

## Mick's Musings

### The Numbers Game

The phrase "Lies, damned lies, and statistics" is attributed to Mark Twain, although the man himself said that he was quoting British Prime minister Benjamin Disraeli. But whoever said it, the sentiment is clear, that statistics, in any shape or form, are introduced in the hope of bolstering a weak argument. MPs and other high-ranking officials spout on the TV a seemingly unintelligible stream of information peppered with the statistics which they hope will prove beyond all doubt that they are indeed right about whatever subject matter is today's hot topic. The numbers, they say, do not lie, but you and I both know they can be manipulated to cover some whopping porkies.

However, back in the real world, at our last MOWS work party, someone pointed out a statistic which has made me think a little bit, and the numbers (in this case) do tell the whole story.

I was asked by one of our newer work party recruits, how many members, both actual paid-up members, and internet-based followers we had. My answer of "around 1,400" made the maths easy, as there were 7 MOWS people at the work party and, quick as a flash, the answer "well that's only 0.5% of that number that are here today", came back.

Only half a piggin' percent of all those people who are interested in seeing the Melton Mowbray Navigation brought back to life, could be bothered that day to do something about it. Blimey! Even my local Building Society pays better interest than that. And there, in those 2 sentences is the crux of the whole matter-the word interest.

I am well aware that we have many armchair supporters that probably, for many reasons, cannot show their support, in the flesh as it were. I also know that some Facebook members have been dragged along by friends to make up the numbers, whilst others have joined because it is good to be seen to be supporting a good cause. Whatever reason that has brought you to us, many thanks and may your support continue for as long as it takes. But, and it's a big but, there are at least half of that 1,400 who could be eligible to physically help out once in a while. I realise we all have busy lives, with the demands of home life, children, elderly parents, jobs etc, but this statistic coming up is the biggie. Simply put, increasing the present 0.5% to just 1% means that down the 25 years of the society's existence we could have doubled the number of things we have achieved.

Think about that the next time a work party is announced, this is one statistic that doesn't lie.

Mick

Mick Clowes

# Work Party towards Eye Kettleby Lock

MOWS members have begun a major project clearing a 300m stretch of thick vegetation alongside the River Wreake at Sysonby on the outskirts of Melton Mowbray.

The aim is to create a riverside parkland and is a first step towards the restoration of the nearby Eye Kettleby lock. The lock was one of 12 along the 15-mile length of the Melton Navigation which operated during the 1800s from Syston to Melton. It was the last lock that cargo barges had to pass through before arriving in town.

A bridge by the lock connects to Rhubarb Island which was given its name because of the rhubarb-like plants which grow there. They are actually butterbur which were once used to wrap butter pats and take them to market.

Today the lock is covered in thick growth and can barely be seen but it is believed to be in remarkably good condition. Some years ago, the Environmental Agency, which manages the river, filled the lock in with pebbles and gravel as a flood control measure and diverted the river over a weir, but, before doing so, lined the brick walls with cheek boards to preserve them.



Committee member Jono Hewitt, who is overseeing the project, said: “There is a long way to go but we are hoping that Eye Kettleby Lock will be the first of the 12 locks to be brought back to working order. This would enable us to operate boat trips from the town and enjoy the experience of being in a lock.

“In the meantime, we are clearing the land leading to the lock which will provide both a very pleasant riverside location and also enable us to easily access the lock when we are able to begin work.”

Society volunteers were also joined in the clearance by members of Melton Matters Wombles who have been collecting rubbish as the vegetation is cut back. On their first day they collected 14 bags of rubbish and 2 bags of cans as well as big amounts of metal which had been thrown in the bushes. The Wombles are active every week working to tidy up the town and surrounding areas.

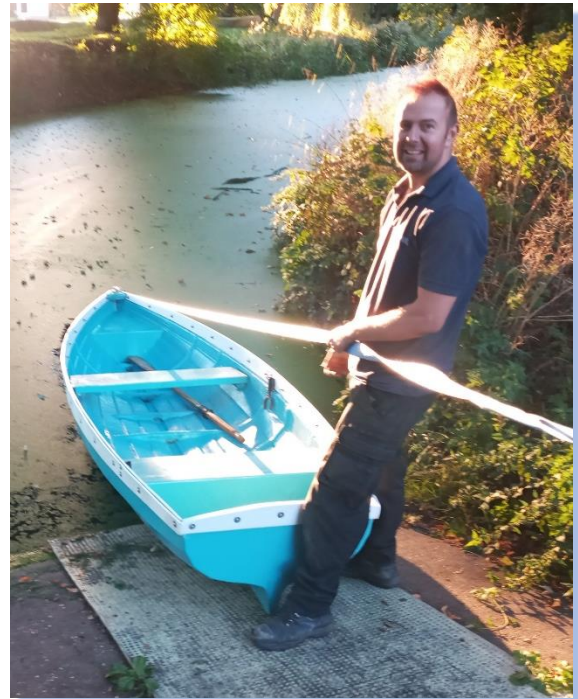


*Two photos taken from roughly the same spot, but 5 hours apart. Note that on the left of photo 1 there is no sign of the metal fence, which is magically revealed in photo 2. Great job, team!*

