



**Canal &
River Trust**

Making life better by water

REFLECTIONS

11th March 2022

Please will all Staff/Task Managers and Volunteer Leads ensure all volunteer teams across each of the sites receive this latest edition. We are getting closer to being able to formulate a distribution list from Sugar and thank you for your helping on sharing our news.

Although we are all troubled by the recent international news and events, it is reassuring to see that all the sites are getting ready for the season ahead with a great spirit of positivity and optimism. There are so many great things happening at each of the sites so no apologies for the length of this month's newsletter. Make a cuppa, sit down and find out what's happening!

Foxton Locks

The team at Foxton Locks is growing and the volunteering opportunities have changed enormously. Around 14 years ago the first volunteer lock keepers joined the site, but since that time there has been many developments. Currently the wider team is made up of volunteer lock keepers, maintenance support, Visitor Welcome Hosts and in 2022 new bookshop assistants joined the site. These differing opportunities bring together people from all walks of life, with a myriad of skills and experience. Training at this site includes shadowing the different roles. So, for example, the new bookshop volunteers will shadow on the locks and assist lock keepers. They will experience the guided walks with Welcome Hosts and where appropriate, they can get involved with maintenance such as litter picks. This helps new volunteers to gain a good understanding of how the site operates and all of the work that goes on behind the scenes. They learn about the history and heritage and interact with visitors on guided walks. This training helps when they are in the bookshop as they are able to share what they have learned with people on a day out at Foxton.

On 23 February all new bookshop volunteers were invited to get together. It was a chance to meet each other and to share ideas. There are 8 new volunteers and the morning kicked off with refreshments and a group induction to the site. They enjoyed a brief overview of the history and heritage of Foxton and then there was a tour of the key points around the site. This was followed by learning to use a throw line and water safety. After this the volunteers couldn't wait to get their hands on the books.



Pictured from left to right – Peter selling books; Doreen and Joanne start sorting out the books; Annamarie taking a break after her first shift in the bookshop and Star preparing for her many roles around the site.

The bookshop team includes a published author, dyslexia specialist, retired head teacher, early years support assistant, scientist, museum curator, primary school teacher and someone who is volunteering before embarking on their chosen career. So much knowledge and creativity brought together for this new bookshop venture. The team plan to showcase certain themes or ideas such as Mother's Day, Roses and Castle painting and in late March they will do a focus on Richard III. So, this new shop looks set to be a hive of activity.

The maintenance team has had two new volunteers joining them at Foxton. Pictured on the left is Nigel who is seen making improvements to the garden at top lock. Pictured to the right is Martin on his first shift and he is seen here helping to get the Jack Cryer statue into place. There are now 8 people within the maintenance team and with 34 acres to oversee the 'to do' list is usually very long indeed.



Jack Cryer

Jack Cryer was a former Foxtan lock keeper and a statue in his image had been in storage for many years. It was always an ambition of the site manager, Alex Goode, to put Jack back on display and so his new resting place is at top lock alongside the plank shed. This new addition is already becoming a photo opportunity as people crowd around Jack with cameras at the ready.



Pictured left Jack Cryer is set into place and on the right, Gerald stands with Jack. All he needs is a cup of tea to make the scene complete!

March will be a month of preparation as new volunteers train and established volunteers get ready for the busy spring and summer season ahead. The overflow car parks will be prepared for opening and all facilities will be checked and made ready. Soon this beautiful site will see the visitors return in ever greater numbers and it will be time to welcome back the crowds.

Canal Museum Stoke Bruerne

The museum recently offered visitors the opportunity to test out their engineering with an origami boats challenge in half term and this was a great success. It was wonderful to welcome so many new visitors into the museum. Previously the museum had an entrance price but it now relies on donations which has meant a lot of new faces are venturing upstairs.



Looking ahead, an Easter crafts workshop will be on offer soon as well as a trail for visitors to enjoy. The crafts workshop will be a new venture as the museum has not previously done a paid children's activity session before. It will be an interesting experiment to test out what visitors would like to see and what can be delivered so watch this space.

The café is also getting ready to launch a hot drink loyalty card so if you are local, why not stop in and pick one up?



Standedge Tunnel & Visitor Centre

Standedge Tunnel & Visitor Centre has had a smooth start to the year. Over the fantastic February half term period it was great to see the site busy once again. Discovery Boat Rides into the longest, highest and deepest canal tunnel in the UK were well received and the volunteers were open to trying new things such as site tours around the museum and the nature reserve. Let's Paddle sessions also returned and although the weather was a little more on the rough side, everyone enjoyed the day, even those who went for an impromptu swim!

