

PLANE

INFORMER

Foxton Inclined Plane Trust & Canal Museum

Happy Birthday 30 years

Foxton Canal Museum



Nº 146 Summer 2019

Trust Update

Sean Park

Now that the AGM and the festival have taken place we move into a new Trust year!

At the AGM the members approved and welcomed two trustees - Giles & Matt, both of whom had previously been appointed by the trustees. We now have 8 trustees but wish and will actively look to increase this number. Very much the tone of the meeting was on the need to halt the gradual drift away from purpose over the last few years and focus (re-focus) on a number of areas. With the extra people and skills added in the last 15 months this opportunity will be taken full advantage of.

The Festival whilst attended by almost 2000 visitors was heavily hampered by some rather unpleasant weather over the weekend. It is foreseeable that at least once every 5 years weather will have a major impact. The last time this happened was 2012. As the event has grown so have the costs to run so this year the financial loss attributable to the event will be substantial. As previously commented the pre-occupation with fundraising rather than purpose has contributed to this situation. Hence it is vital the trust revisits its fundraising and promotion going forward

In the last edition a number of priorities were high-lighted (as below) and I`m pleased to report that progress has been made in a number of areas

Agree a clear identity - how to answer the questions: what is the FIPT doing and what does it want to achieve in the future?

The answer here is getting back to its stated purpose and going forward from there. All the points below provide the opportunity to do so

How the trust is presented to the public - Our local & media social media image is somewhat confusing FIPT, Foxton Inclined Plane trust, Boilerhouse, Canal Museum.....?

Getting the balance between "The Foxton Inclined Plane Trust" for the trust business and a more consistent "Foxton Canal Museum" to promote the museum and the wider Foxton locks site are making things much clearer for all. This is an ongoing process particularly with the many external web-sites who often create their own text.

Identify both required & desirable roles necessary to effectively and efficiently run the trust (and what is expected from each role)

The immediate roles the trust needs are:-

Treasurer - Giles Parsons who has an extensive accounting & financial background has taken on this role

Membership - The development role here is VACANT however we expect to have the administration role covered before the end of the year

Volunteer co-ordinator - Penny (with full support) as Museum manager will take on all volunteering roles for the Museum i.e. recruitment, induction & development

Accreditation Committee - The maintenance and development of our collection to the highest standard is paramount. Mike, Elaine, Penny & Giles lead this process

Marketing Committee - Promoting and publicising the trust both on and off site. Derek, Will & Penny

Digital & social media (the Modern world!) VACANT

Fundraising - All fundraising options need to be fully reviewed. An essential part of the operation

Ensure that the duties & responsibilities of trustees are fully understood and accepted.

Some good progress at each trustee meeting. The "Charity/Charitable Trust" industry has had a fair amount of adverse publicity over the last couple of years and often it has resulted from ignorance rather than negligence. As trustees we have a duty to constantly re-visit these responsibilities.

Ensure all policies relating to employees and volunteers are reviewed and updated to meet our legal obligations as employers.

Our most important assets are people. Many of the policies relating to employment and to health, safety and welfare have been comprehensively reviewed and improved where appropriate. More are being worked on by both trustees and employees.

Compared to the last couple of editions a much more optimistic message. Many areas are moving in the right direction and the challenge now for trustees, employees and volunteers is to keep the momentum going. This also presents hopefully ideal reasons for even more people to be involved.

New objects for the collection

By Mike Beech.

We have received two wonderful new objects for the collection.

The first is a steel document box, a simple object if it were not for the name on the lid:- Grand Junction Canal Co. This was the property of one of the company directors during the time of the lift. The item was donated by the De Salis family.

Sean and Giles had the pleasure of meeting Gordon Thomas's great granddaughters, Pat Kaenzler and Pauline Statham. They gifted the museum with Gordon Cale Thomas's book of acts of Parliament relating



to the Grand Junction Canal. Copies of the act's have been bound together into the book, it has a leather spine with gold embossed lettering. It is showing its age and needs very careful handling. The remarkable bonus are the modifications and notes added by Thomas. Each section has a paper tab added to aid finding the



GORDON C. THOMAS.

relevant document. Most of the tabs are no longer legible but it has an inscription in the front and lots of notes in a very small hand, not easy to read. We haven't done much research into the book yet, we decided to ship it off to Leicester Records office. They still

have a full time conservator. (there used to be 5) She is going to restore the book to a usable and long lasting condition. The cost will be about £100 well worth it for what to us is the best connection we have to Gordon.

Gordon Thomas
The Martins
Isle of Man
Light House Bazaar

This book contains
all the Acts relating to the
formation, rights, privileges,
and obligations of the Grand
Junction Canal Company.
has been compiled from
various sources, and mainly
at the expense of Gordon Thomas.

Museum Report

Penny Arscott

The nights are getting shorter and the summer is on it's way out. We've had a very busy August and the "Leonardo and Locks" exhibition has gone down well. It's on till the end of October if you haven't seen it yet. Elaine and I designed and produced the exhibition.



