



The **R**o **i**e **C**ana
& Northern Devon
Waterways Society

SOCIETY NEWS & VIEWS

AUTUMN ISSUE
November 2015

CONTENTS

COMMENTS FROM THE CHAIR	Page 4
A DIFFERENT VIEW OF SEA LOCK	6
A very fast lady visits the Rolle Canal	
HELP IS AT HAND	11
The work force expands	
FINALLY IT BEGINS	13
Uncovering the past at Rosemoor	
AND YET MORE TOYS	16
Fixing ropes and mending cars	
THE END OF AN ERA	25
Tribute to an extraordinary man	

Front cover picture:- Camera man for the BBC at Sea Lock.

Comments from the Chair

Well, we've nearly come to the end of another year. The summer has come and gone and we have once again returned to a period of wet and miserable weather which, as always, is creating difficulties for outside work. However, this year is going to be rather more memorable than many, as a result of some great progress on several fronts and a very sad occasion on another.

Work at Sea Lock has continued and plans are already being laid for major undertakings next year, including a Public Open Day. Hopefully there will be more for people to see than there has been in the past.

Discussions with the administration of RHS Rosemoor Gardens have finally reached a point at which agreement for proposed work by RC&NDWS volunteers has been finalised and is already beginning to 'bear fruit' (well, It is a horticultural site when all's said and done!)

Whilst thinking about RHS Rosemoor, the guided walk from here to Darkham Weir, as always very competently led by Chris 'Hassall, was so well attended that despite there being 3 other committee members to assist, the number of people (84) was such that we almost couldn't cope. This has led your committee to consider acquiring some form of mobile public address system so that Chris' can make himself heard when talking to larger groups. We're going all High Tech!

The sites of the inclined plane and permissive footpath continue to demand regular attention due to the ever-growing weeds. Unfortunately the purse, from which finances were drawn for

maintenance staff of the Tarka Trail, like so many others, is continuing to shrink so that on-going maintenance is becoming more and more reliant on volunteers from such organisations as ours. We always need and welcome new volunteers!

The fact that there was once a canal in North Devon, owned by Lord Rolle, continues to attract interest by more than just a small number of canal 'anoraks'. The existence of the canal is about to be brought to the attention of a potentially huge audience of the general public. The cover picture of this newsletter and the picture to the right may provide some clues as to this statement but I hope the article on **Page 5** will explain all.



In the spring 2015 issue of this newsletter (I apologise for its very small print!) I talked about the difficulty I was experiencing in trying to get my Priestman Cub crane working with a clamshell bucket. That problem has finally been resolved as you will read about on **Page 16**.

It was hoped to have an Open Evening with the Rolle Canal & Northern Devon Waterways Society in Barnstaple this autumn but, for various reasons, the planned date had to be postponed. We are now planning to hold the event in February next year. Further details will be published nearer to the time, along with information about the 2016 AGM.

Adrian Wills



STAR OF TRACK & FIELD *and CANAL?*



The site of Sea Lock on Lord Rolle's Canal had some very unusual visitors, including a somewhat prestigious one recently. Following on from the very successful series of television broadcasts called 'Countryfile', the BBC is in the process of recording a new series, entitled 'Secret Britain'.

A while ago Hilary and I had been informed that the BBC was looking for unusual sites and stories to incorporate in a new series and the Rolle Canal had been brought to its attention with us as useful contacts.

Time went by and then we were contacted by telephone by a young woman who worked for the 'Beeb' as a researcher, wanting to know if she could visit us on Wednesday, September 30th and interview us as a preliminary stage towards more formal recording later. An appointment was made and she duly arrived although much later than agreed, meaning I had to break off the work I was doing on site with Trevor and leave him to his own devices whilst Hilary and I described to her what we were up to on our own section of canal and what other members of the RC&NDWS were involved in elsewhere along its course.

A little later in the day Hilary and the researcher wandered off to look at different aspects and other features of the canal so that they could find the best places for filming and inclusion in the programme. Trevor and I got on with whatever we were doing before she turned up.

