

source^{NW}

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WALKING ON WATER

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WESTWARD HO!

Antony Wilson on Liverpool, its music and its river.

THE LIFE AQUATIC

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Power from the Mersey



An exploration of the potential for renewable energy

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The Mersey Estuary holds the prospect of a real contribution to reducing carbon emissions while allowing the region to prosper and grow.

Find out more at: merseytidalpower.co.uk



Has business finally seen the green light? It starts to look that way when no less

a retailing institution than Marks & Spencer publicly commits itself to ambitious reductions in CO₂ emissions.

The company is a regional as well as a national treasure – it started trading in Manchester in 1894. But when it comes to things green and ethical, another Manchester-based national retailer has been doing it better for longer. In this issue of Source NW we talk business with the impressive Martin Beaumont, chief executive of the Co-operative Group.

Meanwhile, another regional business giant, Peel Holdings, has joined the Northwest Development Agency to back research into renewable energy on the River Mersey. The name behind mega-developments like the Trafford Centre, Peel is not one to throw away good money on wishful thinking.

And in June, the barometer of the region's economy, Northwest Business Insider magazine, produced its first ever 'green' issue.

Conversely, green avenger Jonathon Porritt, one-time scourge of big business, last year produced a new book in which he argues that far from being the destroyer of the planet, business is its last, best hope.

Are we witnessing a historic convergence? I think so. Is the job done? It's barely even started.

Matthew Sutcliffe, editor
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Source^{NW} is the magazine of the Mersey Basin Campaign. The campaign works towards better water quality and sustainable waterside regeneration for the rivers and waterways of England's Northwest.

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Branching out

Woodland scheme to transform derelict land wins major new funding.

At 8,420 hectares, the Northwest has more derelict brownfield land than any other English region. That's an area roughly the size of Preston, or 24 per cent of all the brownfield land in the country.

Now a major programme to transform almost 1,500 hectares of the region's most scarred landscapes into community woodlands has won additional funding of £36 million from the Northwest Regional Development Agency, bringing the total to £59 million. The new money will allow the programme to expand across the entire region.

The Northwest also has one of the lowest rates of woodland cover in country.

Newlands (New Economic Environments through Woodlands) was launched with £23 million by John Prescott in 2003 and has focused on five brownfield sites in the Mersey belt area between Manchester and Liverpool. Work on two sites is already complete.

Moston Vale in Harpurhey, Manchester (an area in the top five per cent of the Index of Multiple Deprivation), received £1.7 million in 2005. The former landfill site now boasts woodland areas, sports facilities and extensive pathways illuminated by solar powered floodlights. The goal is to help attract significant new investment to the area, enhance the adjacent Central

Park Business Park and add value to the local Housing Marketing Renewal area.

Bidston Moss has also been transformed as part of the Newlands scheme. More than £2.7 million has gone into the revamp of the Wirral site, with the pathways, boardwalks and even the soil which covers the site all coming from recycled materials.

Long term maintenance of the Newlands sites will be taken on by the Forestry Commission. As well as more brownfield land than anywhere else in England, the Northwest also has one of the lowest rates of woodland cover in country.

Steven Broomhead, chief executive of the Northwest Regional Development Agency, said: "When Newlands was launched we envisaged that it would become one of the top land regeneration schemes, using rejuvenated woodland as a basis for change where previously sites had become neglected.

"Four years on and the programme has drawn praise from central government for the way that new opportunities have been presented, how new uses have endured over time and the quality of the landscape that has been created.

"We are providing a benchmark for carefully planned, intelligence-led land regeneration."

The Newland sites are selected to have the maximum benefit, not only providing recreational space for local communities, but also enhancing the appearance of the main transport corridors into the region, with woodlands used to screen off eyesores and industrial plants.

As Newlands expands to cover the whole Northwest, one site already set to benefit is the Brockholes Wetland Nature Reserve in Lancashire. Located next to the M6, Brockholes was created when gravel was extracted to make the motorway. The 172 hectare site includes ancient woodland, ponds, lakes, reed beds and flower-rich grasslands.

A series of guided walks this summer will let local people get a first look at the site, which is owned and run by the Lancashire Wildlife Trust.

MORE INFORMATION

www.englishpartnerships.co.uk
www.lancswt.org.uk

SOUND BITES

S High energy. The decommissioning of Sellafield nuclear power plant has prompted an energetic response from the West Cumbria Strategic Partnership, which has come up with proposals to create Britain's first 'energy coast'. Around 8,000 of the 12,000 jobs at Sellafield are expected to be lost by 2015. In July the partnership presented its master plan to then prime minister Tony Blair and other top government ministers. Included in the plan to transform west Cumbria into a world class centre for excellence in energy and environmental technologies is a national academy for nuclear skills.