I'm in the process now of organising the winter exhibition which will be showcasing paintings from artists who are inspired by the waterways. I've been speaking to the Guild of Waterway Artists who are interested in displaying their work here at the museum. There will be an opportunity to purchase paintings too.

We have been very fortunate this

year with volunteers. We wouldn't be able to run the museum without them. Elaine's husband Andy volunteers when she works weekends. He's out weeding , painting and emptying our chemical toilet to name a few things! He's a great help. I would like to thank all our volunteers for their support this year - Stuart, Brian, Glenys, Hazel, Nanette, Steve, Kaelin, Cathy, Tess, Alison, Pauline, Louise and Mary.

I'm as always looking at how to further develop the museum. Trying to reach out to wider audience. Nowadays its all about having an experience. The visitor's journey starts when they look at your website, planning their day. As Sean mentioned in his article that at the moment our online presents is confusing. This is something I will be looking at over the winter months.

We are still looking into developing the science and engineering side of the lift and locks . We have a bit of a science corner but it needs working on. Yet another project to sort out over winter!

Next Summer exhibition will be on "Roses and Castles" which Elaine will be researching and writing it over the winter.

A BRIEF HISTORY

OF THE BRITISH CANAL SYSTEM

Part 1- Why canals? Compiled by Derek Harris

The Romans

Some artificial waterways were constructed by the Romans when they came, saw and conquered in the 1st Century AD. But it is open to conjecture whether their primary use was for drainage or navigation.

The major work on this

The Agricultural Revolution



PLANET JR. No. 7 HORSE HOE.
PRICE, \$7.50.

country's canals was completed during the 18th and 19th centuries. The reason for this can be traced back to the Enclosure Acts. Under the old three field system which had operated in most rural areas since mediaeval times, each villager had a strip or strips of land in each of the three fields. These fields' crops were rotated insofar as each year one would have cereals grown on it, one would have root crops and the third would be left fallow.

The Enclosure Acts, the first of which was in 1773, effectively took away the

villagers rights to their strips of land and title to them reverted to the lord of the manor. He could then farm it more efficiently, especially when using horse drawn agricultural equipment which was coming into use at that time. An example of this was the Horse Hoe, invented by Jethro Tull (1664-1741). He wrote a book on how to use it entitled "Horse Hoeing Husbandry". He also invented the first seed drill, and there were others too including Thomas Coke of Holkham in Norfolk who, as well as becoming 1st Earl of Leicester, also did much groundbreaking work in crop rotation influenced by Viscount Charles "Turnip" Townshend.

With these fundamental changes to their way of life the people who had previously been providing for their families by farming their own strips of land as tenants were now to become employees, working for the landowner, for whatever mean wage he decided to pay them. Not surprisingly, many of them decided not to hang around, but to move into the towns and cities.

The Industrial Revolution

In the urban areas certainly plenty of jobs were available. While the Agricultural Revolution was happening in the

countryside the Industrial Revolution was taking place in the towns and cities.

Factories and mills were opening in many towns, particularly in the Midlands and the North of England. Initially, powered by waterwheels, they soon began to take advantage of the improvements that Messrs Boulton & Watt had made to the steam engine, which had been first devised by Thomas Newcomen. In 1795 they began production. Now the mills and factories not only needed raw materials bringing in,

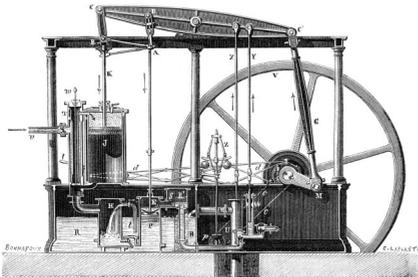


Fig. 59. — Machine à balancier de Watt.

A. Train de piston de vapeur; T. Guide; J. cylindre; H. condenseur; PE pompe d'épuisement; WY pompe alimentaire de la chaudière; VZ pompe d'alimentation de la boîte à; p. 2 régulateur; 46 excentrique; 48 et 49 parallélogramme; 50 et 51 guide et manivelle; V volant.

oldbookillustrations.com

but they also had an insatiable need for coal.

The finished goods needed to be transported away from the factories and mills to other towns and cities so that they could be sold.

In order for the Industrial Revolution to happen an efficient, economic and reliable method of transport was vital.

Road Transport

Road transport at the time was dire. Roads, such as they were, were unrecognizable by comparison with the roads of today. They were supposedly "maintained" by turnpike trusts. There was no knowledge of how to deal with drainage problems and there was, of course, no heavy earth moving equipment around at that time. Tarmac and concrete were yet to be invented. Consequently, the roads were more like muddy tracks, deeply rutted in the summer and mud-ridden quagmires for most of the winter months.

Goods were moved by packhorses with panniers on their backs or by horse and cart.

It was said that a wagon load of coal would spill more on the sides of the road during its journey than actually arrived at its destination!



