

Autumn 2014 No 132

Plane Informer



www.facebook.com/FoxtonCanalMuseum



Front Cover The first of the winter Fogs blanket the locks.

Left a Boggats Breakfast, one of the Morris dancers that performed in the museum, see the report inside.

The swing bridge on the Harborough arm is locked open at the moment, broken we are told by 'kids swinging on it'. Not sure when it will be fixed but it is inconvenient for those wanting to walk the canal from Foxton when they use a mobility scooter. (some of the scooters wont go over rainbow bridge.



Chairman's Notes Steve Bowyer



"Revealing the Treasures" of Foxton Locks is our Arts council funded project to implement part of our digital vision. A lot of this project will be delivered by a technology provider based here in Leicestershire, see more on page 3.

I am excitedly looking forward to 2015 when we expect to have transformed the Museum and delivered enhanced visitor experiences.

Before we have even finished this project we are looking forward to what comes next. We have met with Heritage Lottery Fund people who have been very encouraging but have given us a challenge - ask for more! This never happened to me in my working life! We need to work closely with our Canal and River Trust colleagues to seize the emerging opportunity - watch this space.

In parallel with the progression of our digital vision, there remains the opportunity to increase visitor numbers to Foxton. The 5-year-old MasterPlan envisages a whole host of activities from rebuilding the Inclined Plane lift to provision of camping. This MasterPlan was overly ambitious and, as previously discussed in this column, we are unlikely to see the Boat lift rebuilt in the foreseeable future. Disappointingly, there are other feasible opportunities

that have never been progressed. I am pressing the South East Waterways

Partnership (<https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/south-east-waterways-partnership>) to do more to focus on achievable improvements.

It is with great sadness I have learned of the passing of Sonja Rolt, a well known waterway celebrity and member of our Trust. She and her late husband were instrumental in the regeneration of our waterways and their legacy lives on through the network of waterway groups, including our own. Mike Beech has some personal reflections on page 7

In November last year, you our membership, supported the changes to our constitution. A primary reason being not to mislead the public regarding the use of their money (it will not necessarily be used for boat lift restoration).

Unfortunately some of the wording of a small but critical part - the objectives, has fallen foul of the Charities Commission view of charitable objectives. It is a great pity that they did not object when we sent them a copy last year. We have started the process

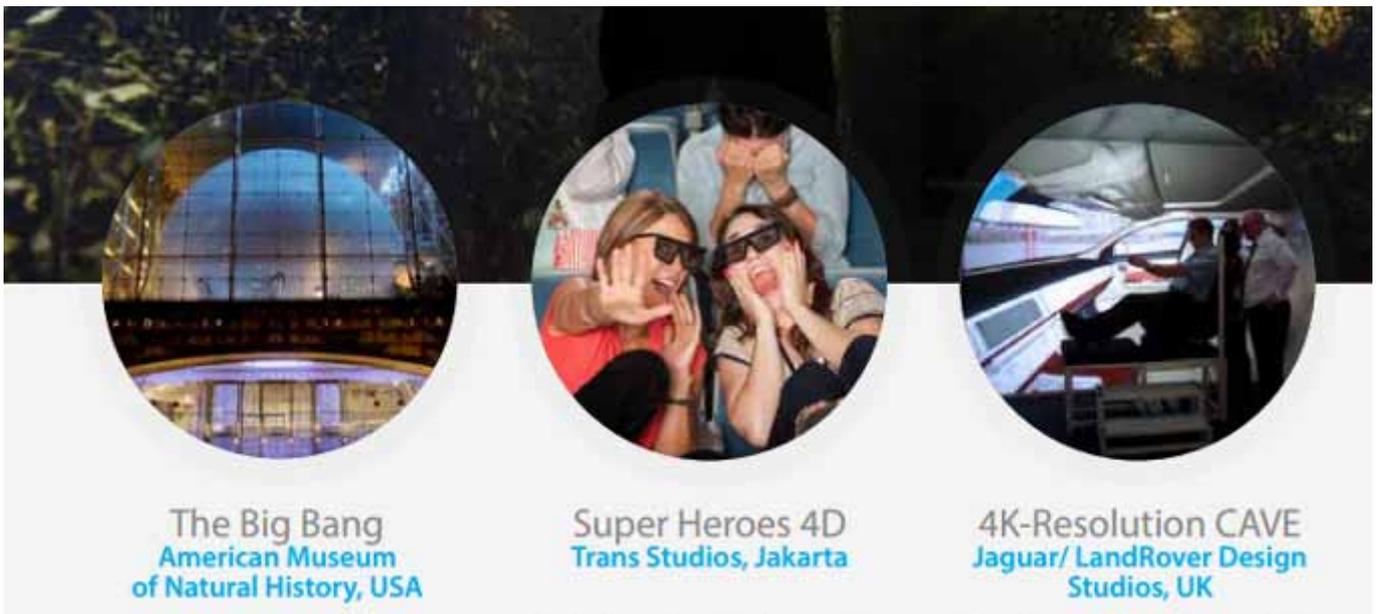
of correcting this detail and engaging a firm of solicitors to help. We will, of course, let you know the outcome.

