

**Newsletter of The Friends of The Canal
Museum, Stoke Bruerne**

Chairman's Jottings

Mick Butler

The following is taken from Mick Butler's address at The Friends recent AGM.

Sadly, another frustrating year to report, but with the Canal & River Trust reorganisation in progress, this was inevitable, I am afraid. Now, however, the situation has begun to settle, so hopefully there are more optimistic and positive times ahead.

Stoke Bruerne and its Canal Museum with gift shop and café, now sit in the Canal and River Trust's East Midlands Region, headed up by the newly-appointed Regional Director Phil Mulligan. Since joining the Trust in August, Phil has been familiarising himself with his region. Locally he's been through the Blisworth Tunnel on the Museum's boat *Sculptor* and participated in a BBC Radio Northampton interview, discussing the significance of the 1968 British Transport Act and the role that waterways can play today in improving our wellbeing. These visits, along with meetings with Graham Boxer, Head of Museums, will help inform Phil of his decisions going forward for the Museum, this site, the Quarry Field, the Grand Union Canal, Northampton and beyond.

Meantime, The Friends have been keeping a general overview of what has been going on,

carrying out routine tasks, such as tidying up exhibits and enhancing their presentation. As I have said before, the present hiatus in the Museum's development is testing the patience of us all, but it is something we have to live with, while the Canal & River Trust continues with its restructure of the regional teams and the re-mapping of its employees. This delay includes the Heritage Lottery Fund bid, which remains in abeyance. Another disappointment has been the lack of development of the Quarry Field. As I say, frustrating – but let us remain positive and trust the final outcome will be well worth the wait.



A strategy is needed for the development of the Quarry Field (Photo: KD)

Council usually meets monthly, with summer and winter breaks. What is evident now, however, is the need to recruit more volunteers to join us on Council, preferably with ideas and commitment but, with above all, enthusiasm. Unfortunately, we lost the services of Rob Westlake this summer when he decided to concentrate his volunteering efforts on overseeing the running of *Sculptor*. We miss his contributions at Council meetings and we thank him sincerely for his support. He is still

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Cover picture: A dramatic sunrise at the end of October with *Sculptor* sitting easily on her mooring in front of the Museum (Photo: KD)

prominently in the picture, not least by sourcing the Christmas tree on the Museum Green and arranging the seasonal lights.

We held another highly successful Village at War weekend in September, attracting many thousands of visitors and raising a commendable £9,000 surplus to help with the upkeep of the Museum together with donations to local charities. However, the lack of volunteers meant that we could not stage, for a second successive year, our usual mid-summer event in June. This is a great pity, as I am often told how much it is enjoyed and appreciated. Minor ad hoc events didn't really fill the gap.



Friends' Patron, local MP and Leader of the House of Commons, The Rt. Hon. Andrea Leadsom at this year's Village at War (Photo: KD)

Pleasingly, local MP The Rt. Hon. Andrea Leadsom continues to support us actively in her role as Friends' Patron. She was a welcome visitor to Saturday's Village at War and expressed her admiration of what we are doing.

My report is a little shorter than usual – but that is simply because there is less to report on. As always, I voice my sincere thanks to all my colleagues, both on the Friends' Council and elsewhere for all the hard work they have put in

over the year. These thanks, of course, include Louise Stockwin, the manager of our Museum and all her support staff both in the Museum and café. Sometimes it can get very hectic! Overall, they had a successful 12 months but, like all of us, are anxious to know what the future holds for the Museum – something we all cherish and care for.

AGM Update

The formal part of the AGM passed without too much ado. The contribution of Rob Westlake, who resigned during the year, was noted and the need for more volunteers to come forward, reported elsewhere in *Museum Matters*, has been publicised.

Sculptor - Stop Press

There's information elsewhere on *Sculptor* but this is just to report that following a meeting with Margaret Harrison (Head of Collections for CRT) it has been agreed to that The Friends and hopefully IWA Northampton will invest some money (that has been previously allocated to *Sculptor*) to ensure that the gunnels (and that can be spelt a number of ways!) are replaced; any IWA money may be invested in *Sculptor's* cabin. At the time of writing this, just before Christmas, it looks as if *Sculptor* will go off for new gunnels in February 2019. The *Sculptor* team are delighted as this is a major step in ensuring the future operational viability of *Sculptor* in which The Friends have invested considerably in the past. All funding was approved on 7th January.

