Last local meeting of the highly successful Mersey Basin Campaign was held in Winsford, and I had hoped to address the delegates, under the, 'five minute rule,' indicating that there was still much to achieve. In fact there was no time available so my words of wisdom were left unsaid, but what I wanted to say is still cogent, so I am asking our Editor, Colin, to print it separately, (page 15). I hope that you will bear in mind the context in which it was written. I will revert to this matter in subsequent issues.

Perhaps not many of you will know Ann Bates. She has, however, over the last ten years played a very significant part in the improvement of our local environment and on people's (particularly children's) awareness of what our locality has to offer. Her position was supported by the Mersey Basin Campaign and she accomplished marvels with the limited funding that she was able to beg, borrow or scrounge from many sources. Now, as mentioned above, the Mersey Basin Campaign is being closed down and Ann is moving on to similar work closer to her home, where I am sure she will be equally effective. Her knowledge, enthusiasm and quiet competence will be sorely missed and her accomplishments will remain. Ann, we wish you well and success in your new post.

Ann and I had a meeting recently, where she presented me with such



documentation that she had collected that she considered should be preserved for future reference. Colin and I have material from various important sources which we catalogue, use, where appropriate, and then preserve, normally by depositing it at the Salt Museum. (I believe we should now call it Weaver Hall)

This paperwork included fascinating contemporary reports of the disastrous floods of February 1946, and led me to write a commentary on the different attitudes of the River Weaver Trustees, who then controlled the River for one very specific purpose, namely, ease of navigation for all wishing to use it, to its apparent purpose now, which would be much more difficult to define, as each pressure group advocates different priorities to suit their particular purposes.

I sent a copy to Councillor Andrew Needham, who, amongst other matters, is seriously trying to find a solution to the very, very real possibility of similar floods happening again, and he has asked if we will be further involved in discussions with the official authorities who control the long term flood protection of the Weaver Valley, the worrying feature being that there is no funding available immediately. Partial protection can be achieved by careful attention to detail, as my commentary suggests, and for those interested, you will find my comments printed on page 17.

Enough of my pontifications. It remains only to remind you what is stated in more formal terms on another page. Please come along to our A.G.M. on March 25th., to have your say, and to stay to hear Tony Hurst tell us of the continuing success of the preservation of the Daniel Adamson. See you there.

WEAVER NEWS

Vale Royal Locks Working Party, a report by Stuart Gardiner

On Thursday March 11th the Society had a working party at Vale Royal Locks, welcomed and managed by Steve O'Sullivan, The BW River Weaver supervisor.

The ten who attended enjoyed a fine day in beautiful surroundings preparing and painting the lock walkways and waterside protective railings. This was a new venture for both BW and RWNS in terms of volunteer waterway maintenance, and was a bit more constructive than



Stuart Gardiner and David Booth scraping and painting

the Towpath Tidy banner suggests.

Those taking part were:

Warren Atkinson, Danny Bebington, David Booth, Colin Edmondson, Stuart Gardiner, John Hulme, Jim Mole, Dave Potts, Lynn Potts, David Roberts, John Tackley. Moral support from Neville Robinson.

Did it work? Yes, as a trial of the process, and both Peter Shaw (lock keeper) and Steve were appreciative of what had been done.

Good points:

Introduction and briefing.

Wearing a Hi-Vis waistcoat to immediately distinguish volunteers from members of the public, anglers etc.

Provision of protective gear, and tools & materials for the task.

A visit from Jim Taylor during the day.

Could be better: Nobody from BW was working with us, so a bit us & them.

Would I do it again? Yes, because the relationship needs to develop, although volunteering with BW (on this occasion) was less fulfilling than with some other waterway groups. BW will have to realise that volunteers

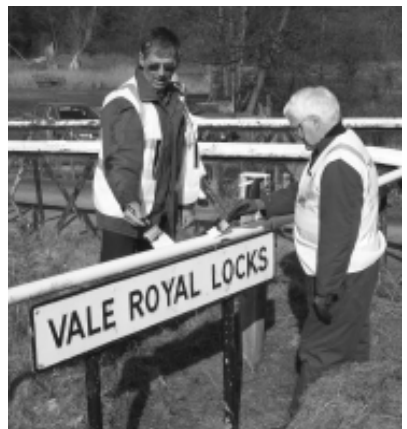


“The Motley Crew!”

are capable of much more than picking up rubbish, painting and vegetation clearance if they are to succeed as a true third sector organisation. With several qualified engineers in our work party, we probably could with a BW engineer have got the swing bridge over the barge lock working again, which in turn would have allowed the reopening of the barge lock, after all that expensive restoration work! Perhaps a task for another day.