As ever, your Trust has a lot going on and a small number of hard working Trustees and your Museum Curator find time to make this happen. If this sort of work interests you we can always use

good and able people - so please get in touch.

It seems a long way off as I write this but have a Happy Christmas and an excellent New Year. The latter is certainly what your Trust is working towards.

Kind Regards Steve



Holovis

Read the next pages
to see why this is
great for Foxtan

Example Clients

- Coca-Cola, USA
- Adlabs Imagica, India
- Trans Studios, Indonesia
- Jaguar/LandRover, UK
- CineCitta World, Italy
- Balfour Beatty, UK
- Schindler Elevators, Switzerland
- American Museum of Natural History, USA
- LinkÖping University, Sweden
- Saudi Aramco, Saudi Arabia
- Optis, China
- SAIC, China
- JCB, UK
- Manufacturing Technology Centre, UK

Visiting the Wizards Cave by Mike Beech

It seems appropriate to be writing about wizards in the days coming up to Halloween. Do you believe in Magic? Well if you visit HoloVis they create a kind of magic. If, like me, you were borne in the 1950s, you may well have started life in a house with no electricity, radio was available and you took the battery, known as an accumulator, down the town to get it recharged. I watched the early episodes of Star Trek, where the doors were opened automatically (by a couple of men behind the scenes pushing and making whooshing noises) I smiled at the plastic blocks they were putting in a slot for the computer - no they would never be doing that! Now I smile because the plastic blocs were so big. Later on they featured a 'holodeck', where computers brought anything you wanted to life, giving the crew of the

'Enterprise' an amazing playground.

If you have anything to do with HoloVis you soon find that they have something very similar [www.holovis.com]. HoloVis is a world leader in sensory experience design in the Entertainment, Industrial, Retail, Military and Retail Brand sectors. Specialising in creating immersive, experiential solutions HoloVis can design, build, install and support the most complex and demanding requirements where world class solutions are required. That includes military training domes, where you can shoot people but not actually hurt anyone or be trained to instantly react to the good and bad people being in the same space. You can sit inside the newest Landover, when the only reality for it is a computer drawing. Or you can have a theme park

experience without building millions of pounds worth of sets.

This is the company that are now working for Foxton using the Arts Council money. We have visited them, in their cave, well



OK, a barn on a farm, but you don't look at the building when surrounded by a high tech toy shop! They are doing two parts of the project at the moment. The biggest is to create a quality digital model of the lift. With more money in the future this could become a 3D show as good as any high end animation. The other is the production of a new interpretation strategy for the entire site and the Museum. They are asking some very challenging questions about what we do and what we should be doing, making us all think and debate the future aspirations for what at the moment we will still call the 'Museum'. This project is in part about the sustainability of the Museum in a new and changing world, so part of this is to rebrand the 'Museum' give it a new identity which hopefully will bring in people who would not normally come to a museum, without putting off those who

do. Part of this is to look at who we want our audience to be. OK, my reaction is 'everybody' but we will be looking at targeting particular types of family audience. The people who will pay money to come in. I don't know about everyone else who has taken part in the meetings, but I have had one or two sleepless nights thinking about all of this. We have never before treated the museum as a blank sheet of paper and with (for us, at least) unlimited funds to make it wonderful. We have always just changed parts of the Museum to make big improvements, usually on a very tight budget, involving volunteer help led by me. We can be very proud of what we have created, I was once told by the committee that I should strive to make Foxton the best canal museum, this is the next step and I believe that whilst we can never be the biggest or have the best collection, we will be the best place

to visit. If you would like to come and visit to see what the Museum looks like now please do so before the end of this year, as work will start in the Museum around January.



Updating and Repair

Before we fill the Museum with high quality electronics and brilliant graphics we are sorting out the building. We are investigating ways to improve the environment. We have always had a problem with condensation inside the building. Our insulation is under the concrete slab roof, it should have been on top (building practice has changed a lot since our volunteers rebuilt the boilerhouse, opening in 1989). Ideally, this would be done by putting extra insulation on the outside of the roof, but this is very expensive, £22,000 was quoted by one company. But we also need to improve the ceiling inside.

The present one was donated by a local company who had used it as part of a Jaguar display stand at Earls court, It has been in place since 1989 it lets hot air rise through the insulation where the moisture collects on the underside of the concrete and drips down. It is also the lair of hundreds of spiders that love living in the gaps. There is a way of replacing the ceiling with a modern clean

looking surface and fixing the problems, which should cost around £5,000 - not the ideal solution but one that we can probably afford. We are also having the inside of the window frames painted. This is not my favourite job and most of the windows haven't been painted in at least 10 years. Some of the paint is falling off, rust is appearing and where we can't easily get to them they are very dirty. Other repairs include fitting a new burglar alarm, moving the very big coping stones from the back of the museum to the front (something we did easily when all of our volunteers were young!). Sealing the museum floor to cut down the dust is also on the agenda. Outside, we have had a great volunteer re-pointing the wall, and there is much



more brickwork to do around the building. The chimney base has suffered from the weather and we want to repair it and then put the original stone blocks on the top - some of those heavy stones being moved round from the back yard.

