

of British Waterways. Their normal procedure with such a boat would have been to dredge it out as an obstruction to navigation.

However, because of Queen's heritage value the Wooden Canal Craft Trust (the original name of the Wooden Canal Boat Society) was offered the opportunity to mount a rescue. On March 20th 1994 an epic working party raised Queen from 5'6" of water and then members took turns at hitch hiking the boat Northwards asking for tows from motor boats travelling in the right direction.

Leakage was not a big problem on the journey but some difficulty was experienced in getting her through narrow locks. She arrived at Runcorn on May 3rd 1994, where she stayed until being towed to Portland Basin in 1997

In 2001 a grant from The Waterways Trust enabled the WCBS to carry out conservation work to prevent further deterioration of her hull. A fund has been established, ring fenced for "Queen's" restoration. For the last few years though "Hazel" has been the priority, "Queen" patiently awaits her turn for restoration.

**How you can join in or help us,  
find more information  
or contact us**

- 
- Come on a monthly **RECYCLING TRIP** from Portland Basin
- Become a **member or Trustee**.
- **Contact us via our Website:**  
wcbs.org.uk  
or

**Email:** [general@wcbs.org.uk](mailto:general@wcbs.org.uk)

- **Find us on Facebook** - search on 'Wooden Canal Boat' for the main page then link to the project or shop pages
- **Visit our shop:** 173 Stamford Street, Ashton-under-Lyne, OL6 7PS
- **Phone us:** 0161 330 8422

**THANK YOU - hope to see you soon**



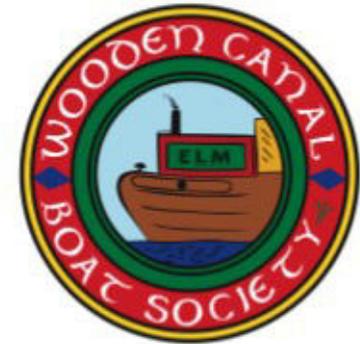
**The Wooden Canal Boat Society**  
173 Stamford Street Central  
Ashton-under-Lyne  
OL6 7PS

**Registered Charity No 1069820**

# OUR BOATS

## Queen

**Queen, the boat with 9 lives, one of the oldest surviving wooden motor narrow boats.**



# WOODEN CANAL BOAT SOCIETY

In 1924 "Walsall Queen" was sold to Harvey-Taylor of Aylesbury. The boat's name was shortened to "Queen". The original engine was replaced with an early water drip Bolinder, possibly second hand, and maintenance was carried out at Bushell Brothers of Tring.

Originally named "Walsall Queen", she and her butty, "Queen of the Ocean" were gauged on 23rd June 1917. The butty's name seems particularly inappropriate for a boat based in Walsall. The pair were built for and operated by the Walsall firm of Hildick & Hildick.

Little is known of the work they did for Hildick & Hildick who were manufacturers of malleable iron fittings. For some reason in the middle of the first world war they had a small fleet of new motorised wooden narrow boats built.

"Walsall Queen" was registered at Brentford which suggests that she was trading regularly down the Grand Junction Canal.

She was powered by a large single cylinder British Kromhout semi diesel engine. There is a rumour that she was originally steam powered, but this does not seem to have been the case.

Harvey Taylor owned a flour mill in Aylesbury and much of the carrying work was connected with this business. The mill was supplied with grain and coal by boat and some of the flour may have been delivered by water.

Other carrying work included supplying Aylesbury with timber from London Docks and domestic coal from the Midlands.

Harvey Taylor built up quite a thriving carrying business in the late twenties, and kept going successfully during the depression years.

World War II brought an artificial boom to the narrow canals, but trade dropped off rapidly once things got back to normal after 1945.

During all this time Queen was kept busy. At different times she was skippered by Jack Monk and Arthur Bray, both renowned as expert and hard working boatmen.

In about 1947 Queen was laid up and, after her Bolinder had been stripped for spares, the worn out boat was allowed to sink. This is probably when she developed the twist in the stern end that she still has.

That could have been the end of the story. However, in 1949, John Gould needed some boats to use in his campaign to keep the Kennet & Avon open. He bought a job lot from Harvey Taylor, including Queen.

The best pair, "Colin' and "Iris" (also ex Hildick) went down to Newbury and the rest were sold. Queen went to Bernard Barker, a pioneer canal enthusiast from Birmingham.

Queen became a pleasure boat. A Kelvin petrol / paraffin engine was fitted and her hold was cabined over, but otherwise she was unaltered. For the next 38 years.

Mr Barker used the boat for family holidays and campaign cruises to keep the waterways open. Her ageing hull was dry docked for repairs each winter, but by 1987 the struggle to keep her

reliably afloat had become too much. A steel boat was built to replace Queen and she was to be broken up.



**NOWADAYS, Queen needs extensive restoration:**

In the nick of time Martin Leman turned up and offered to take the old boat to Rickmansworth for restoration.

Full restoration never materialised but some patching was carried out and Queen became part of the canal scenery south of Watford with a new conversion. made to look like cloths.

One of her new owners made the mistake of thinking that she was an 1887 Fellows Morton & Clayton steamer and so she was painted in F.M.C. colours.

In the autumn of 1993 Queen sank near Denham deep lock. Her owner was unable to raise her and she was abandoned to the mercy