

Friends of PRESIDENT



195

June 2014

'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.

Help raise funds for Friends of President

By searching the internet using <http://fop.easysearch.org.uk/>
Current total : £51.70p from 5,689 searches

By shopping online via <http://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/fop>
Current total : £361.63p from 26 registered supporters

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

Editorial

Welcome to the latest newsletter. By the time you read this the boats will be on their way to Chester to attend the IWA Campaign Rally there. Then it will be on to Ellesmere Port where *President* will hopefully be in steam at the weekends.

The first trip report for this year has arrived from a new member who hadn't crewed before. Please remember that it doesn't have to be just one person from a trip that can send me stuff, any or all of the crew can send their thoughts.

For all those that know Roger Prior, we have received the following from his daughter Charlotte.

"I know he has been a keen member of your crew for many years now.

I would like to let you know, he is seriously ill in Heartlands hospital. He has had a few diagnosis but treatment is complex and the doctors are working on the best one. Fundamentally, he has bone marrow cancer and many other complications surrounding that.

He loved coming aboard *President* and is immensely proud to be part of the crew. Please could you let all know how poorly he is and you can email his address aldridgeprior@blueyonder.co.uk for updates on how he is.

Kind regards, Charlotte.

Waterproof Jackets



Nick is going to be placing an order for these jackets in the next couple of weeks, so if you want to get one, let Nick know fairly soon.

The price last year was £35.35 each when we order more than one, I assume the price is still the same. This includes delivery to the museum where it could be collected. If you want to have it posted to you then there would be another £9 to add to the cost

Trip Report - BCLM to Crick, May 19th - 23rd.

Most people reading this will not know me, so who am I? I'm Steve Daniels, and I have just completed my first crewing trip on *President* from the museum to Crick. I have been asked by Nick Haynes who was captain to write my impressions of the trip for 195.

It was at Crick last year that I first saw *President* and *Kildare*, I was at the show with my friends who own a boat, I had no close interest in boats or canals. I am a steam man, for over 40 years I have been involved around steam railways, and until I had a serious fall I had been actively involved as support crew to mainline steam operations at up to 75 mph. No longer able to

physically do this I was encouraged by my friends to join FoP as a possible new outlet for my enthusiasms.

Last summer I did so, and hearing very little from FoP contacted Malcolm about working parties, I was put on the contact list but most proposed dates just didn't seem to happen. So when the crewing list came up I was keen to volunteer, again I heard nothing. I kept May Day free for the proposed training day, again nothing happened. I was ready to give up on FoP when I was contacted by Malcolm at the beginning of May, "are you still free from the 18th, to crew *President* to Crick?" My first reaction was to reply to Malcolm "Oh you must be desperate then if you need me?", it was said humorously, but I was free so here we are.

I turned up at the museum bright and early on Sunday lunchtime to be greeted by Nick, Will and Jim, and having been given a quick tour of *Kildare* was put to work cleaning the boats. Over the afternoon the rest of the crew Nikki, David, and Tony arrived and boats ready we retired to the Pie Factory for sustenance and a pint.

Bright and early Monday morning we departed for Gas Street basin, as a complete novice it soon became clear to me that it was no simple job navigating the boats, as we left the museum, but underway in decent weather my education quickly commenced under the careful eye of Nick and with the limitless patience of Tony, I even managed to get in a short spell of steering on *President* and successfully avoided the banks! Despite getting stuck on the bottom of the cut a couple of times we reached Gas Street without incident and moored up about 14.15.

Following an early morning shower the sky cleared and we left Gas Street on a nice bright morning bound for Hockley Heath, this morning I was given tuition on steering *Kildare* by David and Tony. We made sound progress until we reached Kings Norton Junction, when our optimism turned round and bit us! As we approached the junction the boats were in the experienced hands of Nick and Tony, despite which *President* first became grounded then proved to long to turn on to the Stratford due to a silted up junction. Things were beginning to get frustrating when a "very kind" gentleman single handed a boat that was waiting behind us said "Why don't you just go down to the winding hole a 100 yards down towards Worcester and turn round? You will get round far easier from that direction." So leaving *Kildare* at the junction *President* set off to find the winding hole. It returned nearly 2 hours later! By which time the "nice kind gentleman" was well on his way ahead of us, and Tony, David and I had bow hauled *Kildare* round on to the Stratford.

The promised winding hole had turned out to be suitable only for much shorter boats and only just short of Wast Hill tunnel, not knowing where the next opportunity to turn lay, Nick had decided to rev**** (please don't use the r word in his presence for a week or two) back to Kings Norton. By two o'clock we were on our way again, and apart from one serious grounding incident proceeded to Hockley Heath without further incident.

