



S&N News

November 2001

www.sncanal.org.uk

Issue 4



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Feasibility Study

The feasibility study is the most important immediate objective of the Trust. Over the past few months there have been significant advances towards this aim.

Gordon Howdle has made contact with a number of consultancy firms including W.S. Atkins, Scott Wilson Kirkpatrick & Partners and Halcrows, and preliminary meetings are to be held soon. The scope of the feasibility study will then need to be drawn up, in consultation with the local authorities.

The funding of the study is also a matter that is being progressed. An application has been made to the Inland Waterways Association for a grant from their restoration fund. In October, Shrewsbury & Atcham Borough Council led the way amongst the local authorities when their cabinet recommended that the council make provision for a contribution of £2,500 from next year's economic development budget to the study.

About £20,000 is likely to be required for the study. When the sum is committed various Consulting Engineers will be asked to tender and the actual cost will be determined.

AGM

The first Annual General Meeting of the Trust will be held at 11.00 am on Saturday 19th January 2002 at The Royal Naval Association, Bellmans Yard, off High Street, Newport. Bellmans Yard access is between The Britannia Building Society and Lifestyle and cars can be taken up and parked close to the RNA.

We hope as many members as possible will be able to attend. Please note your new diary as soon as you have received it for Christmas! Full details will be sent nearer the date.

Publicity Leaflet

At last, thanks to the efforts of Charlie Stroud, the Trust has a new publicity leaflet. You should (unless collation has gone wrong!) find a copy with this edition of *S&News*. We hope you like it – any comments would be appreciated for the next version! If every member could recruit just one more member then....

If you would like a supply to put in your local shop or other premises where it is possible potential members will see them please let a Trustee know.

Charity Registration

The Trust has at last received official confirmation of entry in the Central Register of Charities with the Charity Commission. This will now allow the Treasurer to recover significant tax from the Inland Revenue.

Welcome to New Members

We welcome as members:

Geoff & Thelma Marshall of Newport; Alan & Anne Wisener of Whitchurch; Keith Bartlett & family of Church Stretton; Linda & Gerry Carruthers & family of Hinstock; Phillip & Julie Brook & family of Edgmond; Tam & Kay Hazan of Shrewsbury; David & Lucy Pulford & family of Shrewsbury; Brian Hill of Shrewsbury; Michael & Irene Morris of Bridgnorth; Roy Lewis of Telford; Fiona & Anthony Peal & family of Exeter; Peter Bradley M.P. of London; Dennis & Melville Rogers of Newport; Aled & Susan Jones of Newport; Nina & Luciano Marchewka & family of Eccleshall; Jill & Michael O'Connell & family of Newport; Newport (Shropshire) Town Council; Rotary Club of Newport; R J Alexander of Budleigh Salterton; R J & D E Freeman of Shrewsbury; Gary Mosesley of Telford; Malcolm Edwards MBE of Newport; Newport (Shropshire) & District Chamber of Commerce; Philip G Sharpe of Rugeley; Stephanie Scovell of Shrewsbury; Roger & Margaret Hudson of Shrewsbury; Brenda Flowers of Newport; David & Patricia Tidy & family of Newport; Stefan Bielecki of Manchester.

Membership of the Trust now stands at 218.

Membership Renewals

With the Trust one year old, those original members will find with this issue a membership renewal form. Progress in this year has been greater than we could have expected and continued widespread support is vital. Please renew, and to make things easier in future, please consider completing a standing order.

Many thanks go to those who have renewed without prompting! You too will find a standing order form which you can use to set up your renewal ready for next year - so you won't have to remember again!

Dates for Your Diary

Thursday **15th November 2001** - 7.30p.m. Trustee's meeting*, Guildhall, Newport

Saturday **19th January 2002** – AGM, Royal Naval Association Club, Newport (see page 3), followed by Trustee's meeting*

Thursday **31st January 2002** – copy date for next *S&News* – please submit any articles, letters etc. to Steve Bean (details inside front cover)

Thursday **21st March 2002** - 7.30p.m. Trustee's meeting*, Guildhall, Newport

* Trustee's meetings are open to members. It is suggested that you confirm with a trustee before travelling.

