



FoR News February 2026



Nutfield & Raymond passing through Cosgrove 18th July 2025 Picture: Paul Weal

News

2026 Annual General Meeting

As announced, the AGM is next Sunday, 8th February, on Zoom at 11am. All members are welcome, indeed encouraged to attend, and we look forward to seeing as many faces as we did last year.

The agenda and the link to join the meeting will be sent out this week. And the 2025 accounts and the various reports will be available on the website before the meeting. The 2025 AGM minutes are already available to view on the website under Documents & Archives.

Membership renewals

All but a handful of Friends who were due to renew their membership in January have now done so, and a big thank you to everyone who has. If you're one of the few who haven't yet renewed, please consider renewing because it's the support our Friends give us year after year that enables the charity to keep doing what we do.

Nutfield

Nutfield is currently on the marina mooring. She is normally kept partially clothed these days for additional accommodation, but the stern end of the hold has also been covered for the winter, and the cabin has been "winterised".

Having had problems with *Nutfield*'s gearbox back in the summer, when we were offered one that was being refurbished in Braunston, we decided to take it. So, *Nutfield* will shortly be going up to Brinklow Boat Services to have the new gearbox fitted. In preparation for the fitting, we have just held a small work party to clean out the engine bilge.



While *Nutfield* is up at Brinklow, we hope to have the wooden gunwales alongside the cabin and engine room replaced. Then, all being well, she should be back in time to be docked over the Easter weekend.

Raymond



Raymond is on her mooring in the arm, clothed up and winterised.

A considerable amount of work was carried out on *Raymond* last year (more details in Review of 2025 on page 4) and she will be going into the dry dock again in March when Braunston Marina have very kindly granted us a further three days to complete the woodwork repairs and additional painting left over from the October docking.

Boat hire discount



Picture: © Wyvern Shipping Company Ltd

Our long-standing member James Griffin, who owns the Wyvern Shipping Company in Leighton Buzzard on the Grand Union Canal, is very kindly offering a discount to all FoR members who may claim 5% off the price of a Wyvern canal holiday. Please contact Wyvern Shipping on 01525 372355 or see their website www.canalholidays.co.uk.

FoR Webmaster stepping down

Our Webmaster, Jeremy Cooper, has let us know that he feels the time has come for him to hang up his mouse which is fair enough after a good many years as Friends of Raymond's backroom boy and unsung hero. Jeremy was in charge of our website for several years until 2016.. But in 2020, concerned that the site had become rather neglected, he returned and carried out a complete redesign, producing the website we have today, all the while working in the background to keep the content up to date and looking great. We will be very sad to see Jeremy go but we owe him an enormous debt of gratitude for giving Friends of Raymond a bright, colourful, and impressive online presence which has undoubtedly raised the profile of the charity and everything we do.



Is anyone good with websites?

A hard act to follow? Possibly not as hard as it might look because right now, the site is working well. So, is there anyone out there with any degree of website expertise, ideally using WordPress, who would be willing to take over the role of Webmaster?

The job is obviously something that can be done from home, so where you live is not important. In due course, some the older content could do with revising, but keeping the site up to date with current documents, news, and announcements only requires a few hours involvement a month. The more immediate, day-to-day news tends to be posted on Facebook.

We need to find someone to take over from Jeremy as soon as possible. So, if this is something you think you could get involved with, please contact me, Nick Lake, by email (nicklake@outlook.com) or by phone (07712 005444).

Programme for 2026

Two anniversaries in one year

Nutfield's 90th

The majority of the Grand Union Canal Carrying Company's "Town Class" boats were built in 1936, and *Nutfield* was launched on 22nd July that year at the yard of W.J. Yarwood & Sons Ltd on the River Weaver at Northwich, making her one of the so-called "Large Northwich" motor boats. 22nd July 2026 is therefore her 90th birthday. *Nutfield* will join the anniversary gathering of Town Class boats at the Batchworth Boat Rally in May, and plans are in progress for our own celebration at the Braunston Historic Boat Rally on the weekend of 27th & 28th June.

Friends of Raymond's 30th

The Friends of Raymond was formed as a charitable trust on 1st September 1996, which means that our charity will be 30 years old this year. We propose to hold a celebration of both anniversaries at the Braunston Historic Rally, and we are considering a members' gathering, probably at Braunston as near the actual anniversary date as is feasible, possibly on Summer Bank Holiday Monday, 31st August.