In the back yard we have a large store shed which is crammed full of stuff for the Festival. Much of it gets used only once a year and it is not a convenient place to store it all. So now we are applying for permission to put a storage container in the Gumley Road car park.



One of our members has volunteered to repair some of the brickwork. Gary has done a great job so far. The join between the new part of the building and the old has suffered from years of bad weather and we had a damp problem inside. Garry has re-pointed the old

bricks and replaced some of the modern ones which had succumbed to frost damage. Gary has since moved house performed in a show and is currently providing musical accompaniment for a pantomime! Then, weather permitting, he will get back to us and do some more.

Sonia Rolt by Mike Beech



I am sad to report the passing of Sonia Rolt at the age of 94. Sonia was best known for being the widow of Tom Rolt, the writer and engineer whose book 'Narrow Boat' who is widely credited for inspiring the people who helped save our waterways.

She was also, however, a remarkable woman in her own right: a former Vice-President of the IWA, an author, campaigner and recipient of the OBE in 2010 for Services to Industrial Archaeology and Heritage.

Sonia Rolt was born Sonia South. Her early years brought her no contact with the canals but when World War II was declared, after a brief spell in the Hoover factory, working on the insides of Lancaster bombers, Sonia became one of the now revered Idle Women.

The Idle Women (as they were unflatteringly labelled at the time) took on the back-breaking labour of transporting essential cargoes by canal, when the boatmen who usually did this work were conscripted. When Sonia joined the Idle Women she had no knowledge of the canals, she told me that she and her friends thought that they were volunteering for some sort of

coastal trading work, a bit of an adventure. The factory were not keen to let her go as she had been trained to be an engineer, but at interviews with the ministry they decided that they had better let her try (try stopping her!). But, her new venture led to a life-long love affair with our inland waterways.

Sonia married a working boatman, George Smith (they were both at Foxton a few years ago, on the same day but I don't think they met), and stayed on the canals after the war. She became increasingly politically active - campaigning for better conditions for the boat people - and eventually met Tom at a screening of 'Painted Boats' in 1945.

Sonia and Tom spent much of their time campaigning for the future of the British canal system, and their efforts directly contributed to the formation of the Inland Waterways Association (IWA) in 1946. They were actively involved with the IWA for many years, with Sonia going on to become Vice President. The couple married, had two children and moved to Tom's childhood



Sonia, in the white scarf, pictured at North Kilworth when FIPT arranged for her to travel on Heron for Tom Rolt centenary in 2010. We were told, then, that she would never be able to get on the boat—you try stopping her!

home, Stanley Pontlarge, where Sonia still lived until the end of her life. Her love of historic buildings led to her work as a furnisher and librarian for the Landmark Trust and later, the National Trust, and she has been an active member of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB)

Sonia Rolt loved vintage Avis cars, and one of our members provided transport in one to get her back from Foxton Locks to Kilworth. David Stevenson got to ride in the 'dokie-seat'

for many years.

In recent years Sonia edited and wrote introductions to several of Tom's books - and in 1997 she wrote *A Canal People-The Photographs of Robert Longden*.

Through the publication of *Narrow Boat*, Sonia's second husband Tom deservedly became the 'saviour of the inland waterways'.

However, it is clear that our treasured canals and rivers are better places thanks to the

tireless efforts and dedication of Sonia Rolt herself. She had remained a good friend of our President David Stevenson and he brought her to see us a several occasions. I filmed her on a working boat at our 1940s event in 2010.

<https://www.youtube.com/user/foxcanal/videos>. Or on facebook.



WI Foxton by Mike Beech



The first I knew about this event was the sound of lots and lots of female voices outside. At the beginning of October the Leicestershire and Rutland WI branches decided to start celebrating the 100th birthday of the organisation. It is not in fact the hundredth anniversary until next year, which confused me for a while until I found out that a batten was being relayed round the country to all branches before the actual anniversary.

They chose Foxton and a rather novel idea which I don't think has ever been done before. Each branch made a length of bunting, all completely different, some just cloth flags, some with the

branch name embroidered on, some knitted. One branch had even decided to link it to Breast Cancer awareness week, one of the ladies explained to me that they had decided to knit boobly bunting! I am told that there were 850 women taking part. It seemed like more! There were women holding up the bunting from the road bridge above the locks to rainbow bridge at the bottom and not one inch of the bunting was in any way stretched. Add women in hi-vis jackets running up and down encouraging a Mexican wave, and lots more walking up and down looking, I have never seen this many women on site at the same time before. The



Mexican wave never seemed to quite get coordinated, they were all lifting their bunting up and down, but not actually with any synchronisation. But they were all having lots of fun. Then the singing started. Each group seemed to be

singing a completely different song and trying to out sing their neighbours. I will let you imagine what Jerusalem and old McDonald sound like when sung together and listened to from the Museum door!



