



**Newsletter of The Friends of The Canal  
Museum, Stoke Bruerne**

# Chairman's Jottings

Lynda Payton

Strange times. Who would have thought only a few weeks ago that many of us would be now confined to our homes in the midst of a global crisis that is sadly claiming so many lives and wreaking havoc with our economies. I trust that you, your families and loved ones are safe and well. We can only look forward to the time when life returns to normal and we can once again enjoy our countryside and waterways.

As you would expect, we are following the Government's advice on Coronavirus (CV19). The Canal Museum is closed and our volunteering activities have been suspended as part of our support for the national effort to keep people safe. So, what is there to report I hear you ask? To answer your question plenty!

In early January we heard from Phil Mulligan, Canal & River Trust's Regional Director, that the Trust's Executive Board were broadly in support of the development plans put forward for the Museum and Stoke Bruerne and that work was underway, with the help of new Destination

Manager, Jannette Warrener, for planning consents and tenders to be completed in time for Stage 1 work within the Museum to go ahead next winter and for an HLF bid to be put together for Stage 2 work outside the Museum to follow. Unfortunately, the effects of Coronavirus means that staff at the Trust are now spread very thinly and the Trust, like other organisations, are facing many challenges. Over the last three weeks the Trust has had to drastically scale back its activities in line with government guidance to fight the pandemic. Jannette and Louise Stockwin, Destination Supervisor are both on Furlough until 31<sup>st</sup> May and Stephanie Furniss is on long term leave. The seasonal team have been laid off until things return to normal.

So, everything is going to take a little longer than first envisaged and it may even become necessary to resecure the Trust's investment in the project. However we understand that work is going ahead to secure planning consent, an on-line questionnaire with over 500 respondents so far, is informing customer research and positioning of Stoke Bruerne and this should be followed by tendering for the first phase of the work followed by the appointment of contractors so work can start next winter. Currently the scope of works includes for a new catering offer, bespoke retail lines, an interpretation plan for the site up until 2025 backed by an

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Cover picture: *Sculptor* in Blisworth Tunnel helping with the engineering inspection  
(Photo: KD)

application to the National Lottery Heritage Fund, a marketing and social media plan, events planning and projects to bring in more volunteers and partnerships. As we mentioned in the last issue of Museum Matters, the Friends are committing major funding to the project and look forward to supporting the Trust with a view to improving the Museum and Stoke Bruerne as a thriving visitor destination.

So, what else?

It is my sad duty to inform you that our friend and colleague Roger Hasdell lost his brave fight against cancer at the end of February. Roger was a true friend and supporter of the Canal Museum and a founder member of

The Friends. Our condolences go to his family at this very difficult time. Please read more about Roger's life and contribution to the waterways he loved elsewhere in this newsletter. RIP Roger.

Despite the current circumstances I am pleased to say that Kathryn in her capacity as one of the volunteer members of the team caring for *Sculptor* was called upon to assist with an emergency which required taking *Sculptor* into Blisworth Tunnel. All done with full social distancing measures in place of course. The whole escapade resulted in a very complimentary media release put out by the Trust and favourable coverage for the Friends in the local press

and on Radio Northampton. I won't steal her thunder any further as she has written a full report for you to read. Suffice to say, if you want to hear Kathryn's radio interview and read the coverage you will find it on our Facebook page.

It only remains for me to say 'Keep safe' and join me in looking forward to a swift end to this crisis so we can get back to normal and enjoy our waterways once again.



**Roger was awarded the Cyril Styring Trophy in 1990.**

(Photo: IWA)

## Sculptor Update

Kathryn Dodington

We were rather hoping to provide a really positive update but sadly we have been restricted on what can be achieved on *Sculptor* at the moment.

Luckily, I live with 50m of *Sculptor* so am able to keep an eye on her on a day-to-day basis.

The planned work included repainting the gunnels, starting on the back cabin and generally bring her back into fine fettle after the winter in order she could attend a number of events. Those events are no longer taking place and we are not allowed, quite understandably, to work on *Sculptor* so everything is abeyance at the moment.