Sometime later we were contacted again to be told that what the researcher had supplied her bosses with, was considered to be well-worth following up and further contact would be made in

the future. Not long after this we were contacted again to be told that a BBC film crew were in North Devon at Clovelly where they were attempting to make a programme about herring fishing from the village. Unfortunately the herring chose not to oblige and failed to arrive on location during the predicted time scale. Schedules had to be swiftly re-arranged and it was agreed that a crew would arrive at our site a day later, on Sunday, October 4th around lunch time. We had been asked if we could have plenty of activity with lots of volunteers running round and digging big holes and the like whilst the camera crew were there. We said that it didn't work quite like that and we would be hard pushed to get any volunteers at such short notice.

After a bit of frantic telephoning friends and volunteers, we managed initially to summon up 2 others; new volunteer Wayne Berry, who has already proved himself to be a very valuable addition to the RC&NDWS work force and Mike Chambers from the committee. As you can imagine, most of our other local RC&NDWS volunteers were otherwise committed.

Anyway the day ticked on and no one arrived. At last we received a 'phone call to tell us that the film crew were on Dartmoor, had not quite completed their tasks there but would now be with us around 3 o'clock. One of my pet hates is waiting for people to turn up particularly when specific times have been arranged!

3 o'clock, as well as 4 o'clock, came and went. Finally, at nearly 5pm a film crew did actually arrive, introduced themselves to Hilary and myself who had returned home by that time, and we duly set off down the field to the site. Hilary was thoroughly interviewed, almost interrogated, on the walk down and I was almost entirely ignored, (not that I minded so much!). Wayne was still working hard at clearing invasive weeds and

overburden from the next section of wharf wall which I would like to get rebuilt. He had been 'beavering' away at this for most of the day single-handed and was quite happy working on. Much later 3 more volunteers did arrive but by now it was too late for them to start anything.

Although we had walked down to the site we were soon joined by a couple more vehicles which had driven down the towpath to the lock side. Two had originally arrived but these additions brought heavy filming gear and the star of the show, who was huddled in the back of one, feeling somewhat cold and tired.

Prior to coming to us, the BBC crew had spent most of the day on Dartmoor trying to record a round-up of Dartmoor ponies. This time it was the weather that chose to be uncooperative since the moor had been shrouded in mist (now there's a surprise!) for much of the time they were there so both ponies and farmers herding them were virtually invisible to the cameras. (Is this why the programme is called Secret Britain?)

Denise Lewis, ex Olympian Heptathlete, is the presenter of the Secret Britain Series. The poor soul had spent most of the day standing around in the cold, damp atmosphere of Dartmoor waiting for conditions to allow filming and had become quite chilled.

Both Hilary and I, in the past, have been heavily involved, coaching and competing, in local athletics. It was quite an experience to meet and speak with an athlete of her ability. She proved to be a very easy lady to speak to, be interviewed by and to be filmed with.

I had already been asked if I could get Denise on camera, dressed in hi' viz' and wellies, digging with all the other volunteers. This was obviously not to be so I suggested that I gave her a little lesson in operating the 22RB crane.



Like bees attending to their queen, the BBC camera team prepare Denise (far right) to interview Hilary. In the meantime, I'm the one talking to a man with a hedgehog on a stick and a strange growth on his forehead!

She was well up for that and following some introductory conversations in different places on site, she was eventually sitting in the cab, in hi' viz' jacket and helmet, following instructions as to how to raise and lower the boom, hook-block and finally slew the crane from left and right all of which she thought was really cool!

None of the conversations or actions were recorded as first takes but often had to be repeated with questions or answers rephrased, camera angles changed and actions repeated for close-ups. By the time the director, camera man and sound man were happy with what was 'in the can' (notice how well I speak the lingo!) it was gone 7 o'clock: the daylight had not just

faded away, it was positively dark. How much of the camera work was going to be usable, only the camera man knows!