Danny Bebbington and David Roberts show how to do a proper job of the preparation.



Jim Mole and John Hulme carefully apply a coat of white paint.



On a more negative note ?

'A Northwich Landmark Demolished'

Work began in November on demolishing the unique floating hotel on the River Weaver in Northwich. Previously known as the '**Floatel**', the structure was built in three sections in the late 1980's, and was supported on floating pontoons located by steel piles.

It was believed to be the only floating hotel in the country that was not based on board a boat, and accommodation comprised 60 rooms, a restaurant and conference facilities. The design proved its worth several times when the waters of the River Weaver rose above normal levels.

The 'Floatel' in happier days.



The 'Floatel', later known as the 'Quality Hotel' (a name which it struggled to live up to, read the user reviews later on, ED), closed in early 2009 when its owners, the Real Hotel Group, went into administration. The building was then boarded up and became the target of vandals and other undesirable elements. It also began to sink, and actually went down some two feet, gradually becoming something of an eyesore.

Emergency services and Environmental Health Officers agreed that the structure should be removed, and the funding for this had to be found by BW as the landowners. With the site cleared by late December, BW hopes to use the space to create some extra moorings for visiting boats. It is thought likely that some of the existing pontoons and piles can be incorporated into the new development.



*Demolition
underway in
November 2009*

The society have heard one or two comments on the lines of ‘what an outrage it was to destroy something unique’, but the structure really was life expired, the following **user reviews** submitted to the Holiday Watchdog web site sums up the condition of the hotel in its last days; **“I would have graded it Zero, but 1 was the lowest option!”**

If only it were forgettable! The terrible stench of damp throughout the hotel takes your breath away - the windows had to be kept open to breathe, but the heaters weren’t man enough to keep out the winter chill - the mattress was dangerous with sharp spring ends sticking through, making it unusable - the convection heater’s blue sparks lit the room when it turned on and off - An utterly nauseating experience - the only redeeming feature was the staff, who efficiently had a copy of the complaints procedure and contact details of the Manager who unsurprisingly was not available. They had been instructed to take our money first!!! This is merely the tip of the iceberg. Don’t find out for yourselves - avoid this place at all costs! I wouldn’t wish it on my worst enemy!

And another satisfied customer,

“This is the worst hotel I have ever set foot in”

This is the worst hotel I have ever set foot in. Dirty, smelly and shabby. The bedroom curtains were covered in cigarette burns, the bathroom smelled and the shower was filthy and the bedroom furniture was badly



stained. Staff unhelpful. My partner and I walked out after 5 mins and refused to stay there, we booked into a Travel Inn a few mins down the road which was £52 for the night instead of the £59 this hovel tried to charge us.

To be fair, the reviews were not all as negative as that, one or two reviews tried to be more positive but it was still there if you read between the lines.

*The site was
cleared by late
December*



**Now on a very positive note, the making of a mural, Entitled;
'The ANDERTON BOAT LIFT,
THE PEOPLE WHO MADE IT HAPPEN'**

By Diana Bernice Tackley

In 2005, whilst on honeymoon in Canada, I visited Chemainus on the east coast of Vancouver Island. Over several years, guest artists have been invited to paint murals in this charming town and these have become a major tourist attraction and revitalised the town's local economy since the closure of the logging company, the town's main employer.

One mural in particular had a profound effect on me personally when I discovered it had been painted by Paul Ygartua who I remembered as 'Iggy' when he attended Liverpool College of Art at the same time as me. He had painted an enormous mural of three Canadian First Nation Indians which had a huge impact on the town, as he was famous for his paintings of West Coast Indians. When I returned to the UK the strong image of these portraits was still on my mind and at first it was my intention



to produce a personal painting for my own pleasure.

Living so close to the **Anderton Boat Lift** and being a waterway enthusiast, the eminence of the three engineers came to mind and I focussed on them for the central part of my painting. It then occurred to me that I could develop the idea a little further and attempt to tell the story of the volunteers presenting the petition to No. 10 Downing St. to save the lift after it fell into disrepair. I also wanted to acknowledge the efforts of the **Friends of the ABL** working from their visitor information base in a converted 40 foot container nearby. I added narrowboats and rivercraft to complete the scene and to show typical craft on the two connected waterways. Little did I know at the time that this personal painting would develop into a 10m x 2.5m exterior mural!