Francis Egerton (1736-1803) Third Duke of Bridgewater

In common with most sons of the nobility in the 18th Century, Francis was sent on the Grand Tour of Europe, during which he observed canals in Holland, Germany, France and Belgium.



Returning to this country, he spent some months in London, wasting his father's money (as sons of the nobility often did back then). He was engaged to be married to the Dowager Duchess of Hamilton, but she broke off the engagement and married the Duke of Argyll instead.

The mines already had a system of small underground waterways, designed to get the coal to the entrances where it would then be taken by cart to Manchester where most of it was sold. The boats used underground where referred to as "starvationers" as the ribs were left exposed.

In a coming together of ideas, the Duke had his underground canal system in mind when he remembered the waterways he had seen in Europe. It occurred to him that a canal between Worsley Delph and Manchester might just be financially beneficial to his business. Not for nothing did he acquire the title of "The Father of the British Canal System".

The First Canal of the "Modern" Era

The Duke outlined the idea to his land agent, John Gilbert, who

immediately saw the advantages of such a project and the two of them began making plans for the canal.

They worked out a route but soon realised that there were problems in the way - not least of which was the need to cross the River Irwell en route to Manchester.

James Brindley (1716-1772) was gaining a reputation at the time as a problem solver, particularly in the realm of machinery. A man of little education, trained as a millwright, he had the knack of seeing how obstacles to progress could be overcome. Gilbert insisted that Brindley be brought in to solve the river crossing problem.

His answer was the first ever aqueduct to be constructed in this country where the canal crossed the Irwell at Barton.

During one of the many meetings at Westminster seeking permission to construct the canal, some committee members expressed doubt that a watercourse could be taken over the top of another watercourse successfully. Brindley sent for a block of cheese and a jug of water. When the cheese arrived (Cheshire, it was!) he set about it with his pocket knife and fashioned it into a model of his aqueduct. Then using the water proved that water could quite happily flow over water, just as he had designed.

Continues in the next issue.

Foxton Locks Festival 2019

By Will Norton.

June 15 and 16 saw the return of the annual Foxton Locks Festival, organised by the Foxton Inclined Plane Trust.

The event had over one hundred craft stalls showcasing everything from soap to cheese, and all manner of diverse and interesting products.

We were also fortunate to feature over twenty trade boats, again supplying many varied and interesting products, proving once again to be one of the most popular features of the festival.

Live music was catered for over two stages, this year featuring a smaller second stage within its own mini environment and was a big hit over the course of the festival.

The main stage hosted a variety of acts from midday to midnight on Saturday the 15th, finishing off with the popular "Jive Aces". Sunday the 16th saw music from mid day until 5pm.

There were a host of attractions in the main arena including a fun dog show, a display of falconry, owls and specialist bmx riding skills. The arena events were ably

hosted by Hfm our local community radio.

On offer there was a wide variety of catering, from traditional fish and chips to tacos, pizza, vegetarian to satisfy all taste.

For the thirsty, there was a fully stocked bar, supplied locally by the Langton Brewery, which again seemed to be one of the most popular destinations!



The amazing Lancaster bomber returned to the skies over Festival with an incredible flypast on Saturday 15th, and a Spitfire on Sunday the 16th, both awe inspiring, and did genuinely bring a lump to the throat.

For the first time since the total washout of 2012 the festival was hampered by the really awful weather. Despite this we had around 2000 visitors and we soldiered on, and thanks must go out to all the volunteers, who gave their time to make the festival run smoothly and help make it an enjoyable event.

Final words? Shame about the weather! But what would we have to talk about otherwise!

In The Beginning.....part 2

The early years of The Foxton Inclined Plane Trust.

By Mike Beech

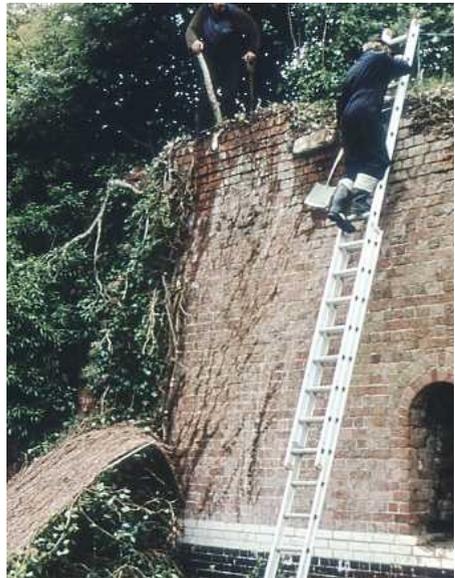
It really is 30 years since the museum opened. To be writing this account close to the museums birthday is something I do with pride. We set out to say that we could achieve our goals and many critics claimed that we would never rebuild the boiler house. It is sad that it is unlikely that we will rebuild the lift, but 30 years on, the fact that we are still running an award winning Museum, that it improves every year is something that FIPT can be very proud of. The fact that it is still getting better after I have retired from actively running the place is especially good.