Whilst Hilary and I were heavily involved with Denise and her crew right down near the entrance to the lock, Wayne was getting himself on silver screen at the top end of the wharf.

What I was unaware of at the time, was that there was a second camera and sound crew wandering about which stopped to talk



Hilary and Denise prepare for, 'Lights, Camera, Action!'.

to Wayne and film him working so, hopefully, he will make an appearance on the TV as well.

Not quite content with all that was achieved on that Sunday, on the following Wednesday another film crew, minus sound man and Denise , arrived to make some close-up shots of Hilary and I. We had to stand still and smile into a camera for between 10 and 40 seconds for fade-in and out shots to



Wayne clearing the overburden on the upper end of the wharf wall.

be created. It is not easy to hold a smile for a length of time that looks natural and not as if you are trying not to wet yourself. How the continuity is going to work will be interesting because as I have already stated it was quite dark by the end of the session with Denise but very bright

sunshine and a glorious blue sky on the Wednesday. We shall see. (Or at least we hope to!)

Secret Britain is due to be televised sometime early next year. Further details will be given when we know for definite.

MORE NEW KIDS ON THE BLOCK

The RC&NDWS has gained two new volunteers recently. Wayne Berry (below left and already mentioned) contacted me to offer his services towards the proposed work at RHS Rosemoor whilst being in the process of finding himself full-time paid employment. Since work at Rosemoor had not started at that time, he was more than happy to lend me a hand at Sea Lock and has proved himself to be very reliable and hard – working.



Ian Harrison (pictured centre above) and his wife have recently taken up residence in Westward Ho! Ian came along to the last RC&NDWS guided walk of the season to the head of the leat at RHS Rosemoor when he learned about the forth-coming work around the lime kiln site there. He was very enthusiastic about it and wanted to become fully involved. As with Wayne, he was more than willing to help me until the project at Rosemoor was actually under way.

At Sea Lock, the two 'new boys' were asked to start the removal of invasive vegetation along the top and face of the upper wharf wall where rebuilding is planned to start sometime next year, and they set to with a vengeance. Within a very short time they had made considerable progress. Ian even managed to master the knack of starting and driving my rather ancient dumper truck.

I was hoping to host a Waterway Recovery Group camp in the new year but have had my application turned down because of the heavy commitments the WRG already have agreed to for 2016. Perhaps 2017 instead? So back to the drawing board!

Work has now started at Rosemoor and I have managed to convince Ian to oversee this project instead of me so that I can continue to concentrate on Sea Lock. In the following article he describes the work so far.

Should you wish to help RC&NDWS at Rosemoor then please contact Ian Harrison PM (that's Project Manager, not Prime Minister). Details on **Page 15** **Adrian Wills**

RESTORATION WORK AT ROSEMOOR GETS GOING

The Rolle Canal terminates at Rosemoor where there are the remains of a group of five limekilns (the largest group in North Devon) and it has been an aim of the Society for many years to get involved in the restoration of this part of the canal.

After a period of negotiation we finally got the go ahead from RHS Curator Jonathan Webster in October.



This well-known photograph taken circa 1890, perhaps in the early 1900's, shows the canal with plenty of water together with the limekilns already in a dilapidated state

Contrast this with the following picture before we started work in early November this year where the line of the canal was pretty much obscured by trees and bushes and large sections of the limekilns had disappeared.

The first working party took place on Tuesday 3rd November 2015, with four volunteers and we had an excellent first day; thanks to all involved.



A substantial amount of brush clearance was carried out and a short section of the basin wall was exposed. Work stopped mid



Of course when Tuesday afternoon, we probed all around the old white fence and scrub bush as far as the electric pole to which a challenging amount of “old mans beard” was attached.

A substantial box-like foundation was revealed at the far end of the lime kilns and near the entrance of the site a shallow trench was dug between the lime kilns, as they exist at the moment, and the canal to try to reveal the line of the original outer wall.

