

Mick's Musings

Making a sow's ear out of a silt purse?

When that Greek bloke, Archimedes, leapt out of his bath shouting "Eureka!" it meant one of two things; either he'd woken up to find his bathwater was stone cold, or he'd thought of something really clever. Arch's bubbles were still toasty so it meant he'd formulated an idea of lasting use to mankind. His theory (at its most basic) states that; a body immersed in water displaces its own weight in water.

Try it for yourself – take two identical buckets, fill one with water and put a house brick in the other. Fill the one with the brick from the first and when full, the water you have left over is equal to the weight of the brick. Simple!

All fine and dandy you might say, but what happens if you keep pouring? Where does the displaced water go? And wouldn't it be better to have a plughole in the bucket to run the water safely away?

So, as my old maths teacher used to say, let's do a bit of substitution. For bucket substitute river, for house brick substitute silt, and for plughole let's substitute the now removed Eye Kettleby sluice gates.

Now I'm not sure what proportion of the £6.7M Brentingby flood alleviation scheme was spent on the silt traps, but if the amount of silt we shift at every MOWS work party is anything to go by, **it ain't working**. I think the Trade Descriptions Act could easily get your, sorry, our (the taxpayers) money back.

More silt "bricks" in our river bucket means that when the bottom is so near to the top, only a little extra "pouring", ie slightly more than average rainfall, will displace the extra water somewhere in Melton.

Not dredging the river to a decent depth and permanently removing the only method of flushing renders the Brentingby flood gates useless, and every grain of silt that settles out around the town increases the too often quoted 1 in 100 year flood risk to 1 in 75, 1 in 50 etc. Hmm ... now where did I put those wellies?

Have a lovely Christmas!

Mick

Mick Clowes

2014 Annual General Meeting

The Society's AGM was held on Saturday 8 November 2014 at Sysonby Knoll Hotel, Melton Mowbray.

As usual the well-attended meeting was attentive during the business part of the meeting, but had plenty to say when the open forum began.

Earlier the Chairman had praised the recently recruited volunteers, saying that they had brought a breath of fresh air and extra enthusiasm to our work parties and that the idea to ask for more helpers was one of the best things to happen during the year.

He went on to outline the work that had been carried out, the plan to re-locate the workboats in the town and gave a glimpse of MOWS future strategy. His speech also highlighted the fact that in future we will be more involved with Waterways Recovery Group, and that the idea of the National Trail Boat Rally for Melton had been resurrected.

Our guest speaker was Geoff Pursglove of the Ashby Canal Association, who on his second AGM appearance, brought us bang up to date with the latest happenings on the Ashby Canal. Some of the slides made our volunteers sit up and take notice, but MOWS is not daunted by the scale of some of the works shown, as we are assembling a task force that seem to take everything in their stride.

Don't Panic! (Yet)

A small section of the Chairman's speech has provided food for thought.

The River Wreake/Eye, although passable by canoes and other small craft in many places is not regarded as Navigable at this present time. It does however, have its line unimpeded, all its bridges extant and every lock chamber bar the first still intact and ready to be rebuilt. But in the eyes of the Environment Agency, it is one of their non-navigable waterways.

Soon, and we are not sure exactly when, the Canal and River Trust will take over the EAs navigable waterways where they will be afforded the maintenance and attention a properly funded pro-navigation authority can give. So where does that leave non-navigable EA waterways who are in with a great chance of restoration?

If we, and I lump together any societies in our position, do not lobby for transfer to CRT, the greatest tragedy of our short existence could take place and render all of our hard work wasted. MOWS is seeking clarification on this matter as we go to press, but in the meantime if anyone can bring pressure to bear on any official anywhere please feel free to do so.

Winter Work Parties

At the first work party in October, we discovered that 'Mole' had a small oil leak. Sad to say that it hasn't had a regular service for quite some time, so this was really no surprise. This meant that we had to get the work done before we could go out on her again.



Thanks to Dave and latterly Shaun for fixing the oil leak, changing the oil and renewing the oil and fuel filters. Mole also had her fan belt and all hydraulic joints checked. The volunteers then lifted her gratings and cleared the bottom of the boat of five years accumulated dirt and debris. She now purrs along and is set for a full winters work.

In the interim 'Badger' has been put to work as this is the time of year when tree clearance and cutting back will not affect the wildlife. We have taken out two large saplings between the school footbridge and the slipway on the river part of the ring in readiness for Mole to clear the corner of reeds and silt and return it to a less obstructive profile.

The photograph above shows the lock gate we recovered from the depths down at the Waterfield baths corner, changing our thinking about the construction of the watergate that was there. Amazingly the ceramic toothpaste container top (circa 1880) and pictured right, survived intact to be uncovered along with a clay pipe and many bottles.

Fancy trying your hand at operating Mole's bucket and arm? Contact any committee member for details.



Waterways Recovery Group Visits Melton

Members of the Waterways Recovery Group recently visited Melton to assess the site of the proposed “Mole Hole” here in the town. The build was suggested as a project for a week’s canal camp of 18 volunteers next year. However, having seen the plans, it has been thought that the confined site and extensive excavation works may not be suitable for a large group, and other ideas were needed. We immediately put forward Eye Kettleby Lock and Bridge as an alternative, where the lock chamber and copings are almost invisible due to moss and grass and the surround back to the fence is overgrown with brush and weeds.

The adjacent double arch bridge is also looking worse for wear with repairs to the brickwork and re-pointing needed in addition to the removal of saplings and weeds.



Tree bursting the brickwork of Eye Kettleby Lock Bridge

As we go to press, no decision has been made but, as you can see from the photograph, work is needed urgently to uncover the “lost” lock chamber and preserve the fabric of the bridge.

The Syston Hub

Discussions continue with interested parties, but there is no progress to report at present.

Are You A Little Treasure(r)?

We are looking for a new Treasurer and Membership Secretary. If you think you might be interested in this position, but would like more information, please contact Mick Clowes or Richard Booth.

**MOWS Committee
wish all our readers
A Very Happy
Christmas and a
Peaceful New Year.**



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