E-mail and Address Changes

It was found to be both very much easier and, perhaps more significantly, cheaper to issue the notice of the Open Day to those members for whom we hold an e-mail address. Hopefully the same method will be used for notice of the AGM.

If you have recently obtained the facility to receive e-mail by computer or television (notices will not be issued as attachments as it is recognised not all can read them) please send a quick message to sn.canal@lineone.net. Notification of any change of e-mail address (or postal! – to Secretary) would also be appreciated.

Centrefold Map

In the centre pages of this issue you will find the first in a series of maps which will look at sections of the canal route. This covers the first section of the canal from Norbury Junction. It dates from around 1900.

The map shows the main line of the Birmingham & Liverpool Junction Canal (now Shropshire Union) running north/south, with the great Shelmore Bank south of the junction, and the Newport branch striking off westwards.

Norbury Junction owes its existence totally to the canal. The first building was the lock cottage, of typical Thomas Telford design, which can be seen on this map between the junction and the first lock on the branch.

Soon, however, Norbury became the main maintenance depot for a great mileage of canals, stretching to Shrewsbury, Wolverhampton and Nantwich. On the map though the only building named is the ‘Smithy’, where the ironwork for lock gates would have been made and tools repaired.

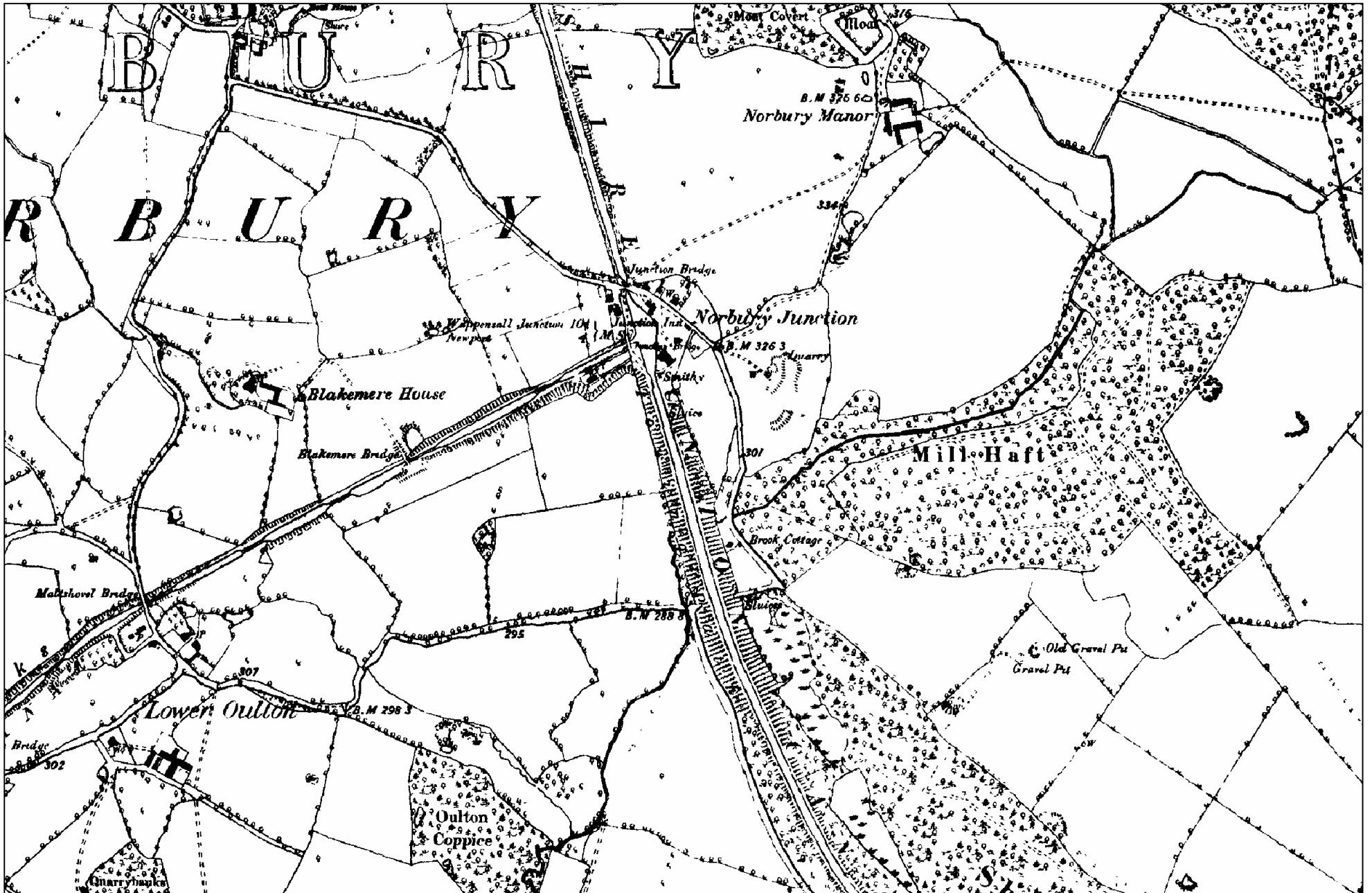
Also marked on the map is the Junction Inn. This was in existence by 1851, when in the census a John Rutter was described ‘Parish Clerk, Publican and Farmer’. Indeed the pub remained as a smallholding well into the 20th century, the farm buildings being sited on what is now the car park.

