

Friends of PRESIDENT



195

August 2013

'Friends of President' is a support group working for the Black Country Living Museum, Tipton Road, Dudley, DY1 4SQ

(Registered Charity No: 504481)

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All items for inclusion in the newsletter to be sent to the editor, contact details above.

The opinions, beliefs and viewpoints expressed by the various authors in this newsletter do not reflect the opinions, beliefs and viewpoints of the committee, Friends of President or the Black Country Living Museum unless specifically stated.

Help raise funds for Friends of President

By searching the internet using <http://fop.easysearch.org.uk/>

Current total : £38.98p from 4,167 searches

By shopping online via <http://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/fop>

Current total : £201.75p from 22 registered supporters

Website : <http://nb-president.org.uk/>

Editorial

A few more members have returned their ticket stubs for the prize draw - many thanks for that. There is still a large majority who haven't returned theirs yet. I know there are still three months before the deadline, but if you are going to buy or sell the tickets please don't leave it too late. Of course, if you have lost them you can always ask me for some more.

There is now one less event in the calendar for the sales stand, Waterways World have cancelled the planned event on the River Lea stating that the bookings that they had had "did not cover the entire spectrum of leisure pursuits in sufficient depth".

Because of a forthcoming move to Guernsey, Carole Atkinson is resigning from her post as secretary on our committee. On behalf of the committee, thank you Carole for all that you have done. A while ago she wrote an article describing why she took up this post, and now seems like a good time to publish it in the hope that someone else will read it and think - I could do that. I have left her email address in the contact list on the previous page just in case you have any queries about the role that she could answer. If you feel that you want to fill the vacancy please let Nick or any other member of the committee know and we will welcome you on board.

I am trying to publish the trip/event reports in the order that they happened. In this issue the trip from the Museum to Crick is covered. I have a few later ones but I am still missing the Crick event and the Crick to Sawley trip. If you were on either of these please put pen to paper or fingers to keyboard and let me have a report. They will both be needed for the next issue.

Museum to Crick - May19/24

Sunday 19th - Crew arrived from various corners of the UK during the afternoon to find a list of jobs to be carried out before Captain Stott was due to arrive. Energetic workout by four crew members loading 4 tonnes of coal in the sunshine before refreshment sought at the Pie Factory to restore lost fluids!! All crew assembled early evening and introductions made.

Monday 20th - Early start under overcast skies out of the museum and along the Wolverhampton Level towards Birmingham during which the passage under the motorways always impresses. Down Smethwick locks to join the Birmingham Level and stopped by the Oozalls Street Loop for a lunch break. Before we could carry on it was necessary to remove debris from the prop on *President*. This proved to be a formidable task as there were several saris, some PVC cable and other debris which took a great deal of effort to remove!! Is there a tradition that saris have to be thrown into the canal after the owner dies? This put us behind on our schedule and as *President* had a full load of coal aboard progress was very slow along the Worcester and Birmingham, and even slower after we turned onto the Stratford-on-Avon at Kings Norton Junction. The restored guillotine lock tail was a particular challenge and required much reversing and back and forth into the lock to get clear. All this resulted in a very late stop at The Drawbridge!!

Tuesday 21st - Before we could make a start this morning the prop had to be cleared once more to remove a tablecloth but this did not delay the start too much. Again it was found that the bottom of the canal was too near the top several times during the run past the smart flats of Dickens Heath and on to Lapworth locks. There was a further delay when *President* became wedged with another boat and the lock entrance caused by the owner of the other boat not realising how big *President* was and how much manoeuvring room was required!! The use of the 'Tirfor' was threatened but thankfully not required. There were plenty of suggestions from onlookers and some considerable concern from the private boat owner when a 'crow bar' was mentioned. Once on the move again and reconnected to *Kildare* at Kingswood Junction we were

on the Grand Union with greater depth of water, much better progress through Shrewley Tunnel and on to the top of Hatton locks with a trip to the restored Hatton pub (*now called The Hatton Arms - Ed*) for more refreshment.



(Hatton Flight - Chris Walker)



(Blue Lias - Chris Walker)

Wednesday 22nd - Early start and with no other boat movements around meant that we descended Hatton in 2 ¼ hours and past The Cape, over the Avon aqueduct and through Warwick where a stop was made for provisions and paraffin for the driver who assured us that he was not drinking it! The sun shone brightly up the Bascote staircase, seeing the boats moored at The Warwickshire Fly Boat Company and finally to a beautiful mooring under the willow trees outside the very welcoming Blue Lias pub.



Thursday 23rd - Black clouds and the threat of heavy rain ensured a swift passage up Stockton Locks and on through Calcutt locks to Napton Junction. If all the boats moored in the three enormous marinas in this area were to cruise at the same time, there would be very little canal movement!!! Thankfully the rain held off until safely moored in the welcoming Braunston Marina together with it's really good free to use shower!

