

# Friends of PRESIDENT

## NEWSLETTER

NO1



MARCH 1985

This first newsletter is to keep members informed of the work of the Committee set up in December 1984, and also the plans made for the use of the boat during 1985.

The Committee has met on 3 occasions as well as the inaugural meeting and has finalised and published the constitution (full copies of which are available from Ian Myers). It has also worked out a programme of activities (see back page) which means that although the boat will reside at the Black Country Museum it will venture out some 12 times to local events. Volunteers and trainee crews have been organised and now that the miners strike is over good quality steam coal should be available. However more volunteers are welcome and should contact either Dave McDougall at the Black Country Museum or Ian Myers at 14 Talbot Street Colley Gate, Halesowen. B63 2TJ (Cradley Heath 636878).

Membership is coming along nicely. Latest figures are 26 individual members and unwaged members, 16 Family memberships and 3 corporate memberships. We do not yet have any junior members - at £1 each this has to be a bargain, so juniors - roll up!

David McDougall (yes, he who starred on Central T.V. together with President on Saturday 23rd March) has been preparing the boat for 1985 and he has written an amusing article about the writer's trials and tribulations.

Don't forget the first Friends Social evening to be held at the Long Boat pub at 7.30 in the evening of the 18th April. The bar will be open and there will be films and talks about President and chance for a 'natter and noggin'. The Committee welcome all friends and look forward to meeting you all.

Committee members are:

Peter Anthony (Chairman)  
Ian Myers (Secretary)  
Bryan Bennett (Treasurer)  
Michelle Ellison  
Alan Green  
Terry Jones (W.M.C.C.)  
David MacDougall (Black Country Museum).

# GETTING READY FOR THE SEASON

Since the last steaming of 19c4 President has been drained down for the winter to prevent frost damage to the boiler and pipework. The museum canal arm froze solid to a thickness of six inches even under the old Wolverhampton Canal Street bridge where President's cabin hid from the worst of the winter weather. We were relieved to find that no damage has occurred to paintwork, hull or steam plant - or at least nothing we have yet discovered.

The appalling weather did, however, wreak havoc with the programming of maintenance on the old girl. The counter deck cants were showing signs of rot due to inclusion of sapwood when they were cut. It is rather difficult to get paint to stick to wet rot however hard you try and those well scrubbed ash strips were being undermined making the steerer's job tricky. Whip them off and replace them was the verdict. We should have known better, of course, as once you start it is hard to know when to stop. Hard was not the word for many of the deck sheering planks, except during the first frosty spell! Cracked and rotten in patches they just had to go, too. The layer of felt and pitch under this half-inch planking had done its job and stopped the rot, thank goodness. Next, order some new planking and allow to season, refelt and seal, replank using the same nails and only then can the cants be replaced. Show the deck a paintbrush then a set of new ash strips and there we have it - a new look counter deck. With luck the hot summer sun won't split the new planks - at least not if they are swabbed down as regularly as they will have to be to keep that nice new ash dazzling white. Enginemen, please note: greasy boots not allowed on the counter!

Down in the hold the annual bilge clean has yielded half a ton of lost coal dust removed with care to leave the elm bottoms whistle clean to prevent them going the way of the counter deck planking. A thorough coat of creosote on the shuts - probably false bottoms to you! - would cause the tainting of any cargo.

Up on the cabin top there's a new cabin stove top pipe on order as the previous 18 month old one developed an interesting streamlined profile as it cracked alongside the rivetted seam. A little modification to the safety valve blast pipe should stop over-enthusiastic firemen from sending it into orbit or spending hours with a magnet fishing it out of the canal.

Down in the engine hole - or should it be the boiler hole - the British Steam Specialities have been scratching around looking for those hard to get fittings to enable steam pipe modifications to be carried out on that awful flexible exhaust pipe which leaked most of last season. A bit of subtle re-plumbing on the Worthington pump

exhaust ought to prevent a lot of cursing and swearing when opening the steam cylinder drain cocks.