During the first two working parties there was considerable speculation, as we worked, on how the limekilns in their present state related to the old picture. From the work so far it appears that the outer wall facing onto the canal has gone, as has the far wall running to the edge of the canal. The archway had us fooled until it became apparent that the one now facing us was originally behind the wall with the wooden doors!

Working parties will take place every Tuesday throughout the winter. We may also have one or two meets on Saturday or Sunday if there is demand. Anyone who can lend a hand would be very welcome. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you need any info.



Mike Chambers trying to define some foundation walls.

Report by **Ian Harrison**

Tel: 01237 475707

Mobile: 07557 478371

Email: halehillfarm@gmail.com

THREE WHEELS ON MY WAGON

(But at least there are no holes in my bucket!)

Those of you who have read back issues of the RC&NDWS newsletters will know that I have something of a fascination with big boy's toys! So has my trusty 'side kick', Trevor Fordham, who mistakenly joined the Rolle Canal Volunteers when he misread 'Cranes' for Trains'.

Trevor has been invaluable over the years that I have known him for his very diverse skills. Not only has he proved himself to be a very competent builder's mate, always having a mix of mortar ready in plenty of time, finding the perfect stone to fit a particular space in the wall, or reading my mind and handing me a cup of tea, he is very mechanically-minded and has solved many engineering and electrical problems for me.

I had been wanting to attach a clamshell bucket to my Priestman Cub crawler crane for quite some time. Having acquired a suitable bucket, I then had to get longer ropes than the machine already had in order to operate the bucket efficiently. After many deliberations as to how long the new ropes needed to be, I finally bit the bullet and ordered them from Certex, a company specializing in lifting ropes for all occasions, and they were duly delivered on a large wooden reel.

Removing the old ropes required lowering the boom of the crane until it was nearly horizontal and drawing the ropes from the machine. This was all going well until we came to the very ends of the ropes where they were attached to their respective drums. How they were anchored we could not fathom out. After much head-scratching and poking about in the innards of

the crane we discovered the anchor points which were not easily accessible but eventually we succeeded in freeing the ropes off.

The two new ropes were duly anchored to the drums and whilst I very tentatively operated the crane to wind them in onto the drums, Trevor made sure that they spooled on evenly and without crossing over themselves whilst ensuring his hands didn't get trapped during the operation.

Next we had to attach the ropes to their respective anchor - points on the clamshell bucket. One of the two ropes is attached to the top of the bucket and is used to raise or lower it. The other rope is threaded down and back up through a set of three pairs of sheaves (pulley wheels) and is used to open and close the bucket. Reeving (threading the rope through the sheaves) is an awkward process because the rope is quite stiff, heavily greased and has to be pushed in and around some quite tight bends. So to help facilitate this process we first reeved the bucket with a length of nylon rope which we then joined the steel rope to and fed it through. The whole process worked beautifully and before long it was time to try working the bucket.

Having brought the boom back up to its working height, I began attempting to raise and lower the bucket as well as opening and closing it. Not only does this require considerable coordination on the part of the operator but also a measure of physical strength due to the effort required to pull on levers and press on foot brakes which stop the bucket from free-falling. Unlike the 22RB, the Cub has no power-lowering mechanism. The bucket is held in the air and its jaws kept closed by the application of 2 footbrakes. The heavier the load, the more the brake pedals have to be depressed.

Due to having been standing in a yard for many years, the various bearings of the bucket were rusty and very tight. Having applied liberal quantities of grease and oil, as well as a considerable amount of heat to those which were proving particularly non-cooperative, Trevor and I finally got the bucket opening and closing smoothly and evenly, on demand.



I have since had a couple of 'goes' at actually removing silt from the lock chamber using the clamshell bucket but it is going to be quite some time before I am sufficiently practised to operate it with ease. Fortunately I'm in no hurry!.

AND NOW FOR SOMETHING COMPLETELY DIFFERENT!