But we have to go back even further. As I said in chapter 1 this has been written from memory rather than looking everything up. So we had decided to rebuild the boiler house. We were then as now a very small organisation, the big difference being that most of the people on the committee were practical hands on engineers and builders. We were also a bit eccentric. We saw no problem in just getting on with things. We changed the name from society to trust, and then worked out how you had to do it. We cleared the site and then asked for permission. It was

a very different world, sadly you could not do it that way today.

CLEARING THE SITE

The site of the BoilerHouse was a heap of overgrown bricks with the back wall standing, but leaning forward dangerously. The top of the wall had collapsed. Most of the building had been demolished, starting in 1928 and continuing during the lean years of the 1930s.



That is me up the ladder, with Dave Goodwin on the top, clearing the ivy from the back wall.



The windows and doors had been taken to Tring pump house to refurbish that, the timber winding house had gone and the roof of the BoilerHouse, partly to get at the scrap metal inside. The chimney was demolished, the bricks, robbed to repair the locks and what was left was not considered worth the effort of removal.

We borrowed a Smalley digger from Waterway Recovery Group. It was a strange 2 wheeled machine that could be towed behind a van. Trevor Towers had cleared a ditch round the incline and worked out how to operate the little monster. You had to use its bucket to pull it along and balance it on its 2 wheels. We then decided it was safe to let him use it to clear the rubbish from the boiler house base, loading it all into our Thwaites dumper truck. (no effective brakes and a single cylinder engine which burnt more oil than petrol). Plus some willing hands for the detail. We slowly uncovered the base of the building. Slowly as at first we only held work parties once a month. The back wall was partly rebuilt. The picture at the top gives an idea what it all looked like when we had cleared the site. The



Tony Faithfull-wright digging for the original walls.



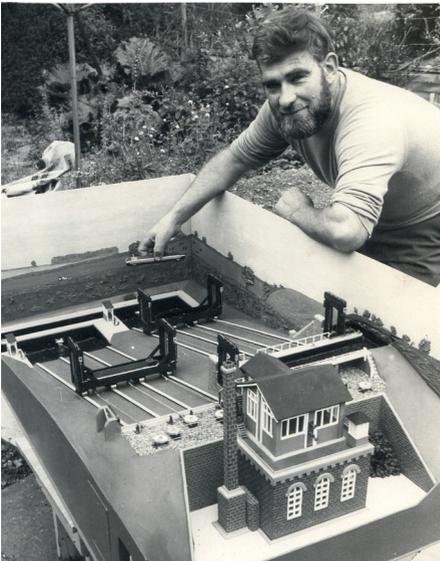
The Smalley Digger with the dumper parked behind. The museum base covered in snow.

Smalley is to be found in the top right of the picture. Using lots of photographs we collected and measuring the foundations we had uncovered these were used to draw up plans, Roy Nichols aiding us in this. Windows were a big problem we wanted cast iron round tops to match the *originals* but with a tiny budget we could not afford to get new. We gain a few individual windows, but then a man from the then Market Harborough Council came up trumps. Possibly the best thing the local council ever did for us. The Baptist Chapel in Husbands Bosworth was being demolished to make way for a council care home, the windows and front door were offered and gratefully accepted. They were not as heavy as the



Trevor and I accepting cheques from the IWA. Dave Goodwin in the background. IWA national donated £500 and Northants £100.

original's and they are a bit taller and narrower, but they looked the part. We now had enough to get planning permission. (once again a lot easier than it would be today) the bricks for the building were chosen by the council. All we had to do now was raise the money.



Peter Cook with his model of the lift in the 1980s. The model has now worked for 3 times longer than the real thing with only limited maintenance.

This is where Peter and Jill Cook came in. At the time they didn't have a car, so Dave Goodwin fetched them in his van. They brought there small tent and Peter's model of the lift (now in the museum). They demonstrated model and collected for the project. Soon we put the model in our railway container and started to operate from there. Someone had a brain wave and we started "selling" bricks. Visitors donated a minimum of £1 and signed there name in permanent marker. Looking back it was just a few of us that donated significantly more, we have the book in the archives. This idea was spread further, by rebuilding the chimney base we could include

bricks with peoples names on them, blue brick to match the original, sadly the company making the bricks closed before we could get any done, we just have one sample with FIPT on it which is mounted above the front door of the building. The rest had to be cut for us by a stone mason, when you visit have a look. I believe we asked £10.00 for but it could have been more. Sadly the list of donors for this was lost a long time ago. I can come up with a name or organisation for a lot of them but not all. If you donated in this way please let me know and we can regenerate the list and display it in the building as originally intended. Also in the chimney base is a stone listing Everards Foundation (from the

Brewery family still in Leicester) they donated £500.

Today these amounts sound small but wages were a lot lower in the 1980s and each £1.00 would purchase several bricks and the mortar to lay them.