Village at War 2018 - *but what about 2019?*

Our annual 40s weekend continues to grow in size year on year supported by an army of re-enactors who flock in to enjoy the unique and historic waterway setting of Stoke Bruerne. This year's event, the eleventh Village at War, was no exception.



A Battle of Britain Memorial Flight Spitfire gracing Village at War (Photo: KD)

Despite mixed weather, thousands of visitors came to enjoy two days of vintage music, dance, memorabilia displays, wartime dioramas, fashion parades, a Spitfire flypast or just to soak up the ambiance afforded by costumed living history enthusiasts going about their business alongside the canal and throughout the village. As usual, the occasion was an opportunity for a gathering of historic boats and this year, in memory of the late Trevor Maggs who attended for many years, there was an award up for grabs - a mounted cup and saucer for the best turned out historic working boat. Most appropriately, it was won by *Corona*, Trevor's old boat! It is intended the award will be an annual feature, to be passed on to

successive winners each year.

All in all, despite pouring rain on Saturday, the weekend went with a proverbial bang and we raised a very useful £9,000 for Friends' funds.

We all owe an enormous vote of gratitude to the Village War team who have worked their socks off as usual. This year, after many years of sterling service, two members, Mick and Trevor, have decided to step back from their full on roles and take more of a back seat. This means that if the event is to be able to continue next year new team members are needed to step into their shoes and a new event Chairman will also be required. Could this be you? You will have plenty of support as existing team members are ready and willing to keep calm and carry on!

There was a public meeting at Stoke Bruerne Cricket Club on Wednesday 5th December at 8pm to discuss the way forward. There was a good turnout of members of village groups, businesses and organisations who fundraise through Village at War. Some groups have already come on board to help us organise the 2019 event. If you would like to know more about what might be involved, you can contact Friends Chairman Mick Butler, either by telephoning him on 01604 473756 or email chairman@friendsofcanalmuseum.org.uk who will be only too pleased to chat.

Again a relatively quiet time for *Sculptor* but there has been work going on in the background. The Canal & River Trust have requested tenders from three suppliers to replace the gunnels (various spellings are all correct!) which are in need of professional attention. On the assumption that the money can be found, and we expect an approach from Canal & River Trust to help with that aspect, it looks hopeful that the gunnels will be replaced in 2019. This means that the new side cloths can be fitted at the



***Sculptor's* ageing gunnels are quite visible in this image of her ascending the Stoke Bruerne flight in the company of *Nutfield* (Photo: KD)**

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same time. We have held off fitting the new side cloths until it was clear the gunnels were to be replaced. At the same time we expect Canal & River Trust may approach The Friends for help with the cabin on *Sculptor*. There is a meeting planned for around 19th December, please see the *Sculptor* - Stop Press item on page 3. Meanwhile general maintenance continues.

We have taken an initial look at the events we may attend in 2019, some of which we just attend anyway, but the one that looks interesting is the 60th Anniversary of the reopening of the Welford Arm the weekend before Crick Boat Show, so fits in rather well.

If you'd like to become involved with *Sculptor* please contact Rob Westlake via the Museum.

Canal Museum Opportunities

Lynda Payton

Could you be a curator?

Every winter, on days the Museum is closed, a small curatorial team beaver away to make sure that the galleries and the collection contained in them are well looked after and maintained. One of our winter tasks is a deep clean of the galleries, open artefacts, such as the Forge and *Sunny Valley*, and display cabinets to make sure that dust and grime hasn't built up which could be harmful.

This winter there will be an opportunity for interested members and volunteers to join us, see what we do and have a go themselves. No experience is necessary as full training will be given. If you are interested in helping please contact Louise in the Museum who will be delighted to let you know the dates when the Curatorial Team meet. There will be a museum professional on hand to guide you initially.

We normally start around 10am until 2pm or 3pm and there are breaks for coffee and lunch (tea/coffee is provided but bring something to eat with you). You will be sure of a warm welcome whether you come for an hour or two, or the whole day. Just turn up, or if you would like more information, speak to Louise at the Museum on 01604 862229.