Seen here at an early stage of the painting are the three central panels, showing; left: Sir Edward Leader Williams, Engineer to River Weaver Navigation Trust 1856 -1872, centre: Edwin Clarke, designer of the 1875 hydraulic lift, right: Colonel Saner, Engineer for the reconstruction of the lift in 1908.



With the restoration of the lift complete, plans were being made by the **Anderton Boat Lift Trustees** to dissolve the trust. It was suggested that as a parting gesture my painting could be developed into a mural which not only would enhance an area on site and disguise an unattractive wall but would provide a pictorial educational feature and an additional attraction for the public.

English Heritage wanted the wall to be preserved in its original state so marine ply or Medite, an exterior grade MDF, were considered as an alternative which could then be attached to the wall. However, after extensive research into the durability of Canadian exterior murals it was discovered that many murals were painted in acrylic on 'Dibond' and lasted many years despite the adverse weather conditions. 'Dibond' consists of a hard rubber core sandwiched between thin sheets of coated aluminium and it was decided that this would be ideal for the purpose. The 'Dibond' was supplied, delivered and installed by Sign UK Ltd. from Oldham.

After further research into which acrylics would be durable and lightfast I received invaluable advice from Dave Evans, a former ICI paint chemist from Wisbech, Cambridgeshire who supplied Italian exterior acrylics for the mural. He also supplies excellent paint for narrowboats!

Emphasising the history of the boat lift, prominence has been given on the mural to the three main Engineers to represent the skill and expertise of all the Engineers working on the lift. The three central figures are surrounded by other events and activities connected to the lift. The contribution of the voluntary efforts, in particular the **Trent and Mersey Canal Society**, the **Inland Waterways Association** and the **Friends of Anderton Boat Lift** is illustrated and the petition to save the lift presented to No. 10 Downing Street is depicted. The people in the boat represent all the others who could not be painted individually.

The aim of the mural is to increase the appreciation and raise the profile of the individuals and groups who have been responsible for the Anderton Boat Lift, without whom the lift would not exist. The mural also acknowledges the tremendous skills and efforts of all the engineers and volunteers who contributed so much to the design, construction and restoration of the Anderton Boat Lift. The mural will be an enduring legacy



from Anderton Boat Lift Trust to British Waterways and it is hoped it will have a huge impact on the site, furthering the visitor experience at the Anderton Boat Lift.

The **official unveiling** of the mural is to be **Friday March 26th** when invited guests will see all seven panels joined together and displayed for the first time. Frances Done CBE, Chair of the Waterways Trust, has graciously agreed to unveil the mural.

An accompanying exclusive **exhibition** of Diana Bernice Tackley's latest paintings and other original artwork will be on display together with photos of the work in progress of the mural. You are particularly invited to join Bernice between 11am & 4pm at Anderton Boat Lift on Saturday 27th March to celebrate the first day the mural '**The People who Made it Happen**' is on view and the first full day's opening of the exhibition.

The exhibition itself runs for a limited period from Sat 27th March to Sun 11th April. It is open from 11am & 4.30pm.

More information can be found at www.dianabernicetackley.com, or contact Bernice by email: bernice@dbtackley.com or at 01606 76204

ROWING NEWS

I was out and about on the towpaths on Saturday 20th February, and was impressed to see about 20 rowing eights gathering above Pickering's ready to race against the clock down to Clifton. This was the RUNCORN SPRING HEAD race, which is rowed on the lower reaches of the River Weaver. It is listed as a 6,000m race for eights and quad sculls on the River Weaver from Pickering's Lock to Sutton Weaver.



The arriving boats assemble on the river between Pickering's and Dutton viaduct. They now have to wait in the sub zero cold until the race starts.



Here are a few highlights of the Runcorn Rowing Club Winter Season.

With thanks to press Officer Linda Butterworth.

