

Raymond & Nutfield News – July 2010



Raymond & Nutfield welcome the 'Cressy Cruise' to Braunston Photo: T Coghlan

Our cover picture shows Raymond and Nutfield meeting IWA boat Heron at Braunston turn. To celebrate the centenary of Tom Rolt's birth, Heron was recreating one of his early cruises on the Cressy. At short notice, our local IWA branch invited us to participate and thanks to Brian, Roger and Diana we were happy to oblige.

Editorial

Welcome to a packed edition, with reports from lots of members on the shows and events Raymond and Nutfield have attended so far this year – more than ever before! My grateful thanks to everyone who has contributed. Also a special article from our Chairman, Chris Jones, about the road and other vehicles used by the Samuel Barlow Coal Company.

I was delighted that we were able to spend a whole day practising the Braunston parade circuit. As our boats are local, we should be able to complete the route as well as anyone - and better than some. Next year, I'm hoping we'll manage the ladder bridge turn in one. I know it can be done even with a butty.

This year, the Trustees have been consulting with all members to seek their views on the replacement of Nutfield's cabin. The first round led to many members saying they favoured another wooden cabin. However, several of the Trustees felt that a steel cabin, constructed to look like a wooden cabin, would be easier to maintain and longer lasting. Some members said they preferred wood because that was how Nutfield was originally built and others were concerned that a steel cabin would lead to lots of condensation.

Although, like everyone, I have an opinion on this, I have no wish to influence the final decision. However, I do have a little concern that there are some misunderstandings at the moment. Just to clarify, therefore, Nutfield was built with a rivetted steel cabin and, yes, the boatmen did not like these cabins due to problems with condensation. Over time, many Northwich boats had replacement wooden cabins installed and Nutfield did have a wooden cabin when she worked with Raymond between 1968 and 1970. However, if we put a new steel cabin on now, it would be properly insulated and so condensation would not be a major issue.

The matter is due to be further discussed at the Shackerstone members' meeting on Saturday 4th September, so please come along if you would like to take part or send your comments to us beforehand.

Marty Seymour

News from the Chairman

We are delighted to welcome three new Trustees to the Charity – Mike Freeman, Diana Golder and Neil Hankin recently have joined Edward & Holly Parrott, Steve Miles and myself to head the team responsible for Raymond and Nutfield, and running the Charity.

Chris Jones

2010 Report – Our Year So Far

As usual, our first show of the year was the annual OwnerShips Show at Braunston in February. Unlike 2009, this time the snow held off and the weather was quite kind. The marquee was up and open early so Brian and Marty had the tarpaulin carpet in place and the display boards up before anyone else arrived. Once the sales stand was set up, we brought Raymond and Nutfield round to show them off in the marina arm. Despite Raymond's range being lit, volunteers and visitors alike suffered with the chilly breeze during the show. In the marquee, matters were somewhat better and for the first time ever we were granted three whole tables to display our wares. Given more space to display stock, including the donated items which we don't send out on the boats, resulted in our best ever sales income from this show. Sadly their founder, Allen Matthews, subsequently passed away and soon afterwards the OwnerShips organisation was placed into administration. A new company, Ownashare, is being set up but it remains to be seen whether they will want to have a mid-winter boat show.

Training Weekend, April – the Captain's View.

We held a weekend of crew training in April, based at Braunston, which was attended by a number of existing and new crew members. The two days each had a different purpose – on the Saturday, we took the boats around the locality, following the Braunston Historic Boat Show parade circuit.

This circuit takes in a lot of the finer skills of handling a pair of boats, including the tight 180 degree turn out of the marina under the ladder bridge, the sharp turn in under the iron bridge by the Stop House, and perhaps the most difficult of all, the turn at the junction, where the boats have to be reversed on cross-straps around the triangle before heading back to the marina. On the Sunday, we took the pair out as far as the three wide locks of Wigrams (aka Calcutt). Again, it is a testing trip, with the twists and turns of the Oxford Canal, the turn onto the Warwick & Napton Canal as well as the locks themselves, which provided a fine opportunity for the crews to practice running the pair into wide locks and then singling out again upon leaving.



Under the ladder bridge Photo: S Miles

2010 Report continued

Everyone involved acquitted themselves in fine fashion, given the difficulty of some of the manoeuvres, and I think everyone learnt a great deal, myself included! The whole weekend was agreed to be a success, and we are looking at repeating the exercise. We can only manage a limited number of people at one time, so it is very much first come, first served; just let me know.