Trevor towers tended to be in charge at work parties, if anyone was, there were no bosses. Trevor had building experience and the rest of us learnt fast. Whilst I always say that I laid bricks in the museum, my main function was keeping the more experienced people supplied with materials, and helping out where I could. Steadily the foundations were re-laid and the walls started to rise. We used a thermal block on the inside then a



Left, Dave Heathcote, Dave Goodwin is shovelling what looks like concrete, and I am turning the bowl of the mixer pouring the mix out. In the background is Peter Mays. The foundations are looking complete. The Mixer was another antique, I think it was Trevor's and was probably scrap when he got it!

gap with insulation and finally the brick skin. The names always going on the cavity side. It was a small regular group, Trevor, Dave, Mike Bindley (the only professional brick

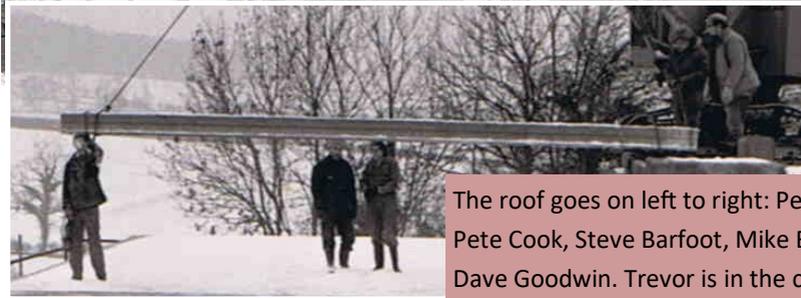
layer) Peter cook John Ellis and a few others. By the time we had some scaffolding up by the time we got scaffolding up we had to move to at least 2 work parties a month, we could only progress at the speed we raised the money for the bricks.

Waterway Recovery Group also helped out. This is not the best picture but Dave is on the left and a female WRG person in red is offering a much needed touch of glamour to the works.

To cut a long story short. As Dave was not working he was able to go to Foxton several times a week and laid a few bricks. We had the windows set up and progress was good but slow. Then we met "Mick the Brick" Mick was having holiday walking the canals and sleeping under bridges. He was a brick layer of the type that built houses on a piecemeal rate. He got chatting to 'Dave and volunteered to lay bricks for us if he could sleep in our work shed. This he did the wall went up very quickly,



The Museum, nearly ready for the roof. Dave made the lintels and stonework over the windows. Concrete with some gravel and stone powder if I remember correctly.



vintage tractor

The roof goes on left to right: Peter Mayes, Pete Cook, Steve Barfoot, Mike Beech and Dave Goodwin. Trevor is in the crane.

with Dave mixing mortar for him. He kept at it until we ran out of money for bricks, but the building was looking much more complete. It wasn't long before we were ready for the roof.

It was mid winter and a good cold one at that. Snow and ice everywhere. The roof beams were calculated to take not only the winding house, but equipment as well. I think they came out at about 1 1/2 tons each. Trevor and Dave had come up with a plan. Trevor had a

and a shoe was made to fit one end of the beam. The bucket was removed from our dump truck and another shoe made to take the other end. A steel cable was rigged to stop the 2 vehicles separating. The beams were loaded with by Tony Matts using the vintage boatyard crane. and the tractor reversed up to the top of the incline with the dumper following behind, Trevor and Dave driving. Despite the ice this worked well.

Probably give the modern H & S men a heart attack but it worked and no one was in any danger of injury. At the top we already had the ancient tracked crane lent to us by Foxton Boat Services. (it blew lovely smoke rings as it started up). We had replaced the lifting cable and made sure it was safe to use. The beams were lifted in place. This is when we realised we could have a problem. The crane could not lift the beams to the ends of the building, we could not get a bigger crane up there even if we could afford it. The Ice must have been cent by the gods! We had laid a waterproof membrane on top of the wall and when we had craned the second beam into place we found a wonderful bonus, the ice on the top of the wall allowed us to push the heavy beams along until they were in place, when the ice melted the beams settled in to place. A layer of concrete covered by professionally laid roofing felt which was then covered in another layer of concrete did the job. With only one small repair the roof is still good 30 years on.

The Museum

As work progressed we had to ask ourselves what we were going to do with the building when complete. Steam had been ruled out by the cost and the authorities so we were sure we would not need to get boilers in to the building. At some point we came up with the idea of a museum, to help promote the idea of a lift. This was enthusiastically taken up by all, despite us having no

experience of or knowledge of how to set up and run a museum. As I had sort of become the archivist for the trust sorting something out fell to me, with a lot of support from Dave. By 1982 We took some advice from the then keeper of Harborough Museum Sam Mullins, now director of London transport Museum. The one big thing I remember was don't put the book on the wall. Good advise which many museums don't take to heart if the visitors want a book sell it to them, the story is about objects and pictures. Despite lack of knowledge a distinct lack of objects, no electricity and limited time we did indeed open as a museum as soon as the roof was on. The building wasn't finished and we relied on volunteers to open up. In fact we still had no electricity or water when we opened but we did have heating. In one corner we had a large cast iron pot bellied stove which we fed with a mix of wood and coal. I am sure some days we got much warmer cutting wood than we did getting warm by the fire but it was wonderful in the winter to sit round it whilst eating our food and drinking tea from our flasks. Then in June 1980 we had a grand opening.