Looking onwards to Easter and a new season, the Annual Wedding Fayre will be held on 20 March in the Centre's spectacular warehouse wedding venue. A special event to showcase this unique offering within the Trust with over 20 trusted suppliers who have worked with the team before. The Easter holidays will bring a variety of activities to Standedge including an Easter Egg Hunt and for the first time, Stand Up Paddleboarding sessions.

The new season starts from the 1st April and everyone can't wait! The capacity on the boat will return to pre covid levels and all restrictions lifted meaning that once again younger visitors will be welcomed onboard. The Watersedge, or premium eatery will return to being open everyday of the week and a few new ways of working will be trialled, with the ultimate aim of delivering these to all sites if they're successful. 1st April also sees the launch of the new #getyourtunnelon campaign which seeks to engage with the 15 - 34 age group more to get them excited for Standedge again.

Staff and volunteers are continuing to be busy sorting out a sizeable events calendar for the year and everyone is looking forward to a successful season. Come on up and visit!

Learning

During February sessions for 1,847 children were delivered. Almost 200 children took part in sketch crawls and activity trails at National Waterways Museum and over 130 took part in Lego workshops at Anderton Boat Lift. There was also a careers day for Chester & Ellesmere Port pupil referral units at National Waterways Museum in March. A number of Trust staff supported this with talks and activities, so a huge thank you to those people.

During April & May there will be Let's Play and Let's Engineer workshops for families at both National Waterways Museum and Anderton Boat Lift. Helen is also currently training to be a paddle sport instructor and hopes to qualify at the end of March!



National Waterways Museum Ellesmere Port (NWM) and Anderton Boat Lift (ABL)

For the first time in two years, colleagues within the Destination and Attractions (D&A) team are able to see light at the end of the tunnel, with activities and events being planned and new colleagues gradually being recruited to roles that have been vacant for too long due to the pandemic and being unable to fill them.

To continually focus on inclusion for both visitors and colleagues, a variety of training and initiatives have taken plan as part of an ongoing plan. After attending Makaton tasters in Dec/Jan, both NWM and ABL are now bronze level 'Makaton friendly' sites. Approximately 16 colleagues, including volunteers, attended an 'Autism in the Workplace' delivered by the Autism Society. Both Visitor Services Managers (Carly Graham and Chris Done) and Ani Sutton are now undertaking additional modules to be 'Autism in the Workplace' champions for the D&A team and can also support other teams. Colleagues have been encouraged to add pronouns to their signatures on emails

but is obviously not mandatory. Due to some repainting and tidying up at Anderton prior to the new season, this has identified an opportunity to rebrand the toilets for colleagues, near the mess room, as 'gender neutral'. In addition, some of the team at NWM are trying their hand at paddle sports, together with colleagues from across the region, with the aim of developing as instructors and developing their own skills sets as well as potentially increasing opportunities for visitors.

January proved a very popular month for visitors to the attractions and with the Open Days at Anderton and the Museum being open for 7 days from the half term week, it does feel like a sense of normality is developing. There is an added challenge to ensure that returning visitors have new and different experiences to increase future return visits. Increased seating at ABL and the continued use of the outside coffee area at NWM (in good weather) has been popular.

Both attractions are pushing the use of reusable cups, focussing on upselling, and at the NWM there is an increased focus on Gift Aid.

The future is also looking brighter: ABL have been busy with the travel trade customers and groups -171 groups are already booked in for boat trips there. At the NWM, February Half Term was busy with accessible boat trips, provided by Wirral Community Narrowboat Trust (WCNT), being fully booked. Preparations for the Easter Boat Gathering are well under way, with many historic boats already booked in for the weekend and the WCNT providing boat trips over that weekend.



←
THINK WE MAY
HAVE LOST
GRANDAD DAVE
FOR THE REST OF
THE DAY IN THE
POWER HALL

With Michelle Kozomara moving to a new internal post early January, Marketing Cheshire are supporting the D&A with marketing and branding. In addition, the central Comms Team are managing the digital platforms for both ABL and NWM, supported by Barbara Kay and the social media champions, until the new Marketing & Communications Manager is in post (see staffing news below).

