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Issue 6 - 2020

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Welcome 🖐️

A wonderful year filled with many highlights

One of the year's highlights - and there have been many - has been the amount of warm comments we've had from Boaters, businesses, the media and our esteemed Volunteers.

I was particularly grateful for your feedback on the new Top Paddle Deflectors that we have been trialling at Evesham Lock, which is one of three where we inherited the issue of possible plumes of water on paddle opening.

We were pleased with the engineered solution and Boaters have queued up to add their thumbs up. Now we'll roll them out to Fladbury and Pershore.

Thank you, too, for your comments on licence queries. We have now set up a Direct Registration Enquiry Number on 0300 111 2010.

Other top spots have included the new partnership with the Environment Agency. We have signed a five year Public Sector Co-operation Agreement (PSCA) to enable us to undertake necessary maintenance, prevention and development work, which is good for the Avon as well as the public purse.

I've been working towards this for ten years and we have waded through a mountain of paperwork, but it's a significant result.



Another decade-long dream is about to be realised, with the launch of *Neptune* as our new training and learning hub... and as the centre of the ANT Squad of up and coming Boaters, river-users and Volunteers.

I was pleased, too, with our decision to mirror Chairman Jack's success with his business and local authority VIP event at Stratford with a special celebration of our own most Very Important People - the Volunteers - at Pershore River Festival.

We laid on the ANT hospitality pontoon (pictured below), there was a fine spread of donated refreshments and we enjoying welcoming Volunteers throughout the busy day.

It felt like a perfect way to say a very big thank you for your help in every way.

Another gift, for everyone who loves our river, is the appointment of Alison Bergqvist as our Volunteer Poet Laureate. We will be publishing Ali's first poetry book and she will be penning verse for ANT special occasions (turn to page 20 to read all about her). Enjoy!

At the end of the day it is the people who make our River so special.

Clive Matthews

Editor and ANT Chief Executive



Getting set to welcome our feted Volunteers at Pershore.

Rescue bridge built over troubled water

When the June floods stranded two Boaters at Bidford they were sadly resigned to missing out on their 11th national Russell Newbery Register Rally. But the ANT Works Team rushed to the rescue.

Within an hour the team was building an aluminium gantry to get the couple from their traditional tug to land and on to the fun in Stratford-upon-Avon.

"We couldn't praise them highly enough. The service we got was exemplary and we would like to thank them for their dedicated and professional help," says Mike Whiteman, who was on board *NB Albion* with partner Fran.

"Everyone at the Rally was amazed at the lengths they went to and we are all encouraged to come back to a river that offers such friendly and excellent support."

The Avon was gently bobbing seven inches below the jetty when the couple moored at the Frog, and level with the jetty when they retired for the night.

"Next morning we were shocked to find it had risen 28 inches and the nearest land was now approximately 15 feet away," reports Mike.

"I rang ANT to tell them we were OK for food and water but we would have liked to have attended the Rally. To our astonishment, within the hour, they were with us and building the solution."

It's par for the course for the members of the ANT team, which was on its usual flood rounds checking on boats

and their occupants.

ANT was already teed up to support the Rally, organised by the Register (www.rnregister.org.uk) to celebrate the historic Russell Newbery engine.

The Trust supplied its usual River Festival infrastructure and pontoon a week early for Rally use and Bancroft Cruisers provided the *Princess Marina* as a bar.

Mike and Fran and more than 40 boats gathered for the grand event, ironically in glorious weather.

"It was our first Rally on a river," says Russell Newbery Register Chairman Bob Scott, an ANT member and long-time Avon fan whose 62' narrowboat *Lothlórien* is moored outside his Evesham home.

"I wanted members to enjoy our river. While 60% had been on the river before, quite a few hadn't visited for some years and noted that facilities have improved dramatically.

"There are more moorings and everything is kept in excellent order, although I've always got a few suggestions for Clive," he smiles.

The Rally brings together enthusiasts of the engines,



first made more than a century ago principally as generator sets to bring electricity to country homes and then as standby generators for various utilities, Royal Navy and other ships, becoming a substantial enterprise, as the National engine, in WW2.

"At some stage someone had the bright idea of marinising the engines and putting them into narrowboats," adds Bob, whose own engine dates back to 1960, with some members'

vessels sporting 1930s' versions.

This year's Rally broke a record. Saturday's temperatures hit 31C, making it the hottest in Register history.

"Everybody enjoyed the Rally and all the help we had from ANT was absolutely fantastic," adds Bob.

"The Register would like to thank Clive and all the team for everything they did and we wish them well as they continue to do the fantastic job that they do."

In the news

Media coverage of ANT's trailblazing VIP event at Stratford-upon-Avon's River Festival doubled an already big boost of the Trust's profile.

Chairman Jack Hegarty's bright idea to banner current work and future plans to two counties' key decision makers was a huge success.

Guests enjoyed donated refreshments on board ANT's pontoon as they heard about the success of recent projects and long-term plans, including Project Neptune and the drive for a young ANT Squad.

ANT is busy applying for further grants and drawing up fund-raising initiatives to fuel new schemes.

"We also rely heavily on the support of our local authorities, organisations and businesses and this VIP event was our way of saying thank you and to showcase our future projects," adds Jack.

● [And a very big thank you to our Volunteers at a special VIP event at Pershore \(see page 31\).](#)

Floods have twice sunk plans for a very special honour at Tewkesbury.

Historic Avon Lock is to be celebrated by The Transport Trust with a coveted Red Wheel that marks it out as an important heritage site.

But a plaque unveiling ceremony, by the Lord Lieutenant Edward Gillespie, had to be rescheduled again in October as the site was underwater.

"We're now hoping for third time lucky next spring," says Lock-Keeper Nic Lancaster.

A very nice splash

A hearty splash in *Waterways World* was a very welcome surprise publicity bonus.

The June 2019 issue featured *The ideal waterway* by Richard Fairhurst, who picked and mixed the best features from all over the country.

His top ticks included the locks of the Worcester and Birmingham canal, the Rochdale's towpaths, the pubs on the Severn... and the independence of the Avon.

"The Avon Navigation Trust has raised "getting on with the job" to an artform," Richard wrote.

"Proudly independent, it keeps the navigation in good order, the locks well-tended, the facilities working. It's a throwback to the days when every waterway had its own company of proprietors, and a lovely beacon of individuality in a land of conformity."

Take a bow, ANT staff and Volunteers. "It is a lovely plaudit that sums up exactly what we are about," says Chairman Jack Hegarty.



Jack with some of the VIP guests (from left): Stratford District Cllr John Feilding, Stratford Town Trust Trustee Lindsay MacDonald, ANT External Funding Director Penny Clover, Wychavon District Council Chair Frances Smith, Warwickshire County Council Chair Nicola Davies and Worcestershire County Cllr John Smith.

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ANT AT WORK



Lock repair is a historic moment

ANT engineers uncovered a nasty surprise but also a rich slice of history when they plunged into major work at Evesham, their third complete Lock refurbishment in as many years.

They also found time to deliver an innovative solution to an inherited challenge that faced visitors to Evesham, Fladbury and Pershore.

Boaters risked a possible rough ride because of the jet of water unleashed on paddle opening. But Chief Executive Clive Matthews' newly invented Top Paddle Deflectors neatly solve the issue by turning, and thus weakening, the flow by 90 degrees (main picture, right).

The trial at Evesham has been acclaimed by Boaters and the system will now be added to the other two Locks.

The emergency-scheduled dewater, repair and upgrade at Evesham was prompted by leaking cills that were getting decidedly worse, necessitating a complete dewater to investigate.

The two cills were repaired and new closure plates designed to seal the gates, but the team's customary in-depth survey revealed that crumbling stonework behind the 380-year-old Lock meant the wall was in danger of collapse.

Specialist grouters had to be called in to plug the gaps, which added time and considerable, but necessary, expense to the project.

But ANT engineers worked around the contractors to ensure everything was ready for the new season start, despite coping with a mid-project flood and that surprise find.

Repair work unveiled the historic structure of the Lock (top picture), built by Fladbury engineer William Sandys back in the 17th century.