We particularly wanted /Mrs Daisy Dainty to do the honours as she had a rather wonderful connection to the building. It was to be a joint effort as we also invited the chairman of IWA Ken Goodwin, to be there. Daisy had as a child in Husbands Bosworth visited the local households with a cloth bag

asking for donations to help build a Baptist chapel for the village. The very same chapel that our windows came from. Her farther got the job of keeper at Kibworth top lock, they loaded there furniture on to a boat and it was towed by a horse to Kibworth, using the lift to go down Foxton. This made Daisy one of only 2 people I ever met who road on the lift. She said it was quite frightening she was sure it would tip up. Obviously it didn't, but the experience mad her a must fro the opening. Foxton Boat services provided a horse boat, horse and crew. Hannah Matts refused to dress in the Victorian

costume but led the horse dressed as a boy. Tony matts steered and there was plenty of help at the locks. The local dignitaries and waterway VIPs were loaded into the boat and taken down the hill to the museum. The town band came out for us for free and sat by the lock playing as the boat came down. Daisy insisted on getting out of her wheelchair to cut the ribbon. Trevor was representing us, as chairman. I had stood down and it seemed fair that as he had done so much of the work he should be at the front for the event. Nothing we have done since in the way of openings has been as good as that day. I will never forget it.



Left, Trevor Towers, Ken Goodwin and Mrs Daisy Dainty. They are cutting the ribbon to declare the museum open.

Please note our original museum sign, designed by me, it last quite well considering . I still have sweaters with that logo on it.



Left top, Virginis waits for her cargo of VIPs. Above, the boat arrives at the museum. Left, the museum as it was in June 1980. bottom, Tony matts holds the boat steady whilst the VIPs disembark, Hanna is in charge of the horse.



TONY MATTS 29.10.1942 – 21.04.2019

By Mary Matts

Tony first came to Foxton in the early 60`s, on a bike ride with his mates to cure their hangovers. They saw a sunken boat, just through Rainbow Bridge, and wondered if it could be bought cheaply as a project to keep them out of the pub. The owner was traced, and what turned out to be the 50ft back end of a Jasher steamer purchased for £20. They got permission from the then British Transport Commission to moor the boat alongside the old carpenters' workshop while they worked on it; at the end of the workshop was the separate blacksmith's forge, and this was rented as a base for the weekends, although the girls had to sleep in the van!

The canal then was virtually derelict, with reeds right out into the junction, and a swans' nest on the end. The commercial use of the Leicester Line had effectively ceased, and leisure use was in its infancy. The authorities weren't very interested in inland waterways then, regarding them as an out-dated nuisance to be ignored or obliterated. The buildings had recently been vacated by the last Company employees, and were in



bad repair; Foxton locks were just a forgotten backwater, with no road access - only a bridle road with a locked gate at the top. (The fields this passed through were owned by Trinity College Cambridge, and contained cattle.)

Whilst working on the boat, which they stripped of the crumbling wooden conversion, and bow- hauled to Peterborough(!) to install an engine, people on the few passing boats would sometimes ask if they could buy a toilet roll, or a packet of fags, and the occasional visitors if they could get a cup of tea, or an ice cream. So Tony saw the potential for a business, and against all advice, but with a very understanding old-style bank manager (remember them?) gave up his job as a physicist in Leicester, and Foxton Boat Services Ltd was

incorporated on 10th May 1966.

A small shop and tea room were created in what had been the toll office and directors dining room in the big house (now the Foxton Locks Inn) and there were rowing boats to hire. (Rowing boats had in the past been available from Percy Preston who rented the shed opposite - now Bridge 61 pub.) A jeweller from Hatton Garden, Janusz Rokicki, had acquired an ex-British Waterways working boat, 'Bexhill', that he converted for 'canal camping', and an architect from Corby, Robin Hewitt had joshier 'Kimberley': British Waterways were then selling off their redundant southern carrying fleet, which had been laid up in the Wendover Arm. Tony bought 'Baldock', and together the three formed Foxton Canal Carriers, a consortium working the boats out of Foxton, with Tony taking bookings and maintaining the fleet. Several more boats were added over the years until at one time there were thirteen 70ft 'campers' based at Foxton, and Janusz and Robin moved to Braunston to form Union Canal Carriers.

The lease on the property included the fishing rights to the overgrown bottom Incline basin, and mooring rights were also negotiated and stages installed. Maintenance and breakdowns were a large part of the business, with

most pleasure boats then being pretty basic, with old unreliable engines or outboards. With the increase in leisure use, several hire firms started up, then without dedicated engineers, so FBS had the contract for many of them. At its peak in the 70s, there were four vans and breakdown engineers almost constantly employed on jobs all over the midlands and beyond. People think River Canal Rescue was the first subscription breakdown service, but FBS's 'Foxguard' preceded it by a long way, and had loyal clients for a many years.