The Museum needs you

There are all sorts of volunteer opportunities at The Canal Museum. Whether you want to be a Museum guide,

become an Explorer education volunteer, join our curatorial team, lead heritage or wildlife walks, help maintain our historic boat *Sculptor*, be a Museum ambassador, assist with planning and running events, give talks or demonstrate canal craft skills, there's bound to be a volunteer opportunity to suit you. Whatever your interests and experience we'd love to hear from you, but you don't need to be a member of the Friends to volunteer. For more information speak to Louise at the Museum on 01604 862229 or any Council member (contact details on the back page of *Museum Matters* or our website).





Could you help with Village at War? (Photo: LS)

For any of these opportunities please contact Louise in the Museum



Could you help Brian look after the artefacts on display? (Photo: LP)



Could you help Della and Lorna with family histories? (Photo: KD)



Could you help organise the performers for Village at War? (Photo: LP)



Could you help the Sculptor team look after a venerable 83-year-old lady? (Photo: KD)

The future of Stoke Bruerne

Kathryn Dodington

On Monday 10th December there was a combined meeting of The Friends of The Canal Museum and Stoke Bruerne Canal Partnership respective committees, together with a representative from South Northants District Council along with Museum staff and representatives of the Adoption Group. The meeting was facilitated by CRT's Phil Mulligan (Regional Director East Midlands) and Liz Fleuty (Development and Engagement Manager East Midlands). The purpose of the meeting was to obtain a combined overview of what was, in the opinion of those present, required to enhance the visitor experience for Stoke Bruerne.



Phil Mulligan, Regional Director East Midlands (Photo: CRT)

Of course, we have been here before but the people who produced those plans are, in the main, no longer working for Canal & River Trust.

We worked out what was needed for Stoke Bruerne in terms of affordability and if what was affordable was within the control of Canal & River Trust. As an example of that, facilitating television companies access to Stoke Bruerne is well within the control of the Trust, the cost is negligible, but the output produced by the

television companies is not within the control of the Trust.

There was general agreement of the issues that we wished to address, some of which were thought to be practical and deliverable at little cost and others that needed some more thought. Phil and Liz agreed to take away our input and come back to us with their views on what we can do in the short term and the longer term.

Despite having been here before, and that was acknowledged, all those present felt that the meeting was probably one of the most positive ones we have taken part in over the past few years.

We await the outcome with interest.

Roger Barnes

Those of you who were at Village at War 2018 may remember Roger Barnes, who with wife Jackie, took over Trevor Maggs' *Corona* and won the best turned out boat. *Corona* was paired with *Alsager*. Sady Roger died very suddenly on 21st December at Napton whilst preparing to test the rebuild of Napton Lock 9 which had just been completed. Our sympathy goes to Jackie at this very sad time for her.



Roger (right) with Ryan Dimmock and wife Jackie, in the hatches of Cedar, at Windmill End in June 2018 (Photo: KD)

Some images from Stoke Bruerne during WW2



The tunnel portal and tug store



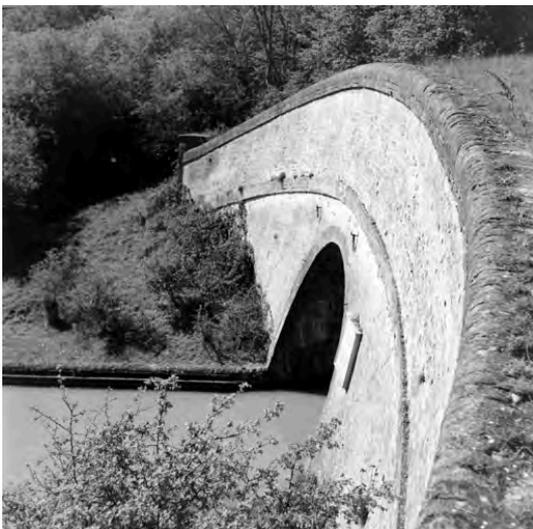
The Boat (not yet The Boat Inn)



The cottage at Lock 16



The cottages at Lock 20



The tunnel portal



A motor approaching Bridge 53



The Museum, the Mill Workers' cottages with the fore end of *Southern Cross* in the late autumn sunshine (Photo: KD)



Peter Austwick, who played such a wonderful Mr Winston Churchill at our Village at War events, sadly died just before Christmas (Photo: KD)