Soggy Morris by Mike Beech



It could only happen at Foxton. Two completely independent organisations decided to have a big Morris dancing event, and both of them decided that Foxton would be an important part of the event. Now I knew that they were coming but I didn't realise that the groups I had spoken to were completely independent. It just sounded like a good bit of theatre to add to the fun at Foxton. Most of them were dancing down near the pub (Morris and Beer traditionally go together) so I wasn't expecting to see much of them, but I had persuaded one Morris Side to dance on the Museum roof. The Saturday morning arrived and so did the wind and

rain, so I didn't expect anyone to turn up, but they did, in dribs & drabs - with lots of drips - they started to arrive. Dancing on the roof was definitely out, so I offered to let them dance in the museum (Pointing out our donations box as I offered). They were delighted by the idea. They brought their friends, two other sides and their supporters, and they danced, it was a wonderful spectacle. The few brave souls that had come to visit, thought it was wonderful too. We had 'Black Annis', 'Sheffield City Morris', and 'Boggarts Breakfast'. I did get a bit worried when they started throwing sticks about!

Teddy Bearers Picnic by Mike Beech

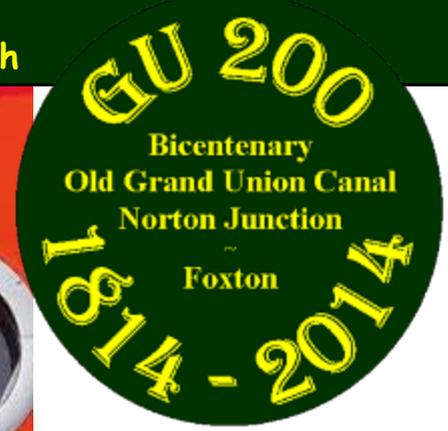
This event didn't go as well as last years, the weather forecast wasn't good and competition from other events was strong. We had good support from the Folk club, and lots of teddies - they hibernate in my loft between events. The weather wasn't bad on the Saturday and we did make a bit of money on donations, but not as many children around as expected. The Sunday was terrible. But 'Still Seeking' one of the groups that regularly come to us from Bedford, still came despite the weather. We had a great afternoon performing for just a few families. 'Still Seeking' are great at performing the old children's favourites and 'wheels on the Bus go round' was very popular. We received a lot more in the way of



donations from those few families so, despite everything, we all went home pleased with our efforts.



Grand Union 200 by Mike Beech



and CRT allowed us to take it up the locks (the boat isn't normally licensed to go through the locks).

Our temporary display this summer was GU 200 it was a success. In August, we celebrated the actual anniversary. The plan was to get boats to cruise from Crick Tunnel to Foxton in convoy. Crick Historical Society were also holding an event and we wanted to link up with them. The grand ideas that I thought we could achieve had to be scaled back due to a distinct lack of interest by some of the organisations i expected to take part. But we did have a good event, just not as grand as I had hoped. A few boats said that they would come, including steam boat President. I was concerned however that we didn't have a boat for the local councillors that I thought we should invite. So we rented one of Foxton Boat Services day boats for two days. FBS gave us a good price

As the weekend approached things started to go a bit wrong. The weather forecast was grim so most of the boats dropped out. Some dropped out because of ill health and family commitments and President had managed to promise to be at Crick and with us, in the event they decided that the canal was rather shallow and it would take them to long to come to Foxton and then get back for the crew change arrange at Crick. This left us with a one-boat convoy! But that turned out to be really good.

With no other boats to worry about we put some banners on the side of Foxglove. We gathered some volunteers so that they could experience a canal boat trip through the locks, some for the first time. With a picnic half way we had a really enjoyable day. The volunteers

gained a lot from it and got to know each other better.



Left we leave Foxton, Ann and I were doing the locks. And the volunteers are on the boat.

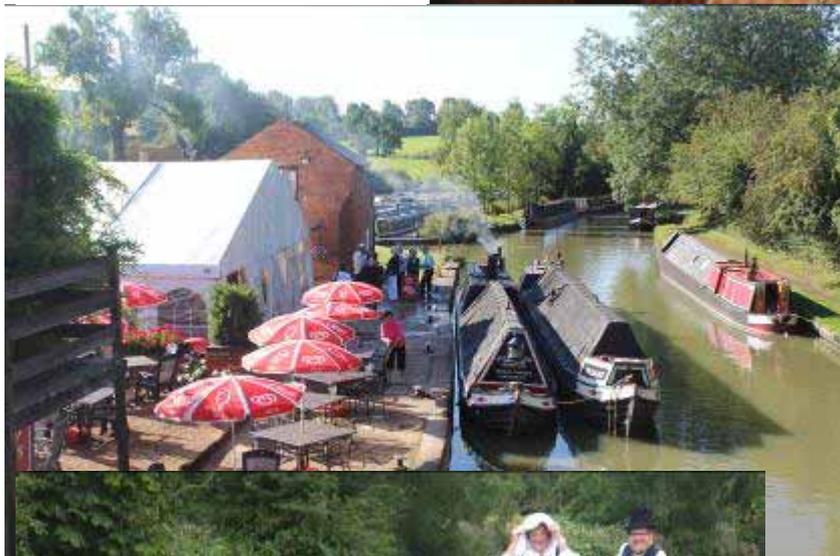


A picnic half way.