"It was a fascinating discovery," says Chief Executive Clive Matthews. "We know that some Locks, and most of the mills, were built on top of a raft of elm beams, probably taken from sailing ships.

"But Evesham's is constructed from U sections of beams every ten feet and we only discovered there were uprights when we were trying to work out why the walls had lines of damp."

The discovery, now logged and recorded in the ANT



archive, presented its own challenges because elm, while stronger than concrete underwater, disintegrates quickly when it dries out.

Not that it fazed the team. Once engineers had drained the 535 gallons, and stanked and lined the Lock to stop leak-backs, it was easy to allow water back in to cover the wood overnight and simply drain down again the next day.

"The stanking is also specifically designed to cope with any floods, and so we were home and dry," adds Clive.

A 15 task To Do list was also ticked off, as customary in a major Lock overhaul, including new handrails and walkways, leaving the Lock all well and good for the next 30 or 40 years.

The team also added a conduit under the Lock to deliver power and water to the Evesham Lock island moorings, and still managed to reopen the Lock well in time to greet the hundreds of new season Boaters.



The works schedule was going swimmingly over winter, until Evesham's leaking cills turned into a full-on March drama that also knocked Nafford off the top of the list of the next full Lock overhaul.

The wall issues, necessitating specialist grouting contractors, also cost far more than expected, which has prompted a revised estimate for Nafford and pushed it into next winter's work schedule.

ANT's carefully managed funding stream, fuelled by significant contract work, licences and donations, has enabled the team to complete three major Lock overhauls in three years.

"Clive does an excellent job in bringing in significant funds that we can use to hugely enhance the usual maintenance programme," explains Treasurer and Financial Director Michael Hodges. "We have contingency money for emergencies, but we need to build up general funds again for our next full Lock project."

Meanwhile, there was another surprise in store at Luddington in September...

Summer slip solved in super fast time

The Avon was buzzing with late summer Boaters when the team had an emergency Gate Off call to Luddington Lock. But it was back in action in super quick time.

Clever protective straps and safety chains are designed to ensure no ANT gates will actually fall off, but one had fallen out of its hinge strap and had dropped by nearly three inches, which indicated a serious problem.

"We'd had issues with the gate not opening properly, which we thought was because of rubbish in the Lock, but this was clearly something else," reports Chief Executive Clive Matthews.

ANT had the call on Wednesday and rushed in to winch

the gate back into position and temporarily working with chains. New parts were made the next day and on Friday they were fitted to make the gate stable for the rest of the season.

"It was quite a logistical challenge because we naturally had to keep stopping work to let boats through."

The ANT diver was poised to do a fingertip search at the end of the season, before a likely stank off.

"Best case scenario is a gate issue that we can solve quickly," adds Clive. "Worst case is a major structural failure with the chamber, which will mean lifting the gates out and recasting the concrete."



A bit of a paddle pickle



There was more to come. The Works Team then had to fly in to solve a paddle failure at Stratford's Weir Brake Lock.

The ANT diver located the problem, caused by corrosion, and the engineers got to work to keep it open through the rest of the season.

"We plan to go back this winter with the crane to lift the gates and do the fabrication work," says Clive.

Stresham sorted & EA partnership forged. See over the page



Strensham sorted

Tewkesbury's major works had been completed at the start of the year, including re-cladding the top gates, before the team moved on to Strensham in February.

The Lock had already been the focus of a major overhaul, when the team braved the Beast from the East to get everything ready on time.

Engineers were then scheduled to return off-season to finish off surface work.

The ANT Health and Safety Consultant's annual audit of all 25 public sites had also flagged up potential issues with the walkways there.

All of them were broken up and relaid, to finish the ticked off major work list.

Then the team was diverted to tackle Evesham, the full horror story of which is told in full on page 11.



Now an official partner of EA

ANT has become one of the first navigation authorities to become an official working partner of the Environment Agency (EA) on the Avon after signing a five year Public Sector Co-operation Agreement (PSCA).

The Trust has done a lot of varied work for the Agency on an individual contract basis, but this move means the EA can instantly deploy ANT where needed, which is good news for river maintenance too.

"This is something I've been aiming to achieve since I joined the Trust," says Chief Executive Clive Matthews.

"It has always felt logical to me because we are already out there looking after our structures, while their structures are often right next door. We are also constantly monitoring the river and its infrastructure. It makes sense to undertake any work needed while we're there and it is more cost effective for the Agency."

Based on section 13(4) of the Floods and Water Management Act 2010, a PSCA enables the EA to work in partnership with relevant authorities to cover maintenance, preventative and replacement work.

The first was signed in October 2013 and was heralded as a major step forward in securing efficient work practices at a local level, which also achieve value for money and is beneficial in the event of any flood incidents.

The PSCAs also enable the EA to take advantage of



local skills and experience, including local knowledge of geography, associated river/drainage systems and operational practices, to benefit local communities.

"It makes strong economic sense to engage expert teams already at work with equipment in place. It also does away with the time-heavy tendering process," adds Clive, who spent six months, with Office Manager Adrian Main, preparing the paperwork to meet the PSCA requirements.

The EA's Area Operations Manager Anthony Perry, comments: "This PSCA further strengthens the good working relationship the Environment Agency has with the Avon Navigation Trust.

"These agreements provide good efficiencies and help keep the river and its structures maintained for the benefits of Boaters and the wider communities."

* A pre-PSCA contract to produce an engineering report and carry out work on all six EA Avon weirs culminated at the Evesham site, where ANT fitted a new boom, at the beginning of the year (pictured above).

The team has also been awarded a contract to replace the weir barrier at Stratford.

Keeping busy throughout the year

The team has been busy on lots of other work over the year.

Alongside the usual general maintenance, tree shearing, dredging and so forth, projects completed and planned are:

- ◆ Work on Offenham & Marlcliff Weir Barriers, Avon Lock control panel and Harvington gates and paddles.
- ◆ Modifications to Twyning Overnight Moorings; completing Pershore Lock Lower Mooring; a new Overnight Mooring at The Valley, Evesham.
- ◆ *Tardis*, *Mike* & the crane tracks have been refurbished; *Neptune* and *Cammell* re-bottomed.

Future major projects include Nafford Lock; refurbishing Wyre and Pershore Locks, re-piling Harvington top and Barton bottom Moorings.

Also planned is a floating Mooring at Stratford Basin (in partnership with CRT); refurbishment of Birlingham Wharf; extension of Harvington Overnight Mooring; access to Luddington Mooring; navigational signage.





Town's ancient bridge

ANT is providing full support for crucial work on Pershore's historic old bridge.

The fleet, including heritage boat *Neptune* returning fleetingly to welfare boat duties, is assisting experts working on the refurbishment for the Worcestershire County Council project.

It is being spearheaded by Jacobs' Assistant Engineer Kimra Berg, who is working with a specialist stonemason and a representative of Historic England.

"The bridge has a lot of history behind it. Most notably for these works were the patchworks of repairs over the years and the variety of materials used.

The greatest challenge has probably been to agree on replacement stones, as so many different types have been used," she reports.

"The stonemason is very familiar with these kinds of projects and we are working closely with a representative from Historic England who reviews all the samples on site with the stonemason and myself."

The Listed Grade II* bridge, which is 66m long and

4m wide, dates back to the 15th century and was remodelled in the 17th and 18th.

It was constructed by Pershore Abbey monks - according to legend, after Abbot Upton was drowned after slipping from the stepping stones that used to cross the river.

The central arch was enlarged by William Sandys in the 17th century and repairs were made after it was damaged during the Civil War. It still bears battle scars.

Fewer than 200 such examples of medieval multi-span bridges are left in England.

gets a new lease of life

The painstaking work, hampered by high river levels in the autumn, started in September and was due to end by Christmas.

It includes the side bridge. "The one wing wall, which is showing outward movement and voids behind it, will be partially taken down so it can be set back into place and the voids can be filled," explains Kimra

The project is being carried out in sections, to allow continued navigation. Both sides of the seven arch structure will be refurbished before the centre piece is tackled, with the experts working from the ANT barge.