S A sense of Unity. A revolutionary new building in Liverpool has won a top award for its consideration towards the environment, just months after being opened. The £80 million Unity building, situated in Princes Dock, combines high environmental standards with unique architecture and was named one of three Northwest winners in the

Royal Institute of British Architects awards. Its penthouses are expected to be the most expensive properties in the city. Now the building stands a chance of competing for the highly prestigious RIBA Stirling Prize.

S Click for a car share. New social networking websites are springing up everywhere, but here's one with an environmental twist. www.isanyonegoingto.com puts travellers in touch with one another, facilitating car sharing and reducing the number of single occupancy car journeys we take. The site is already motoring ahead, with 6,000 travellers signed up and an average of 20 matches made every day in its first three months.

S Eco East Manchester. More than 400 new eco-homes are to be built beside the Ashton Canal in Clayton, East Manchester. The development will include two, three and four-bedroomed houses as well as two and three-bed

flats. At its heart, an eco-park will provide a substantial wildlife habitat, increasing the number of species in the area. Pedestrian and cycle routes will connect the development to Manchester city centre. The scheme was announced by New East Manchester, developers New City Vision and architects MBLA.

S Goyt bridge a go-er. Plans for a new bridge across the Goyt Valley in Stockport have been short listed in a national competition for Big Lottery funding, and will face a public vote on a live ITV1 show later this year. The bridge would create a traffic free route between Romiley, Offerton and Stockport town centre, and link into existing foot and cycle routes in the area. The bid joins a collective of 79 community-based



Electric current

Mersey could supply power to a quarter of a million homes.

The River Mersey could be harnessed to generate enough renewable electricity to satisfy 260,000 homes – more than every household in Liverpool – according to a recently released study. Experts say the Mersey estuary's large tidal range of 8-10 metres and unusual geography create powerful currents that make it one of the top sites for tidal renewable energy in the UK.

According to the government's recent White Paper on the country's future energy needs, *Meeting the Energy Challenge*: "Tidal power could make a significant contribution towards meeting the twin challenges of climate change and security of supply."

Any project to generate power on the Mersey would also be a major boost to the UK's position as the world leader in marine renewable energy.

The study analysed in detail a range of electricity-generating technologies, and where they could be sited along the estuary. The largest of the projects evaluated,

a tidal barrage across the river, would generate 700 MW of electricity, enough to save 516,000 tonnes of CO₂ per year.

However, researchers are keen to emphasize that a full barrage is just one of the innovative options being looked at. Much more likely options are huge waterwheels, tidal turbines and open stream energy converters. These could be used in different ways and at different places along the river.

An artificial tidal lagoon could be created in the open sea beyond the mouth of the river, with the flow of water in and out used to generate power. Alternatively a tidal fence would comprise vertical turbines housed in submerged cells built across the estuary. The restriction to the flow created by the fence would accelerate water through the turbines to create power.

A tidal gate could also be specifically designed for the shallow waters of the Mersey. The bottom part of the sluice would be fitted with a matrix of compact turbines. Finally, a central reservation in the river could be created to hold a series of open stream turbines, converting natural tidal flows into energy.

The study team was led by consultants Buro Happold and included Professor Peter

Guthrie, Professor of Engineering for Sustainable Development at Cambridge University, an internationally recognised expert in green technologies. Professor Guthrie said: "The whole principle of the study is that the technologies under consideration must be proven, but they would be used in innovative new ways."

We must also respect the Mersey estuary's international importance for wildlife.

"We have been searching for a way to generate renewable energy on the river that would bring jobs and investment but we must also respect the Mersey estuary's international importance for wildlife such as wading birds."

The study was co-sponsored by Peel Holdings, owner of Peel Ports, and the Northwest Regional Development Agency.

Many of the technologies it evaluates are so new that they are still under development, so experts are likely to recommend a pilot project that would allow testing before full implementation.

More information

www.merseytidalpower.co.uk

projects competing under the banner of Connect2. If the Sustrans-run scheme wins 'The People's Millions', the Goyt bridge would receive £250,000.

Visit www.sustransconnect2.org.uk to pledge your support.