More information on Runcorn Rowing Club can be found on their web site <http://runcornrowing.com>

The Club was founded in 1894 on land purchased from the Marquis of Cholmondeley. The Clubhouse and boathouses are situated on Cholmondeley Road, Clifton, Runcorn, WA7 4XT adjacent to Rocksavage Power Station. Rowing is on the River Weaver Navigation, the best stretch of rowing water in the North-West. The Club is affiliated to British Rowing (the sport's governing body) and operates under British Rowing rules. The Club has a number of boats from singles to eights to suit all ages and weights. Half of the members are juniors or students - a small number of dedicated rowers have expanded the Club in the past five years. About 30 senior members are active as coaches, committee members or helpers. Water based training sessions are held on Saturday and Sunday mornings all year. On lighter nights: Tuesdays and Thursdays Novices and new joiners Sunday mornings only. Adults on Wednesday evenings The Club is heavily involved in 'Project Oarsome' British Rowing's development strategy for young rowers. New members are always welcomed at the club, which can be found at The Boat House, Cholmondeley Road, Clifton, Runcorn WA7 4XT

RUNCORN SECURES RIVER DEE VICTORIES

Runcorn Rowing Club joined many north west rowing clubs at the Dee Autumn Head Race.

The event, hosted by Grosvenor Rowing Club was over a 4000m course on the River Dee, Chester.

On the same day other Runcorn members were given the fantastic opportunity of meeting an original club member Naomi Ashcroft, from the early 90's, who is winner of World Lightweight Gold medals and Women's Henley Royal. *(see photo over the page)*



Runcorn Club Members with International Rower Naomi Ashcroft (just off centre right with white hat)

RUNCORN SPRING INTO ACTION TO HOST THEIR ANNUAL EIGHT'S HEAD.

A stretch of the River Weaver from Pickering's Lock to Sutton Weaver A56 Swing Bridge saw spectacular rowing action from 40 crews of Eight's and quads racing over 6km in two divisions. This annual event brought stiff competition from rowing clubs all over the North West and as far away as Bradford, West Yorkshire. Despite having to break the ice first thing the day provided great rowing conditions of calm water with bags of sunshine.

SPARROWHAWKS NESTING ON THE RIVER WEAVER

Sparrowhawk Island is a web site dedicated to capturing live footage of many species of british birds, but mainly the sparrowhawk, as it lives in the wild on the banks of our own River Weaver. (I have been in contact with the owner, and can recommend that you have a look at the site, it is very professionally put together. For their protection, we are keeping the location a secret. ED)

Their live streaming web cams are permanently fixed in their wood and capture much of the goings on in a sparrowhawk's typical daily routine.



Quoting from the web site , www.sparrowhawk-island.co.uk, “This isn’t your average online web cam site. Our web cams allow us to follow every aspect of the sparrowhawks life, whether its in the nest, feeding time or the male bringing kills in. You will see the female Sparrowhawk leave the nest and take the kill away from the male to feed herself and her chicks. We also have web cams focused on our mating and courtship branch and a secondary web cam trained on our watering hole. The rest of the cams are situated throughout the wood in all of their favourite hotspots, this means you’re guaranteed a good show.”



February 2010 was spent filming footage of wildlife on our River Weaver with filming legend Johnny Kingdom.

Press release-
‘The new non-executive Chairman of the Weaver Valley Partnership is Cotebrook resident Geoff Hope-Terry.

Mr Hope-Terry has held a number of senior corporate roles in the public and private sector and latterly was the Director of Finance for Manchester University.

He said: “This is a fantastic opportunity to work in partnership with the local residents and various organisations and to build upon the many strengths of these unique localities, with their rich history.”

“I’m looking forward to the challenges involved and to using all my drive



and energy to help build a better future for everyone in the Weaver Valley towns.”

Councillor Herbert Manley, Cheshire West and Chester Council’s Executive Member for Prosperity, which includes regeneration, said:”I welcome the appointment of the new Chairman of the Weaver Valley Partnership and expect that the regeneration of Northwich will now accelerate the delivery of the town out of its past and into its future”

“Northwich and Winsford have a long track record of making a major contribution to the economic success of Cheshire and the new partnership will develop and deliver the regeneration of the Mid Cheshire towns, ensuring their sustainable economic future.”

Abbey Councillor Keith Musgrave, who was involved with the appointment process said: “We had to choose from extremely experienced candidates and we believe we have the right person for the job to ensure progress in Weaver Valley.”

“The Weaver Valley towns will be at the heart of the regeneration strategy and the new partnership will spearhead the delivery of an ambitious programme and a number of significant projects.”

Mr Hope-Terry will be taking the new position imminently and will work with Cheshire West and Chester Council, Cheshire East Council, the Northwest Development Agency and the Homes and Communities Agency in defining the constitution of the new partnership, its terms of reference and governance.

Councillor Jamie Macrae Cabinet Member for Prosperity at Cheshire East Council said: “Mr Hope-Terry’s wide experience, working within both the public and private sector within the North West, will be a valuable asset in his new role as Chairman of Weaver Valley Partnership.”