As I've said, we all learnt a lot, even the more experienced and regular crew members who were there – my thanks go to Robin, Richard and Brian especially for their help. With an eye to the future, it was particularly good to have our chairman Chris Jones' young son Tom along on the Saturday – he proved himself quite capable of steering the pair, under supervision, in the tradition of boat children of old. Perhaps not surprising, as like his father he is descended from the Barlow family!

One of the problems I discovered on taking over as Captain two years before was that there were then no other qualified steerers for the pair, although a number of people had acted as crew. This has now been rectified, to some degree, and I hope to add more names to my 'qualified skippers' list as time goes by. Being skipper for the boats is not just a matter of boat-handling skills – it requires the ability to deal with problems as they arise, from running aground (all too easy on today's undredged canals) to mechanical failures, and taking decisions as necessary 'on the run'. And an awareness of the care of the boats is a major factor – we are entrusted with two historically-important vessels, and it is incumbent upon us to avoid damage to them.

Lastly, an appeal: I am currently acting not only as Captain, but as volunteer and crew organiser and events organiser. As most of you will know, I have many other commitments. If anyone feels that they could take on the job of dealing with the various shows and events we attend, it would be a great help; likewise, if anyone wanted to take on the job of keeping our volunteer crews informed of the event and boat-moving dates, and co-ordinating those available into a suitable crew, it would take a load off of my shoulders!

Robin adds:

We all met up at the boats on their mooring in Braunston Marina on Saturday morning. Peter Boyce was also there making a delivery of new top planks for Raymond so the first job of the day was to get these unloaded from Peter's boat and fitted on to Raymond.

Following on from this we all boarded our boats and set off. The plan was to follow the route of the "figure of eight" used for the parades at the annual Braunston boat shows. We repeated the route over and over again. On each occasion a different person had their hand on the tiller of the motor and the butty and we continued this process until we had all had a turn on both boats.

On the Sunday we headed off and went straight to Calcutt Locks. Here we were shown how to breast up the boats together to go into a lock and how to single them out again afterwards. Having gone down through the flight of 3 locks we then wended the boats at the bottom. We then went back up the locks breasting up and singling out again. We then proceeded back to the marina and put the boats away.

Everyone who turned up thoroughly enjoyed themselves and we all thought that it had been worthwhile. We all agreed that the exercise should be repeated sometime.

2010 Report continued

Taking a Carpal Tunnel Down the Northampton Flight

I have been a member of The Friends of Raymond for a year and have already been crewing with Nutfield and Raymond on a number previous occasions under the watchful eye of skipper Miles. But this time I had a reasonable excuse to not join in the lock wheeling along the Northampton arm. The Carpal Tunnel was in my left hand or to be more correct in the right hand as the left one had been opened up leaving me with stitches and a scar.

The purpose of this trip was to attend the annual May Bank Holiday gathering organised by The Northampton Branch of the Inland Waterways Association at Becketts Park, which is just down river from the junction with the canal. The plan was for Steve and myself to work the motor ahead and the rest of the crew to deal with the butty. Richard had the short straw and was thus elected as chief bow hauler. This was the first time in a long time that I had been down the arm and so it was almost a voyage of discovery.

The previous trip had been in the height of summer and the blanket weed was plentiful plus there was still a large iron shed above the bottom lock. I had moored beneath its overhang on the old wharf and enjoyed the rain and thunder on its roof. Now an unrepeatable experience.



On the Northampton Arm

Photo: R Golder

Fortunately the Friday was dry and sunny and, in my leisurely role of steerer, I was able to appreciate the rolling Northamptonshire countryside and take some pictures from less usual view points.

The journey was executed with pleasing efficiency, that is until we cleared the bottom lock and required to breast up with the butty on the right hand side of the motor so that it could be against the bank and be in a position to head off back up the arm on the Monday morning - with the help of the sea scouts.

2010 Report continued Taking a Carpal Tunnel Down the Northampton Flight

I reversed up to the tail of the lock, gave the butty a start out of the lock and thought that I would let the butty pass and then pull onto its left hand side. Unfortunately I had not

reckoned with the depth of silt below the lock and the planned manoeuvre did not exactly take place as intended though I am pleased to say that the boats were eventually breasted as required.



Raymond on the Northampton Arm Photo: M Freeman_

The final requirement was to wind at the entrance to the nearby lock cut. Yes, you have guessed it, just as the pair was lined up for the manoeuvre, a boat heading upstream chose that moment come out of the lock cut. A back off, a successful second attempt at winding and the boats were safely tied up at the reserved moorings.

I am pleased to be able to say that the crews appetites and thirsts had not been damaged by these experiences and they went on to have a successful, if slightly damp, weekend. Me? I had a lift back to the top lock to be reunited with my vehicle.