S Reach for the stars. The third phase of Lancaster University's Environmental Centre has been opened by Astronomer Royal, Lord Rees. It provides office space for local businesses and is home to the centre's economic and business partnerships team, which works to stimulate local economic regeneration and deliver economic benefit to the region. Forty-five businesses will eventually be based in the centre, with fifteen scheduled to move in by March 2009. The aim is create

seven brand-new concerns by 2012, with hundreds more benefiting from collaboration and training. The centre's work will also create learning opportunities for Lancaster students.

S Fish get chips. Six thousand young salmon are due to be 'coloured, chipped and clipped' before being released into Cumbria's River Hodder as experts struggle to reverse a worrying decline in numbers. The fish can be identified using 'fin clipping', tracked using microchips, and their survival rates monitored using spots of blue dye on their undersides. They start life in a specially constructed 'smolt' pond near Stocks reservoir, the first in the UK to be built in a wastewater treatment works. The project is a collaboration between United Utilities, the Hodder Consultative and the Environment Agency.

S Web search. Source NW has been out and about on t'internet looking for little gems to enhance your surfing

pleasure. Here's our current favourite Northwest-focused web offering – twin sites offering a comprehensive guide to the flora and fungi of the Irwell Valley...www.brent-d-pearson.fsnet.co.uk. The sites boast illustrations of over 300 plant species as well as links to every fungi-related website you can imagine. We're always looking for interesting online destinations – if you know of a site that could feature in a future issue of Source NW, let us know at info@merseybasin.org.uk

S And finally... it's already proved more popular than Big Brother. Now the appeal of nature is being promoted as a huge fillip for the region's tourism industry. Three times more people tuned in to follow the animals and plants in the BBC's recent Springwatch series than watched the antics (however wild) of the humans caged in the Big Brother house. Stars of Springwatch were the golden eagles of Islay in the Hebrides. But the only place in England to see golden eagles is in Cumbria, here in the Northwest. Bosses at Natural England Northwest say that kind of star quality could be used to attract more tourists.



Sammy's river relay

In 2001, salmon returned to the River Mersey for the first time in living memory. In June 2007, Sammy the salmon (pictured) became the first of his breed to complete the inaugural River Mersey Relay – a weeklong journey from the source of the river in Stockport town centre to the sea at

Liverpool. Sammy was helped along the way by cyclists, canoeists, rowers, sailors, rambles and ferry passengers. His epic adventure marked World Environment Day, and celebrated the equally epic clean up that has taken place on the Mersey in the past twenty years.

Parks' progress

A new network has been set up to coordinate work on regional parks in the Northwest. The parks aim to strengthen the region's economy by enhancing some of its finest natural assets.

Nine regional parks are now either in place or planned, with at least one in every county of the Northwest. The first of the regional parks, Mersey Waterfront, is now well established and plans are advanced for parks in the River Weaver Valley in Cheshire, the Ribble Estuary in Lancashire, and in East Lancashire.

The new network, Regional Parks Exchange, aims to build the capacity of the various partnerships backing each of the regional parks.

The news comes as the Mersey Waterfront regional park unveils details of its second phase funding,

incorporating £10.9 million from the Northwest Regional Development Agency and £6.9 million from the ERDF, bringing the total funding managed by the project to £91 million.

The money will be spent between 2007–2010, and will allow Mersey Waterfront to support a wide variety of flagship projects and local improvements along 135 km of Merseyside and Cheshire coastline.

Developments will include that of Sefton WATER Centre, a water-based recreation centre at Crosby Marina; a new urban park – Liverpool Riverlands – on the former International Garden Festival site; as well as laser lighting displays, public art and improved access to promenades such as Otterspool, right.



Wrong connections, Gromit!

Are you well connected? According to a recent report published by the Environment Agency, as many as one in five homes and businesses could be contributing to pollution in our rivers, lakes and groundwater.

If your property has wastewater pipes illegally connected to clean water drainage systems, your dirty water could be flowing straight into local watercourses.

The problem occurs when appliances such as dishwashers, washing machines and toilets have been moved or installed and incorrectly plumbed into the rainwater pipe, which is meant to allow clean rainwater to flow to a local river. It particularly affects post-1960

buildings, and it's the owner's responsibility to right the wrong connection.

But the Environment Agency points out that it's also down to builders and plumbers to take more care, and that building regulations must be enforced.

Tricia Henton, director of environment protection at the agency, says: "We want to see simple checks for wrong drainage connections in the new house seller's pack. This would raise awareness of the problem and reduce its impact."

The report, *The Unseen Threat to Our Water Quality*, looks at how diffuse pollution is affecting rivers, lakes, groundwater, estuaries and coastal waters in England and Wales.