“His new appointment will help us to unlock the economic potential of the Weaver Valley and its towns in both Cheshire East and Cheshire West.”

Steven Broomhead, Chief Executive, Northwest Regional Development Agency (NWDA) said: “I am pleased to welcome Geoff’s appointment as Chairman of the Weaver Valley Partnership. He will bring a broad range of experience and specialist expertise to this role. The NWDA is looking forward to working alongside the Partnership to develop a strong, sustainable economy.”



Water Forum November 2009 Five Minute Address on behalf of the River Weaver Navigation Society

My name is John Tackley and I am the Chairman of the River Weaver Navigation Society. I am also a Trustee of Anderton Boat Lift Trust and a Northern committee member of the Trent and Mersey Canal Society. I am also a qualified engineer, have successfully owned and managed an engineering company in Northwich and have operated my own trip boats on the River Weaver and the Trent and Mersey Canal.

I say this, not to be boastful, but to highlight some of the skills available in our society, emerging as the new 'third sector', which, we believe, is where we fit into the new rationale now being promoted.

I could spend the whole of the next five minutes listing the skills of our other members, they include owners of large companies, qualified engineers and an accountant, a local historian, ex- C.E.O's and a naval architect, a marketing expert and two boatmasters, to name but a few of their skills. In total, a wealth of business experience, **untainted by desires for promotion or hidden agendas imposed from above** and, most important, allied with enthusiasm and a desire to benefit the local community.

The aim of our Society is broadly, 'to improve the River Weaver and its environs', and I believe we can make a major contribution to how we can all achieve exactly that.

I have with me several copies of our latest, 'Weaver News.' This highlights 10 projects we would like to encourage and eventually achieve, ranging from the simplest, like improving river moorings and trying to alter lock opening hours, to the frankly impossible (in the present financial climate) of another navigable water connection between the river and canal at Winsford, to revitalise the town and attract many more money spending tourists into the area.

I would like here to briefly outline one project that, in my view, would bring tremendous benefits to the area, achieve a high profile, involve true co-operation between private, public and third sectors and incorporate young volunteers in training in interesting areas.

Some years ago I was asked to prepare a consultation document for the



proposed National Angling Centre, which many of you will know did not get off the ground, but, as a consultant to them, it led me to prepare a public trip boat cruising map very similar to a London Underground railway map, showing the many attractions that can be reached within 2 hours cruising from Northwich or Anderton, served by different cruising routes.

The list is almost unbelievable, but major attractions are;

The wonderful attractive scenery along the river,

The Salt Union Salt Mines at Winsford,

A visit to the Salt Museum via its riverside wharf,

A transit through Hunts or Saltersford Locks,

The engineering ingenuity of the two river swing bridges in Northwich,

The story of the massive subsidence around Witton Brook,

The Anderton Boat Lift itself,

The story of Salt and the Chemical Industry processed and handled beside the River, including the invention of Polythene,

The story of the last battle of the Civil War at Winnington bridge,

The delights of Marbury Park,

A visit to the Lion Salt Works,

The transit of Barnton and Saltersford canal Tunnels.

All these attractions are within close proximity, but cannot be visited in one cruise, but, if properly promoted, will encourage interested visitors to make multiple visits, highly desirable for increasing tourist revenue and reducing marketing costs.

The initial requirement is one trip boat on the river and one on the canal, an operating base in Northwich or Anderton, co-operation between British Waterways, Cheshire West and Chester, the Waterways Trust, a management organisation, possibly provided by the Society and involvement of other organisations as appropriate.

The operation, if well run, would be profitable, (I know because I have done it) and the peripheral benefits to the area would be incalculable.

I believe that the new reorganisations of both our local authority and British Waterways has produced a new working environment that is so much more conducive to co operation and achievement that this opportunity



should not be missed.

We have to focus on value for money, fast action and a new incentive to achieve real success. Hopefully this will awaken a largely apathetic local population to the wonderful potential that exists to improve West Cheshire to become a place of which to be proud. This is a good place to start.

As for the future. We have the tools, wonderful countryside, waterways and water space in abundance, a fabulous location close to three major cities, two international airports, the most significant rail junction in the country and motorways in close proximity traversing both north- south and east- west. It would be difficult to envisage a better tourist location—so—**let's finish the job, or, at least, start it!!**.

River Weaver Flood Control

A presentation by John Tackley

Flood risk can certainly be reduced in Northwich if floodwater from the Weaver above Northwich can be restrained until the uncontrolled flow from the Dane can be given priority in clearing the Town environs.