Wednesday dawned on a super morning, and between preparation tasks I even managed to get a few beautiful back lit photographs. Little did I know what was to follow! We soon reached Lapworth Locks and with the help of Neil Ratcliffe and John Glock *President* made rapid progress down the flight following a busy start, *Kildare* made more sedate progress due to the limitations of Steve the human horse and Will when I floundered. Despite all the hard work when we reached the end of the flight it was a most satisfying feeling and I for one proceeded on to Hatton with a light heart. Hatton about broke it! We got through the Hatton flight unhindered in 2 hours, the first of which was in hot sunshine the second in heavy overcast conditions.

At the end of the day at Warwick, it was a very tired but satisfied crew that sat down to a pint at the Cape of Good Hope, with the boats moored at the wharf outside in the sunshine. The last of the good weather we were to see.

Thursday dawned – or did it? I wasn't quite sure, I certainly didn't want to get out of my pit, despite the pain killers my back still ached and some one had switched my motor off! My morning coffee didn't work and as we left Warwick my mind was still in bed.

This morning Nick decided it was time to try out the bike. My knees precluded me from being volunteered and Tony bravely stepped forward as cyclist lock wheeler. If the unloading and preparation of the bike was an indicator of its success I wasn't hopeful! We left Tony at the swing bridge adjusting the apparatus to his liking and..... apparently he got about 10 metres. The bike was consigned to the hold with flat tyres, back to shanks' pony then, well at least I could do that, or could I? My legs didn't want to work and neither did the pain killers - still. Progress for me was today more sedate but 17 locks later we reached Braunston. A very long and hard, wet day. Not only was the bike a failure but so were the "waterproof" coats, we were all cold and wet arrivals except of course the engineers, please remind me what it is they do down there all day, except stay dry?

President had apparently been handling badly all week and a lack of coal in the hold was suspected. Nick decided to arrange for a delivery at Braunston on Friday morning. We were ready and able at 08.00 *President* blowing off under the wharf awning. The coal arrived at 10.30 and we had loaded all 4 tonnes and were ready for departure by around 11.00. The weather forecast was not good and we wanted to make progress as quickly as possible, unfortunately a busy canal and a couple of selfish boaters prevented that and we made a slow start through Braunston locks, by 2 pm we were just entering the tunnel. As we approached Watford the rain came down with a vengeance, today we already knew the coats offered no protection, boats were coming down the flight and we had to wait and wait, that said once we made progress it was rapid and amazingly by the time we reached the top it had stopped raining. What a surprise!

Our entrance into Crick show at around 19.00 had very little to do with industrial preservation and much more to do with Mr Stott's sense of theatre and liberal use of the whistle as we proceeded through the lines of moored boats in a manor similar to the entrance of the Queen of Sheeba.

My impressions relate to three things, *President* and the canal network, the people and FoP. *President* performed magnificently throughout and is a credit not only to the museum and FoP but its place in the history of industrial development in this country, and she sounds superb. It was a pleasure to be involved for a short journey in its history. Yes it's hard work, if not as hard as running a mainline steam engine, but it's certainly worth it. I'm just amazed at the ability of people considerably older than I to keep it up.

On the other hand the poor condition of the canal network amazed me. If as a Rights of Way Officer I allowed the network of footpaths I am responsible for to fall into such disrepair my employers would face legal challenge from the users.

The people I crewed with were superb company throughout, from the warm welcome I received upon arrival to Crick. The wonderful Gentleman Tony with his onesy – don't ask (he and David amazed me throughout with their stamina which shamed many younger including me), the humorous Mr Stott who kept us laughing through out, cheery, chatty, friendly and so competent Nikki (not forgetting Steve who appeared at regular intervals), Will with his endless enthusiasm – are he and David really joined at the hip? And last but not least super organised Captain Nick.

Finally FoP, who undoubtedly do a superb job in promoting *President, Kildare* and the Museum across the canal world. As I mentioned at the start I nearly gave up on you, was my perseverance worth it? To be honest I'm not sure.

I had a hell of an experience, which I thoroughly enjoyed in particular the company of a great bunch of people, but would I crew again if asked? Or attended an August training day? After consideration, I'm not sure.

As I have already said my previous experience of life on the waterways was negligible, and this aspect of my journey this week didn't "light my candle". I firmly believe that voluntary involvement is firmly based on a very fine balance between the needs of the organisation and the enjoyment to the volunteer, it's a principle I apply every day in my work. On my experience of this week I think that balance was firmly in the favour of the organisation.

Any comparison between life on the footplate at 75mph and the waterway at 3 mph is not valid and I have to accept this in my "maturity". However in my whole week with FoP my intimate contact with steam was negligible, in fact my friend who came to Crick to pick me up spent more time in the engine room than me!