However, we were able to work with the skilled tunnel engineers on a emergency inspection of Blisworth Tunnel following the discovery of two sinkholes on Blisworth Hill Farm. The following is the press release.

An 85-year-old canal boat which played a key role in fighting fires in London during WWII has once more come to the rescue to help with an emergency inspection of Blisworth Tunnel.

*Sculptor*, which is ordinarily moored outside the Canal Museum at Stoke Bruerne, was called into action by the

Canal & River Trust after a suspected sinkhole was reported near one of the tunnel's construction shafts.



***Sculptor* about 1,150m from the northern portal of Blisworth Tunnel during the inspection (Photo: KD)**

The Trust's engineers needed a boat to inspect the tunnel from the inside and *Sculptor*, moored just along the towpath, seemed an ideal option for a quick response. Being part of the Trust's museum collection and on the historic ships register special permission was granted to use her.

The inspection, which was carried out in accordance with social distancing guidelines, found a small amount of displacement in the tunnel's concrete lining but nothing to cause the Trust's specialist engineers immediate concern or require a closure of the tunnel. Further investigations will take place once the coronavirus restrictions ease, but the inspection

allowed the Trust to ensure that the tunnel is safe.

Built in 1935, *Sculptor* is one of a small number of working boats that still lives on the canal. Originally owned by the Grand Union Canal Carrying Company, she was used to carry a variety of cargo such as cotton and coal from London to the Midlands. During WWII *Sculptor* was called into action to help with firefighting duties in

'It was really helpful for us to be able to use *Sculptor* as it enabled us to get in there quickly, have a good look, check there was no significant damage and alleviate any concerns. It was also a bit of a treat for us to spend time on this amazing historic boat and it was wonderful to see her back in service again. We're really grateful to the Friends of the Canal Museum for their support in making it happen.'

## Historic canal boat called into action for emergency inspection of Blisworth Tunnel following reports of sinkhole

"Sculptor is ready to serve again when required should the call come"

The headline from the Northampton Chronical and Echo

London, helping to pump water from the city's canals to extinguish fires caused by bombing.

After the war she was used as a canal maintenance boat at Northwich before being taken out of service in 1985. Today *Sculptor* is an important exhibit at the museum and is lovingly cared for, on behalf of the Trust, by volunteers, including a number from the Friends of the Canal Museum.

Neil Owen, regional engineer for the Canal & River Trust, said: 'Although boat traffic is very limited at the moment due to coronavirus it was important for us to get into the tunnel to make sure that everything is safe.'

Kathryn Dodington, *Sculptor* volunteer, said: 'It was a huge privilege to be able to operate *Sculptor* on behalf of Canal & River Trust to enable their specialist tunnel engineers to inspect the Blisworth Tunnel and to declare it safe. *Sculptor* is ready to serve again when required should the call come. She is a delight to operate and, like any old lady, does exactly what she is asked with graciousness.'

There will be a Memorial Service in memory of Roger Hasdell as soon as the current 'crisis' is over. Time, date and location will be advised and we understand there will be an opportunity to reminisce about Roger at the Boat Inn, Stoke Bruerne afterwards.

# Roger Hasdell

Lynda Payton and Kathryn Dodington

We are saddened to report the death of Roger Hasdell on 29<sup>th</sup> February. As well as being a prominent figure in IWA Northampton Branch for the best part of 50 years, Roger was a volunteer editor of IWA's Waterways magazine from March 1973 to December 1989. He was awarded IWA's Cyril Styring Trophy in 1990 and, more recently, the Richard Bird Medal in 2011. This is awarded to members of the Association whose efforts and support are considered to have brought significant benefit to the Association over a sustained period.



**Louise Stockwin and Vicky Martin with Roger at a recent Village at War event (Photo: LP)**

Lynda Payton says: I first met Roger in 2000 when he rejoined the IWA Northampton Branch Committee not long after his wife died. I had taken over from him as Newsletter Editor when he stood down to nurse his wife and he gave me lots of advice and support. In 2005 Roger attended the public meeting chaired by Tim Boswell MP (now Lord Boswell of Aynho) which resolved that a Friends organisation

was needed to help support the Canal Museum. He was there right from the beginning as a member of the steering committee, which established a constitution and modus operandi for the new charity. Then joining the new Friends Council as Minutes Secretary and continuing until Denis Atkinson took over. Not surprisingly, given his journalistic experience, Roger was also our Joint Newsletter Editor, and Lynda recalls when she was Editor, many long lunches while he meticulously proof checked Museum Matters over and over, and over again.