Your surmise, therefore, that increasing the holding capacity of water in the upper river between Hunts Lock and the Winsford Bottom Flash will be beneficial, as it can be controlled, is entirely correct. As deep draughted vessels now seldom transit above Hunts Lock, previous resistance by the River Weaver Trustees (that was apparently evident after the 1946 floodings,) to dropping the river levels on a temporary basis to accommodate likely floodwaters are not really relevant today.

However, this flood water retention facility is useless, unless water levels are materially reduced before the onset of a likely flood, as a facility that is already well filled has little capacity remaining to fulfil its designated task.

This, in practical terms, means opening sluices and reducing water levels throughout the navigation, prior to anticipated high rainfall, so that levels can then be allowed to build above Hunts Lock whilst the Dane flood water is allowed freedom to escape along the lower river

In practice, water levels below Town Bridge will probably remain high, as the extra Dane flood water will make good (and more) the extra permitted run off achieved by the fully opened river sluices.



Above Hunts Lock, however the situation becomes more extreme, as the holding water capacity needs to be maximised, and, if time allows, water levels should therefore be brought as low as possible to buy time for the Dane waters to escape, prior to the release of the stored flood water in the upper pounds.

This, in turn supports your contention that dredging of the Bottom Flash would be beneficial as its near surface water volume is increased. An incidental side effect would be that larger fluctuations in water level on the two top pounds would probably call for the provision of floating pontoons for any permanent moorings on these two levels, to prevent grounding with more widely fluctuating water levels being permitted. This would not be expensive as few craft are currently moored above Vale Royal Lock, with a further small nucleus of craft at Pimblott's old yard.

I have recently come across a report of the Assistant Engineer to the Weaver Navigation Trustees (F.G.B. Clayton) prepared on 18th. March 1946, some 6 weeks after the catastrophic floods of 8/9th. of February, It states that the flood waters were 5'-0" above normal above Hunts Lock on that date, but they were 12'-0" above normal at Town bridge, obviously indicating that it was the Dane floodwaters that were creating the majority of the flooding in the town, being heaped upon the flood waters of the Weaver, which could perhaps, to some degree have been restrained.

It would indeed have been a brave man to have decided to close the Vale Royal and Hunts Lock sluices at that time, as all were fully open, but that decision would have saved much of the flooding in Northwich, to the detriment of the waterside buildings on the Winsford waterfront, which were prolific at that time.

Today, this is not the case, as virtually all waterside structures above Vale Royal Lock have been demolished and considerable water level fluctuations would cause little embarrassment, particularly low levels, so the opportunity to improve the control of floodwater by reducing levels in the upper navigable river is much greater.

It must, however, be clearly borne in mind, as previously stated, that this is only effective if prior action is taken to drop water levels before the incidence of high rainfall, as a potential flood protection facility that is already almost full is no facility at all.



The existing computerised sluice control does not consider forecasted flood warnings, and even if no further flood prevention works were undertaken, if this facility could be built into the control system for the sluices, it would offer limited extra protection. The old system of the lock-keeper opening his sluices and dropping the river level if he sensed or was told that heavy rainfall was imminent did, most certainly, have its merits.

The further investigation of flood risk reduction by increasing the water holding capacity of the upper Weaver Navigation does have much to recommend it, as the water control machinery already exists.

It would need much more careful investigation to determine how much extra water volume holding capacity can be created for flood prevention purposes, by dredging and embanking, dependent upon how much time prior to potential flooding a flood warning is likely to be issued. As previously stated, as much water as possible must be released downstream prior to the storm water arriving.

In the final event, at present the River Dane is uncontrollable, but its flood plain serves a catchment area of 161 sq. miles, whereas the Weaver flood plain serves (above Northwich) a catchment area of 245 sq. miles, It is likely that even under extreme conditions, flooding of the lower Weaver Valley could be controlled whilst the upper Weaver Valley water is restrained.

The question remains, how much time can be bought by adopting such control methods and between what limits can an upper navigation water level be permitted to move before really significant flood damage occurs on these pounds?

It is logical to restrain flood waters in the navigation above Northwich, if Northwich is flooding, as the damage will be so much less (remember, 256 houses and 70 shops were flooded in Northwich in 1946) but what are the optimum flood levels on each pound to minimise damage and does the flood control computer know what they are? I very much doubt it.