On the Newport branch, lock numbers 1-6 of the Norbury & Forton flight of 17 - the “Seventeen Steps” - can be seen. The first lock is now widened into a dry-dock with a building over it, whilst numbers 2-4 are buried. Number 5 can still be clearly seen from Maltshovel Bridge. This bridge and Blakemere Bridge still stand in good condition.

Please remember if visiting this area that much of the line of the Newport branch is now private land and that permission must be sought if venturing away from public rights of way.

The image has been taken from the website of www.old-maps.co.uk.

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Map of Canal Part 1 – Norbury Junction to Maltshovel Bridge

Letter

Dear S&N News,

As a stropky teenager way back in the late fifties I was serving an apprenticeship as a fitter / machinist at Audco Valves of Newport. Whether by chance or with deliberate intent I was put in the care of Tom Manning who at that time was running the small machining section of the research and development department.

To a large extent, in his own quiet way, he straightened me out and taught me to be a good engineer and I hope, a reasonable person. It was also entirely his fault that I developed my own interest in canals, traction engines and all things of a certain age after listening to his stories of his many travels during tea and lunch breaks.

We once went on a trip to London for some conference or other but skipped off early and went to, I think, the science museum where he absolutely amazed me by reading the hieroglyphics off a tombstone. I could go on for ever about his widespread knowledge but needless to say I think the man is a genius and I cannot think of anyone more suited to the position of first president.

Furthermore if you have any mechanical or similar problems you want solving ask him, give him a few days and I bet he will come up with a simple solution.

Yours sincerely, Derek Gambie, Leominster

PS. Ask him about his scale model steam locomotives and traction engines. Also, how he melted down some old three penny bits to make a miniature pipeline valve.

Archive

In the archive is a "Preliminary Report" into restoration published about 1965 by the Shrewsbury & Newport Canal Association. It split the project into five sections and gives an indication of the state of the canal and (how little) work was required. Section 1 reads:

"The first major work will be the provision of a new dry dock for Shropshire Union Cruises. Details have not yet been worked out as to how this would be provided - but alternative schemes are under consideration.

There are 18 locks between Norbury and Newport. It will be necessary to fit new gates throughout. The concrete weirs will have to be removed, new ground paddles fitted together with new cills.

Locks 5, 9 and 11 will need some rebuilding of walls, and between locks 16 and 17 it will be necessary to construct a new culvert, repuddle and make good the banks and towpath.

It is understood that there is drainage pipe in the vicinity of the Newport Basin which would not allow the necessary depth of water. This will be investigated and if necessary this would be lowered - we hope to have the co-operation of the Newport Council on this.