"The navigation has a restriction in place but if any boat does want to come through, we can move out of the way within 30 minutes," explains ANT Chief Executive Clive Matthews.

"ANT helps us with navigation management. These include pilot boats to warn boats going through the area, providing signage and warning lights as well as directional floating booms to guide boats away from the scaffolding," adds Kimra.

"ANT is also assisting in providing barges and rescue boats for the actual works themselves."

Pershore Abbey has a stained glass window to mark its Civil War vandalism.

King Charles breaketh down the Bridge depicts the attempted destruction by the royal forces, who were being hotly pursued by the Parliamentarians hurtling after them from Broadway.

Forty men were said to have died in the incident on June 5, 1644.

Cable guys

ANT is poised to support work to replace the duct that carries telecommunication cables beneath Stratford's Clopton Bridge.

The Trust raised a warning notice to alert Boaters to possible falling debris from the old cast-iron pipe once used as a conduit from the old gas works.



Those low-tech jewels of the trade in the picture are the real deal (and on show in the office). The late 1920s' typewriter is an American Underwood and that's a 1930s' Bakelite 300 phone.



AVON PEOPLE

Welcome to the 21st century

I tried typing some minutes on that typewriter in the picture. It took me an hour, and a lot of cursing, to do half a page! Thank goodness the ANT office is now really so 21st century.

Updating continues. You've welcomed the email sign up MailChimp system, which not only gives us a GDPR compliant database for speedy send outs of notices, it also allows users to easily sign themselves off it - a boon for visiting Boaters.

The high-tech star of 2020 will be our new website, which we'll roll out with a soft launch after the new year rush abates.

We are taking time and trouble to ensure it's totally user-friendly. Your feedback will be much appreciated.

It's bright, colourful and super useful for us all, allowing easy online licensing and membership, but covering all ANT activities, with a special area, for instance, for Volunteers. It's also super secure with SSL (Secure Sockets Layer) encryption.

It will be linked with Waterway Routes, so you will be able to see exactly where you are on the river and what's coming up. That will mean the ANT team can rush directly to your rescue if you need us. Currently we have to rely on your description of what you can see.

The new licences will also have a barcode to add another security level, and we have issued a dedicated licensing line - 0300 111 2010 (2010 is our amalgamation year. Neat).

We wanted to make sure our Boaters get to speak

to a human, rather than a recording, in office hours. It will also stop licensing query calls to our emergency breakdown number.

One of my jobs is leading the patrol teams. You can read about their work on page 24, but I would like to personally thank everyone who supports me.

I'm particularly pleased that the number of reported unregistered boats is down, which is a good safety plus because, invariably, they are not compliant with boat safety standards. Good news for owners too: if they register in time and are fully compliant, they get a large discount.

My role encompasses supporting our river festivals and it was grand that boat numbers doubled at Pershore this year. Evesham was a great event too. I topped my boat with a Mickey Mouse and lit up to join the nighttime parade.

It was my third year, and the busiest yet, as Harbour Master at Stratford. We were oversubscribed so I was busy offering no-shows' spaces to those on the waiting list.

Numbers were swollen by the Russell Newbery Register Rally, whose boats, in prime position, were a lovely spectacle.

Stratford also saw the first of Jack Hegarty's VIP engaging events, which was a huge success. Smiles all round.

Adrian Main

Office Manager

Brian's an Avon treasure

After 40 years on the Avon, 36 of those as a full-on Volunteer, Brian Morgan has amassed a lot of happy memories. But there's one extra special blast from the past that he'll treasure forever.

When the crowds gathered with Chief Executive Clive Matthews for the celebration of his dad Dudley's life, the then Chairman John Tomsett made a surprise announcement.

Dudley Matthews MBE, our Mr Avon, had secretly dictated letters to be handed to John, to Engineering Director Roger Clay and to Brian and his wife, and fellow Volunteer, Diana.

"It was typical of my dad, passing on his thanks, thoughts, personal wisdom and counsel after his death," says Clive.

"Di and I read the letter and I was so moved that I had to slip outside. I'll treasure it for the rest of my life," Brian confides.

"One of the things he said was 'Don't you ever resign from the Trust, because I'll be watching you'. So we're tied forever now!"

Not that it's a bind, the couple, married for 54 years, give generously of their time and expertise with very glad hearts.

They've dived into all sorts, from Volunteer recruitment to looking after Fladbury Lock (and now Craycombe Turn), which they've made as pretty as a picture, are both Trust Directors, Di heads up the Sunday Lock-Keeper team and both help out at Tewkesbury, at SWIC and with shifting work boats about.

Brian, a Reachmaster since September 2nd, 1983, has special responsibility for Lock Training. He also helps the ANT Works Team on projects when they're stretched.

"I enjoy every minute, except just a few when we've had trouble with vandals at Fladbury," he says.

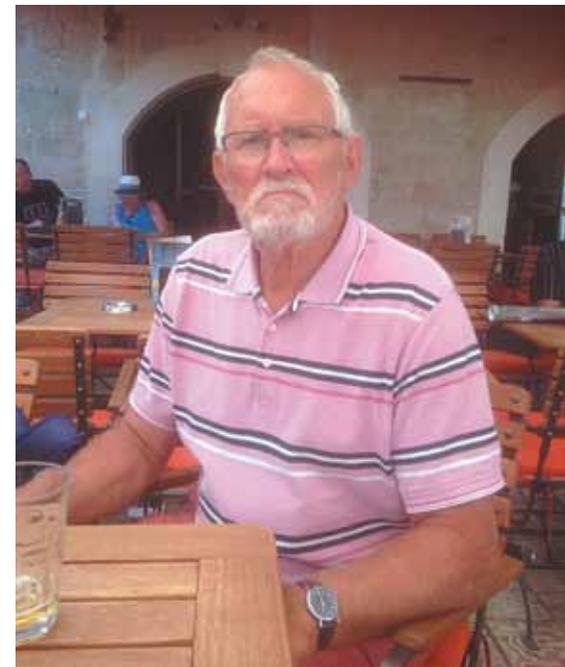
We're lucky that Brian and Diana were lured to the Avon and then hooked by Dudley. They live west of Hereford and could have picked any river.

"We love it," explains Brian, who retired as a lorry fleet engineer 17 years ago.

"The people are lovely and the engineers are a fantastic bunch of lads who'll work in any weather. How they put up with the Beast from the East I'll never know."

Brian and Di came here with *Sea Creature*. They're now on *Kippin 3* - named for Di who sleeps like a log on board - version three, a narrowboat built by ANT's Roger Apperley.

Daughter Mandy - now a teacher in London, married



Brian Morgan, happy to be 'tied' to ANT for a lifetime.

to a head teacher - loved those family boat trips too. Brian and Di's granddaughter is studying for a Masters in architectural engineering.

"Once I met Dudley, way back when, that was it. It was like getting caught in a rat trap, in a nice way, because he was so determined when it came to the Avon. He was a lovely bloke."

Things, naturally, have changed over time. "There are not many left of those I first worked with," muses Brian, who was persuaded to become a Reachmaster by Les Hodgkinson and Major Bill Andrews at Chadbury.

"The biggest change came with the amalgamation and when Clive came in. It used to be a longwinded rigmarole to get things done.

"Clive was, and is, a breath of fresh air. He knew exactly what he was doing and the direction ANT should steer. He's just as determined as his dad and he's an engineer, a very good one.

"He grasped the nettle that was licence fees, brought in contract work and spent money on equipment so that the river is beautifully maintained.

"No wonder everyone loves the Avon."

Our Bard's on board



Sailing enthusiast Alison Bergqvist wasn't that fussed when partner Chris suggested chugging along the Avon in a river boat. But it turned out to be a life changer.

She fell in love with the river and, while she enjoyed its beauties, the creative juices started to flow into poetry, which sparked off something even more magical.

When Ali told self-confessedly unpoetic ANT Chief Executive Clive Matthews about her plans to self-publish a book of her verses, he was inspired too.

Now she has been named as the Avon's first Poet Laureate* and her debut book - *River Poems: written on and about the Warwickshire Avon* - will be published by ANT to be enjoyed by all, raising money for the charity at the same time.