On the last two days of the trip I gained no tuition on steering at all, despite assurances that there was plenty of time for me to do so. I knew nothing of waterway life last Sunday, I did not expect to rule the waterways, I know a lot more now, and finally, I am a slow learner, I accept I have confidence problems and do not push myself forward, and my hand to eye co ordination is non existent, but I put my all into anything I attempt, the question being..... really at 56 years of age, do I need to "do as you are told" when I make an honest mistake in trying to help? I appreciate everybody else was as tired as me and patience frays, but I do object to being treated as a child and this was a major point in my contemplations for this report as was the tale I was told by a member of FoP about a Captain who regularly set "tests" for his crew to make sure they were on their toes!!! Just who does he think he is? Captain Edward Smith.

It strikes me that the "greying" membership of FoP may genuinely aim to attract new younger volunteers to continue on with their amazing contribution to industrial preservation however my experiences indicate to me that if they seriously want to achieve this aim they perhaps need to reconsider the balance in how they address this issue.

Steve Daniels

(Chairman's response - We are sorry if Steve's first experience was not ideal. We would normally ensure a new member takes part in a training weekend, which is structured to introduce new crew members to all aspects of the requirements to crew both boats, before embarking on a week long trip. But as we were unable to arrange one before the start of the boating season we were only able to offer a crewing slot on a planned leg of your journeys.

Unfortunately a challenging one, with lots of locks and not too many opportunities for training, with 63 miles and 82 locks to be navigated in atrocious weather conditions. We decided to print Steve's article in its entirety and hope it doesn't put off any future members from crewing. We will of course take note of his comments and look to see how we can make sure we manage better in the future.

Nick Haynes

Fundraising

As you will have seen on page 2, the amounts raised from easysearch and easyfundraising continue to climb slowly. Searching on the internet has raised another 70p to £51.70p, and money

raised by shopping with certain retailers has increased by £7.98 to £361.63p. Still only 26 supporters for this though, I know I keep saying this but with the thousands needed for *Kildare* this winter, hopefully a repaint for *President* as well. Then in two years time there will be re-tubing necessary for the boiler.

If anybody has any good ideas for fundraising please let a member of the committee know.

AGM Report

Chairman's Report

The non-boating highlight of my year was to be attendance at one of the Queens Garden Parties at Buckingham Palace. Dave Powell, Dave Stott and myself were proposed by the Lord Lieutenant of Staffordshire in recognition of our involvement in the Diamond Jubilee Pageant. We selected 6th June as our preferred date and had to wait for the official invitation from Her Majesty's Office. So that was put to one side and we started concentrating on the year ahead.

As it was *Kildare's* Centenary Year a lot of focus was on what we could do for her. The first thing was to sort out some restoration plans we identified when we replaced the footings in 2008. Also we decided that we would take the opportunity to put her back to her earlier days when she had a wooden back cabin. Request for Tenders and response varied from £30k to £72k. After a meeting with Ian Kemp it was decided to offer him the work, to be completed in the winter of 2014/2015. The Museum now had the task of raising the required £30-£40k.

To help towards the costs we decided to hold a Prize Draw. Our initial intention was to ask a number of boat hire companies if they wanted to contribute towards a voucher to be exchanged at any of the participating companies. Neil Ratcliffe duly mailed a whole raft of boat hire companies, but unfortunately this approach had very little support. Luckily ABC (Alvechurch Boat Centres) offered us the full £2000 first prize. With Calcutt Boats also offering a weekend boat hire we had our prizes. Neil then had the job of sorting out a licence and getting the tickets printed in time for the launch at our AGM last year. By the time we eventually made the draw on Bonfire night November 5th at the Museum we had sold just over £2000 worth of tickets.

As Alvechurch were supplying the main draw prize we agreed to attend their opening in April. Dave rose to the challenge and got the boats ready in time, but as our first trip of the year it was certainly hard boating in each direction regularly running aground in bridge holes. Although we had the sales stand in attendance it wasn't a financially rewarding event.

We manage to fit in a training weekend in early May, which saw five new crew members blooded and two late withdrawals.

Next journey was to Crick Show, I was at Crick when the very wet crew arrived and we sorted out ourselves a very good mooring, side on to the landing from which the trip boats ran. Not only was it a good pitch for us but the artist Rob Pointon took all three days to paint an oil of the boats. As we were flying both the Pageant and the National Historic Ships flag it made it a bit tricky for him when the wind changed direction half way through the weekend. Unfortunately I couldn't get hold of the painting as it was donated to CRT. Even after asking a number of times they never did tell me what happened to it.

After Crick, after a suggestion from Tim Coghlan, it was decided to return to Braunston via Sawley. That was my bit of the journey and we had fun on some high water on the Soar and Trent. I had to leave at Hawkesbury, two days early, to attend Queen's Garden Party, which I'd mentioned earlier. As we had a couple of weeks to wait in Braunston for the FMC weekend and

it being *Kildare's* Centenary weekend, a journey with just *Kildare* to Stoke Bruerne and back over a 6 day period, two there, two at the show and two back. After some negotiations with Sue Day it was decided to remind *Kildare* of her heritage and horse boat in both directions.