We will confirm arrangements as soon as they are finalised, and we hope that a good number of our Friends will come and celebrate with us.

Diary dates

Meanwhile, the following dates are already in the diary.

Mon-16 to Wed-18-Mar	Raymond docking at Braunston to complete outstanding jobs
Fri-03 to Mon-06-Apr	Easter weekend work party and Nutfield docking at Braunston Possible pop-up sales event (TBC)
Sat-16 & Sun-17-May	Batchworth Boat Rally at Rickmansworth (confirmed) Plus 4½ days there and 4½ days back
Fri-26 & Sun-28-Jun	Braunston Historic Boat Rally (confirmed) Setting up Friday, parades and sales stalls Saturday/Sunday
Sat-18 & Sun-19-Jul	Cosgrove Canal Festival (TBC) Plus 1½ days there and 1½ days back NB. We may not go on to Linslade this year, see below
Sat-15 & Sun-16-Aug	Brownhills Canal Festival (confirmed) see below

Linslade in July

The Linslade Canal Festival will be on Saturday 25th July. However, owing to the difficulty we've experienced in recent years with getting stock and sales staff on to the site, we may skip it this year. If it turns out that we can muster enough volunteers willing to take the boats from Cosgrove to Leighton, and enough volunteers willing bring them back to Braunston, we might consider taking the boats to the Linslade Festival but running a reduced sales stall.

Brownhills in August

We have attended the Brownhills Canal Festival on the Wyrley & Essington Canal for the last two years, taking the gazebo by road. In 2024 we cancelled taking the boats owing to a lack of crew, although lock closures due to the pollution incident on the Walsall Canal would have stopped us anyway. And last year the water shortages would have had the same effect. We have booked our pitch again for this year, but if enough people, ie, at least three, would fancy taking the boats up to the BCN – and a similar number are willing to bring them back, of course – we would seriously consider it, possibly going to Birmingham via Hatton and the North Stratford rather than lugging the pair through 53 narrow locks via the "bottom road". This should take about three days each way.

Saltisford (possibly in September)

We have no news yet of what the Saltisford Canal Trust are planning this year, but if they do hold an event we'd aim to have *Nutfield* & *Raymond* there and, were we to take the boats to Brownhills, it might work out that we could go from there down to Warwick on the way home.

Banbury in October

The Banbury Canal Festival is billed as taking place on the weekend of 3rd & 4th October and, as we've been unable to take the boats there for the last two years, 2026 may prove to be third time lucky.

CRT have scheduled work on Napton Lock 12 in February, and if a trial run with *Nutfield* in the spring proves that she can now get through, we'll book in the boats as well as the gazebo. The run from Braunston to Banbury is normally a day and a half in each direction, with overnights at Fenny Compton.

Volunteering at events – can you help?

There was a time, not so many years ago, when we could count on six or more people at most events to take turns on the stall, chat to the public, and give visitors "show-rounds" in *Raymond*'s cabin. But in the years since lockdown, we have lost a number of our former regulars and, as often as not, we have found ourselves down to three, or even two. And 9-to-5 without a break, especially over two days, is a long shift when you're volunteering.

What we urgently need are more members willing to come and help at events!



Events invariably take place at weekends, it's not hard work, you won't get your hands dirty, you can do the hours that suit you (it's voluntary after all) but the more people we have at an event, the fewer hours each person needs to put in.

Spending time talking to people about what we do and helping to raise money for the charity can be an enjoyable and rewarding experience for anyone who would like to help Friends of Raymond in a practical way that doesn't involve the harder work of boating or maintenance. So, if getting involved with events might appeal to you do, please, consider giving it a try because we really do need some extra help in this area. For more information, please get in touch with me, Nick Lake, by email (nickjlake@outlook.com) or by phone (07712 005444).



Review of 2025

This time last year we described 2024 as having been a bit of a rollercoaster, and 2025 wasn't without its ups and downs either. Setbacks included locks, leaks, and mechanical failures, not to mention the water shortages that prevented the boats going anywhere between August and November. All the same, we attended every event in our schedule, even if we had to go to some of them without *Nutfield & Raymond*, and we ended the year with our finances and the boats both looking very respectable.

April

Over the Easter weekend *Raymond* was in the dry dock at the marina for repairs to the cabin sides and fore-end top bends, as well as blacking, cleaning, and general painting. And at the same time, we had our sales stall in two gazebos set up in the car park by the arm where, in spite of the weather, Kath and Brian did an exceptional amount of business.