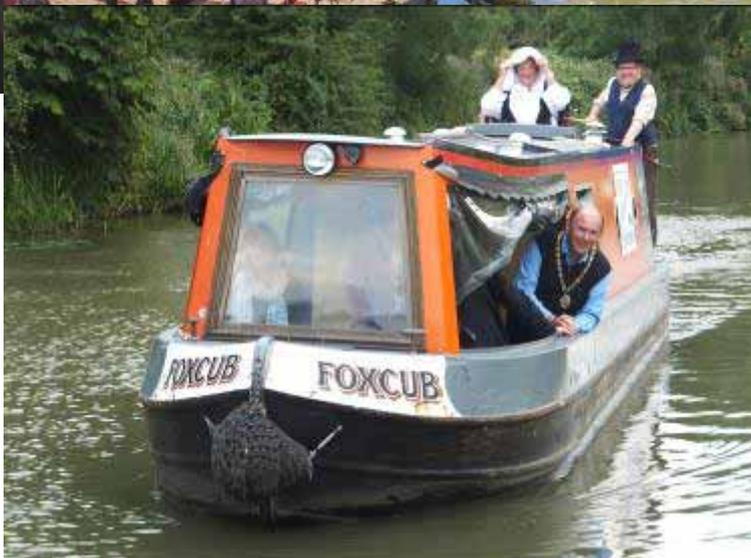
We had a meal at the 'Moorings' at Crick.

The Crew LEFT TO RIGHT

Trevor, Mike, Cathy, Val, Brian, Charlotte, Ann, Rosemary.



The Crick event with President and Kildare. They had music and ran trip boats through he tunnel. A plaque to commemorate the event was unveiled as a permanent reminder.



LEFT HDC Councillor Michael Rook leans out of the boat as Ann and Mike steer back to Foxton.



Ann supervises the husband of Northampton Councillor Joan Kirkbride as he has a go at steering, he normally goes boating in a sea-going cruiser.



On the County border we stopped and presented the VIPs with a certificate to commemorate the day. HDC Michael Rook and his Consort on the left of me and Joan Kirkbride and Consort from Northamptonshire on my right, they are on



either side of the border. Ann, on the right, is in full boatwoman's costume.

Left: back at Foxton, CRT had put out lots of bunting and on the previous day had held a press day, giving away 200 ice creams to mark the event.

The forecast bad weather never arrived and we finished the event in bright sunshine.

Fundraising

By Ann Bushby

This year we held 3 small fundraising events to coincide with events Mike had arranged for the Museum.

We started off at Easter when we had a small cluster of craft stalls on the grass near the middle lock for a four day event and our volunteers ran our usual variety of fundraising games outside the museum. This proved a very popular weekend with visitors and the weather was kind to us all weekend. Mike had organised an Easter Egg Hunt.

In June we held our annual Foxton Locks Festival on the long stay car park. The weather was glorious (if not a little too hot) and not only did we have the most visitors we have seen at one of our Festivals the Festival itself was very successful raising over £14,000 in much needed funds.

In August Mike organised the GU200 Celebrations and once again craft stalls were recruited for the area by the middle lock. Unfortunately although the weather remained fine all day for the boat trip with the dignitaries to celebrate the event on the Saturday - once again the weather turned and on the Sunday we experienced heavy rain again so had to limit the event to the one day. Unfortunately therefore we didn't actually do any fundraising ourselves due to the involvement of our volunteers in the boat trip and therefore unavailability to run a stall.

We then moved on to August Bank Holiday and Teddy Bears Picnic (see page 12) and were optimistic after having weeks of sun. Little did we know that come Bank Holiday Monday the weather was going to change with torrential rain all day and high winds. The event therefore was a bit truncated with craft stalls by the locks on the Saturday and Sunday and we volunteers ran a Lucky Dip stall and bric a brac on the Sunday but took an executive decision that none of us were coming on the Monday in view of the weather forecast.

We decided we needed to clear the bric a brac we had accumulated and also to dispose of some of the items we had acquired and stored in the shed over the years, most now surplus to requirements as we are about to move the contents of the shed to a storage container in the long stay car park, a cull of its contents was desperately needed and what better way than to sell them to someone else to accumulate dust in their home! Gill and Georgie Cook and I subsequently had a bric a brac stall outside the Museum on two more Sundays with the remaining items of bric a brac being donated to the village sale - thanks to Mary Matts storing it for them.

Altogether the fundraising events we have held this year have been successful with those events other than the Festival raising modest sums for Trust

funds. We would like to do more of these small events around the museum area and tie in with the children's events Mike organises for the Museum as they do attract visitors but to do that we need volunteers! Could you be the person we are looking for that would like to run a stall for us for a couple of days over a Bank Holiday weekend? Have you any wonderful suggestions that we could incorporate in one of our fundraising weekends - that ideally cost nothing or

very little but will still attract visitors and raise funds - if so would you be willing to come and help organise that?