A new and not to be repeated experience on this stretch of the canals, you've probably seen my report in "195".

We then attended Braunston Show at the end of June, with the usual and welcome donation of £2,000 from Tim Coghlan. With Prunella Scales and Timothy West joining us in the parade on the Saturday. Dave Goode and Neil Ratcliffe ran the sales stand in our new (orange) gazebo.

After getting back to the Museum, we were in steam for a number of weekends, including the WWII Weekend.

Most of the weekends covered but a couple we were unable to get sufficient crews. Let's hope we don't have similar this year.

We then ventured out the long two mile trip to Tipton to attend their show. Had a good chat with Richard Parry, the new CRT boss and look forward to some of his enthusiasm changing CRT.

Final event was at the Boaters Gathering at the Museum before we put the boats to bed for the winter.

We now look forward to a busy 2014 going up and down the Grand Union and then taking *Kildare* to Dadfords for her major re-build this winter.

I'd like to finish with some thank yous.

First of all Jo Moody and Janet Small at the Museum who are always here to provide us the support we need, Janet even acquired a rail grab so we could take out the ballast and clean and treat the hold. The Committee, some coming a long way for our meetings. Dave for his tireless work in keeping the steam plant in working order, Malcolm for his efforts in keeping our membership together, Neil for his sterling work in producing a "195" every month for the last year, I'm sure he's looking for more input and finally but not least our new committee member, Jim Garratt.

Jim was co-opted in mid year and single handed over the last couple of months has transformed the electrics in both *President* and *Kildare*. On *President* we now have the tunnel lamp wired up from the cratch through to the batteries in the back cabin, also it can be controlled from there. An improved charger and battery layout and we've even got a light over the weed hatch. On *Kildare* he has removed the need for an inverter and we have LED lights, not only improving battery life but also lighting up like the Blackpool illuminations. I'm looking forward to trying all this out in the weeks to come. Jim still plans to install lights for each bunk but that will have to be completed during the summer. So a big thank you to Jim as all the crews will get benefit for all his work over the winter.

Membership report

55 Family members (1 down on 2012) 78 Individual memberships (1 up on 2012)

7 Honorary members(no change) 1 Corporate member (no change)

20 members removed from membership due to non payment

20 new members in 2013

Payment systems available: Standing Order (preferred), Paypal, Cheque, Cash

The number of members renewing via the website has increased as have those using Standing Orders to pay.

If you haven't paid so far this year please do so now.

I've had a couple of complaints from some members who feel that their renewal should be on the anniversary of their joining. If we accept this then the extended membership for those joining after the August Bank Holiday should be abolished. (Malcolm Dunlop -Membership Secretary)

Crewing Report

2013 was a very successful year for the boating programme. The Crick show was a success and a well known canal artist painted a picture of *President* during the three days of the show.

Possibly one of the best trips was from Crick to Braunston the long way round, via the rivers Soar and Trent, the Trent and Mersey Canal and back to Braunston via Fradley junction and on to the North Oxford canal.

As it was *Kildare's* Centenary, one trip was dedicated to her travelling in her original way, towed by a horse. Sue Day very kindly organised the horse part and some of our more intrepid members acted as crew. *Kildare* was taken from Braunston to Stoke Bruerne and back.

President and *Kildare* took part in the Braunston show where Timothy West on *President* and his wife Prunella Scales on *Kildare* opened the show.

It was decided to modify the steaming days at the museum to allow crews to take part in skills practice. This has a number of advantages. It allows the public to see the boats taken in and out of the museum. It improves the interest for the crews attending and it allows for the development of crews with their boating skills.

The final shows of the year were local, one at Tipton and the second the Boaters' Gathering in the museum.

Please let me, or one of the committee know if you wish to crew the boats. We would strongly recommend it to you. (Malcolm Dunlop - Crewing Secretary)

Correspondence

From David Goode, Shorelark (mentioned last month) was a new boat built at Brinklow somewhen in the 2000s and not part of the Cowburn & Cowpar fleet.



From Rod Fox, a photo of something that he has made, we can all see what it is made from, but what is its intended purpose, it will be tested on the boat's return from Crick.

Send all comments to me, and the answer will appear next month.

From the Taunton Model Engineers, via Richard Thomas. They have requested someone to give a talk to their group about building, maintaining and running a steam powered narrowboat.

This was raised at the last committee meeting and Simon Nuttall kindly volunteered, so he will be travelling to Taunton some time next year.

In answer to my request for photos, David Goode has also sent me a couple of pictures of his boat loaded with bulk bags of building sand, destined for the Chesterfield Canal.