Then, of course, we have the steam test. It is only a year since the boiler was taken out, retubed, ultrasonically tested for wastage and cracked rivets, hydraulically tested to 150 p.s.i., painted and re-installed then examined under steam. Thank goodness that is only necessary every ten years. This year examination internally through the man lid and mudholes and externally on the shell seam tell-tales with a thorough examination under steam and valve check should suffice.

With diligent operators and careful attention our certificated boiler should not be responsible for the type of canalside spectacle in the photograph enclosed. No wonder bricks or bits of wood wedged under the safety valve were not recommended for that extra turn of speed!



*Don't forget*  
*the* FIRST SOCIAL GATHERING  
April 18<sup>th</sup>

# The Steam Narrow Boat 'President'

Known as a 'Josher Steamer' to canal boatmen, President was one of 31 such boats operated between 1889 and 1927 by the major carriers Fellows Morton and Clayton Limited. Joshua Fellows was one of the firm's Directors.

Built in 1908 for £600 at the company dock in Saltley, Birmingham, President's distinctively shaped 'Josher' hull has riveted wrought iron sides and 3 inch wooden bottoms of elm. The specially developed compound steam engine and coke fired boiler took up much valuable cargo space. Steamers could carry only 12 tons compared with over 25 tons in a horse drawn boat, but were powerful enough to tow several unpowered ones behind, called butty boats. Steamers normally worked 'Fly', that is day and night, on the canals between London, Birmingham, Coventry, Derby, Leicester and Nottingham.

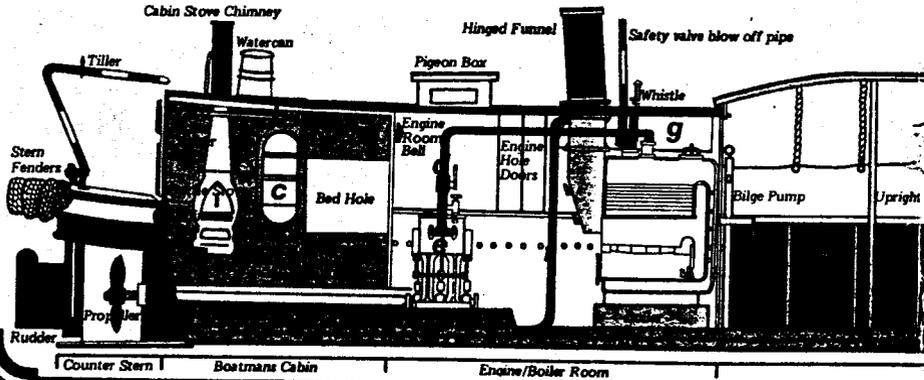
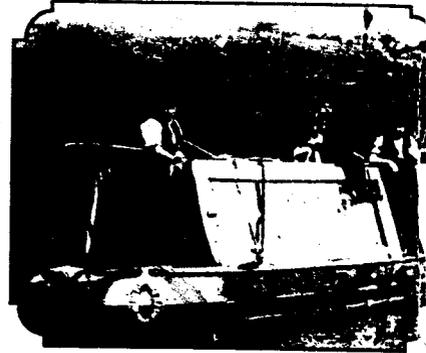
The busiest part of the route was between London and the canal centre of Braunston. Here steamers often unloaded or exchanged cargoes and butty boats, returning to London or working on alone to Birmingham where narrow locks made it easier to use a horse rather than tow the unpowered boats.

Steamers usually took 54 hours between London and Birmingham non stop using about 1 ton of coke as fuel and drawing boiler water direct from the canal.

Most cargoes were valuable ones such as spices, tea, wool, cheese, soap, sugar, wheat, flour, barrels of beer and spirits, tinned goods and even bedsacks.

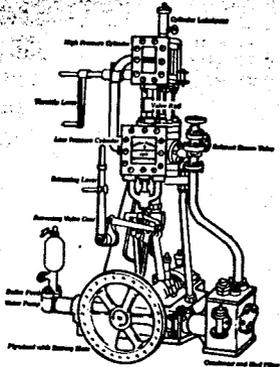
The maximum crew of a steamer was four men or women working shifts. All male crews were usual except during the Great War when family crews ran several steamers.