Carpal Tunnel? What? Where? Well its not boat size! A tube of sinew through the wrist that protects nerves and blood vessels. With passage of time and use, the tube shrinks impeding blood flow and nerve function. A few quick cuts, the tube is opened and hands are better able to do what they are meant to.

Mike Freeman

2010 Report continued

Boats on Tour mainly by Robin Bishop

Following on from the Northampton event the boats were moved to Wolverton. The next port of call was to attend the IWA Chiltern Branch Canal Appreciation Weekend at Marsworth. Quite a small event but well attended, thanks to Roger arranging for posters to be put up on all local buses. We saw much interest from the public in Raymond, especially on Saturday and the sales stand did surprisingly well.



Raymond and Nutfield on the Marsworth Flight Photo: R Golder

Robin joined the boats at Berkhamsted part way from Marsworth to Rickmansworth. They reached Nash Mills on Monday and arrived at Rickmansworth early in the afternoon on Tuesday, leaving the boats with other early arrivals and returning on Friday to prepare for the Festival. As we were a bit short of volunteers for the weekend, Brian was allowed out to help, starting by giving Steve a lift to Ricky. When they arrived, it was found that Raymond and Nutfield were in each other's moorings so the first thing to do was to swap the boats so that Nutfield was moored alongside Roger in the Chess lock next to Batchworth Lock. Raymond was moved into the Number 3 mooring position alongside the towpath.

There was the usual large number of ex-working boats present. These included President and Kildare who had a very high visibility as they were moored in the Number 1 mooring position. In addition to all the boats present there were many side stalls and a fun fair in the nearby Aquadrome.

On Saturday, there was a steady stream of through traffic of the general public as well as visitors to the event itself. A lot of interest was taken in Raymond and we had many people come on board to see inside her cabin. Sunday dawned cloudy and with rain threatening it was decided to put a tarpaulin over the sales table in Raymond's hold. Trade continued until the serious rain started mid-afternoon, when it was decided to pack up.

2010 Report continued

Following on from this event, the next move was to travel north. The boats got to Cassio Wharf on Sunday, Bulbourne on Monday and reached Linslade on Tuesday. Arrangements had been previously made to leave the boats at Wyvern Shipping for a few days. Richard and Robin then moved the boats on to Soulbury 3 Locks to attend the IWA Milton Keynes Branch Lock Ransom over the May Bank Holiday weekend. Both footfall and weather were disappointing this time, but it is important to keep trying different events and we like to support our friends in the IWA whenever possible.

After Soulbury, the boats moved on to the long pound at Stoke Bruerne ready for the Gala Weekend and Canal Festival. While they were waiting, the damaged floorboards in Raymond's cabin were replaced and Steve managed to finish the paint retouching left over from last year's docking.

The Stoke Bruerne weekend was blessed with good weather but the footfall sadly seemed quite low. These days, we can face a bit of competition on the sales front from other trading boats though, of course, only Raymond gives the 'visit a working boat cabin' experience. The people who did visit were generally very interested but there weren't really enough of them.

Raymond and Nutfield then returned home to Braunston marina, having been away for nearly seven weeks.

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From the Bucks Herald 19-May 2010

Two fascinating and historic working boats stayed the weekend in Marsworth recently, mooring up by the White Lion. The Raymond and Nutfield were the last butty boat and motorised narrow boat to carry loads on contract on the canal, ceasing work in 1970. It was fascinating to sit in the colourful cabin of the Raymond to see how a family of five or six could make their home in a tiny space, thanks to fold down beds, babies placed in drawers, children sharing a small bunk and meals eaten at a pull out table.



Raymond at Marsworth with newly repainted deckboard Photo: M Seymour

Braunston Historic Boat Gathering June 2010

This year, Raymond and Nutfield were asked to open the Braunston Historic Boat Gathering. David Blagrove performed the honours and steered Raymond round the short parade route, with Brian watching closely hoping to pick up some tips. Tim Coghlan had arranged a good turn out of VIPs including our MP, MEP and the Chairman of BW. Braunston Pickle played the music, the boat handling went well despite Tim blocking Edward's view at one stage - and Marty was able to relax a bit.

On the Thursday evening before the show, Tim Coghlan had very kindly decided to sponsor a performance by the DayStar Theatre, with all proceeds going to our Nutfield Restoration Fund. The show proved popular with nearly all seats taken and we have a useful £500 to put away in the bank. Many thanks also to Tim for making us the main recipient of money raised by the boat gathering this year.