Dredge throughout to commercial standards, trim hedges, tidy up banks and towpath."

Notice

This is not a Trust organised event, but we are very pleased to include details as it will certainly be of interest to many members:

NORBURY JUNCTION IN THE 60'S

A social evening will take place at Norbury Junction on

WEDNESDAY 28th NOVEMBER 2001

Start Time: 7.30PM PROMPT

Harry Arnold, well known waterways photographer will give an illustrated talk on what Norbury was like in the 60's when he first started getting interested in boats and canals. He will show lots of very interesting and informative photos, slides and has a wealth of local history to share.

If you would like to attend please phone Pat on 01785 824012 to reserve a seat.

Pam will have the Canal Gift Shop open for those original Christmas presents.

Admission is free - but there will be a small charge for refreshments.

Open Day

On 20th October the Trust held its first open day for members at Norbury Junction. There was a splendid turnout of about 80 despite the horrendous weather that heralded in the day but thankfully cleared up (or at least stopped raining!) five minutes before the scheduled start. There were opportunities for boat trips thanks to Pat Barton and Charlie Stroud, to walk around the junction and down to Oulton on the Newport Branch or just to sit in the Junction Inn and talk about old times.

Over lunch a variety of material was on display, including Tom Manning's photographs (with the photographer present), Thomas Telford's longitudinal plan of the Newport Branch (although he couldn't turn up in person!) and Graham and Sam Gould's excellent recent photographic record of the canal on their laptop computer. By the end of the day they had even recorded Tom Manning digitally! After lunch David Adams gave a report on the Trust's first year, which is summarised here for those members unable to attend...

Chairman's Report on First Year

The Chairman was able to report on what could only be considered as a successful inaugural year. This was in large part due to the efforts of the Trustees but also to many others. The invaluable assistance and advice given by Vaughan Welch (Vice Chair of the IWA Restoration Committee and recently elected a Council Member of the IWA) was worthy of particular note.

Membership of the Trust had risen to 180 in the first year, including 11 corporate members, a level some long-standing societies would be pleased with. It was particularly pleasing that Tom Manning had agreed to be the Trust's first president in recognition of his many years interest in the canal, and in canals in general, and his presentation of his invaluable photographic record to the Trust.

Financially this had also been a good year with the Trust having a bank balance at the year-end of over £1230. He was also able to report acceptance of the Trust as a charity registered with the Charity Commission.

On the publicity front, in the year 3 newsletters had been produced and distributed to members. Any comments from members were invited. The Trust had also established a website and, hot off the press, a full colour leaflet was now available which members were encouraged to distribute widely to suitable points. Earlier in the year 'The Case for Restoration' had been produced for distribution to Councils and other interested parties.

Turning to more practical matters, consideration had been given to including the Wappenshall - Trench Branch in the scheme to provide closer access to Telford. Specific works had been considered, principally at Newport, and in June Roy Sutton (an IWA engineering consultant) had visited and reported his findings and recommendations. He pointed out a number of problem and potential problem areas and in the main recommended that efforts be concentrated at the present on preservation of the remaining structures, particularly with regard to vegetation growing on bridges etc.

Negotiations had been held during the summer with planning officers of the five local authorities which had been very helpful and supportive and on 10th August a letter had been sent, together with a copy of 'The Case for Restoration', to each council seeking their formal backing for the restoration. The outcomes of their deliberations were awaited. The importance of informing and discussion with Parish Councils on the route was also stressed and letters and copies of 'The Case' were to be sent soon to Norbury, Forton, Edgmond, Lilleshall, Preston-on-the-Weald Moors, Eyton-on-the-Weald Moors, Hadley, Rodington, Withington, Upton Magna and Uffington.

The most important matter for attention was the Feasibility Study. Gordon Howdle was in contact with three firms of engineering consultants. The estimated cost for the study for the whole Norbury - Shrewsbury route was £20,000. Grants were being sought from the IWA and the local Councils etc.

Another major activity to be undertaken was providing more information to, and discussing the proposals with, landowners on the route.