"It is the most exciting thing that's happened to me. I'm stunned," says Alison, who confesses that the news had another special effect.

"I'd had poet's block after writing my very first two and then they started gushing out. Spurred on by the excitement of Clive's idea, I produced five more."

Ali's passion for poetry, boats, birds and wildlife all springs from her late father, John. "But it took falling in love with your river to bring them all together into my poems," says Ali, who worked in literacy and dyslexia support before she retired.

John's grandfather and his father before him were Bristol Channel pilots and Ali learnt to sail at her dad's side, later going on to take RYA exams. "I got up to Yacht Master, but only the theory."

The water theme continued when she worked alongside, and married, boatbuilder Eric. Now she and Chris share a love of boats, and folk music and Ali's software engineer

son John, who lives near the Thames, enjoys folk too.

"Chris plays the fiddle and mandolin and I'm on recorder. Actually the Avon's a great place to practice but we make sure we don't disturb anyone."

Chris had already discovered the Avon and was keen for Ali to share the experience on board *Tess*, a Hardy 20 River Pilot.

"I'd never done river sailing and I didn't know if I wanted to be bothered with a boat with a motor, which sounded boring. But I couldn't have been more wrong. I absolutely adore every minute," says Ali, who lives in Wells, Somerset.

"Chris has boated on many British waterways and decided that the Avon is the best of them all.

"He likes to drive and I sit on the top, watching the river and wildlife and soaking it all in. We only get here about four times a year, but every time the river is completely different, and yet it's the same beautiful Avon.

"My mind is never still and putting all that into verse seemed to be the obvious outlet."

Before ANT stepped in, Ali was planning to get a little book printed to give to friends and family. Suddenly her audience has swelled immensely.

As well as the book, our Poet Laureate will be crafting verse for special occasions and for the annual publications.

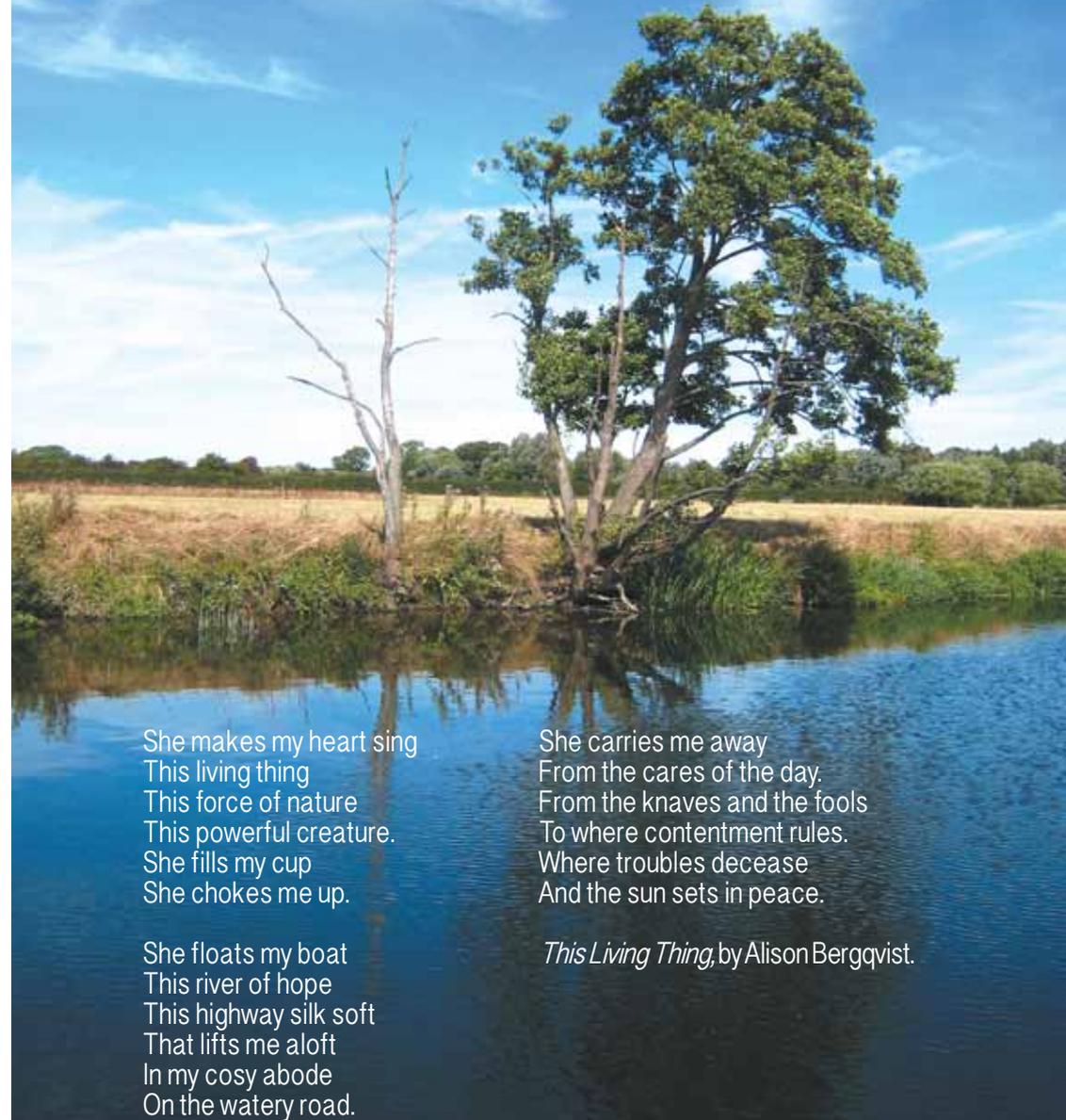
There's no danger of the inspiration drying up.

"The Avon's a pretty useful muse because of the constant changes, the people and all that navigation history," adds Ali.

"There's plenty more to come."

*** We know Poet Laureate refers to a country's poet, but we're claiming it for our Avon country!**

You'll be able to get a copy of Ali's book *River Poems* from ANT early in 2020, but here's a taste of what's to come. *This Living Thing* was one of her first Avon-fuelled poems.



She makes my heart sing
This living thing
This force of nature
This powerful creature.
She fills my cup
She chokes me up.

She carries me away
From the cares of the day.
From the knaves and the fools
To where contentment rules.
Where troubles decrease
And the sun sets in peace.

This Living Thing, by Alison Bergqvist.

She floats my boat
This river of hope
This highway silk soft
That lifts me aloft
In my cosy abode
On the watery road.

Going

He's a music legend, a sax sensation who has made music with stars ranging from Duke Ellington to Ginger Baker, Quincy Jones and Dame Shirley Bassey. But to many Avon folk, Dutch Lewis is simply the chap on the end of ANT mascot Jacob's lead.

"Most boat owners are dog lovers, and he's the first thing they see," smiles Dutch, who wends his way around the riverside businesses selling adverts to help fund ANT publications and raise the Trust's profile.

"One lady said recently that she'd seen Jacob on the telly. I joked: I was there too, you know!"

The popular pair hit the local news headlines because the two feature in a walk/pad-on part in a new film version of Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*, but more of that later.

It does mean we can now add two films to Dutch's long lexicon of achievements that began in his pre-teen school days, when he taught himself to play trumpet, clarinet and write music.

At 15 he joined his first grown-up band and was still in his teens when he was asked to become saxophone player, vocalist and compere for international show band the Cosmopolitans, specially formed to entertain the NATO Forces across Europe.

Winding on, through a plethora of career high notes, in the '80s Dutch joined forces with Jamaican born veteran sax man Andy Hamilton in the Blue Notes, as Musical Director of Blue Pearls Big Band, and made his first film debut in *Silvershine*.

The multi-talented gent, master of more than 20 instruments, launched The Dutch Lewis Broadband, described by *The Telegraph* as one of the most entertaining jazz groups in the UK, in the '90s.

The band - featuring "Mrs Dutch" Jayne as melliferous singer and musician - is still wowing the crowds. Check out their gigs at www.dutchlewis.com.