At the Braunston Historic Boat Gathering



Photos: R & D Golder

At the Braunston show by Roger Golder

I have been fascinated by narrow-boats since I remember being lifted out of my push-chair to watch a horse-drawn boat heading towards Oxford, in about 1945. I was also very proud when working Sandford Lock as a summer relief lock keeper to let a loaded Willow Wren pair through to deliver a trial load of coal to the paper mill; sadly this traffic never took off.

I had nothing more to do with narrow boats until Diana and I joined The Friends of Raymond in 2004. Since our retirement, we have enjoyed manning the sales stand, doing show-rounds, working in the dry dock at Braunston, lock-wheeling, learning to steer and bow-hauling Raymond.

However, the 2010 Historic Boat Show was for us, a revelation. Over 90 working boats together and with living on Raymond we really felt part of the event. No wonder people say that Braunston is the show the old boaters like to visit. While doing show-rounds on the Saturday afternoon, a gentleman asked if he might come and just sit in the cabin as he and his family had gone on the bank when he was about 6 years old. Looking through the Barlows booklet he discovered photos of two of his aunts!

So we were thrilled by the sheer number of working-boats at Braunston and enjoyed being part of the friendly team looking after our pair. Long may they stay together to show visitors how an extended family could live in such cramped conditions.

Treasurer's Report

Show income this year has varied considerably with results showing again that weather, location and footfall play a major part. Overall, we are doing well and I have started putting money aside for some of next year's bills. This is important as many of our bills arrive early in the year while our events run from May onwards. Our biggest expense this year was nearly £700 on new top planks with £340 spent on Raymond's cabin floor, and we will have to spend a bit more on caulking/blacking Raymond in October.

Membership Report

At the end of 2009, we had 59 paid up members. We are now up to 73. There are still a few April renewals to come in. Please do renew if you can; we welcome your support whether it is from the comfort of your armchair or out on the front line. Many of these new members have been signed up by Steve – well done. Do you know anyone who might like to support us? We can't let Steve do it all! For those who have not yet had a letter, more renewal invitations will be sent out in October.

Fund Raising

In the January update, we told you about www.easyfundraising.org.uk This is an on-line shopping website which gives donations to charity. It can't be difficult to set up because I have managed to do it. However, not many people have signed up yet, so Edward has prepared this more detailed explanation of what to do.

The Friends of Raymond is registered with this organisation, and through it can receive a donation every time you shop on-line with over 2000 retailers. It doesn't cost you any more to buy your goods, the donation is given by the retailer from their own sales, and it is very easy to use; here's how!

Firstly, you need to go to the website at www.easyfundraising.org.uk and create yourself an account. When you are creating your account you get an option to choose which organisation you wish to support, and if you search under 'R' you will find us.

Having created your account, the rest is very simple. When you decide you want to order a new book or DVD from Amazon.com, all you have to do is navigate to the Easy Fundraising website – which I have saved as a homepage – and log in.

Once you are logged in, you need to find Amazon and you can do this very easily by using the little white box at the top left of the page which is showing 'search for retailers'. Just type in 'Amazon' and hit 'Go' and it will bring up a page with a 'Visit Store' button. If you click on the little orange and white star button it will add it to your 'favourites' on the Easy Fundraising website and you can go there quickly in the future.

Once you click the 'Visit Store' button, you will be directed to the Amazon website, and now you shop as you normally would – you need do nothing else, its that easy! You will have seen on your way in that Amazon donate 2.5% of every purchase, so if you spend £10 we get 25p, and if every member in the club did it once a month for a year, it would bring us over £200 a year, for free!

Its also worth pointing out that you also get donations from retailers for requesting a catalogue or holiday brochure, opening an account with EBay, and I even saw one that gave a £45 donation for taking out a mobile phone contract! The key to it is that you must get to the retailer via the Easy Fundraising website and log-in to your account. If you just go straight to the retailers site the club will not get a donation.

So there we are, it takes about 10 minutes to create an Easy Fundraising account and learn to use it, it's completely free, and all the hard work is done for you! You can buy everything from mobile phones to insurance, and holidays to the weekly shopping, and your support will be greatly appreciated by the charity!

The Barlows Other Vehicles

It goes without saying that we know a considerable amount about the canal boats of Samuel Barlow Coal Company from our own Raymond, through the film star – Sunny Valley/Northolt – to the much photographed Rosie Agnes, Hood and many many more that feature in various canal history books and magazines. However one area of the company operations is not so well known and has been largely ignored – that of road and rail vehicles.



Although the Barlow canal operation dates back to Samuel's first registration of his boats in early 1870s there is no evidence of him (or his descendants) using road vehicles of any kind until the turn of the century. However with granting of large coal carrying contracts from Glascote Colliery in the 1890s it can be assumed that from their base at John Street, Glascote Barlows must have had some way of moving coal from the canal basins to many of its domestic customers in the Tamworth area.