Fundraising this year (apart from the Festival) raised £791 with £350 of that coming from the bric a brac stalls.

If you feel that you would like to not only help at one of these events but also help organise one in 2015 then please email Cathy.fipt@gmail.com

Classics at Foxton

by Bike Beech



A rather damp day on the 10th of August for this years Welland Valley Wander but they set off from the bottom car park with enthusiasm. This is relatively early in the morning and to avoid having to have lots of crowd control they don't give it much publicity, but it is great seeing the beautiful cars lined up. And I think it is fantastic that they are actually being used. I have over

the years been to probably hundreds of classic car shows, where the owners spend all there lives polishing. Many arrive on trailers, I remember one man removing the wings from his Citroen so that he could polish behind them, and then refitting them before using

a small paintbrush to flick away the last smidgen of dust from under the bonnet. Much better to see them used, with a splash of mud up the side, and hear the engines. This event puts a big smile on my face when I get to work in the morning.

Festival 2015

by Ann Bushby



Well, as I write this at the end of October - beginning of November I was hoping to have good news about next years Festival.

Much planning and thinking has been going on in the background since the last Festival and many good ideas were forthcoming at our debrief meeting.

We held our first official meeting for 2015 in September and although we were met with a body blow that Bob Hurst was resigning as site manager due to work commitments we were confident that we could recruit a new one.

Despite interest from two candidates to our pleas for a site manager we are still without one as the candidates have been unable to make interviews arranged. So - where do we go from here? Having made over £14,000 profit in 2014 and had over 5,500 paying visitors and many good comments both verbally at the Festival and via Facebook since I feel it would be a retrograde step to cancel the 2015 Festival (20th & 21st June in case you have forgotten) as trying to recruit a site manager after a year of no Festival is not going to be any easier and we will have lost the interest and enthusiasm of many of our visitors.

I am suggesting that if we can get a firm commitment from more of our membership to come and volunteer at the Festival for more than a couple of 18 hours, that will free up us the

organisers to take on many of the site manager roles between us. But it does need to be a FIRM commitment - we can't run a Festival of this size and importance with just a few volunteers.

Better still, do you have good organisational and practical skills, are you well organised and spatially aware - in which case could YOU be the person we are looking for to become our new site manager. We meet once a month (currently in the Museum) to discuss and agree matters but the rest is conducted by email so until the actual Festival week it doesn't take up too much of your time.

If you feel that you could help and would like to see another Festival in 2015 then **PLEASE** contact us - we are a friendly bunch.

Either contact me (Ann) on ann.bushby@btinternet.com or 07710 795057

or Cathy on Cathy.Fipt@gmail.com or 07752 007099

We'd love to hear from you and know that we can feasibly put together another successful Festival for 2015.

Membership and Volunteers by Val

Hello members

Well it's been a while since I last issued a report on membership matters but here we go.

Membership numbers are lower now than I have ever seen them and this is almost certainly reflecting the fact that the recession still continues to affect just about everyone. The vast majority of our members have been with us for many years and a small number are now retiring and resigning as a result. We extend our gratitude to those people for their loyal support over the years.

Sadly we say goodbye to the following members who have passed away.

Margaret Wright and Sonia Rolt

I am happy to report that all membership subscriptions are up to date and this leads me to remind those members who do not pay by standing order that payment is due by 1st of January 2015. Just to remind you that the cost is single £9 and family £12.00.

To encourage and thank our volunteers, the Trust has decided to offer travelling expenses to get to Foxton and free membership those support us regularly.

There are conditions, a limit of £15 per day on travelling expenses for instance. We don't expect everyone will take this up, but if it makes the difference between volunteering and not we are very happy to offer it. You can always claim it and donate it back if you wish. If you wish to claim you will need to fill in a form and send it via Cathy to the Treasurer. Include your bank details and e-mail for prompt payment.

Val having a go at steering Foxcub



To get free membership we ask that volunteers work a minimum of 10 hours a year. This is based on the fact that just a couple of hours work would pay Trust membership, and many of our volunteers are not members (including me your Membership Secretary!) this would be extended to supporters at events, perhaps encouraging those volunteers to get more involved with FIPT. If you qualify and you are already a full member please inform Cathy, our Volunteer organiser, and you can claim free membership for next year.

This is my last report for the year so let me wish everybody a Happy Christmas and prosperous New Year (although a little early the sentiments are well intended).

Val Britcher - Membership secretary
28th October 2014

Rebranding the Museum by Mike beech

The debate about what to call the refurbished Museum continues. Whilst there has not yet been any suggestions from HoloVis some names have been banded about. I do have my own ideas, but no one yet has said that a particular name has grabbed them.

The Boilerhouse, FOX CM, FMC, FCM, and the most recent suggestion Foxtan Alive.

We are still open to suggestions, the best Name is still out there somewhere.

Rebranding seems to be the trend at the moment. You may know that Bristol rebranded its museums as the M Shed.