In between, Dutch worked as an advertisement revenue whiz until he retired at 74 and now uses those skills for ANT, also working on the new *River Guide*.

"It's a fun hobby," he says. "I love talking to people and the river people are a great crowd."

Black Labrador retriever cross Jacob, aged seven, actually belongs to Jayne and partner John.

"But he had terrible anxiety issues and so I offered to sort him out," says Dutch, whose dad was an RAF police trainer of dogs and handlers.

"Jacob's a rescue dog from Ireland, complete with a concealed long white stripe where he must've run into the edge of a newly painted door edge, painted with brilliant white paint. As a rescue dog he cannot bear to be left on his own so he smiles at everyone to share his pleasure at their company," adds Jayne.

Jacob was an instant hit when he started accompanying Dutch on his ANT rounds and so was crowned as the official Trust mascot, complete with his own high-vis vest.

"Dutch doesn't have to say a thing as Jacob the ambassador uses his evolved dog eyebrows to win people over," laughs Jayne.

"I put the vest on even when we're not on duty, so I can spread the word when people ask what ANT stands for," adds Dutch, who also supports river festivals with his add selling prowess.

Now 78, Dutch is busy polishing off another new skill. "I've been working on a book for the past eight years. It's a text book about the structure of music but written like an adventure story. There's never been anything like it," promises Dutch, who reveals that it's already earned him some money as the subject of WI talks.

"I don't believe in ever slowing down. It's the surest way of rusting up."



Eco expert hailed as an asset



A local mum of two, whose family loves messing about on the river, will now be helping to grow its biodiversity.

ANT has enlisted Dr Fiona Sharpe MCIEEM as its expert Ecologist to advise on key projects such as white water rafting and the wildlife haven at Pershore Lock Island.

"Fiona's expertise will be an important ANT asset. We take our duties as guardians of the Avon very seriously and that includes encouraging and nurturing our wildlife as well as doing everything we can to further enhance the experience for Boaters and everyone who enjoys the river," says Chief Executive Clive Matthews.

A Consultant Ecologist for the past ten years, with a special interest in birds, Fiona carries out a wide range of habitat and species surveys throughout the UK.

"I deal with a lot of private developer applications and so it's nice to be involved with a charity and focus more on the conservation side," says Fiona.

"The Trust has some very interesting developments in the pipeline."

Pershore-based Fiona already knows the river well. She, hospital doctor husband Rob and their children William, aged 10, and eight-year-old Arabella, enjoy kayaking and Stand Up Paddleboarding.

They recently saw one of the Avon's more usual visitors. "We were paddling along near Wyre Piddle and spotted a terrapin having a breather on a log. Of course we went for a closer look."

The Avon is already rich in birdlife. "We've got a Kingfisher patrolling and there are Reed Warblers and Buntings singing their hearts out at summertime," reports Fiona.

"We also have Cetti's Warblers, a relative rarity, nesting at Avon Meadows, and I've spotted another pair further downstream.

"It's a Schedule 1 protected species and very loud for a small bird. The song is amazing."

Jacob (and Dutch) the film stars

Our trusty pair would have just been common or garden extras in a new movie of *Wuthering Heights*, were it not for Dutch's dainty feet.

"I was originally going to play the part of a drunken yokel - I'd have been good at that!

"But the wardrobe lady happened to have some 18th century boots and I was the only one who could get them on, so I was elevated to a merchant-like figure," reveals Dutch, who can be seen in the bar scene (filmed at Bretforton's The Fleece barn)

with Jacob looking cute on a silken cord.

"I don't have any lines, but I nod dramatically on occasions."

The pair are also in the background at the funeral of Cathy, when the now unruddleable Jacob really showed his mettle.

"It was an interesting day - we had nine goes at shooting the scene when the open coffin was carried over just a few feet of grass to the chapel. They nearly tipped the poor girl out about three times," reports Dutch.

"Jacob was brilliant inside the

chapel, despite being terrified. No-one had warned us that they were sending in a drone to fly over the mourners and linger over poor dead Cathy.

"I managed to keep him fairly calm, but we were the first out the door when it was over."

Our VPO man for all seasons



The Volunteer Patrol Officer (VPO) team has notched up its best year yet.

"We had improved figures on last year, more regular patrols and fewer boats were reported without a registration certificate, which is good news for increased safety on the navigation," says Office Manager Adrian Main, who leads the team with Chris Binks.

VPOs Adrian Bailey, Nick Farr, Steve Myers and Peter Underwood made a total of 18 visits to Marinas, covering 27.1 miles on *Tardis*, *Mike* (Upper Reaches), *Vigilant* (Stratford) and *The Roger Hewett* (Tewkesbury).

There were 61 notices issued, but the VPOs are also our friendly face on the river, giving advice and keeping everybody safe. We caught up with the newest recruit.

River regular Adrian Bailey was already having a whale of a time as a member of the Mobile Volunteer Team, but his cup runneth over now he's added VPO duties.

"I absolutely love it," says the retired MD of builders merchants Fairview Trading, who relishes his hands-on duties.

"Obviously licensing is important because it's our lifeblood, but VPOs are the first ANT people that visitors see and our role is to be welcoming and help out in any way we can. In addition we keep an eye out for anyone in trouble or any hazards on the river."

It's also special to be patrolling in *The Roger Hewett*, named in honour of the late Boater and keeping his name in view on the stretch he patrolled with wife Ali for nearly nine years.

"Roger was a very dedicated ANT man who did a great deal of voluntary work and it's a traditional boat that's lovely to handle," adds Adrian, who keeps his 22ft cruiser *Idlers* at Bredon and has a sea fishing boat down in Cornwall.

Adrian occasionally comes across a speeding boat but simply being there is a great deterrent. "The majority of Boaters treasure our river as much as we do and are very good at keeping to the rules."

Work is invariably interesting. One call out, from Volunteer Chairman Paul Cronin, was to investigate a large gathering of young canoeists, who'd appeared out of the blue.

"They were a lovely bunch of Scouts and their leaders were most apologetic when I explained that they should have notified us so that we could put out an alert and look out for them," says Adrian.

"They are going to memo the other groups to let them know too, so that's a good result."

He was brought on board by Volunteer Director Nick Farr who is delighted to have him as a fellow VPO too. Adrian couldn't be happier.

"I love the river and I find the work involved really enjoyable. All the ANT teams are a pleasure to work with, the Boaters are a pleasure to meet and I feel very lucky to be a VPO for the Avon."



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Meet our flagship

Festival visitors got a sneak preview of ANT heritage vessel *Neptune*, which is getting a new lease of life and helping to launch a dream.

The 60-year-old former British Waterways Board motorised hopper is being transformed into a new youth and learning hub that will be the pride of the Avon.

She's already had a makeover, courtesy of Evesham Marina, and will be fitted out over winter, ready for a 2020 grand unveiling.

But ANT VIPs and Stratford-upon-Avon festival goers enjoyed a soft launch when *Neptune* took prime position on the river, while Bonkers Activities' Stand Up Paddleboarded around her as a taste of what's to come.

ANT and Bonkers' Activities have teamed up to provide a mobile youth engagement and activity centre that will also teach boat handling skills to all ages.

Evesham Marina's Steve Smith and partner Fran were invited to ANT's Stratford's VIP event as a thank you for their work and support. They are pictured first left with ANT Chairman Jack Hegarty (third right), Stratford Town Trust Chief Executive Sara Aspley, Stratford DC Chairman Cllr Christopher Kettle, Worcestershire CC Chairman Peter Tomlinson, Stratford Mayor Cllr Kate Rolfe, her husband Mike Rolfe and ANT Director Penny Clover.



Crucially, the mighty *Neptune* will be home to the ANT Squad, the brainchild of Chief Executive Clive Matthews, who grew up mucking around on the river with his dad, the late Dudley Matthews MBE.

"I loved being out and about and learning all those new skills and I've always dreamt of ANT giving the same opportunities to new generations," he says.

"The Avon's future will be in their hands and the more youngsters we can engage and get interested now, the stronger that future will be."