As a trustee of the North Devon Museum Trust, (more commonly known as the Appledore Maritime Museum), I have become temporary custodian of parts of a 1934, vintage 3 wheeled Raleigh Van. The rented shed where this vehicle was being stored until the NDMT could find a permanent home for it, became no longer available so I ended up with it. As is always the case, after a while where I had stored the Raleigh parts at my home, it turned out to be most the inconvenient place and they had to be moved again so with Trevor's help, we shifted all the bits of engine and chassis to the shed by the wharf where we store the scaffolding, tools and other odds and ends.

After some discussion, we decided that it would be interesting to determine just how much of this vehicle we actually had and how much was missing.

Neither of us had much idea as to the way in which the machine should be assembled but being far more mechanically minded than me, Trevor soon began sorting bits and laying them out in some sort of order.

I began making enquiries with various people who have vintage motorcycle connections to see if we could get some more considered advice on the potential restoration of the Raleigh but without a great deal of success. Many years ago, Barry Hughes, whilst still teaching, had made some moves towards rebuilding the van but for various reasons was unable to make much progress. More recently Trevor, was searching the internet for information but also without much success.

However, we began 'tacking' bits together and soon realised that we had far more of the van than was first apparent and that much of it was in surprisingly good order.

What was a little strange however, was the fact that we had three separate engines. We knew that it was a three-wheeler van but that was ridiculous! Having 2 spare engines was good because we were able to select the best for restoration. To add further confusion to the process, amongst the collection of bits and pieces were a couple of parts that we could not identify at all. It was only after considerable head scratching and fruitless pondering did we decide that these unidentified parts had absolutely no connection to the Raleigh Van at all and had just been 'lumped' together with the other parts!

For the more technically minded readers, the engine driving the van is a 'V', twin cylinder, 742cc, air cooled Sturmev Archer, four-stroke, with a three forward and one reverse gearbox. The

body capacity was 62 cubic feet and the maximum payload was 8 cwt (hundred weights)



The two previous pictures, found on the internet, show a beautifully restored van.

We decided that 'tacking together' the bits we had would give us a much clearer picture of how much work was going to be required if full restoration was going to be attempted. By only 'tacking together with 2 bolts where 4 should be used we can easily dismantle everything and start again if and when we



Mike Guegan, Chair of the NDMT, inspecting the level of assembly of the Raleigh van to date.

decide to do things properly.

We knew that originally the van had been used locally by a trader working a market garden. Where the other 2 engines and other spare parts came from, I don't know. I am very keen to see the van completely rebuilt, decorated with the North Devon Museum Trust logo and being used to advertise the museum.

Both Michael Guegan and Barry came to see how far Trevor and I had got with reassembling the van. Mike has considerable experience in restoring vintage motorcycles and was impressed with what we had achieved.

Unfortunately due to other major priorities, neither he nor Barry, who was absolutely delighted with what Trevor and I had achieved, were able to offer anything other than moral support.

Barry was able however, to supply us with copies of the original logbook and registration details plus a photograph of the van when it was first donated to the Trust. What a load of junk!

So far we have managed to assemble most of the engine, chassis and suspension. None of the body work, which, originally would have been a timber framework probably of Ash, with aluminium sides and a canvas roof has survived.

The Internet has been useful in producing images of 3 wheeler Raleigh Vehicles of different styles and ages but has produced little detail as to structure.

Apart from being interested in canals Trevor is passionate about railways and is a keen model railway enthusiast, delighting in creating his own layouts. Quite coincidentally, he already owns a 3-