Now what was my favourite Museum and one whose fortunes I follow has joined the mob. They were the Windermere Steamboat Museum. Sadly the owner (it was privately owned) died and intended the museum continue and be run by a public body. Unfortunately the lawyers

took over, closed the doors and argued for a few years by which time the buildings and the wooden boats were in a very sad state. They are now owned by the Lakelands Art, they have been restoring the boats and have now have lottery money to build a new museum. The following is their statement about rebranding....

"A new attraction deserves a new name, and the museum will reopen as **Windermere Jetty, Museum of Boats, Steam and Stories.**

Windermere Jetty combines the unique collection of historic vessels, a stunning lakeside position, competition-winning design and interpretation, working conservation workshop with rare public access to the lake shore and one of the most beautiful locations in England.

Windermere Jetty will connect people to the lake in a very special way."



Autumn / Winter Programme

In the Museum ~ All events are free to members

Normal Museum entry £3.50 and £3.00 applies to everyone else

November 1st - Museum Winter opening times commence

Open every weekend until Christmas 11—5

Monday - Wed please phone after 11 - open subject to staff availability

(We may be closed for refurbishment works anytime from January to Easter)

November

Spooky Foxtan

Saturday 1st & Sunday 2nd, see poster.

Foxtan folk Sunday 2nd in the Museum from 7.30pm

Narrowboat Art by Mary Matts Wed 26 1.30pm

December

Films from Foxtan

Dec 3rd 1.30

An afternoon of Films from our waterways including the premier of *Grand union 200* made by Dr Leonard Holden and Narrated by Mike Beech

A Song for Christmas

Sunday 7th 1.30 for 2

Songs music and fun for the Christmas Season - various performers from Foxtan Folk Club, but not just Folk music there will be a very wide range of seasonal 'stuff'!

Entry free to members, £3.00 non members

Foxtan folk in the Museum Sunday 7th from 7.30pm

Harborough's Buildings from the Canal Age

By Bob Hakewill - Wednesday 10th 1.30

When the Canal Came by Mike Beech

What were the benefits to the towns and villages when the canals arrived?

When the canals arrived at a town or village there was the obvious benefit of cheaper coal and bulk transport, They could import and export bulk goods at much better prices, but there were other less obvious benefits. In the Harborough district including Bowden and Foxton the arrival of the canal in 1809 changed the character of the place tremendously.

Before the canal if you had lots of money you could import stone to build a substantial house, if you were not rich then you would have to build or rent substandard property. Timber for timber framed buildings wasn't that easy to get and transporting it even a short distance was expensive. Many of the buildings were made of 'cob,' a mixture of clay, straw, cow dung and for a fine finish, horse hair. Some survive in Great Bowden, the 'rectory' behind the church has a wall made of cob, and there are traces left in Foxton. The important thing to remember with cob, is that they must have dry feet and a good hat to keep the water out. The roof would be thatch. All needing lots of maintenance

to keep them dry. The local roads would be made of earth and with lots of horses and cattle using them you can imagine what else. And I won't mention the human waste in some places. All of this could turn into a slurry in wet weather. Timber framed buildings were in-filled with wattle and daub. Turnpike roads helped but there is no stone available locally, it all had to be imported by horse and cart. Water supply was patchy with most people relying on a well, or a pump, and the collection of rainwater. There were virtually no sewers. Pipes imported by canal would help a lot to improve the situation. Bricks made in clamps fired by wood, were often of poor quality a lot of them came out half baked and had to go back in for a second time (where the term half baked came from?)

As soon as the canals arrived things changed, better brick fields had been created to make the large numbers of bricks need to construct the locks and bridges, and all benefited from the cheap coal; brick became the material of choice. The easier import of lime stone enabled lime burning again fired by coal to provide lime mortar to stick the bricks together. Slate from Wales

started to arrive providing a lighter more durable alternative to thatch. Brick cottages still survive from that period and form the character of much of the towns and villages. Even timber could now be imported from further afield making it cheaper.

Grave stones changed as the richer inhabitants purchased slate for grave markers. Slate gravestones weather better than many stone alternatives (see the stones preserved at St Mary-in-Arden, Gt Bowden Road, Market Harborough). The import of wood reduced the amount of timber being cut for fuel so the countryside would change slowly at first but faster as more people changed to coal.

Road stone could be imported at a much cheaper rate, transport being one of the highest costs so the roads improved steadily. Bales of wool from the annual shearing were moved out by the woolstaplers to the mills. Grain for human and animal consumption could be moved out in bulk to the cities improving the wealth of farmers and merchants. At first the wharf at Gallow Hill was for coal, and lime, but this changed to boiling up bones for chemicals and glue, still known by many locals as the glue factory. This was just one of the spinoff industries in the district. Animals were needed for food, but nothing was wasted, Harborough had a tannery which would have supplied leather to Northampton for the show industry, by canal boat.

Foxton Locks Inn by Mike Beech



retractable roof and replacing the cladding on the lock side of the original building. It has also been repaired outside and changed inside.