Raymond in the dry dock Picture: Mike Bowley



Peter and Norman tackling the rot in the top bends



Norman plugging and filling



Brian and Kath on the sales stall



While *Raymond* was in the dry dock, we moved *Nutfield* into her place in the arm giving Norman the opportunity to re-install the silencer with the new set of baffles. The baffles were designed and made at the marina by Candle Bridge Fabrication, and were generously paid for by the Wyvern Shipping Company.

We're pleased to report that once the baffles had bedded in and stopped rattling, they have greatly reduced the volume of *Nutfield*'s exhaust.

After the docking, on Thursday 24th April, we took *Raymond* to Pete Boyce's yard by Braunston Turn for Pete to replace the cants and other woodwork at the stern end.

Having dropped off *Raymond*, we continued with *Nutfield* round to Napton locks, to see if she would now get into Lock 12. Unfortunately, in spite of CRT's repairs in January, *Nutfield* still stuck fast at the same point where she'd stuck the previous year.



Nutfield stuck at Lock 12 Picture: Chris M Jones



Norman inspecting the pinch point

CRT were made aware, but with no further work scheduled until February this year, it was clear that once again the boats wouldn't be going to Banbury.

On Sunday 27th April we attended the Northants Heritage Fair held near Wellingborough where we had a stall in the marquee in conjunction with Pete Boyce and his 'Lucy Project' – Pete is restoring *Raymond*'s sister boat *Lucy*.

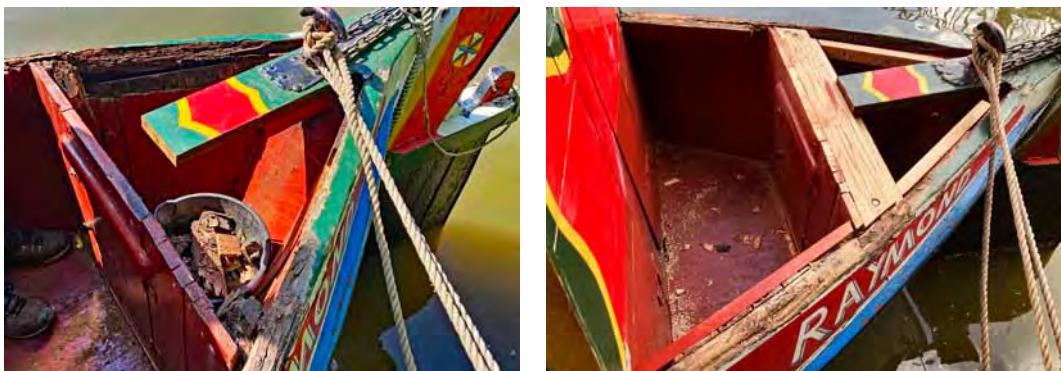
It was a lovely venue and, on a fine spring day, was very well-attended. But despite all the people, the event turned out to be more of a craft fair than a trade fair, and we did next to no business! So, while it was worth the try, we've decided not to return this year.



May

Pete Boyce's work on *Raymond* throughout May because, as is so often the case with wooden boats, the more rotten wood Pete removed, the more he discovered.

Pictures of the work in progress:



Meanwhile, we loaded the four intermediate bulk containers (IBCs) we had bought in April into *Nutfield*'s hold, and filled them with water.

Weighing about a ton each, the full IBCs, together with some of the original blue barrels, gave us about 4½ tons of ballast which significantly improved the trim, and brought the fore end down by about a foot.

We then put a second, decent-sized tent in *Nutfield*'s hold to enable us to comfortably accommodate up to four people on the two boats, and fitted the new purpose-made top cloth.

At the same time, we made a start on painting the engine room – a job that will be finished off in the spring of this year – and Pete Flockhart from Tradline fitted a new tipcat fender.



Nutfield fitted with the new single, long top cloth

On Monday 12th May, we set off for the Batchworth Boat Rally at Rickmansworth. Owing to the work on *Raymond*, we were only able to go with *Nutfield*, and arrived around midday on Friday 16th.



Apsley Bottom Lock with *Princess Anne* Picture: Mike Bowley



Lot Mead Lock with *Columbia* Picture: Mike Bowley

The Batchworth Boat Rally was held on the weekend of 17th and 18th May.

Rally organiser and FoR member, Christine Thompson, had arranged an excellent pitch for our gazebo, with *Nutfield* moored nearby, which ensured a very successful and enjoyable weekend.