## Four Down and Three (and a lot of Red Tape) to Go!

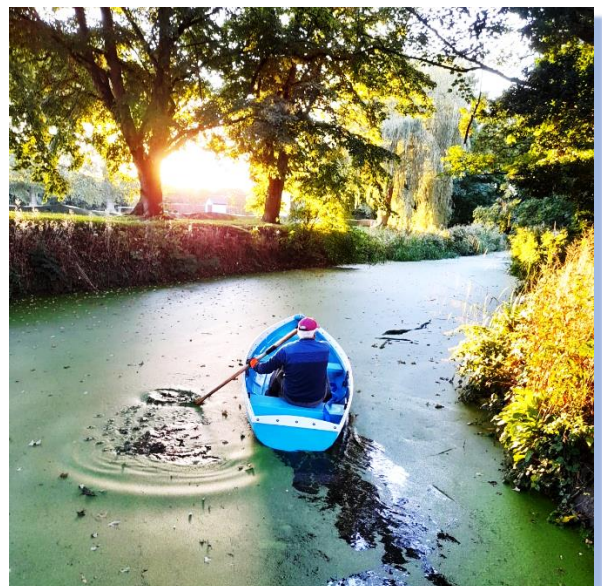
Many thanks to everyone who has worked so hard to get four of our fleet of seven hire boats ready for use. These are now secured in our compound, awaiting the other two decent condition boats and long-term, the seventh which will need some extra work.

Our original plan was to use the riverside area below the Town Estate compound to run and launch our hire fleet. However, quite understandably our landlords, and nearby scout troop were not too happy about hordes of people invading the compound. This was a shame, as the nearby Wilton Road Car Park provided easy access.



So, back to Plan B ... the building of a safe, disabled friendly and easily accessible landing stage, around the area to the rear of the park café. A yearly rent will have to be paid, understandably, which we will hope to recoup through our hire charges, as will also any wage needing to be paid to our fleet supervisor/money taker.

However, the main obstacle seems to be planning permission for the landing stage which, if required, will need supporting ecology surveys, entailing extra time and expense, along with the costs of the build itself. Watch this space for more news soon.



*Photo (right):  
Geof 'sailing' into the sunset.*

## Big Demand for Reprint of MMN Walks Book

The book of walks along the Melton Mowbray Navigation, which was published by MOWS earlier this year, has had to be reprinted after the initial print run quickly sold out.

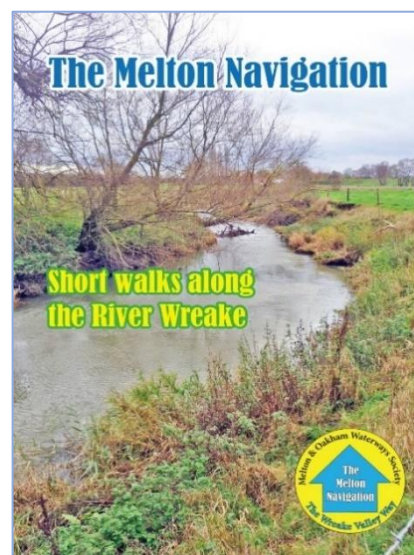
The book is now on sale at several outlets and one of them, The Grange Garden Centre, told committee member Jane Martin, who is looking after distribution, that it is their biggest selling item!

The book features six walks along the River Wreake and they follow, as closely as possible, the original route of the Navigation, from Melton Mowbray to Cossington, a distance of just over 16 miles. Most of the walks take around a couple of hours for both the outward and return journey and some include a circular route.

Walk 1 is one of the circular routes and starts and finishes at the Boat Inn in Melton which was originally on the quayside of the basin and which marked the end of the Navigation and the beginning of the Oakham Canal. It goes as far as Eye Kettleby Lock, the last lock before boats arrived in Melton, where, as reported elsewhere in the Newsletter, MOWS has been carrying out a major project.

If you haven't got your copy yet, the 40-page book costs £3.95 and is available at the following outlets:

- Melton Sports, King Street, Melton
- Melton Carnegie Museum
- Country Park café
- Hill Top Farm shop
- Sysonby Knoll Hotel, Asfordby Road
- Grange Garden Centre, Asfordby Hill
- Frisby on the Wreake post office
- The Gate Hangs Well pub at Syston



## 2022 AGM

This year's AGM will be held on Saturday 5 November.

As usual the venue will be the Sysonby Knoll Hotel, Asfordby Road, Melton Mowbray, LE13 0HP. Proceedings start at 10.00am. Tea and coffee will be available on arrival.

All welcome.



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