The Inn has been given a makeover, This includes a new conservatory with

This means that all of the canal stuff has been removed and donated to us!

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Membership is open to all who have sympathy with the aims and objectives of the Trust upon payment of the appropriate subscription:

£9 Single, £12 Family - renewable Jan 1st

£150 Individual Life

Foxton Canal Museum: The Museum is run by the Trust and its volunteers. It holds extensive collections of artefacts, models, archives, and photographs of the Lift site and associated waterways. The Museum has won several awards and contains something for everyone and every age, including touch screen interactive displays, a play boat and working models.

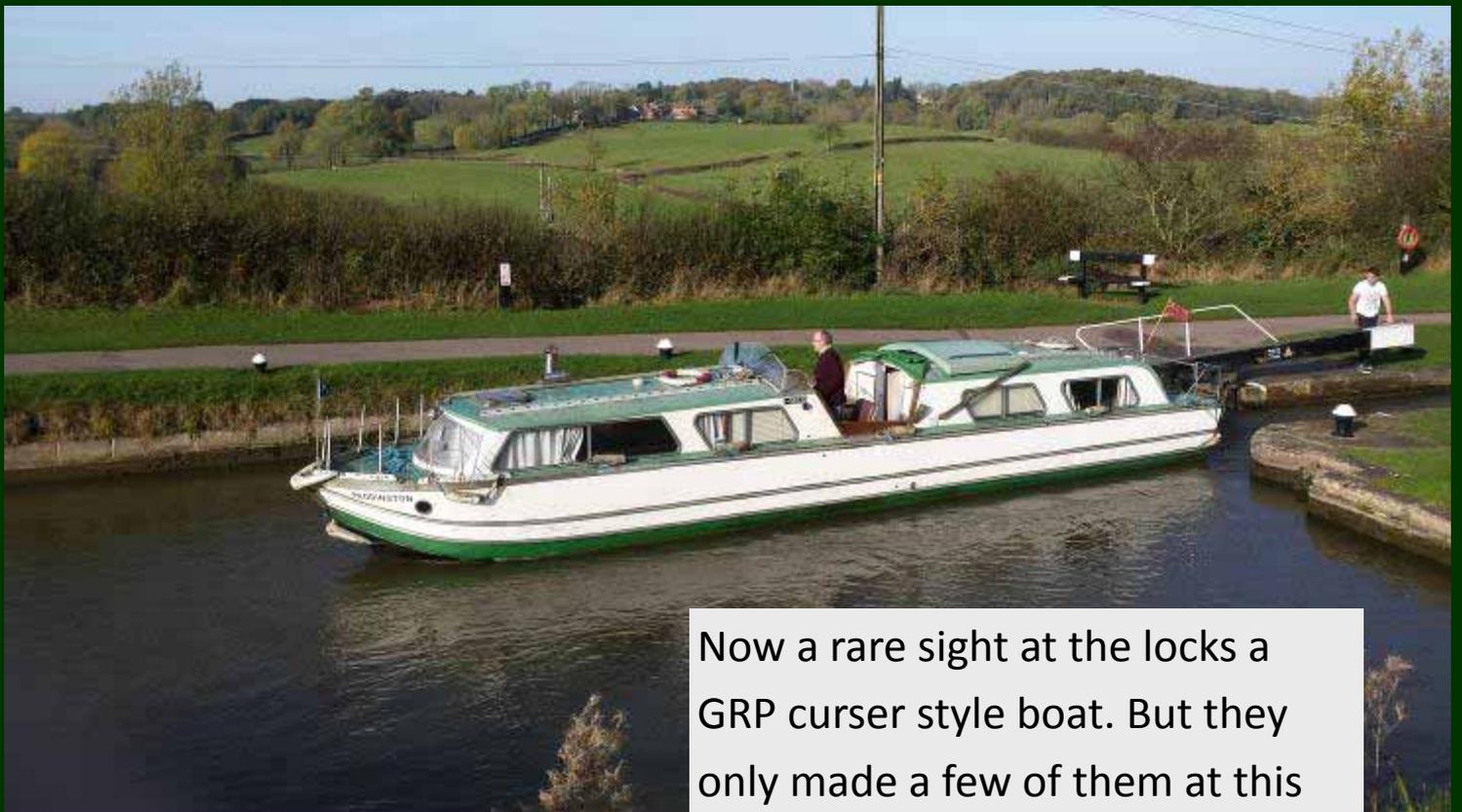
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Now a rare sight at the locks a GRP curser style boat. But they only made a few of them at this length so it is a rarity on the cut. Will they ever follow the classic car market and become valuable as collectors items?

Children sing with Still Seeking on a rainy day in the museum. (with mum on tambourine)
It will look very different next year.



No room for a full report on my holiday this time, but this is one of the tall ships I went out on. Plus I went up the Thames on another tall ship, had rides on a tram, and visited the Norfolk Broads. Afterwards as one of the now famous birthday presents from Ann, I went sky diving, in a wind tunnel. Is she trying to finish me off?

Mike