While we were away, Pete Boyce completed the work on *Raymond*'s stern and returned her to the arm, so she was waiting for us when *Nutfield* got back to Braunston around 10.00 on Friday 23rd May.

June

Two weeks after returning from Ricky, *Nutfield* was off again, this time with *Raymond*. The boats left Braunston on Thursday 5th June for Foxton, where the Harborough '75 event over the weekend of 7th & 8th June, commemorated the 75th anniversary of the first IWA rally held at Market Harborough in 1950.



Raymond at Foxton on the Saturday Picture: Tim Coghlan



Nutfield below Foxton Locks Picture: Kev Maslin

Leaving *Raymond* with the sales stall, *Nutfield* took part in the Saturday cavalcade down the locks and round to Market Harborough and back.

In spite of the rain on the Saturday, overall, we had a successful weekend, bar the fact that *Nutfield*'s gearbox lost reverse gear just as they were returning from the cavalcade.



Both boats at Foxton on the Sunday Picture: Kirk Martin

Attempts at DIY repairs proving unsuccessful, the boats had to remain at Foxton until Dave Ross from Brinklow Boat Services was able to come out and get *Nutfield* up and running again.

The boats were finally back at Braunston on Thursday 19th June, just in time for *Raymond* to go into the wet dock to have a lick of paint over the unsightly red oxide primer covering the repairs to her fore and stern ends. While *Raymond* was in the wet dock, Peter Copeland repainted the by now very scruffy deck board at home.

Despite lacking her name, *Raymond* was looking quite presentable for the Braunston Historic Boat Rally on the weekend of 28th & 29th June.

As seems to be usual for the rally, the sun shone, and the boats paraded, while the band played, and the Morris dancers did their thing.

Meanwhile our sales team worked their socks off on the FoR stalls beside the arm, and had a very successful weekend, managing to clear a great deal of donated bric-a-brac as well as our regular items. We must as always extend our thanks to Tim Coghlan and his team for putting on an excellent event and, of course, to Tim for his very kind donation.



Frankie steering *Nutfield* on the opening parade Picture: Tim Coghlan

More pictures of the rally on the following page...



Picture: Kev Maslin



Picture: Kev Maslin



Picture: Tim Coghlan



Picture: Tim Coghlan



July

On the perfect summer's evening of Thursday 3rd July we entertained members of the History Group from the nearby village of Barby (pictured right aboard *Raymond*).

Tim kindly gave the party a guided tour of the canal history of the area before everyone embarked for a short boat trip to the winding hole at Wolfhamcote, returning soon after 9pm.

The success of the evening was borne out by the group's very generous whip-round and their purchases from our sales stall, for which thanks are



Picture: Christine Thompson

Three days later, over 30 members of the Friends of *Raymond* and the Narrow Boat Trust gathered at The Boat House pub by the canal in Braunston...



Picture: Christine Thompson

The gathering, arranged jointly between the two charities, was held at lunch time on Sunday 6th July to celebrate both the 25th anniversary of *Raymond*'s rebuild that was completed in early July 2000, and the extensive work on NBT's butty *Brighton* that had been carried out over the winter of 2024/25 and completed early last year.

The event kicked off with short presentations from FoR and NBT explaining the work that had to be undertaken in order to restore *Raymond* and *Brighton*.



Talk by FoR chairman Nick Lake Picture: Charlotte Fleming



The Friends of Raymond table Picture: Charlotte Fleming



Before settling down for lunch, we held a small ceremony on *Raymond* to reinstate the plaque on the hold door that was put there in 2000 to recognise the work by Phil Babb and Richard Clapham in rebuilding *Raymond*. We'd removed the plaque to have it re-engraved to mark the fact that Richard had died in 2019.

In the company of our patron and founder, Tim Coghlan, and three of our senior members, Roger & Diana Golder, and Brian Syemour, the plaque was screwed in place by Irene Reeves who is now our only active member who was there at the very start and witnessed the rebuilding.



Left to right: Roger, Irene, Tim, Diana, and Brian



Getting ready for the boat trip Picture: Joy Rayment



Nutfield & Raymond breasting up to wind Picture: Joy Rayment



Pairs at Dunchurch Pools Picture: Joy Rayment

After lunch, *Nutfield & Raymond* and *Nuneaton & Brighton*, travelling together, took members of both charities on a trip up the North Oxford Canal to Dunchurch Pools Marina, where they breasted up, winded, and returned to Braunston, arriving back at the pub around 5.30.