It is perhaps critical to note that when Samuel died suddenly in 1894 he was described as a coal contractor not a canal carrier. From this period it would seem Barlows had contracts to supply coal around the district by carts as well as longer distance traffic into Birmingham and Coventry by boats. Further evidence comes from some the location of these contracts that Barlows obtained in the locality such as Hopwas waterworks, Alders Paper mills etc which were not located near a canal and must have required carting of coal from the canal side to the works.

There is only one photo in existence of a Barlow cart that I have been able to locate featuring TW King standing beside the cart outside his family home at Glascote around 1920. This photo though of poor quality shows the style of lettering on the cart to be of similar design to that of the boats. Sadly no one I have met remembers whether there was a similar colour scheme.

By 1916 Barlow advertisements described the Limited Company as Canal and Carting Contractors. The company records do not record any details of this side of the concern but it can be assumed that it featured significantly in their operations.

As motor transport advanced Barlows were not slow in embracing technological advancement. By 1919 the company had purchased an Overland Car. It can only be assumed that this was used by the Managing Director to visit clients and attract new business. Later that year the car was disposed of for a new Ford car – though the details of what type is not recorded.

The Barlows Other Vehicles continued

Soon the company had also purchased a James motorbike for company use and by 1927 an Austin 7 car and a new AJS motor bike. The company records fail to mention any other vehicles for the following years but it can only assumed by 1939 further cars and motorbikes were being purchased for use by the company managers who by this time must have been covering large parts of the Midlands and South visiting the likes of Kearley & Tonge's at Southall, Aylesbury Dairy and the Ovaltine Works at Kings Langley as well as many clients in the West Midlands.



The surviving Asset Register for the company begins in 1942 by which time there were 5 cars in company ownership and 12 lorries. The lorries were mainly Fordson and Ford Tipper makes and their appearance in the register appears to show a concerted effort by the company to expand their carrying capabilities – at the same time as purchasing large numbers of owner boatmen's craft in the late 1930s. It can only be assumed that, by then, Barlows could see the need to diversify their carrying options as industries moved away from the canals and roads improved in quality.

Despite the purchase of the Braunston yard in 1942, the company records show a consistent effort from then to purchase and expand the lorry fleet as the boat fleet reduced in size. The lorry fleet increased by around 3 or 4 vehicles per year from 1951 mainly with Dodge 7 ton Diesel Tipper lorries costing around £2,500 when purchased from BW Garages. There were also purchases of vans and company cars including a Singer Vogue Saloon in 1963.

By the late 1950s the company had constructed a Motor Vehicle maintenance yard at Tamworth and was using lorries to carry coal from Tamworth into Birmingham rather than using day boats.

The Barlows Other Vehicles continued



Other cargoes such as oil distribution were being considered by 1961 and the profit margins on the lorry fleet were far exceeding the losses being suffered in maintaining the boats and the yard at Braunston. In the late 1950s workers were being brought by van from Tamworth to Braunston every day to work in the boatyard and the increasing cost of this operation and loss of canal carrying contracts forced the company to sell the yard and business to Michael Streat in 1962-3.

The Barlow Lorry fleet continued to expand from their base at Tamworth diversifying into carrying other types of load. In 1971 the fleet and company name was bought by neighbouring haulage company Smith Brothers of Tamworth.

Railway Wagons

One of the least known areas of the Barlows businesses was the use of railway wagons to distribute coal. It made sense from the location of the Glascote docks near the Birmingham to Derby line sidings at Kettlebrook to use railway wagons to distribute coal to lineside factories.

Evidence for the railway wagons is only shown in the Asset Register and is somewhat confusing. From 1942 to 1947 there were 9 railway wagons in the ownership of the company. However they were numbered 61 to 69 and purchased in November 1940.

Whether there were any railway wagons from the inter war years we cannot say for certain but it appears that the wagons were mainly used in the winter to move coal into Birmingham when the canal was frozen or for urgent deliveries. Despite exhaustive searches no photograph of the wagons have been found but it is believed they were grey in colour and bore the company name. In addition records suggest other wagons were hired by the Company from a wagon and carriage company at Gloucester in this period.

So we have seen Samuel Barlow Coal Company was far more than just the boats that we are accustomed to. It is in many ways a pity that more illustrations of their other vehicles have not survived but at least in this article I hope I have showed that the carrying of coal from North Warwickshire was more than just reliant on the boats.

Article and all Photos: Chris Jones