ANT's External Funding Director Penny Clover and Recreation Project Development Manager Alex Mellor secured thousands of pounds to help fund the work on *Neptune* by Evesham Marina, whose MD Steve Smith also donated to the project.

His team of experts dedicated five months to a complete



refurbishment. She's been re-plated, has a new engine, a new generator and heating system and she's been rewired and repainted.

"Evesham Marina is a big supporter of the Trust and they did an absolutely cracking job with great loving care," praises Clive.

"We think *Neptune* and her fellow ANT sister ship *Canopus* are two of the best remaining examples of vessels of this class and are still used as working vessels on a daily basis."

"It's always a pleasure to work with the Trust and we were delighted to work on this new and exciting project on such a historic craft, which has been modernised in a way sympathetic to her heritage. We look forward to working with the Trust on future projects," adds Steve.

The winter internal fit out will be crafted by ANT Volunteers, spearheaded by Bonkers Activities' Stand Up Paddleboarding and canoeing experts Kim Bonk and Alex.

Rather wonderful

Neptune's previous owner would have been delighted with her new role, says his good friend and ANT Engineering Director Roger Clay.

The late Dr Roger Lorenz, who bought her as a work boat for the northern waterways, was a popular college lecturer among his many skills, which ranged from boatbuilder to marine surveyor.

"Roger would have definitely approved. He was very much in favour of bringing young people onto the waterways, plus carrying on the knowledge and breathing new life into skills that are fast disappearing," says Roger, who met his pal at university and is credited with immersing him in that waterways world.

Trail-blazer *Neptune* was the prototype of her class of British Waterways Board's motorised hoppers.

Built in 1959/60, they were deployed in the northern waterways, carrying 40 tonnes of dredging and building materials.

"Everyone loved them because they were so useful, flexible, quite quick and solid and easy to handle," recalls our Roger.

"They were built like the proverbial brick, but, as Roger and his wife Stef found out when they converted her into a leisure boat, they are also incredibly safe sea boats, very well ballasted and stable and punch through the waves."

When Roger died tragically young, in 2013, *Neptune* came to the Avon to carry on her good work, alongside sister barge *Canopus*.

ANT acquired her last year and began the transformation.

"It's lovely that an old lady of the waterways is being turned into something else rather wonderful. There's no stopping her."

You're the tops: MVT land Towpath Talk accolade

ANT's jubilant Mobile Volunteer Team were super buoyant after beating off tough competition to scoop *Towpath Talk's* coveted Top Team award.

The hands-on squad were crowned by a panel of judges and readers of the popular publication, which named The Cotswolds Canals Trust and Welshpool Canal Adopters as joint runners-up. Third place was awarded to Daniel Adamson steam ship volunteers and the IWA Northampton Branch.

The success was celebrated at the ANT AGM, to which Patron Tony Hales CBE made a special journey to present the glass trophy to Volunteer Chairman Paul Cronin (pictured left) and MVT lead, and Volunteer Recruitment Director, Nick Farr.

Towpath Talk Editor Janet Richardson had already handed over a framed certificate to proud Paul at the unveiling event of MVT workboat *Jubilant's* new Top Team plaque.

The award was launched to celebrate unsung heroes who have gone that extra mile for their local stretch of towpath, canal or river, waterways association or community boat.

"The MVT was a clear winner in both votes for our first team award and its work sums up why Volunteers are so important to our waterways," says Janet.

The happy team also received a prize of a celebratory canal day out from awards' sponsor ABC Leisure Group and a £100 cheque, which will be spent on equipment for the team.

"Receiving this award is one of the most special



moments I've enjoyed since I started working with the Trust 23 years ago," comments Paul.

"I was extremely proud to accept the Award on behalf of all the dedicated members of the Mobile Volunteer Team and it certainly gave us a boost to know that we could hold our heads up against some far larger and longer established Volunteer groups," adds Nick.

"I didn't miss an opportunity to show off the Award on my Volunteer Recruitment stand at our three River Festivals this year."

Nick has no problem finding helpers for the MVT, which is in its third season providing more hands-on support to free up the charity's engineering squad to get on with the big jobs.

"We're a friendly bunch on a boat, who have a lot of fun doing non engineering maintenance. What's not to like," he smiles.



A VIP thanks to Volunteers

ANT celebrated its much-valued Volunteers with a special VIP event at Pershore River Festival.

Chief Executive Clive Matthews laid on the hospitality pontoon, complete with a spread of donated refreshments, to toast the ever-growing team.

"We are so very grateful to our Volunteers, whose skills, friendliness and achievements are invaluable and very much appreciated," says Clive.

"They don't only put their hearts and souls into ANT,

they also help to make the Avon an even more friendly and welcoming river. The event was a new way of saying thank you."

Volunteers were, as always, out in force at Pershore's busiest festival yet, operating trip boats and encouraging more people to come on board with ANT, among many other things.

● Festival fun - see page 32.

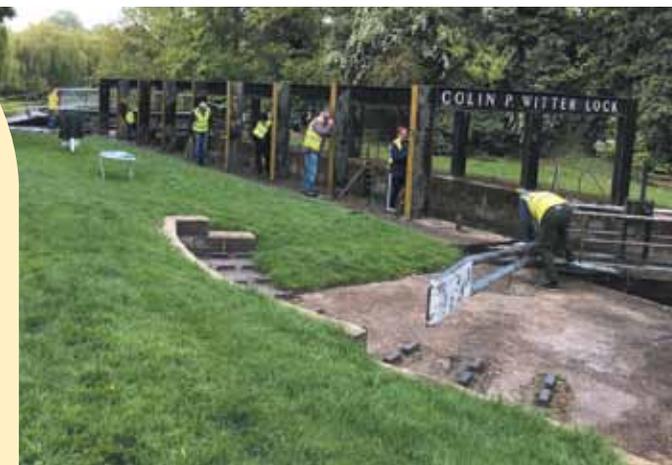
Shipshaping up in style

Cheerful Volunteers had a fine old time getting Stratford Trinity Lock all shipshape in the spring.

Clive Matthews and the ANT Works Team gave up their free time too to help with the weekend makeover.

Tasty eats were supplied by culinary whiz Mark Lyons and Mandy Myers' amazing cakes. Meanwhile, amongst all the sterling work ticked off this season, Volunteers have built a new hut to house the mower and equipment at Strensham.

It's a very welcome amenity, as they used to have to lug the mower through a field and winch a heavy bridge across the river just to mow the grass at the Lock.



Spreading the word

Volunteer Chairman Paul Cronin is searching for special people to become ANT Ambassadors.

"My dream is of a team of enthusiasts who will act as front of house at events, to spread the word about what we do and how we do it," he explains.

The Ambassadors would be set apart from the usual volunteering work, although people are very welcome to do both, of course.

"They may be giving out leaflets and directing people to our stand at festivals, for instance or joining groups on our trip boats to get people engaged with ANT.

"It's something I'm very passionate about, but I just need someone to help me get it off the ground, as Nick Farr did with the MVT."

There were lots of smiling faces at all three river festivals, which ANT attended in force.

Pershore doubled its number of boats, Stratford had a massive waiting list for would-be comers and Evesham was super popular too. We look forward to seeing you again at next year's events: Tewkesbury's Big Weekend returns to kick off the season May 16 and 17 (www.tewkesburymedievaltown.uk/tewkesbury-big-weekend).

Stratford-upon-Avon is usually the first of the July fests, but the date was unconfirmed as we went to press (www.stratford.co.uk/events/stratford-river-festival).

Evesham River Festival takes place on July 11 (www.theeveshamriverfestival.uk or their Facebook page).

Pershore River Festival launches on July 18 (www.pershoreriverfestival.org).



The bunting and balloons were out in force to add to the fun feel at Evesham (left), Stratford (bottom right) and Pershore.



Ahoy there

ANT extends a warm welcome to a new marina. Mark Waterson, Manager of Dovecote Moorings, will be unveiling a 17 berth facility just half a mile out of Barton village.

The Moorings, complete with an information

and refreshment hub, will go live next season. "We're looking forward to welcoming even more visitors to the river," says Mark, whose Moorings are now part of the Heart of England Forest Group.