Steamer captains, whose distinctive uniform included white corduroy trousers, took great pride in the appearance of their boats. Practical blue overalls were worn by the engine driver and his assistant, whose job also included boiler stoking. A curtain protected the engine from dust when firing or cleaning boiler tubes.

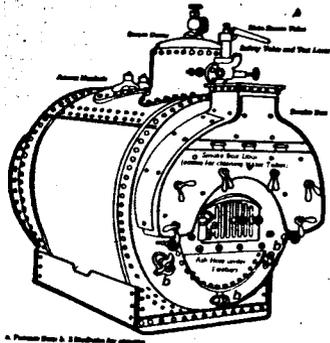


FIRST SOCIAL GATHERING OF THE "FRIENDS"  
To be held at the Long Boat Pub, Cambrian  
Birmingham.

Thurs. 18<sup>th</sup> April at 7.30 pm - Films & Talks



President's original compound steam engine built by Fellows Morton and Clayton to design by W.H. and A.H. Haines of Birmingham.  
 Engine 11 BHp at 200 rpm



President's original riveted "Scotch" return tube boiler built by Ruston Proctor and Company of Lincoln.  
 Boiler Pressure 150 psi

Spartan sleeping accommodation in the cabin was little used because on many runs, crews were frequently changed. In front of the boiler a hammock was provided for the driver. Any cooking was done on the 'bottle' stove in the cabin or using the heat from the boiler. Bell signals provided the only means of control for the steerer over the engine driver.

The problem of lack of space for cargo and crew was solved by the introduction of the more compact Swedish Bolinder Crude Oil engine. Fellows Morton and Clayton tried their first motor boat in 1912 and the other Steamers were soon being converted. President had her boiler and engine replaced by a 15 Horse Power Bolinder in 1925.

- a. Oil Lamp b. Drying Rail c. Table Cupboard d. Steam Supply Pipe e. Twin Cylinder Steam Engine f. Exhaust Steam Pipe
- g. Coal Bunkers at side of Boiler h. Mast Beam i. Rubbing Guard Irons



DS OF PRESIDENT"  
 Wharf, Cambridge St.

*All Welcome*

# NEWSLETTER

## CANALS IN THE 1980's

By Councillor David H Sparks, Chairman,  
West Midlands County Council Statagic Planning Committee.

There are some 150 miles of canals in the West Midlands County and they form the hub of the national waterways network - as a system they are unique.

The West Midlands takes canals seriously. They are part of our environment and by improving the canal network and adjacent land the environment in which people can live and spend their leisure time will be greatly enhanced.

We are determined to revitalise our canals in association with the British Waterways Board and the local canal societies. The County Council is achieving this aim by promoting greater awareness of canals through various publications, exhibitions and rallies.

A canals strategy has been prepared by the County Council with the intention of getting the maximum long term benefit out of the limited resources which are invariably allocated piecemeal with only short term perspectives. The main aims of the strategy are to encourage the use of canals whether for walking, boating or angling and to improve their appearance. Tied in with this the County and District Councils are also encouraging interest in the County's industrial heritage of which canals form a major part.

Since the publication of the strategy, over £800,000 has been spent by the County Council for canal projects. Nearly £1m has been spent on the reclamation of derelict land canal sites, £100,000 on environmental improvements and £200,000 on conservation projects. As a result of the increasing success of canal projects £800,000 has been allocated for 1984/85.

Major projects have been undertaken to reclaim derelict land adjacent to canals, to clean up and dredge canals with the added benefit of enhancing the wider leisure and commercial opportunities related to canals, such as boat building and boat hire. The work has been concentrated on reclamation at Holly Bank on the Wyrley and Essington Canal, Ridgeacre Branch/Swan Village on the Walsall Canal, Soho Loop on the BCN, the Stourbridge Canal, the Stourbridge Arm, Hawne Basin on the Dudley No 2 Canal and at Bumble Hole on the Dudley Canal. During 1984/85 further work is proposed on