Because of the growing proliferation of hire fleets and boat-builders (three major ones in Market Harborough alone) FBS did not join in these markets (but built a wet-dock for fitting out and DIY) until about the 500th person had asked for a hire boat from Foxton, then one boat was obtained, later joined by two more. Passenger trip boat Vagabond originally belonged to Harborough Marine, but they struggled to make it pay, so relinquished it in 1969, from which time on it became a staple of the Foxton locks scene. (Now continued with Vagabond II)

A lot of private parties hiring Vagabond wanted a cream tea or a pub meal afterwards. The Black Horse and Shoulder of Mutton in the village, were approached, but both were adamant they did not

want lots of 'boat people' upsetting their equilibrium, so Tony said "we'll build our own pub". The planners of course hated it, and the saga of obtaining permission would fill this publication, and several more. Suffice to say, the pub got built, and was opened in 1980. (By this time Trinity College had sold the fields, and the bridle road was open for vehicles, although very pot-hole - no need for speed humps!)

Unexpectedly (to us at the time) a large number of visitors welcomed the new edition, and the boat party trade became only a very small part. (Remember pub hours were heavily restricted then, and at 2pm on a sunny Sunday afternoon, with the queue out of the door, we had to say "sorry, we're shut now till 6". Cue serious buying of cans in the shop, to be consumed on the grass.) The single-phase electricity supply that had made its way to the locks in 1957 proved woefully inadequate, and a large diesel generator was a necessity.

In the 1990s new legislation stated that all pub toilets had to be integral, so despite customers only having to take two steps from the bar door, undercover, to the toilet block, this had to be changed. Having to undertake substantial building work, we decided to go the whole hog and have a completely new double-storey wing, to include

a large commercial kitchen upstairs (with possibly the best view of any pub kitchen in the land). So the original building which doubled in size with the pub, now, including a conservatory, tripled in size - having undergone several extensions in the past from its humble beginning as a single-storey building pre-canal.

By this time camping boats had had their day, and also the basic hire boats: people wanted luxury floating cottages. As a new venture Tony decided to have a horse-drawn trip boat; he felt that people should experience the canal in the original way. 'Grouse' the fell pony was a family pet, but was put into some improvised harness and attached to an empty butty boat. He took to it immediately, and a new boat was commissioned for the purpose, but getting permission from British Waterways took even longer than the pub. They said, amongst other things that the towpath was totally unsuitable for horses!

'Vixen' the 36ft horse-boat ran for about 10 years, before logistics made it un-economic. (Tony managed to skirt the stringent Maritime and Coastguard Agency regulations by maintaining that via the towrope the boat was permanently connected to the bank.) Day hire was becoming very popular, and two day boats entered

the fleet. Breakdowns became less of a feature, as modern reliable boat engines came onto the market, and most hire fleets now had their own engineers, but maintenance and sinkings remained a speciality.

Tony was a founder member, and on the original committee, of the Foxton Inclined Plane Trust when it was formed in 1980. He resigned a few years later because his suggestions that the only way the Trust would make money was by selling things, and that Treasurer should be a paid position, were soundly rejected. (Mary replaced him, and has been on committee ever since!) A lot of the improvements to the incline site were done in conjunction with FBS, including the boilerhouse roof beams, installed with the Neal crawler crane, which was driven up the 1:4 slope backwards, in the snow! For the official opening on 10th May 1989, butty boat 'Virginis' towed by Grouse carried the VIPs from Bridge 60 to the meeting pond, where they disembarked to the sounds of the Harborough Band.

Tony's qualifications and experience enabled him to become a Royal Institution of Naval Architects surveyor, and when the Boat Safety Standards scheme was introduced in 2002 (initially for hire craft and later extended to all boats), he was one of the vanguard of people

licensed to conduct the tests, and also to examine other candidates. He was later elected onto the Waterways Council as a representative of boat businesses.

In 2003 the lease expired on the big building, and BW decided to do a comprehensive re-vamp of the site to fulfil increased visitor expectations. This included phase one of the reconstruction of the Inclined Plane - the re-watering of the upper arm, clearing of the slope, and reconstruction of the bottom basin, £3m being available from lottery and millennium money via the Foxton Locks Partnership

Foxton Boat Services had to vacate, and a considerable fuss erupted throughout the canal fraternity, since FBS had single-handedly taken the place from something moribund that the owners had no interest in, to a thriving 'honeypot site' (BW's own description.) The 'Pub Partnership' was created with British Waterways and Scottish & Newcastle Brewery, (which very quietly ran into the sand a few years later with huge losses) and the Foxton Locks Inn came into being. The buildings have now been extended many more times, and are probably increased 10 fold.