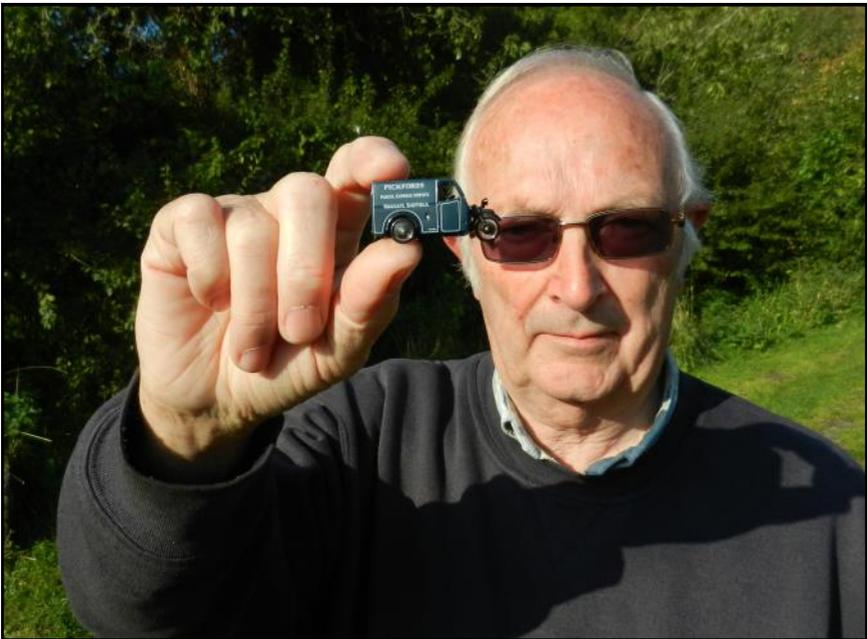


1934 3-wheeled Raleigh Van as donated

wheeler Raleigh Van, which he acquired before knowing anything of the existence of the museum's van, and his is in mint condition!

You may be surprised to learn that this has not been as helpful to us in working out how to put the museums' van back together as you might expect but perhaps the following picture may help you understand why!

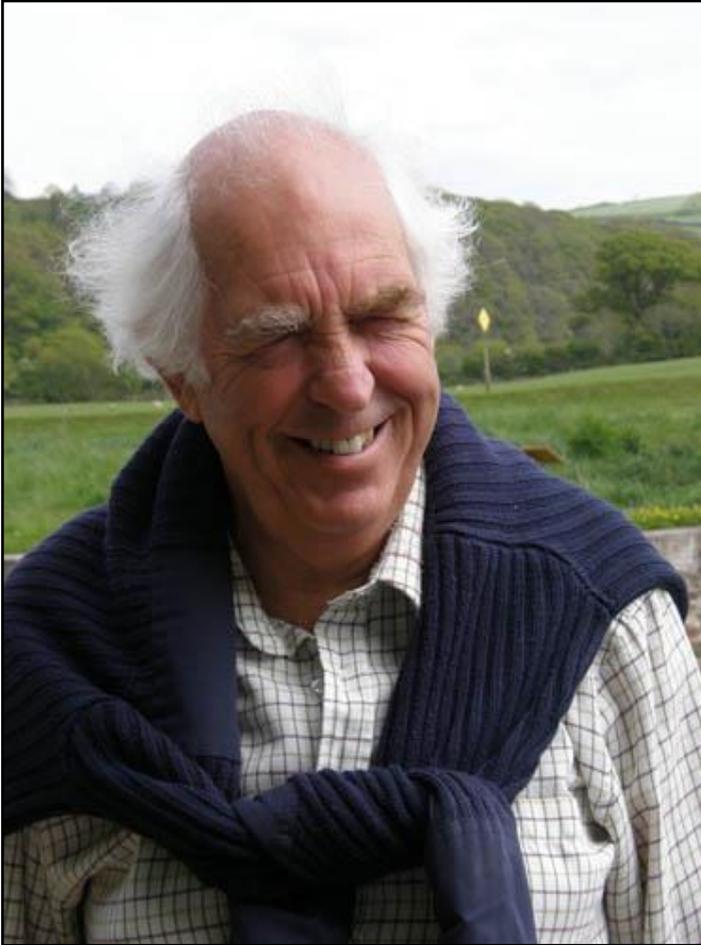
Article by **Adrian Wills**



Trevor with his 00 gauge model Vintage Raleigh Van.