January and February saw the completion of remedial works at NWM following the damage caused by Storm Arwen which was perfect timing before Storms Dudley, Eunice and Franklin. Whilst the damage was less than the site experienced during Arwen, Franklin took out the Sunlight Soap billboard at Porters Row, along with one of the large

gates at the back of the site by the Boatyard and a shed in the grounds of ABL was damaged. Both gates have been repaired by the teams. The Lime Shed, which is awaiting its transformation to a new hub, also experienced damage to two of its skylights.



February finally saw all the task managers within the Destination and Attractions team have access to Sugar. Not having access has been causing significant difficulties, in communicating with volunteers, supporting them to record hours, recruitment and managing opportunities. This is great news to now be in a position to move forward. Training is planned for March, in addition to a process to 'clean up' some of the data ready for the new season.

It's great to welcome additional colleagues to the museum as it hosts the temporary hub in the Theatre, whilst the Lime Shed is developed for the permanent hub. This does mean more people on site which is great and as the museum is open 7 days a week now, this is a perfect reminder to all colleagues to sign in on arrival, wear your name badges and remember that visitors will look back on their visit and return if everyone engages with them - smile say hello.... so get those smiles ready!

Anderton Boat Lift – Behind-the-Scenes Public Open Weekend (26/27 Feb)

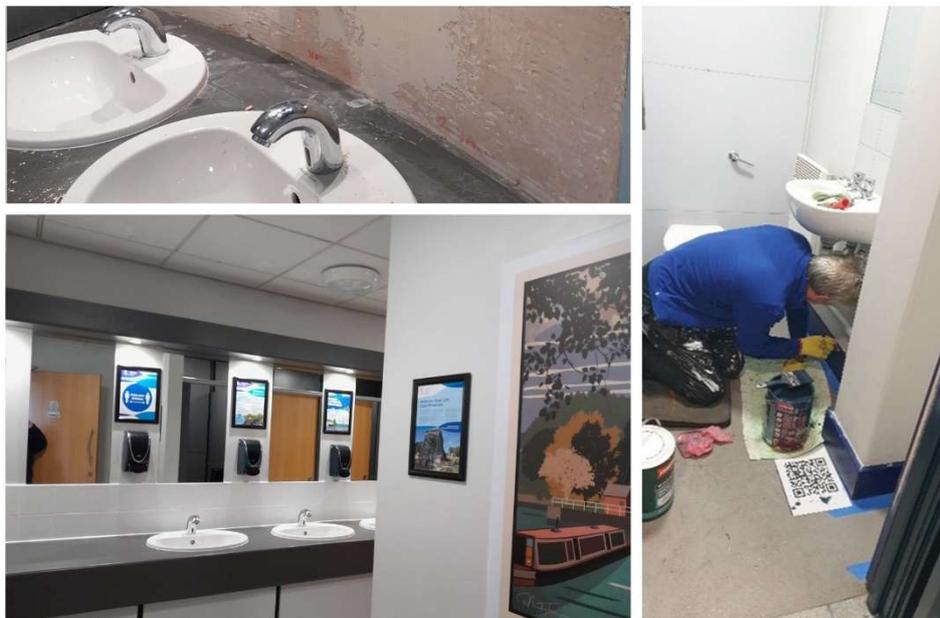
Anderton Boat Lift welcomed over 1,700 visitors over the weekend. Guests were invited to take part in activities such as Walking the Lift Tours, Behind the Scenes Engineer Talks and LEGO building to learn more about the vital maintenance works required to keep such an amazing structure operational. Guests could also take part in a variety of free activities such as paddleboarding, fishing and walking, all aimed at engaging the audience in the Trust's wider ethos of life is better by water and the positive impacts such activities can have on well-being and mental health.



Photos from top left clockwise – Daniel Greenhalgh with staff; Engineer Fran Littlewood with visitors; ABL Café Staff; Community & Youth Events Co-ordinator Sarah Potts with Well-B and volunteer Paul Fallows; Visitor Karen Wild with artist Bernice Tackle; Let's Fish Mark Parry with Charlotte aged 6.

Spring has come Early at Anderton

Everyone has heard of the term ‘Spring Clean’, well it’s come early this year at Anderton. A team of both staff and volunteers have been busy ‘sprucing’ up the customer toilets and staff areas in time for the start of the busy 2022 season. These areas were in need of some TLC and a team of willing helpers have been busy, tiling, plastering and painting.