(On the Braunston pound - Chris Walker)

Friday 24th - After some of the relief crew were on board we set of on last leg to Crick, up Braunston Locks, through the tunnel to Norton Junction where the strong wind made the turn onto the Leicester Section quite interesting. Before arriving at the bottom of the Watford Staircase the wind strengthened and the rain began to fall heavily making for an unpleasant passage through the locks. There was brief respite from the elements during the passage through Crick tunnel but this did not help the manoeuvring of the boats in high wind onto moorings in the Crick Marina ready for the weekend show.

Chris Walker

A BOW HAULER'S LAMENT (for best results, imagine Dave Stott is reading aloud in 'Hoffnung' mode).(*I had to look it up as well - Ed*)

Dear Sir

Report of an accident whilst bow hauling *Kildare* on the way to Crick.

Trying to haul *Kildare* from the lock on the long line I found the work very heavy, so returned to the lock and rigged the line with a pulley at the looby, to assist my efforts.

I dropped the loop at the end of the line over a bolt on the balance beam and returned to the towpath.

The boat was heavier than I was and I strained slowly backwards, *Kildare* followed me reluctantly.

Some ne'er do well must have shortened the line between the toggle and the loop on the balance beam. When the looby on *Kildare's* mast passed the fixed point on the beam, the toggle was still some way from the pulley.

I strained backwards, mulishly.

The angle between me, the looby and the loop on the beam had long since ceased to be acute, had gone past the perpendicular some time ago, and was now becoming increasingly obtuse (a bit like this tale, you may be thinking).

Eventually, inevitably, the line slipped from the beam. The toggle, after accelerating towards the pulley at great speed, stopped dead.

I was now heavier than the line, my upper body proceeded backwards with considerable velocity, my feet did not. Landing on the ground, I received several painful bruises. At this point I must have lost my presence of mind, because I let go of the line!

Please may I be excused bow hauling for the remainder of the year?

Yours faithfully,

Colin Wilks (with apologies to the late lamented Gerard Hoffnung)

Fundraising

Another £11.04p raised this month courtesy of easyfundraising and easysearch. The big increase reported last month on the easysearch monies hasn't been amended, so I assume that it is correct and not a mistake.

Membership Matters

Welcome to the following new members that joined at the Crick Boat Show:-

576 - Ian Wilkinson

577 - Stephen Jones

578 - Steve Parkin

579 - George Davis

580 - Deborah Evans

Look forward to seeing your names on the crewing list one day.

Committee News

Our secretary, Carole Atkinson, is shortly going to be moving to Guernsey. A while ago she wrote this article as a forerunner to a series of pieces about your committee. Here is the article that she wrote - someone will hopefully read it and think that they can take over the role of secretary. She writes:-

I have lived in the Black Country since 2008, but my first introduction to *President* came in Waterbeach, Cambridgeshire, during the 'Below the sea tour' – I think that was 2007, though I may be corrected by others involved (*2008 - Ed*).

My good friend Ron Jackson was struggling to get to the boat to join the crew for two weeks, and I picked him up from Peterborough station and drove him to join *President*. She was moored up and not in steam. I was in awe of her and *Kildare* and the notion that she would be cruising under steam through the Fens drains and rivers.

I worked at that time in Peterborough Town Hall and went to work full of what I had seen. No one had heard of *President*, despite the fact that a few of the workers were actually living aboard narrow boats at the time. When *President* later came down the river close to Peterborough a lot of people lined the banks to wave to her – I would like to think I was instrumental in this.

Fast forward to my relocation to this area. I visited the BCLM and saw the boats again – though it was Winter and all were silent and prepared for the cold. I retained an interest over the intervening years and read Ron's copies of 195 avidly when they arrived. Then when the AGM was announced of Friends of *President* last year, I thought I would like to come along with Ron and become a Friend.

There were fewer people present than I had envisaged. The usual boring bits went on, and I heard that there were problems recruiting people to the committee. I saw a way I could contribute to the preservation of these wonderful boats. I am not practical. I have spent very little time actually aboard narrow boats so I am not much good at crewing. (I have attended a couple of working parties – did a bit of brass polishing but proved really adept only at drinking the wrong cup of tea by accident!!!). Here is something I can do!

I was a bit canny. I didn't ask for details of the commitment until after the meeting so that I would be free to back out if it was too onerous. I know what these AGMs can be like. Show a modicum of interest and you're in before you can draw breath!! So I had a word with our Chair – (then as now, Nick Haynes), immediately after the meeting ended. He explained I would need to take minutes only 4 times a year or so, and communicate with committee members before each meeting – mostly by e-mail. Well I could do that no problem. The meetings are on a Wednesday when I have a long standing commitment, but after a short discussion with Ron we decided we could work around that as it is only quarterly. I was in – acting secretary the first year as the position was not ratified by AGM until this year.