Catriona, Roger's daughter, always said he was more interested in the free lunches which always involved a glass of wine or two! As the current editor, I can say he also helped me with my punctuation and grammar and wryly accused New Zealander's of being too American in their English. I enjoyed so many debates and banter with Roger; I shall miss him very much.

Roger's volunteering extended far beyond his passion for the waterways. Until only a few years ago he was assisting those with disabilities enjoy sailing on Pitsford Reservoir and helping out at Kingsthorpe Grange Nursing Home, where his wife resided for many years before her death; and latterly at Richmond Homes on Grange Park; something he loved and enjoyed very much. Nothing ever got in the way of Roger's cricket though!

We extend to Catriona, Mick and their Families our sympathy.

The Friends of The Canal Museum is managed by a small dedicated band of volunteers, our Trustees. They understand that not all Friends can or want to become actively involved and want to assure you all that they really do appreciate the valuable support shown to them just by being a Friend.

carrying Friends to free entry to the renowned Village at War Weekend which, Covid-19 allowing, will be held over the 12<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> September this year. This is on top of the existing benefit of a discount in the café. It is hoped and intended that free entry to Village at War for Friends will be maintained as long as there is a Village at War event.

## MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTIONS

Individuals	£15
Joint members/families	£20
Joint members (over 60)	£15
Family membership	£20
Concessionary rate *	£10
Paper copy of Newsletter	£9
Life membership	£250
Corporate Membership	£50

\* *Students and those over 60*

You can pay your subscription by way of BACS. The information you need is:

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Being a paid-up member of Friends demonstrates, not just to the Trustees but also to the wider world such as our governing bodies and importantly, funding bodies, that there are folk who care about the preservation of our heritage and its availability to generations to come. Many Friends who renew electronically will already know that to thank Friends for their support, our Trustees have decided to show their appreciation by entitling card

Our membership year starts 1st April; to those who have already renewed, thank you. There is still time for those still to renew.

Please do encourage anyone you think might like to support our cause to join, membership details and an application form can be found here **Friends Membership** or telephone 01908 631650.

## Finance

As at 31st December 2019, we had cash balances of around £100,000. As reported in the Autumn newsletter, we had been in discussions about the timing of various financial contributions to the Museum upgrade projects. Those have slowed down but our commitment to part funding the project remains.

The schedule of works on *Sculptor* continued in the Autumn; we contributed £575 in February 2020. We are hoping that the last of these works that we have committed to, on the back cabin, will be carried out later this year.

Income from subscriptions for 2020 has started to arrive and we have little other expenditure to date.

**Chairman - Lynda Payton** (chairman@friendsofcanalmuseum.org.uk)

**Vice-Chairman** - Lorna York

**Treasurer** - Paul Lynam (treasurer@friendsofcanalmuseum.org.uk)

**Membership Secretary** Chris Durham (membership@friendsofcanalmuseum.org.uk)

**Publicity, Grant Funding & Awards** - Lynda Payton

**Website** - Trevor Allum

**Minutes Secretary** - Vacant

**Village at War** - Mick Butler (vaw@friendsofcanalmuseum.org.uk)

**Newsletter** - Kathryn Dodington (editor@friendsofcanalmuseum.org.uk)

**Governance** - Laura Sturrock

**Other** - Museum Manager (*ex-officio seat*)

## **Curatorial Group**

Steve Bagley (CRT), Louise Stockwin (CRT), Rodney Hardwick, Brian Mayland, Lorna York, Lynda Payton, Olive Minney and Kathryn Dodington



## **Photographic Credits**

KD Kathryn Dodington FoCM  
IWA Inland Waterways Association  
LP Lynda Payton FoCM



**A reminder of how beautiful Stoke Bruerne is and what we can expect once this lockdown is over (Photo: via KD)**