Pictures: Nick Scarcliffe

The festival, which takes place along the canal below Cosgrove Lock, was held over the following weekend, 19th & 20th July.



The festival, which takes place along the canal below Cosgrove Lock, was held over the following weekend, 19th & 20th July. Intermittent heavy rain on the Saturday didn't seem to deter too many visitors, and a fine day on the Sunday helped ensure we finished the weekend with a reasonable profit.



Four days later, on Thursday 24th July, the boats moved on to Leighton Buzzard for the Linslade Canal Festival on Saturday 26th.

Despite a reasonably fine day, footfall and takings were noticeably down on recent years, although as it turned out, that was the least of our worries.

Late on the Saturday afternoon after the festival, the boats were moved up to The Globe Inn just north of Leighton Lock but when the crew returned from supper, they found *Raymond*'s cabin awash. It was evident that the boat must be leaking and, as this would have caused the stern bilge pumps to work overtime, they found the battery was flat and water wasn't being pumped out. Exchanging the flat battery for one of Nutfield's starter batteries saved the day, or rather the night.

Then, adding insult to injury, on the Sunday morning *Nutfield*'s engine wouldn't start owing to some kind of electrical fault. Fortunately, James Griffin from Wyvern Shipping, who had come out to crew for the morning, was able to nip back to his boatyard and fetch a jump pack that overcame the fault and got the engine started.

But the relief was short-lived because later that morning, just as the boats were approaching Fenny Lock, the engine stalled and, of course, wouldn't restart. This time it was Norman who came to the rescue. He had been going to meet the boats at Cosgrove with a charged battery but we were able to divert him to Fenny Stratford via Halfords to buy a jump pack and, after a four-hour delay sitting in the sun outside The Red Lion, the crew were able to get the boats moving again.



James taking the boats down the Three Locks Picture: Mike Bowley



The last leg. Norman brings the boat out of Braunston Lock 3

The footnote to this story is that, once the boats were back, Norman checked the starter batteries and found they were both fully charged. He then tried the engine again, and it started first go, and has continued to do so ever since.

So the exact nature of the problem has to remain a mystery, until it occurs again. But *Raymond*'s bilge pumps kept her dry until we were able to address the leak in October.

August

On Saturday 2nd August, Norman & Kath gamely took the gazebo to the Avon Dassett Country Show not far from where they live. They had attended the show the year before, but as results were no more inspiring than they had been in 2024, it's agreed it would be better to pass on the show this year.



Pictures: Norman Townsend



In complete contrast, the Brownhills Hills Canal Festival two weeks later was a great success. Organised by the Lichfield & Hatherton Canals Restoration Trust, the festival was held on Saturday 16th and Sunday 17th August alongside the Wyrley & Essington Canal. Norman, Kath, and Nick attended with the gazebo. With its easy access and parking, the location attracts a lot of visitors and business was good.

September

In September, the lock restrictions around Braunston due to the water shortage became permanent closures, so the boats were confined to the marina. But that didn't stop us attending two events at the same time, over the weekend of the 13th & 14th.



Naomi, Norman, and Krystal at Saltisford



Brian minds the stall at Braunston Picture: Kath Wheeler

On the Saturday, Norman, his daughter Naomi, his granddaughter Krystal, and Nick, were at the Saltisford Canal Trust's event in Warwick with FoR's gazebo. Meanwhile, Kath and Brian ran a stall on the green in Braunston, set up in two borrowed gazebos, as part of the Braunston Scarecrow Trail event.

On the Sunday, Norman, Naomi, and Krystal, joined Kath and Brian in Braunston, and we're very grateful to Naomi and Krystal for making the trek up from Wiltshire to help with what were two successful days.



Naomi painting mugs at Braunston Picture: Kath Wheeler



The following weekend, the 20th & 21st, we were at the Lichfield & Hatherton's other event, the boat gathering at Huddlesford Junction on the Coventry Canal, although so few boats had been able to get there it was hard to call it a "gathering".

There was the usual traders' area where the gazebo was sited, but in spite of a good number of visitors we did very little trade, so if the next Huddlesford Gathering goes ahead in 2027 as planned, we will only take the boats.

October

The last main event of the year was the Banbury Canal Festival on the weekend of 4th & 5th October. For all the reasons explained, we were not able to take the boats but we were allocated an excellent pitch for the gazebo on the canal side where we had a very worthwhile weekend.

Our fingers are crossed that this year we may be lucky enough to have the boats alongside the gazebo, which would be ideal.