The session concluded with a reminder of the AGM and a number of questions and answers (including not answering the date for the canal's reopening!).

SHREWSBURY & NEWPORT CANALS TRUST

Membership Application

The annual membership fees are:	Individual Membership	£8.50
<i>(please circle category)</i>	Family Membership*	£10.00
	Youth Membership (under 18)	£3.50
	Group / Corporate Membership	£20.00

Supplement on all annual rates: for EU £2, for rest of the world: £4.

*Family membership is for people living at the same address: only one copy of newsletters and other material is sent per family membership. Only the person indicated as "applicant" below will be entitled to vote.

I/We wish to join the membership of Shrewsbury & Newport Canals Trust in the category indicated above. I/We also wish to make an additional donation of £_____. I/We enclose a payment of £_____ (cheques made payable to "Shrewsbury & Newport Canals Trust").

I/We hereby agree, if elected, to be bound by all the provisions of the Memorandum and Articles of Association of the Trust (copies available on request).

I/We further agree to my/our membership details being recorded on computer, solely for the Trust's organisational purposes.

Signed:.....Date:.....

Gift Aid Declaration – please sign if you pay tax

I want all donations (includes membership subscriptions) I make from the date of this declaration to be treated as Gift Aid Donations (you must pay an amount of income tax or capital gains tax equal to the tax reclaimed on your donation(s)). I will inform you if I cease to pay tax.

Signed:.....Date:.....

Forename

Surname

DoB (if under 18)

Applicant:

Others:
(family
membership)

Address:

.....

.....(Postcode).....

Telephone number: E-mail:

Please post with your remittance to: The Membership Secretary,
The Shrewsbury & Newport Canals Trust, 4 Arscott, Pontesbury, Shrewsbury, SY5 0XP

Features of the Canal - Number 3 - Shrewsbury Canal Locks

The Shrewsbury Canal featured 11 locks. These were named Trench, Baker's, Turnip, Hadley Park, Peaty, Shucks, Wheat Leasons (or Leasowes?), Britton, Wappenshall, Eyton and Eyton Lower. Can anyone throw light on the origins of some of those names?

The canal was built for the use of tub-boats, about 20 ft long and 6ft wide, which were pulled along in trains. The locks were each 81ft long and 6 ft 7 in wide, which meant that each would hold four tub-boats.

As can be seen in the photograph on the front cover, these locks featured a guillotine gate at their lower end. The upper gate was of the usual swing type. However, it is not known if this is the original arrangement.

In 1797 Thomas Telford, who had then taken over as engineer of the canal, wrote that 'the locks are so formed as to admit either one, three or four boats passing at a time, without the loss of any more water than what is just necessary.....This is accomplished by having gates that are drawn up and let down perpendicularly.... and each lock has three gates, one which divides the body of the lock'. Did this mean that each lock had three lifting gates, or that it had ordinary gates at each end and a lifting gate between them?

However, the mystery is that there is neither a record of the lifting gates having been moved to the lower ends nor have traces of intervening gates ever been evidenced at the locks themselves. It seems highly likely therefore that Telford was setting out his intention in his writings and that this arrangement never actually came about. It would indeed seem a logical arrangement to save water by varying the length of lock to suit the length of boats passing, but in practice the movement of a single tub-boat would probably be unusual.

Whatever the arrangement, in the original design the guillotine gate was counter-balanced by chains leading over wheels above the gate to a centre weight, a wooden box full of stones. However, starting in 1840 at Wheat Leasons the counterbalancing was altered so that a cast-iron weight sank in a well at the side of the lock as the gate was raised. All locks, other than Hadley Park, were finally converted to this pattern.

In the early 1830s, when the building of the Newport branch was under construction, the Shrewsbury Canal Company planned to widen all their locks and bridges to take the standard narrow boat that would in future have access from the national network. This it seems was going to prove to be too expensive and in the event only the two Eyton locks were converted along with the bridge openings between Wappenshall and Shrewsbury, but the design of the guillotine gate was retained. The locks and bridges between Wappenshall and Trench were not altered and especially narrow narrowboats were used on this section.