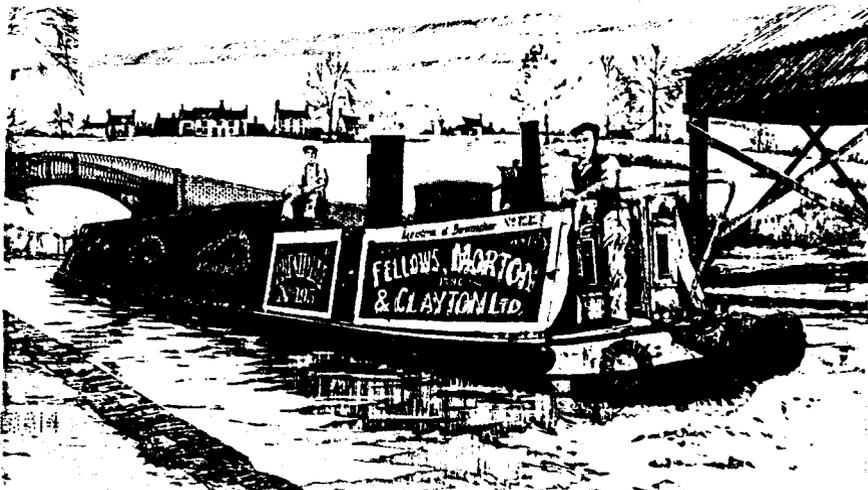
the Anson Branch Canal and at Anglesey Wharf, Chasewater. As a result many stretches of canal previously unusable are once again navigable by boat.

Other environmental improvements have made the canalside a much more enjoyable place to be by improving public access and providing landscaping and seating. Improvements have been completed on the BCN at Tividale, Wyrley and Essington at Walsall and Wolverhampton, the Anglesey Branch and at Delph Locks in Dudley. Further schemes are proposed this year at Hawkesbury Junction and Red Lane in Coventry, on the Birmingham City Centre Walkway and at the 'Ackers' site on the Grand Union Canal. All this is useless without proper public access to the towpath; the County Council has negotiated in association with the District Councils an access agreement with the British Waterways Board.

Projects to conserve and promote the canalside industrial heritage are gaining considerable support and interest. They include the Black Country Museum, the Galton Valley Smethwick, the Bonded Warehouse in Stourbridge and Wordsley Locks.

Canals are part of the urban area and will remain whether they are improved or not. With imaginative development of land adjacent to canals they can contribute to the urban scene especially in our town centres. Gas Street Basin, Cambrian Wharf and Coventry Basin are notable examples and many opportunities exist elsewhere such as in Walsall. The support of local authorities, BWB, developers and the public is essential here.

Whilst recognising the limitations on finance, now and in the future, the need to make safe, preserve and enhance canals in the West Midlands cannot be ignored. The bad old days when society turned its back on canals and filled them in must never be allowed to return. We are determined in the West Midlands to do everything possible to make sure the canals play a major role in our County's future.



# 1985 PROPOSED TRIPS

11/11/84

		DUR'N Days
<b>March</b>		
22/23/24	Icicle Cruise to Parkhead	2.5
<b>April</b>		
5/6/7/8	Black Country Museum	3.5
<b>May</b>		
4/5/6	B. C. N. S. Rally, Titford Pools	2
11/12	Science Museum Traction Engine Rally	2
26/27	Black Country Museum (*)	1.5
<b>June</b>		
2	Commercial Vehicle Rally, BCM (*)	1
21/22/23	Birmingham Boating Festival	3
<b>July</b>		
14	Car & Bike Rally, BCM (*)	1
20/21 or 27/28	Warwick Canal Festival, Warwick (+)	8
<b>August</b>		
24/25/26	Black Country Museum (*)	2.5
<b>September</b>		
21/22	Galton Valley Rally	2
28/29	Boater's Gathering, BCM (*)	1
<b>October</b>		
19/20	Bonded Warehouse Open Day, Stourbridge	6
12/13	B. C. M. Steam Rally (*)	2

(+) This trip is subject to sponsorship being obtained

(\*) In steam/Training trips

(\*) In steam but not moving.

This list is subject to amendment by the County Council and/or the Black Country Museum.

Members wishing to take part in any of these events should contact the Secretary.