The DoETR should have the answers, as the flood control authority, but only British Waterways has the ability to protect us, without sufficient funding to be able to do so.



It must be emphasised that all the suggested measures discussed here are largely rendered useless whilst the highly restricted cross sectional throat created by the narrow channel of the river below Town Bridge continues to be massively exacerbated by the deposition of silt as the Dane water velocity reduces on entry to the Weaver.

The Weaver Trustees were very well aware of this danger and dredging in this area was almost continuous. They simply kept digging a deep hole below Town Bridge and Dane silt dropped into it. This key threat is now largely being ignored as British Waterways struggles for even basic maintenance funding.

Under severe flood conditions this restriction creates a massive water, 'hump' that can only disperse one way, into the town.

**THERE ARE BIG PROBLEMS TO BE SOLVED
IT COULD ALL HAPPEN AGAIN NEXT WEEK.**

Memories Coastal Craft of ICI (Three short period Stories)

In 1948 there were five coastal craft in the 'alkali' fleet, taking goods from Winnington, Wallerscote or Fleetwood to large ports such as Glasgow and Dublin, or carrying limestone from the North Wales Quarries. They, and their sister ships saw the worst of the second World War - the "Weston" and the "Beeston" were in the ferry services to the Normandy Beach Heads - and 'there are many tales of gallantry still to be told.' Here are three such stories related by Capt. Griffiths, Marine Superintendent in 1948.

The "Jolley Days"

The "Jolley Days" was lying in Liverpool during the heavy blitz. The crew did not, as many would have done, seek shelter, but remained on board knowing that a hit or near miss would have meant death to all owing to the smallness of the vessel.



They not only fought fires on their own vessel, but also put out fires on other craft in dock, after the crews of these other craft had gone to cover. These fires were tackled when the fire brigades were more than fully occupied with major fires in the immediate area. The “Jolley Days” was saved, but larger and better manned vessels were gutted.

The “Jolley Days” later on a trip around the coast, in foul weather, with a rough sea, sighted a seaplane in distress, which had made a crash landing on what was understood to be a mined area. Without thought of danger the “Jolley Days” steamed into the mine field, launched a boat and took off survivors, one with a broken leg. The rescue was carried out with great difficulty in a rough sea. In order to give every assistance the lifeboat was manned with the whole of the deck department, leaving only the Captain with two engineers on board to handle the vessel and pick up the lifeboat. An added difficulty was fading light.

The Captain of the “Jolley Days” was awarded the M.B.E. for this exploit.

The Last Voyage of the “Calcium”

The “Calcium” and “Sodium” left port for a voyage from Fleetwood to North Wales, knowing that a number of mines had been dropped off the Welsh coast during the night, and some part of their route lay off the beaten track, in a channel which could only be swept after the deeper channels had been cleared for Atlantic Convoys.

While en route the “Calcium” set off an acoustic mine which, owing to her size, meant that there was no chance of her remaining afloat. The “Sodium” at once went to her assistance, rescuing the crew of whom some were injured. It was found on the check-up that the Fireman was missing. The Captain of the “Calcium,” although injured, crawled along the dark alley way in an attempt to rescue the Fireman. He eventually found the Fireman apparently dead in the Bunker, but would not leave the body on board, as there might have been the chance of a spark of life remaining. In any case, he wanted to bring the Fireman home to his people.

The Chief Engineer reboarded from the “Sodium,” which had remained alongside in spite of a choppy sea. He assisted the Captain of the



“Calcium” to drag the Fireman onto the deck from which he was transferred to the “Sodium”. The Captain and Chief Engineer of the “Calcium” were awarded George Medals for this exploit.

The End of a Carrier

The “Lithium” left port on a fine summer afternoon in 1943, her crew thinking of little except the catching of the tide at home port next day, picturing a night at home and the fresh, sweet cabbages and peas in their gardens. The Captain had finished his Pilotage and lingered on the Bridge, talking to the Mate. The sun was warm and there seemed no reason for going below. Besides, there was an Aircraft Carrier passing with planes operating above her. A plane circled and landed on the flight deck. In an instant a terrific explosion occurred ; the Carrier became a mass of flames, her men jumping into the sea as she burned. The “Lithium” was at once turned round and approached this inferno, dropping a boat clear of the now burning sea. The Captain of the “Lithium” placed his ship between the swimming survivors and the flames in an attempt to cut them off from the fire. The smoke and heat were sometimes so intense that navigating could only be done from the lower deck.

