

Mick's Musings

Smellton Mowbray?

A couple of weeks ago, many of us will have watched the annual Oxford v Cambridge boat race. Alongside the carnival atmosphere that pervades this event, there were dire warnings issued to anyone who may fall in the water. Indeed, the traditional “dunking” of the Cox at the end of the race was forbidden. This has all come about after recent surveys found much higher than normal levels of pollution in the River Thames. However, this pollution is not confined to our royal river, but has been found to exist virtually everywhere. This is due to Victorian statutes that allow, in times of high rainfall, sewer overflows to be discharged into the nearest waterway.



Mick's Musings

Our twice monthly Sunday work parties using the Mole river clearance vessel have unearthed some 'treasures' around the Melton ring. Pottery, brickwork, unidentifiable wooden structures and tons of silt have all emerged from the depths. Ancient bicycle frames and the odd shopping trolley are all to be expected, but a couple of our recent expeditions have revealed something a little more sinister.

Working in the area of the Asfordby Road rainwater outfall produced foul smelling black silt, which made us curious as to what was going on. Our questions were soon answered by a local householder standing in his riverside garden. He informed us that he has regularly seen evidence of raw sewage in the river to the extent that he now refuses to allow his daughters to play at that end of the garden. We immediately made further enquiries and a letter was duly sent to the Environment Agency who manage the river. Their reply was somewhat perturbing as it informed us that at times of high rainfall, they are **allowed** to discharge sewage through this and several other local outfall drains.

The wider implications of this were not apparent initially, but given some thought, they do affect a rather large section of the population. Firstly, the Rivers Wreake and Eye flow into the River Soar at Cossington, the Soar in turn flows into the River Trent which enters the sea at the Humber estuary. The catchment area for this polluted water must be at least a linear 100 miles.

Locally, in the shallower stretches, children have paddled and played down the years, and anglers have fished the river from time immemorial. Livestock has slaked their thirst at the water's edge and, no doubt, during a hot summer, people have swam in it.

In this day and age, we can put a man on the moon, make a telephone call from the top of Mount Everest, perform organ transplants and train an athlete to cover 100 metres in less than 10 seconds - we can do all this, but why can't we deal effectively with our own waste?

MOWS represents, not just our own members, but the wider society and as such opposes the discharge of any noxious materials into our rivers and canals. We intend to pursue this matter as far as we can within the law.

Mick Clowes
Chairman

MOWS Newsletter

Spring 2012

Page 1 of 4

Please sign the petition today ...

[Good Law Project: Protect our rivers](#)

Mick

Mick Clowes

This would appear to be one of the latest political “hot potatoes” in the run up to the next election, but I can tell you that MOWS first brought this problem to light back in 2012 – see my previous Musings (left). Back then though, attitudes were more relaxed, but even so I was prevented from using the headline shown today by my committee, who felt it would bring adverse publicity to the town. Little did they know how massive the problem is. How I wish I had had the courage of my convictions and let the headline remain. Had that gone ahead, maybe, just maybe, the country would not be gripped with the widespread pollution that has been proved to exist today.



Asfordby Road rainwater outlet pictured in 2012 clogged with toilet waste, although it looks much the same today

Grants

The day-to-day workings of the MOWS committee involve many little jobs that need doing, but once done, we all agree that the bottom line is that we cannot move forward without the working capital to buy equipment, engage tradesmen and fund those thousand and one things that will move the restoration forward.

Therefore, we are massively grateful for the £20,000 awarded to us from MBC which will pay for all our scaffolding requirements (see below) and contractors who will dredge the waterway to a reasonable depth, to allow our trip boat and rowing boats to operate properly.

Many thanks, too, to all those who worked on the grant application.

Pole to Pole?

Friday 12 April saw the arrival of our new scaffolding, thanks to a grant from MBC (see above). Following an appeal for extra bodies to help move it to our boat compound, several new people turned up to lend a hand. Thanks guys, we couldn't have done it without you.

This means that three outstanding projects – the installation of the floating pontoons for the rowing boat project (see article on page 4), the flood safe trip boat mooring and the boat compound river frontage, can now move forward.

Exciting times ahead!

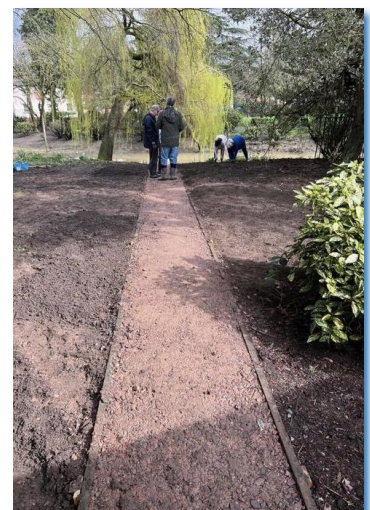


Many thanks to all those who came along to help ferry the scaffolding poles to the boat compound

Path and Ticket Office Ready to Roll



Now that the rowing boat ticket office in Wilton Park is nearing completion (thanks to Hilary and Glynn for the painting) our thoughts turned to the safety of the public hiring a boat and the uneven path from the office to the landing stage. Volunteers flattened the site, fixed path edging and wheelbarrowed in quarry waste, which was generously supplied by Travis Perkins, and was kindly compacted by our good friend Rob from Frisby Lakes at Asfordby with his wacker plate.