Anderton Boat Lift - 20th Birthday of its restoration

On Saturday 26th March, Anderton will mark a momentous occasion, as the lift celebrates 20 years since its restoration! No one could have predicted back in 2002 how popular an attraction it would become. Some stats for a typical year:

- 100k Visitors.
- 40k passengers on the trip boat.
- 280 Group Visits.
- 3k boat passages made through the lift.
- 13,623 pots of tea, 8,056 americanos, 5,159 slices of cake sold.
- More than 10 Tourism Awards and accolades including Experience of the Year, Larger Visitor Attraction of the year (not once but twice) and Access for All Award to name just a few.

The attraction will be celebrating on 26th March with a special 'Memories' Exhibition in the Marquee. Visitors will be welcome to come and view a display of images and film footage from the past 20 years! Listen to personal memories of those involved over the years and get an opportunity to write their own memories and future wishes for the Wall of Wishes.

NWM Easter Boat Gathering Invitation



Easter 2021 Competition Winner - Zaina Alam Piya, Bangladesh

It's been three years since the last Easter Boat Gathering and the Historic Narrow Boat Club (HNBC) members are looking forward to travelling once again to this traditional and long-standing event which will give them the opportunity to meet up with friends, old and new, as well as providing a wonderful spectacle for visitors.

All staff and volunteers are invited to the evening events to be held in the Rolt at 7.30pm as follows:

Good Friday – Welcome and Museum update from Ani Sutton (Destinations & Attractions Manager). Archives Manager, Louise Bruton, and Collections & Interpretation Manager, Steve Bagley, will give an update on the ongoing work of the

Collections & Archives Team to document, preserve and promote the Trust's National Waterways Collections of historically significant records and objects. From pandemic to projects, hear how the team has made progress over the past year in tackling the lockdown backlog, caring for collections in the most challenging of circumstances and responding to the shift to digital. Louise will give an insight into the activities of the archive while Steve will give a sneak peak into the new collections store. Launch of Waterways Journal Volume 24.

Saturday – Martin Summer will be presenting a multi-media slide show entitled ' A journey back in time – People, Boats and Places'. A pictorial journey broadly based on a trip up the Shropshire Union from Cut End to Ellesmere Port.

Sunday – Quiz Evening – questions to be set by Visitor Services Assistant, Billy Brookes.

NEEDED FOR EASTER BANK HOLIDAY WEEKEND!

Join us for an Easter with a difference. Everyone at the museum knows there are some wonderfully talented colleagues out there and would love you to come along to enhance the Easter offer this year. Whether you are musical and would love to showcase your skills with a bit of busking around the museum, or you simply love talking to visitors. Maybe you love dressing up like a Peaky Blinder? If the answer to any or all of these questions is yes, then please contact Jonathan Lott (Duty Manager) who is coordinating the volunteer rota for the weekend. There are also opportunities to help in the café, the pre-loved bookshop, costumed interpretation and much more.

If you're interested in dressing up, here are a few suggestions:

Men: Dungarees, overalls, old shapeless trousers, collarless shirts (either custom made which could be a bit pricey - or any old shirt with the collar cut off), substantial leather belts (for carrying a windlass), work type jackets, overcoats - nothing smart, flat caps, battered trilby hats, old clean trousers. Probably steer clear of red spotted knotted kerchiefs -never seen any photos of working boatmen or dock workers wearing them. Only people 'pretending'!

Women: cotton dresses, wrap-over pinnies or similar, shapeless cardigans, head scarfs, long skirts, blouses, pull-on old fashioned sun hats, shawls. The museum has a small number of wrap-over pinnies which can be borrowed.



Books, jigsaws, games and good quality bric-a-brac required for the pre-loved book shop. Please give any contributions to the Visitor Services Desk. Thank you.

10th Birthday of the Trust

It is the Trust's 10th birthday on 12 July 2022 and colleagues at Anderton and the museum are keen to celebrate this in style. There are lots of exciting plans currently being developed for colleagues across the team by a project team and if you have any great ideas of what to do on this day for visitors at the attractions, please share this with Carly Graham (ABL) or Chris Done (NWM) asap so that can be added to the creative pot. Thank you.

Collections and Archives

Mendip on her Travels

In 2019, work was started to repaint Mendip's cabin. On further investigation, she was found to be needing more than a repaint as a wet rot fungus "Fibroporia vaillantii" was found in her cabin with the starboard side taking the worst of the rot. This had put a stop to works on Mendip until the funds could be raised to have her repairs done and in 2020 a capital bid was approved.