Diffuse pollution occurs when chemicals or other contaminants disperse onto land or into water. It can take hours, days or years to manifest itself.

If you're worried about a wrong connection, contact the Environment Agency on 08708 506506.

Northwest cleans up

The man who “used to be the next president of the United States” but is now the world’s foremost climate change campaigner, former US vice-president Al Gore, stopped off in the UK recently to present the Ashden awards for sustainable energy. Three of the prestigious prizes went to Northwest organisations.

Winner in the energy efficiency category was business support programme ENWORKS, which is funded by the Northwest Regional Development Agency. The judges said they were impressed at ENWORKS’ achievement in helping small businesses make major energy savings.

Almost 1,000 businesses are participating in the programme, saving them over £12 million a year from a total capital investment of only £5.5 million, and reducing CO₂ emissions by an impressive 18,500 tonnes a year.

Joint winner in the category with ENWORKS was Cumbria Energy Efficiency Advice Centre. In just two years it has provided cavity wall



insulation for over 9,000 homes and loft insulation for over 5,000 more, saving 12,500 tonnes of CO₂ a year and reducing fuel bills by over £1.6 million a year.

“No one can attend an event like the Ashden Awards and fail to be inspired,” said Mr Gore.

“We must find a path from a present that still falls short of what’s needed, to a sustainable future. What impresses me most about these projects is they truly are becoming the change that’s needed in the world.”

Rounding out the trio of Northwest winners was Woodheys primary school in Cheshire, which has reduced its energy use by over 30 per cent and also created a high quality curriculum that has been widely praised and replicated.

www.ashdenawards.org

War chest to fight climate change

Funding of £23.5 million has been earmarked to fight climate change in the Northwest over the next three years. The money has been granted in principle by the Northwest Regional Development Agency (NWDA) to support the implementation of its climate change action plan, *Rising to the Challenge*.

The money has been ring-fenced and specific projects within the action plan will now go through the NWDA’s appraisal system to secure funding.

Don’t be surprised if some of the money ends up spent on planting street trees and creating urban parks. According to a new study from the University of Manchester even a modest increase in city greenery could help offset decades of temperature rises due to climate change.

A ten per cent increase in the amount of green space in built-up areas would reduce urban surface

temperatures by four degrees, equivalent to the average predicted rise by the 2080s, concludes the study.

“Opportunities need to be taken to increase green space cover wherever structural changes are occurring within urban areas, as well as planting street trees or developing green roofs,” says Roland Ennos of the faculty of life sciences, who worked on the project with Professor John Handley and Dr Susannah Gill in the school of environment and development.

The team also looked at whether city green spaces can help prevent flooding by soaking up rainfall – highly appropriate, given this summer’s devastating floods and the fact that by the 2080s experts predict more frequent storms of greater intensity, delivering up to 50 per cent more rain than at present.

Sadly, the answer appears to be no. Instead, new techniques known as sustainable urban drainage will be needed.

The University of Manchester, along with the city’s Tyndall Centre, is fast becoming a leading light in studying the impacts of climate change.

www.manchester.ac.uk

September 28 – October 7 Mersey Basin Week

Annual weeklong celebration of the Northwest’s environment, rivers and waterways. Now in its fifteenth year, thousands of volunteers will take part in hundreds of events and activities, from guided walks to bird watching to habitat restoration and maintenance. There are opportunities for individuals, groups and businesses to get involved. Funding is available to help pay for your events organised as part of the week.

Venue: Various around Northwest

More information: Bev Mitchell 0161 242 8212

b.mitchell@merseybasin.org.uk

October 16-24 IEMA foundation certificate in environmental management for the construction industry

The foundation certificate course provides delegates with an introduction to the key concepts associated with the environment and its relationship with business and construction. The programme includes discussion of key environmental management issues, full course notes, practical group work sessions and an IEMA certified examination.

Venue: Cube, Portland Street, Manchester

More information: Roy Stewart 0870 7771130

October 29-30 Northern Regeneration Summit

Join over 40 speakers covering key topics including the future of the North under Gordon Brown. The programme promises to assess the achievements of the past year and consider future strategies for increasing productivity in the North with high-profile speakers sharing their experiences. Building on the success of 2006’s event, this year’s agenda is currently being researched with those in the regeneration field.

Venue: Central Manchester

More information: www.regeneratingthenorth.com

September 18 – December 6 Common Purpose Leaders Programme

Opportunity to undertake a five day leadership development programme with the theme of developing sustainable communities in England’s Northwest, run by RENEW Northwest and Common Purpose. The aim is to bring together managers and regeneration practitioners from across sectors to educate them about regeneration and developing sustainable communities.