I can say the meetings are not boring. I have so much to learn. It is an honour and a pleasure to work closely with people who have so much enthusiasm and energy for these wonderful artefacts of a bye gone age. Being able to work so closely also with the curators of the museum is also a delight. Preparation for the Royal Pageant last year was fascinating and it proved a fantastic year to join the faithful. What a wonderful show we were able to produce. Unfortunately it wasn't well represented by BBC, but that is old news now. Those involved and those who saw the boat both during the Pageant and en route will never forget it, and the Museum is now more aware than ever how much of a jewel in the crown *President* and *Kildare* are. Wow!!!

I would encourage any of the members of FOP who have an inclination to get more involved not to hesitate. Distance need not be a barrier. Although the meetings always take place at the museum, long distance committee members still have a lot to offer. We make full use of the internet in communicating actions and decisions, and in due course, meeting minutes. Often decisions need to be taken between meetings and views are sought through e-mail etc. The committee are all a very friendly bunch and most helpful and supportive.

I hope my contributions are useful and the stress Nick had trying to take notes and chair the meetings before my arrival, is reduced.

I challenge my other committee members to follow on from my account, and tell us all how their involvement with *President* and *Kildare* began and give us a taste of their passion for the boats.

Carole Atkinson

Museum News

Stour - In early July, the Museum's wooden boat *Stour* was taken onto dock at Grendon (Coventry Canal) for maintenance work. A small band of volunteers, headed up by Dave, made the 28 mile and 42 locks journey from the Museum on two of the hottest days of the year. Although the boat went most of the way powered by its own Bolinder engine, an overheating problem meant it had to be bow hauled for the final hour or so.



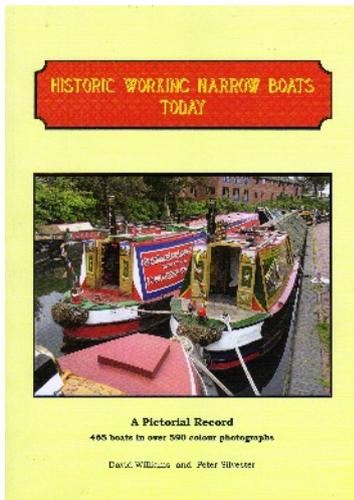
Stour on the dock at Grendon, and some of the rotten planking - BCLM

While on dock, *Stour's* seams have been re-caulked and small areas of rot have been plugged with new wood. Some of the boat's oldest planks are in a worse state than expected, and temporary repair work to these areas has put the schedule under pressure. Thanks to very long hours by Ade and other members of the work party, *Stour* should be ready to float by the end of July. During 2014, we hope to raise enough funds to carry out more detailed work to the hull and the much needed restoration of the cabin, before we get the boat out and about to more waterways events and festivals.

Birchills - Meanwhile, wooden joey boat *Birchills* should be leaving the Museum this summer to undergo extensive works to the hull and day cabin. This follows a successful fundraising campaign during 2012 and early 2013, which attracted the support of some major funders such as the Arts Council England (PRISM fund). There will be more news to follow on this project as it gets underway.

Jo Moody - Senior Curator, BCLM

New Publications



This book is a pictorial record of 465 historic working boats in over 590 colour photos as photographed by David Williams over the last few years. Each photograph is accompanied by brief notes on the boat by Peter Silvester who, along with his wife Christine, run the shop in the old mill building at Audlem.

Some of the boats are in pristine restored condition, a number are still working, many have been converted for holidays or to live in, but others are in need of some TLC.

President & Kildare each appear in four of them.

Published by the Canal Book Shop, Audlem.
ISBN 9780957403727. Price £19.95

Emails

Following my request for a report on the Braunston gathering, I received an email from Nigel Wood expressing his views on the event. For those that may not know, the boats are invited to parade twice a day, from their mooring to Braunston Turn, back to the main entrance to the marina, through the marina, rejoin the main line at the other end of the marina, and back to their mooring.

The options available to the captain of *President & Kildare* range from taking one or both boats out on one or both parades each day, to staying tied up for the whole event. As *President* leads the parade for the opening ceremony with guests on board, there are also two further options, either go all the way to the Turn and then back to the Stop House, or exit the marina and reverse to the Stop House, then pick up the guests.

Nigel is firmly in favour of taking both boats on both parades for the complete lap. He says “I believe that people want to see *President* steaming along, manoeuvring, the boats being worked as a pair and getting caught up in the melee with other boats. It celebrates the fact that the historic boats are still operational. It also affords many a close up photographic opportunity of *President* on the move with the attendant crew, steam, whistles and bells. Just think how many pictures you see of the boats and close ups of crew on board whilst parading at Braunston. Isn't one of the purposes of attending events to generate publicity for the BCLM?”

He was disappointed that the second option was taken in getting to the Stop House, and the fact that the boats only took part in one of the parades. He finished his email with the following “It would be interesting to know what others think (and why).”

So, over to you the members for your comments.

Finally - I would like to brighten up the front page every now and then with a colour photo or two, so if you have any photos that you would like to see appear then please send them to me. They will need to be at least 300 dpi for those that have a printed version of the newsletter.

Neil