However, since the Matts family had managed to purchase the bottom lock cottage and boat-horse stable some years before, when BW

were selling such properties as redundant, Tony simply moved the shop across to the stable, and extended the adjacent shed to become a new Bridge 61. It was a great joy to him that despite their best efforts, Foxton Boat Services outlived British Waterways.

Tony's later years were progressively diminished by ill-health, and children Sam and Hannah effectively took over the running of the business. His last

journey, following his death on Easter Sunday, was a ride on Vagabond II, the coffin being put on his favourite front seat, together with his usual cheese and onion roll and cup of Earl Grey black tea. The following funeral in Foxton church was attended by about 200 people, from all aspects of his life in the preceding 50 plus years, and it would have pleased him to see everybody raising a glass in Bridge 61 afterwards.

Tony on one of his boats. It was 1976 and we had a serious drought. All of the hirer fleet had to be moved down to Leicester so that they could use the river. You can see the marks on the wall where the water normally reached.



Rally in Jeopardy

Bob Hakewill

The 1950 Rally of Boats at Market Harborough is celebrated in the town, the Harborough Arm and at Foxton. What is not so well known is how close it came to be cancelled because of a foreign invasion. No, I am not referring to the Europeans in the hostels on the airfield site displaced because they could not return to their Communist occupied lands but to the American Duckweed. This had invaded the Foxton to Harborough arm to such an extent that Harry Foster who ran Uncle Tom's Cabin and the Boathouse and Pleasure Gardens by the A6 bridge and Kosi Korna, his bungalow, had been forced to close down by the "green slushy slimy weed." Another local was water bailiff and keen angler Mr Bayes Bosworth. He described the canal in summer looking "like a green road." In the close season the anglers had tried to clear the weed with special cutters, but as fast as they moved it came back. Only a full dredge would work he suggested. He reported that before Xmas a boat took six hours to navigate the Foxton Arm. The lock keeper at Foxton Mr Algar Boswell had an ingenious solution for the journalists to report. "A barge towing a ton of barbed wire would do the job." He said, "Nothing is impossible these days." [MHA 3 Mar1950]



The IWA officials responsible for the rally were at pains to explain the weed was a minor problem. [MHA 16apr 1950]

What really caught my eye was the item next to it that the AA were suggesting putting signs up on the major waterway junctions directing boats to the Harborough Basin. A leisure fisherman described how he had to throw a rope out to clear the weed before any fishing and also referring to the tree boughs and underwater roots.

[MHA3Mar1950]
Another part of the same series of articles referred to the local council having to spend £350 because of the Rally. A Wetlands overtaken by surface duckweed. Colour image. The local paper was full of items from March right up to the event but no image of Duckweed.

Bob Hakewill

<p>A.A. May Help the Watermen</p> <p>If you should see the familiar black and yellow A.A. route signs erected on the Foxton arm of the canal and on other waterways, don't be surprised. For the Automobile Association is considering signposting Britain's canals showing the way to Market Harborough for the Water Festival and Rally in August.</p>	<p>DUCKWEED PRESENTS</p> <p>NO BIG SNAG</p> <p><i>Water Rally Official on "Other Menaces"</i></p> <p>THE Inland Waterways' Association, who are staging the water rally and festival at Market Harborough in August give their reply this week to local opinions that duckweed will jeopardise the success of the rally. They think that it will present "no serious obstacle."</p> <p>Mr. E. W. H. Christie,</p> <p>"In September, 1949, I</p>	<p>Winners to Meet Author</p> <p><i>John Fothergill at the Ritz</i></p> <p>BOOK prizes for the winners of the recent Essay Competition will be presented by Mr. John Fothergill, Harborough's author-in-keeper, at the Ritz Cinema at 7.30 p.m.</p>
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Ann Retires

By Mike Beech

Many of you will know Ann, this year Ann decided to step down from her post as Festival Chairman. She is now spending more time with the other charities she supports and enjoying herself in her new big Motorhome.

Ann was a member of the trust for many years taking on various fundraising activities as well as serving on the committee. She left the committee a few years ago but continued in her role as Festival Chairman. She presided over a number of successful events and helped to raise substantial funds for the trust. This is a role she has fulfilled with hard work and dedication for many years.



Name the New Bridge

By Bob Hakewill

There is a new road bridge of the Harborough Arm of the canal next to the Old Union Canal Society Moorings. This has replaced the old wooden bridge loved by local residents. The new bridge is intended to link the large housing development on the adjacent fields with the A6 and the town. It was bitterly opposed but despite sensible alternatives it is now there so;- What should we call it?

Un-numbered Bridge?

It is no longer a wooden bridge, so

that is out.

Rusty Bridge would not be a good positive name. (have you seen the underside already?)

Wm Moss' Bridge similarly.

Airfield Bridge is one possibility.

OUCS Bridge is another possible.

I favour OUCH Bridge, standing for Old Union Canal Harborough.

(I think it should still be the wooden bridge, make people think what has been lost. MGB)