BARRY DAVIES HUGHES

8th March 1937—17th October 2015



It is with great sadness that I report the death of Barry Hughes. Over the past couple of years he had frequently said that he had not been feeling too well and in April 2015, was diagnosed as having terminal Cancer. Given only a few days, maybe weeks, he managed to live long enough to complete and see published, the book on North Devon Barges he had been

working on for some time, and to put all his personal affairs in order.

Following his diagnosis Barry occasionally continued to drive himself to Sea Lock to see what was going on almost until the very end and despite his rapidly failing health he very calmly and cheerfully accepted his fate, and for that strength and dignity he will always have my greatest admiration and respect.

I first became acquainted with Barry at the inauguration of the Rolle Canal & Northern Devon Waterways Society in 2003, in which he became passionately involved. His book, entitled 'Rolle Canal & The North Devon Limestone Trade' has become something of the Rolle Canal Society bible.

Just like me, Barry was a retired teacher and as a result our friendship was something of a love/hate relationship. He was always right even when he was wrong, just the same as I am! When we decided to build a couple of full-sized replica tub boats, as were originally used on the Rolle Canal, it was not long before differences of opinion on structural techniques almost had us coming to blows. Eventually I left Barry to his own devices and he finished the project almost single-handed, constructing, what he said, were the 2 ugliest boats he had ever made. Maybe they aren't pretty but they look the part and he did a brilliant job.

Barry was, at times, the most cantankerous, awkward and self-opinionated person I have ever come across and yet once you gained his support, he dedicated his time, effort and considerable talent, to you whole-heartedly and with no thought of recompense or recognition which is exactly what he did for me, as well as the Rolle Canal Society and the North Devon Museum Trust of which he was a founder member.

Whilst working with me and other volunteers on Rolle Canal jobs Barry would often regale us with tales of his childhood growing up in Wales, National Service life in the Royal Navy and his early days in teaching. He frequently had me nearly wetting myself with laughter. He had a great deal of mischievousness about him. One of his all time heroes was Spike Milligan — say no more!

Despite often being told by Barry that I wasn't doing something right or that he wouldn't do it that way, I will greatly miss his wonderful sense of humour, his practical skills and being able to tap into his incredible nautical and historic knowledge.

Where-ever he is now I hope that there is plenty of his beloved Klezmer / world music which he so enjoyed, so that he may dance and sing to his heart's content. I will sorely miss him.

Adrian Wills



North Devon Barges



Barry D Hughes

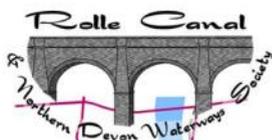
North Devon Museum Trust publication 2015

ISBN 978-0-9504018-9-8

140 pages Fully illustrated £16.99.

Available from **Appledore Maritime Museum (NDMT)**

Odun House, Odun Road, Appledore, Bideford EX39 1PT



The RC&NDWS always welcomes volunteers who are prepared to help with a wide variety of society activities. Many of these tasks do not require long term commitment or massive physical ability but are all equally important to the successful running of the society. If you feel you can help in any way then please do not hesitate to make contact with the committee through the address below:



BIDEFORD

Iron Bridge

Landcross

Railway Tunnel

SEA LOCK

Annery Kiln

INCLINED PLANE

Weare Giffard

BEAM AQUEDUCT

Beam House Weir

GREAT TORRINGTON

Taddiport

Town Mills

Rosemoor

Darkham Weir

Our archives Officer, Norman Richards, is always looking for material, maps, pictures or text, relating to the Rolle family and canal. If you have anything which may be of interest to him, please contact him by email at norm@fhsinternet.com or at the address given below:

All other enquiries to the Chair --
Adrian Wills tel. 01237 477705

info@therollecanal.co.uk

'Vale Cottage', 7, Annery Kiln,
Weare Giffard,
Devon, EX39 5JE

www.TheRolleCanal.co.uk

The views expressed by contributors in this publication are not necessarily those of the RC&NDWS which accepts no responsibility for them or their accuracy.



Bulletin & Newsletter published by RC&NDWS.