The Severn Unit Maritime Volunteer Service (MVS) is a mighty ANT supporter. The team conducts, among many other things, regular patrols from Tewkesbury to Strensham, looking out for any navigational issues and often solving them on the spot.

The Unit also helps keep Avon and Strensham Locks looking good, supports ANT events, and always responds immediately to urgent call outs including, this year, a night-time rescue of a stricken boat.

Goodness, what a busy year

December

While most people were relaxing in the warm for the Christmas break, the MVS was rushing to help after a boat caught fire.

Responding to Avon Lock-Keeper Nic Lancaster's December 30 SOS call, the team knew the fire was out, but the boat needed towing to Tewkesbury and daylight was fading fast.

Tim Huckvale, David Peet and Will Fish, on board *Minerva*, managed to locate the half beached boat and moved it safely downstream.

"We regularly train on the river but having to do the job in the dark made it even more difficult," admits Tim, Regional Head of Seamanship.

"We were pleased that the operation went well and that everyone aboard the stricken vessel was safe."

March

Three members attended ANT Volunteers' Seminar and also welcomed the First Aid Awareness Course. "It was excellent and covered many aspects," reports Head of Unit Nic Price.

The Unit was back in emergency mode mid month, when a 60ft narrowboat sank in floods at Bredon. There was no trace above water and thus it was an urgent navigation hazard. "Our team had to use great ingenuity to set a row of warning marker buoys attached to weights around the sunken boat, which had slipped a good 12 ft out into the

river," says Nic. Volunteer Chairman Paul Cronin and Clive Matthews, who was busy tackling the Evesham Lock challenge, passed on very grateful thanks.

June

Flaming June brought floods. After an enjoyable annual offshore training cruise, the Unit switched to full alert helping ANT patrol moored boats and assisting stranded boaters near Avon Lock, including evacuating a couple who opted to cut short their holiday and head home with dry land-yearning dog Zak.

Another boat dog, Minnie, was grateful for her ride to dry land for walkies and the team also ferried humans who needed to shop.

Post floods, the first task was to shift a huge tree blocking the main navigation arch of King John's Bridge.

"With the help of our small boats we managed to get a rope round the trunk and a party of Unit volunteers, assisted by ANT's Paul Cronin, were able to pull it safely to shore," says Nic.

Later, the MVS had a stand and organised games at the fund-raising Bredon's Big Day. The inflatable rib turned into a very popular children's adventure playground.

July

The team hosted more joyful children with the Tewkesbury Sea Cadets for the Chernobyl Children's Project, providing river trips for excited youngsters, who are all in remission from cancer.

"A holiday to the clean air in Britain helps boost their immune system," explains Nic.

There were smiles all round again, when the Unit turned out in force - four boats, a stand, boat and a Water Display Team performance - for the Pershore River Festival.

"It was a very busy and most successful weekend."



And pull! MVS members, and ANT's Paul Cronin, haul the tree to dry land for collection later.



DAVID BOLTON

ANT's first Chairman was a PR consultant who didn't immerse himself in the waterways world until he was in his 50s but he certainly made waves when he did.

David Bolton turned accounts of his travels on narrowboat *Frederick* into a sparkling new career as an eminent author, whose tomes included *Race Against Time* about the launch of the IWA, and *Waterways World* contributor.

He made friends with the late David Hutchings and

JOHN GRANTHAM

John Grantham MBE had no intention of slowing down when he retired as a BBC senior manager. He and wife Sheila dived straight into Pershore community life, not least serving as Mayor and Mayoress three times.

They volunteered at a wide range of youth groups and John, a Town and District Councillor, was the forefather of the Pershore Riverside Youth Centre (PRYC), which has touched countless young lives. Son Richard, ANT Navigation Engineer, is a current Trustee and also a Town Councillor.

John, whose glittering BBC career included being one of the original members of the Pebble Mill engineering team, received his MBE in 2003 in recognition of his services to the community and youth of Pershore.

ANT and PRYC have honoured his work by naming its wheelchair accessible Wheelyboat (pictured), based at

in the 1990s joined the Upper Avon Navigation Trust, which he went on to chair.

David led the amalgamation that produced ANT. He brought in current Chief Executive Clive Matthews whilst building the Trust, served on the EA's Midlands statutory board and was a member of the Parliamentary waterways lobby, among many other things.

He requested that his ashes be scattered on the Avon.



the Riverside Centre, after him.

Sadly, John passed away, at 88, before the special unveiling ceremony could be arranged.

The funeral service at Pershore Abbey was packed. John was also much loved dad of Martin and granddad to Richard's son Eli.

ANT also mourns the passing of a number of other supporters.

LUKE RUFF

Master Builder and ANT Contractor Luke Ruff had been working alongside the Work Team on Strensham Lock when he was tragically killed in a car crash.

"It was a huge shock for everyone and our thoughts are with his family," says Clive who has ensured the 37-year-old father of two's name lives on in ANT history.

"Luke had just finished resetting the big mill wheel that was found at the Lock. That now bears a dedication plaque in his memory."

Luke is mourned by parents Michael and Patricia, partner Jo, children Ellese and Ashton and siblings Kain and Jessica.

STEVE KEMPSON

The Trust team was also shocked by the death of ANT friend Steve Kempson, on board his boat at Wyre

North Bank. A retired butcher and postmaster, Steve had been a member at Wyre for five years and was well known and liked by the team at ANT's HQ.

A dedication plaque will be placed on the gatepost to the trackway.

TOM SEED

Popular Tom Seed was an avid Volunteer. Volunteer Chairman Paul Cronin says: "I first met Tom and partner Jaquie when they came to Tewkesbury Marina in 2008 and moored *Leobel* close to ours. We quickly became friends.

"Tom was keen to Volunteer for LANT and then ANT and particularly liked helping out at Nafford Lock.

"On retirement they moved to Wyre Piddle and kept *Leobel* at the bottom of the garden. Tom will be sadly missed."

Volunteer news



REACHMASTERS & ASSOCIATES 2019

I get great satisfaction from looking back at what we have achieved over the year. Again, we have much to celebrate.

Those very first years were quite a challenge as we were bringing together two Navigation Trusts, which were run very differently.

The Upper Reaches, for example, had no Volunteers looking after the Locks and Moorings.

A lot of effort has been put into recruitment. Brian and Di Morgan were very active in getting new Volunteers, followed on by Nick Farr.

We now have more than 100 Volunteers working on "our" river and really making a difference.

Something to celebrate and we'll be pushing the boat out next year too.

We mark the first TEN years of the Avon Navigation Trust in 2020.



WINTER WARMER

We finished 2018 with a trip on the Gloucestershire Warwickshire Steam Railway, travelling in style in a first class Pullman-like carriage, reserved just for us.

We enjoyed bacon rolls, mulled wine, tea and coffee on our journey through the Cotswolds to Cheltenham, including the recently reopened line to Broadway. A great day out.

The winter weather was much better than 'normal', allowing our growing band of mobile Volunteers to remain active and improving facilities.

It also gave all our Volunteers a good start to the season with Locks and Moorings looking fresh and well maintained.



SITE VISIT SURPRISE

We had our seventh Volunteers Seminar on March 2nd at Ecgwin's Private Members' Club in Evesham.

A total of 41 delegates were updated on winter works and plans for the summer. Chief Executive Clive Matthews offered a lunchtime site visit to see the Evesham Lock dewatered and work in progress.

We normally include Safety guidance and advice, an important part of the Induction Process.

This year we were all trained, or retrained, in Basic First Aid.

All were certified to Level 2, including Chairman

Jack Hegarty who advised us that he has gained more qualifications as an ANT Volunteer than in his day job!



SPREADING THE JOY

The Vale of Evesham School, for pupils with special needs, helped out with painting at Strensham Lock as part of the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme.

We arranged for them to have a boat trip through the Lock aboard Patrol Boat *Tardis* as a thank you.

They so enjoyed the experience that they were reluctant to disembark. My thanks to Skipper Nick Farr.