Trumpton Awards

Dave and Stuart represented MOWS at the Trumpton Awards Night. For those who are not aware, the local firefighters raise money for local good causes and give it out at their gala night.

Our presentation (pictured) was of two lifebuoy rings for our trip boat and rowing boat landing stage. This follows an award a few years ago of life jackets for crews of our work boats when doing river clearance and will be offered to those hiring out our rowing boats in the future.



DJ Dave (holding the microphone) was asked to say a few words to explain our work within the community and say a heartfelt thank you to the firefighters.

Childhood Memories of the Melton Mowbray Navigation (Part 3)

The last instalment of Fred's story ...

Could our 'sunken boat' have been the central pier of the more common twin arches of the MMN?

Through the shallows below the bridge and on to the deeper straight cut beside the Midland railway, cutting off another backwater on the Rotherby side where we kids (and, later, Martin, fished for small pike) the diverted stream from the Ragdale Wolds turned at a right angle to parallel the cut, leading under a road bridge to feed the sheep-dip, then on to a ford at the end of a narrow spit of land where the stream rejoined the cut to Thrussington Mill. This must once have carried a towpath. On our left there was a by-wash weir, taking little water since the collapse of Brooksby Lock, leading under the road through a culvert near the level crossing and thence under a building which, in my early years, was a laundry, latterly becoming an outbuilding of Brooksby Agricultural College. The water rejoined the cut below the road bridge, the original humpbacked arch having been flattened by the County Council Highways around the early 'thirties.

Attention diverted by these scenes from water level, disaster struck as we neared the fallen masonry of the lock. A barely submerged chunk of sharp-edged metal cut a long slit in the canoe's fabric and the 'abandon ship' order given, fortunately, while we still had a bit of green bank on our right for retrieval of our waterlogged vessel. We loaded the soggy canoe on the portage trolley.

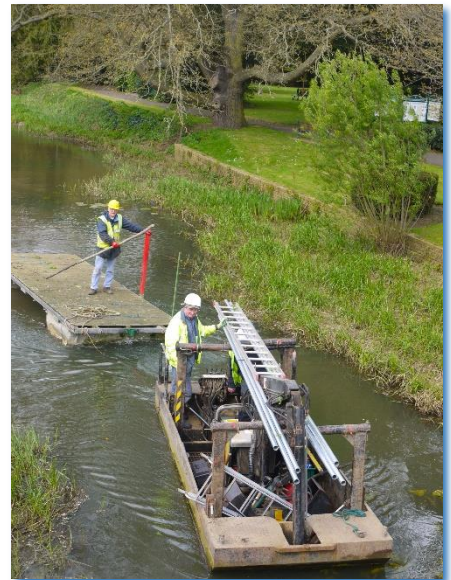
It's quite a long trek by road back to Washstones. The inhabitants of Rotherby must have wondered what a middle-aged couple were up to, trundling a large canoe along their village street on two wheels from old pushchair! Back home a repair was soon made and our canoe survived many more trips, not only on the Wreake and the first little stretch of the River Eye behind the Midland Station, but as far afield as the Polar Circle and Dalsland Kanal! Though our activities are limited these days to visits by motorhome, we are still to be seen from time-to-time around the old haunts of earlier years – and occasionally we visit Jean Morris, John Morris's daughter, who still lives in the Manor House, Hoby, where these interests originated almost 80 years ago.

*Fred Birden
August 2007*

Latest Work Party



Sunday last saw one of the two floating pontoons towed to the rear of the ticket office, where Mole was used to check the proposed mooring was deep enough and take away any silt that had accumulated since the mooring site was originally dredged.



Two scaffolding poles were driven into the riverbed to secure the pontoon and as time was getting short, two other poles were driven into the bank to sprag the originals and keep them secure. The next work party will see the structure completed, as long as we can find a way to drive 11ft of a 21ft scaffolding pole into the riverbed. Ideas on a postcard please!

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4th - 6th May 2024 | Little Venice, London

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#CanalwayCavalcade

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Change of Contact Details?

I must admit that when it comes to changing my contact details for anything other than gas, electric, telephone, water companies, etc, I sometimes fall short of remembering to inform all other societies or clubs or any other of the many companies that need to know. So, we may not be the first on your list to contact if you have moved house or changed your email address, etc, so this is just a reminder to please let us know your new contact details if any of these has changed. *Thank you.*



Society Contacts:

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Follow us on ...



Welcome to new members ...

John & Christine Arthur
Maria Kinning & Ade Thomas
David Ramsden
New life member - Geoff Collier