Thanks to the generosity of Braunston Marina yet again, we were able to put *Raymond* into the dry dock on the afternoon of Thursday 23rd October, where she stayed until the morning of Thursday 30th. We had booked the dock several months earlier for the purpose of carrying out more repairs and repainting both ends following the work. But the docking also gave us the chance to try to fix the leak we'd encountered at Leighton Buzzard back in July.



Rex Wain and Nick Lake Picture: Tim Coghlan

Our trusted friend and wooden boat expert, Rex Wain from Brinklow had inspected the interior of the boat before she went into the dock and reckoned he could see where the leak was occurring – at a point under the cabin bed hole.

So, on the Friday of the docking Rex did a great deal of caulking, after which he sealed in the oakum with hot pitch. We're confident this will have stopped the leak, but we won't know for certain until we have a long dry spell when we can turn the bilge pumps off, knowing that if water is still accumulating it won't be due to rain.



While Rex was caulking, our more skilled volunteers tackled the repairs at the fore end, and Will Hewitt who, although a member, we'd engaged in his capacity as a professional boat painter, began the preparation. The rest of us set about the more mundane tasks.



In addition to Rex's caulking, we achieved a great deal over the course of the week. We repaired the fore end top bends, repaired broken floorboards and side-bed slats in the cabin, blacked the hull (again), treated the shutts, varnished the cabin top, painted the entire fore end including the deck lid, and painted the entire stern end including the cabin bulk head and doors, the rudder and the tiller.

Finally, Will painted the Barlows decoration on the fore end, added his trademark roses to the deck board that Peter Copeland had painted, and reinstated *Raymond*'s name which had been missing since June.



L-R John, Dick, and Will Pictures: Tim Coghlan



Picture: Tim Coghlan



We still have a few outstanding jobs to complete in March, but all told, we were very proud of our week's work and when she emerged from the dock, everyone agreed that *Raymond* was looking splendid.



While *Raymond* was in the dock, we took advantage of the available space in the arm to bring *Nutfield* round to have the long-awaited Epping range fitted in her cabin.

This replacement for the old range was given to FoR by Nick Scarcliffe in exchange for some oil lamps donated by the late Alice Lapworth, so it cost us nothing, for which we were extremely grateful. The range was already in fairly good condition, but Candle Bridge Fabrication carried out some further refurbishment and installed it,

November and December

As it happened, we got a chance to show *Raymond* off in public when Christine Thompson hosted a “special” birthday celebration at The Boat House on Saturday 15th November. *Nufield & Raymond* were invited to give boat rides to Christine’s guests around the rally parade circuit.



Kath, Naomi, and Krystal (and Norman when he wasn’t steering *Nufield*) ran a small sales stall in the pub, and a good time was had by all. Our thanks to Christine for a great party.

Once the boats were back in the marina we lost no time in clothing them up and winterising the cabins, leaving them with small heaters to keep down the condensation.

To round off the year and rake in a bit more cash, Norman & Kath took the gazebo to Southam’s Christmas lights switch-on, and Norman, Kath, and Brian had a stall in the village hall for Braunston’s “Twinkle on the Green” Christmas event.

Volunteering in 2025

We had another excellent show of volunteers last year, with no less than 30 members giving us their time. They were, in alphabetical order:

Kevin Alder, Mike Bowley, Jeremy Cooper, Peter Copeland, Dick Dampier, Diana Golder, Roger Golder, James Griffin, Neil Hankin, Will Hewitt, Michele I’Anson, Mike I’Anson, Chris M Jones, Chris R Jones, Nick Lake, Tracey Little, Paul Marvin, Steve Morgan, Frankie Morini, John Onions, Jim Reed, Irene Reeves, Nick Scarcliffe, Brian Seymour, Steve Smith, Peter Thompsett, Norman Townsend, Paul Weal, Kath Wheeler, and Colin Wilks.

As always, we are extremely grateful to everyone who helped in 2025, and very pleased to once again to see some new faces. The first issue of the 2026 Events & Volunteering schedule will go out to the volunteers’ list shortly, and if we can repeat, or even beat last year’s turnout, 2026 should be a good one.



Nufield & Raymond passing the former Garside’s sand wharf below Grove Lock near Leighton Buzzard on 24th July 2025. In the mid-1960s Blue Line boats, including *Roger & Raymond*, loaded sand here for Paddington Basin Picture: Mike Bowley

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Photographs are by the editor unless otherwise credited

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