The only survivors picked up were those the “Lithium” saved. Although numbering 60 odd, they were but a fraction of the number lost. “Let us ask the survivors what they thought of the “Lithium”.....They will never forget the men who rescued them, tended their burns, lent them clothes, cleaned them of fuel oil and filled them with tea- men who considered that they had only done a normal job of work.”

Syd’s story, written by Carl Leckey and reproduced here with the permission of Syd’s son, Danny. (*Continued from the last edition of ‘Weaver news’*)

We are sorry to have to tell you that Syd Bebbington died recently, he was in his early Nineties. The family wish us to continue with the story of Syd’s life, and I am sure that you will join us in sending them our deepest sympathy.



My parents must have found it hard going living at Dutton Locks in the 1920's and 1930's and bringing up a big family. There were no roads to the locks. Even if there had of been a road ordinary work people could not afford a car anyway. There was a couple of ways we could get in and out of the locks through the fields above and below those these were usually thick in mud. The tow path to Acton Bridge our main access was just an uneven potholed earth track with a topping made from ICI lime brought from the works. When we had a long spell of frost and we seemed to get a lot of them in those days the towpath would be frozen solid. When it thawed out the boat horses kicked it up until it was like a ploughed field. It was so rough we couldn't ride our bikes along it. To avoid this mess we would try and ride on the fields that were alongside the tow path as they were not fenced off then. To separate the fields on the towpath there were iron gates called clap hatches. There were four of these between Dutton and Acton Bridge. One of the lock keepers, my uncle Fred Crooke was found dead in the river by one of these gates. He had been coming back from the cottages at Acton where he went for a game of cards and his overcoat had become entangled in the back wheel throwing him into the river. My father was a good living man, he was always willing to help folk who were not so well off as himself. He was a very hard working man, you had to be to bring up a large family in those days. I like to think I take after him in many ways. He was easy going and very considerate. Always clean and tidy and very smart when he went out. In the First World War he was in the Volunteers, I think they were similar to the Territorials. He did most of the shopping. He had to walk up the railway line to Acton Bridge station in all weathers. This took him approximately half an hour. He would get a bus there into Northwich. Us kids used to meet him at the station when he came back with the shopping usually four well packed bags. He used to take his belt off thread it through the handles of two of the bags then throw them over his shoulder then with a bag in each hand he would set off for the long trek home. We would help him as we got older and were able to carry the heavy bags. When we got home we couldn't wait to see what he'd bought us. Very often he bought us a pound of boiled sweets, which in those days cost six pence. In Woolworths you could buy sweets at two pence per quarter.



If you bought four quarters you got a quarter free. As busy as the lock keepers were locking craft up and down keeping the locks maintained and water controlling they always found time to do their gardens. The gardens were always neat and tidy and the lock keepers and their families were very proud of them. There was a gardening competition then and this was a great event to look forward to. My father was a very keen gardener he was known to be one of the best on the river. We had a very big garden and used to grow all our own fruit and vegetables. We also kept hens and other livestock to supplement the poor wages paid in those days. I was sixth child of a family of eleven children. Seven girls and four boys. It must have been a struggle in those days for my parents to bring up such a large family. Thanks to my parents we never went hungry but we had few luxuries. Starting with my youngest sister the children's names are Madge, Margaret, Reginald, Arthur, Sydney, Miriam, Nancy, Albert, Eva, Ida, Ena. Many of my relatives also worked on the Weaver along with father. These consisted of several uncles, cousins, and my younger brother. My uncle Alf, whose nickname was Rofler, worked on a Navy boat called the spoon dredger. It consisted of a short mast and a derrick operated by a hand powered winch. Attached to the derrick was a long thick shaft with a 'T' piece on the end and a large spoon on the other end. The purpose of the contraption was to clean out behind lock gates and awkward corners etc. The crew would lower the spoon over the side and my uncle would guide it to wherever needed dredging. I think the reason my uncle got the job was because he was a big powerful man capable of controlling and counterbalancing the spoon from the 'T' piece. When my uncle moved from the spoon boat he took on the job as lock keeper at Vale Royal locks until he retired. I remember when he would call on us at Dutton, the first thing he would say is "has your Dad got any fags?". My Father smoked a pipe all his life and if anyone gave him a cigarette he would put it on the shelf in the kitchen and Uncle Alf knew this. Before he got married he lived at Pecks Brow in Crowton with his mother, my Granny. When we called we would be invited to go and see his racing pigeons he was a very keen pigeon racer. *(to be continued)*