George Monger was asked to do a conservation report on Mendip in April 2021. The advice he gave was to replace the starboard cabin side including the cabin frames and all the sheering and panelling on the cabin, as the wet rot had infected a lot of the cabin material. Four tenders were sought from various boat yards and the contract was placed with Ade Polglase at Alvecote.

As Mendip has been sat under the Island Warehouse since the discovery of the rot, there was some work to be done to prepare her for her trip to Alvecote. This included covering the exposed internal boards, painting the cabin to try and protect the elements

that are to be kept, as well as getting the engine running from her winterisation in the winter of 2018.

After a couple weeks of work Mendip was ready to leave. A team of staff and volunteers set off from the museum on 13th February at 8am on what was going to be a 5-day journey, but it was not to be.

With a guest crew member for the day, Billy Brookes from Visitor Services team, volunteers Mike Turpin and Nigel Carpenter and staff member, Alex de Leie set off. The trip went very well and by Tuesday 15th, Mendip had reached Red Bull offices at Kidsgrove ready for the passage through the Harecastle Tunnel. On Wednesday 16th, Dave Tapey, Bob Shoosmith and Alex set off from Red Bull for the passage through the tunnel but things didn't go to plan. With the storms coming over the UK, the decision was made to leave Mendip in Etruria on the Trust's work boat moorings, where she stayed for 2 weeks.

Two weeks later on Thursday 4th March, the boat crew set off again for the final leg of Mendip's journey. It was just 2 days to finally reach Ade Polglase's yard at Alvecote where she will be until later in the year.



Photos from top left clockwise – Inside Harecastle Tunnel; Ready for Cast Off; Passing by the oldest hire boat company in England which was founded in 1948, the same year Mendip was built; Northgate staircase lock and in the centre, Billy Brookes on the tiller with Mike Turpin.

National Waterways Museum Gloucester

Charity Paddle



The Trust's partners, Discover Paddling, based at the National Waterways Museum Gloucester, ran a really successful charity paddle on the Gloucester and Sharpness Canal on a sunny Sunday in February.

Discover Paddling were raising money and awareness of the Trust - for activities on the water and for the mental health charity Mind. They raised over £500 and led a group of 20 paddling heroes along an 8 mile route from Saul Junction to the Gloucester Docks. They were supported by an electric safety boat from Gloucester Boat Hire.

Discover Paddling will continue to promote positive mental health and run events with the Trust throughout the year.

<https://www.discoverpaddling.co.uk/>

Mother's Day Afternoon Tea



The National Waterways Museum, Gloucester will be running a special Mother's Day Afternoon Tea on 24th, 25th and 26th March. The tea will be slightly different to the usual offer with a selection of sandwiches, mini quiches, scone, jam and clotted cream and a variety of cakes. Teas are £15 per person and need to be booked at least 48-hours in advance by calling 01452 318212.

Staffing News

Stoke Bruerne Duty Managers

The museum is getting ready to welcome two new Duty Managers to the team, Phoebe Robinson who has been working with them as a team leader previously and Matthew Ashby who will be brand new to the Trust. Both will be in post by the end of the month with Phoebe looking after the catering and Matthew the retail and events.

National Waterways Museum Ellesmere Port & Anderton Boat Lift

Interviews have taken place for the Marketing & Communications Manager for the two sites and an offer has been made. It is anticipated that the new manager will be starting on 6 April 2022 when all the necessary paperwork etc has been completed. A photo and bio will be in the next edition of Reflections.

At the museum, congratulations to Leyla Hughes and Dan Smith on their permanent appointments as Visitor Services Assistants and welcome back to Jonathan Lott, Duty Manager, from his sabbatical.

Please remember to share your stories with us.

Please look after yourselves, families and friends and stay safe.

Please send any contributions for the next edition to Barbara Kay
Barbara.Kay@canalrivertrust.org.uk by 5pm on Tuesday 5 April 2022. Thank you.

If you no longer wish to receive Reflections please contact Barbara Kay
Barbara.kay@canalrivertrust.org.uk

If you have colleagues who don't currently receive Reflections but would like to, please ask them to contact Barbara with their email address. Thank you.

Barbara Kay

Lead Volunteer for Marketing & Communications NWMEP