May

11th & 12th Roses and Castles painting course

June

14th Mikron Theatre

August

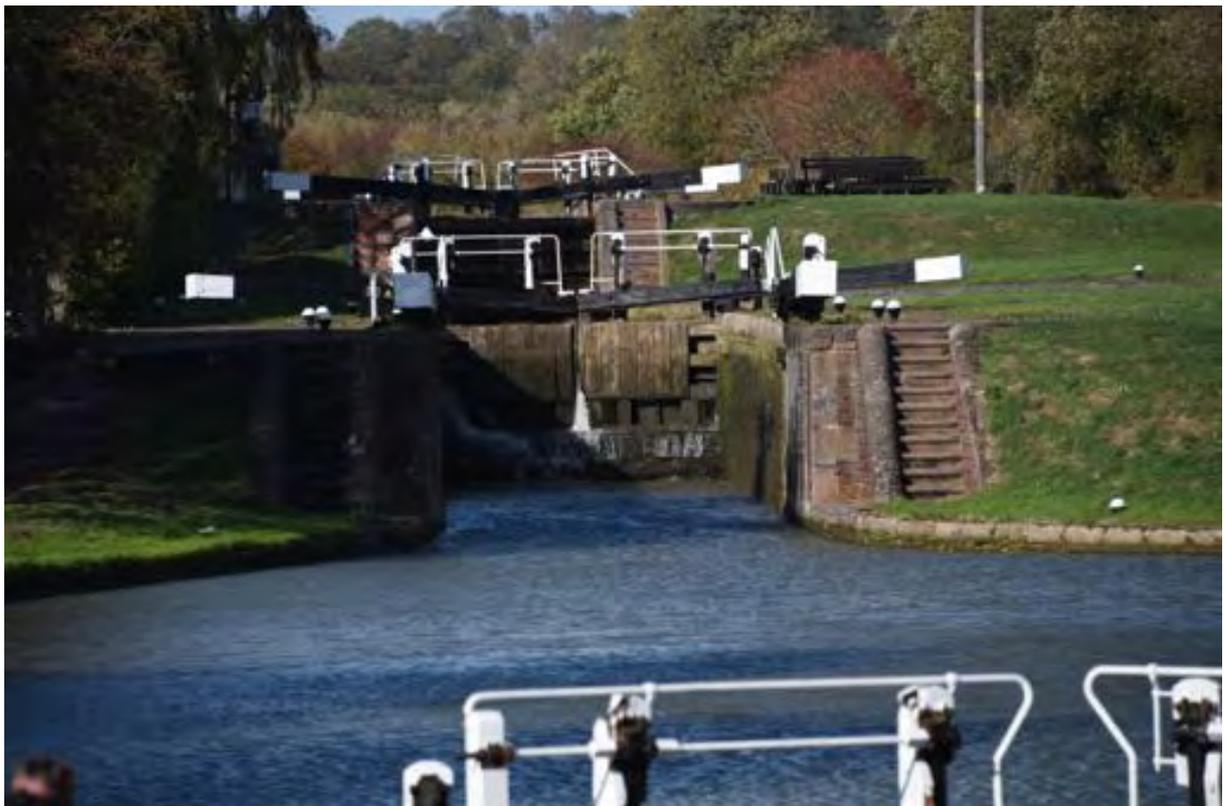
7th Teddy Bears' Picnic

24th & 25th Pirate Weekend

September

7th & 8th Village at War

TBC Roses and Castles painting course



The 'thick' of the Stoke Bruerne flight looking in wonderful order after having come under the attention of the Stoke Bruerne Adoption Group (Photo: KD)

The Friends of The Canal Museum at Stoke Bruerne (The Friends) may not agree with the opinions expressed in this newsletter, but encourages publication as a matter of interest. Nothing printed may be construed as policy or an official statement unless so stated. The Friends accept no liability for any matter, errors or omissions contained within this newsletter. We will however gladly publish corrections if notified.

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Non-Council Post

Roger Hasdell

Asst Newsletter Editor



The 'new' winding hole and the coffer dam during Blisworth tunnel repairs in the early 1980s (Photo: JH - <http://mydadsphotos.shendy.co.uk>)



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LP	Lynda Payton	FoCM
LS	Louise Stockwin	CRT