Special thanks, too, to Chris Knight who has been leading the Pershore Lock Island project and arranged a delivery of trees. These were planted by willing volunteers despite the challenging weather.



TAKE A BOW MVT

Later in March there was a very special day for the Mobile Volunteer Team (MVT), who were presented with *Towpath Talk* Top Team Award at Wyre Wharf by the Editor Janet Richardson.

Chairman Jack Hegarty joined us as we unveiled the plaque that has been fitted to our workboat *Jubilant*.

We were also honoured, Volunteer Director Nick Farr and I, when ANT Patron Tony Hales CBE made a special trip to the AGM to officially hand over the trophy.

Sponsors ABC, at Alvechurch, also presented us with a voucher for a day boat for ten, who were selected by drawing names out of the hat and had a fine time in June.

After a very comprehensive handover we were let loose, visiting the memorial to the meeting of IWA founders Tom Rolt and Robert Aickman before heading to Birmingham, where we had a grand lunch, discounted because one of us is a shareholder in the brewery (thanks Pete).



FOOD FOR THOUGHT

On April 6th we were at Pershore's Angel Hotel for our annual meal, a sellout event with 50 of us enjoying lovely food in a great riverside hotel.

We were privileged to be joined by Jack Hegarty and Wychavon Chairman Tony Rowley.

Jack reported that our numbers had passed the 100 mark and Tony praised the work of our Volunteers.

Volunteer news

TASTY WORK

In May more than 50 gathered for our first Volunteer Weekend at Stratford Trinity Lock, where we were joined by Clive and the ANT Works Team, who gave up their free time to help.

Mark Lyons' culinary skills and Mandy Myers amazing cakes kept everyone happy.

Strensham was refreshed in April 2019; Stratford Trinity in May 2019. Marcliff will be in spring 2020.

FESTIVAL TIME

We supported all of the main, very successful riverside festivals.

At Pershore we again provided two trip boats, which were full to capacity on every trip. Success.

Volunteers enjoyed special ANT hospitality as a thank you and Stratford featured Jack's first successful VIP event.

CLEAN SWEEP

The MVT has been very busy, firstly finishing Craycombe Turn Mooring refurbishment before moving to Evesham's Waterside and onto Comberton.

Stratford's SWEET is doing such a good job of keeping the river and canal litter free that the team is now taking on minor maintenance and spot tree trimming, particularly above Stratford.

DON'T ROCK THE BOAT

Our VPO (Volunteer Patrol Officers) have also been doing sterling work this year checking out licences and providing help and guidance in all manner of ways.

Here's an example - after scanning the moored boats at Twyning the team shifted to continue downstream, checking behind us as we left... and were astonished to see a small dinghy with a large motor performing 'doughnuts' in the middle of the river.

I think the Skipper was as surprised as us when we performed our own U-turn and switched on the flashing amber light.

The young couple's upward-tilted boat dropped back into the water along with their exuberance when they saw us approach.

We good naturedly checked that they were licensed

and were aware of the Avon's speed limits.

I felt a little sorry for the young Captain as we sedately followed him and his partner all the way down to Tewkesbury, where we were heading anyway.

MY HIGHLIGHTS

Certainly the two *Towpath Talk* award ceremonies. I had made two competition nominations and judges and readers shortlisted MVT, who were up against some stiff competition.

July 21: helping at Pershore Festival, I met a young lady confined to her wheelchair.

Her young carers said she would love a boat trip, but we were unable to get a wheelchair onto the ones we were using. However, we borrowed the *John Grantham* Wheelyboat and a very happy lady enjoyed her trip.

October 18: I was very pleased to be invited to the Maritime Volunteer Service Trafalgar Night Supper, as one of the guests of honour, a truly splendid night marking the historic event.

The MVS support continues to grow in many ways, including Boat Watch in the Tewkesbury area.

The team has been particularly active in removing many of the large trees that end up in the Tewkesbury Reach and responding promptly to those that block King John Bridge.

They also provide additional support to our Volunteers at Strensham and Avon Locks and general patrols on the lower reaches.

Not to be forgotten is seeing, on a daily basis, the efforts our Volunteers go to in making their mark.

We have been rewarded again this year by very positive articles in the waterways press.

LONG SERVICE AWARDS

Five years' service badges presented to Bruce Bosworth (Volunteer, Wyre and MVT supporter); Steve Chiffins (Reachmaster, Barton); Mike Vernon (Reachmaster, Chadbury); Margaret Cronin (Volunteer, Nafford and Comberton Quay). Joan Murfin received her 10 year badge.

RETIREMENTS

With a very BIG thank you for all your help and support: Richard and Bev Jones, Volunteers at Birlingham Quay.



A warm welcome to some of our new recruits at the Volunteers Meeting: (from left) Kate and Matt Norkett (helping at Marcliff and Barton); Zita and Tony Aldridge (Strensham); Anne Farr (Harvington). An equally warm hello to Jon Butler (Stratford Trinity); Neil Milward, Dudley Holmes, Carole Sambrook-Hurst (Weir Brake); Paul Soley (Harvington); Robert and Jane Plumb (Waterside Mooring); Brian and Di Morgan (Craycombe Turn); Jonathan Goode (Birlingham Quay).

JOIN THE A TEAMS

If you would like to be part of this amazing story why not join us?

Our esteemed Volunteers get a welcome pack (including a free first year ANT membership), we have an annual Volunteer seminar with first aid and water safety training and an annual spring meal. We have also trained 14 of our Volunteers to RYA standard for helming.

How could you help? You could:

Adopt a Lock - general gardening, painting and assisting.

Adopt an Overnight Mooring - general light maintenance.

Events - including Tewkesbury BIG Weekend in May and, in July, Stratford-upon-Avon, Evesham and Pershore. We always need help in preparation and on the day.

Be a Lock-keeper for the day - training, if required, can easily be arranged.

Join our VPOs - we now have four Volunteer Patrol Officers, led by Adrian Main in the office and Chris Binks, our relief Lock-keeper and PO. They would appreciate more help.

Join our MVT - our award-winning Mobile Volunteer Team has become our most popular Volunteer activity, but newcomers are always welcome.

AND FINALLY

If you are able to help in any way please feel free to contact me.

PAUL CRONIN, Volunteer Chairman

Sunday Lock Duty Report 2019

For more than 50 years Volunteers have helped boaters during the summer and we're hoping to make next year the best ever.

Time was when eager keepers had to book very early to bag a lock, but busy lives makes a day's commitment more challenging.

It can be a great day out for the whole family, however. Bring a picnic, and book the sunshine.

I would love to see it back like it was, (only August was active this year) and therefore I am appealing to the new 100 or so Volunteers to join this very dedicated team, which also raises funds for the Trust.

Donations in 2019 amounted to £2,287.78, helped by

the raffle at the festivals, bottle raffle (£493), boat trips Pershore (£300).

Thank you all who donated bottles. At Stratford festival we also had raffle prizes from Bancroft Cruisers, Avon Boating, Canal and River Tours and The Countess of Evesham.

Once again I am looking forward to 2020 and hopefully a full diary of bookings for a lock duty.

In the meantime, a large thank you to the dedicated team who have carried out a duty over many, many years.

Diana Morgan
Reachmasters and Associates



The Avon Navigation Trust is proud of its customer service and support. We always welcome your comments, via our feedback cards, letter, email, by phone or in person at our offices. There will be an online comment conduit on our new website, which will go live in 2020.

WE ALSO



Provide easily accessible and immediate information via our unique River Watch www.avonnavigationtrust.org/riverwatch or on our screens at our Wyre Piddle head office, our information centre at Stratford Waterways Information Centre and at Tewkesbury Lock.



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To contribute or to book advertising space, please contact the office at office@avonnavigationtrust.org



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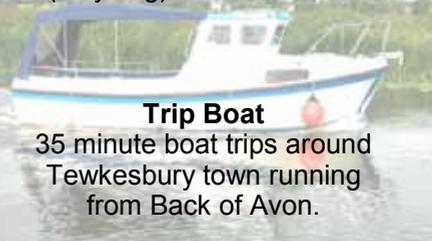


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