Venue: Various

More information: 0151 703 0135 info@RENEW.co.uk

November 1 Ribble Waters Forum

The annual look at the issues affecting Lancashire’s River Ribble. Featuring presentations, soapbox sessions and video presentations. Open to the public, private and voluntary sectors.

Venue: Woodlands Centre, Chorley

More Information: Bev Mitchell 0161 242 8212

b.mitchell@merseybasin.org.uk

Löve

Why I love... my sandyacht

By Derek Nixon, treasurer
of Wirral Sandyacht Club



“ I was just driving down the prom at Hoylake 20 years ago and glanced across when I saw these strange things going fast over the sand. It sparked my interest straightaway. I made my first sand yacht myself. If I'd gone and bought one of the top-of-the-range yachts right at the beginning, I'd have saved

myself a lot of money! There were only six of us doing it here back then, so it wasn't really a club at first. But slowly we started getting bigger, going to other club's competitions and holding regional regattas.

Who's involved in sand yaching? Mainly geriatrics like me. The average age is 45-50, but in France interestingly, it's much younger, more like 30. You need similar skills to water sailing in some respects, but in a boat you'll never go faster than the speed of the wind. We can go three times faster. Sailing a sand yacht is the nearest you'd get to being on a go-kart, except you're speeding along at 50mph. It makes you very religious when the wind's going strong. You can go faster, but the front wheel is a just a wheelbarrow wheel, so you don't really want to be doing 70mph.

My best moment was winning the international sandyacht championships in Lytham St Anne's 12 years ago. I had an older yacht then and I'd made my own mast. It was just one of those days, I thrashed everyone.

It's not the most convenient sport in the world. We only sail when the tide doesn't cover the sandbank, so we're a good mile out. That's every two weeks, and there's only a five-day window. You can go out and the sand is in perfect condition, but then there'll be no wind, so you wait two weeks. Then it'll be raining. So you wait again. The good days are precious.

We're hosting the European Sandyacht Championships at Hoylake from 5-21 September this year. The council have been brilliant and have secured ERDF money to help us run them. We're expecting 150 yachts. It'll be quite a sight.”
www.wsysc.org.uk

Hate

Why I hate... mink

By Paul Corner,
Action Wirral Rivers.



“ Well, I should say straight off, it's not the minks' fault. They're highly effective predators and are just doing what comes naturally. The problems started when humans brought them to the UK from America in Victorian times because we liked their fur.

Initially they were kept in mink farms but after several escapes, they began to establish a small population in the wild. Major disaster really struck when animal rights campaigners began to release them from captivity.

They're now running rampant along many rivers and unlike the very secretive otters, they can easily be seen in daylight. Mink are ferocious predators and our native water voles have suffered dreadfully. In the last 20 years numbers have crashed, and current trends suggest that they will eventually disappear from 94 percent of their former breeding sites, which is incredibly sad.

A mink can devastate a small water vole colony scarily fast, with the female small enough to enter their burrows on a riverbank, taking away any protection they have. Entire family groups can be wiped out in a single attack. In my area on the Wirral peninsular we have very small water vole populations and any mink entering these sites will completely annihilate them. At important sites such as Dibbinsdale Local Nature Reserve we monitor for the mink. If any sightings are made the mink are trapped and humanely destroyed.

Mink don't belong here and have pushed one of our most loved mammals to the point of extinction. The fact we got into this position is a combination of vanity, and a radical viewpoint put into action with willful carelessness.

Now they're here to stay. To get rid of them would cost too much in time and money, so we have to put our efforts into conserving the water vole sites – habitat loss is another big reason for the drop in numbers – and helping them re-colonise areas where they once thrived. Otters will have an important role to play, and as their numbers increase they will push the mink out of some areas, hopefully creating a more natural balance.”

WORDS + NUMBERS

9,040

the distance in miles of Britain's coastline, to which the government, Natural England and walkers' groups want to open up an unbroken 'access corridor', extending the right to roam.

50%

the amount of people in the Northwest who have never visited the region's coastline, despite it having the longest stretch of unspoilt seafront in England.

£2.6 billion

the amount that the environmental sector is worth to the Northwest economy every year – not to mention 109,000 jobs.

£115 million

the amount of extra money that could be attracted into the Northwest economy if its environmental assets were better marketed, according to a new campaign launched by Natural Economy Northwest.

10 tonnes

the amount of CO₂ emissions the average Brit is responsible for each year, according to Defra research. That's enough to fill 24 million balloons.

Two thirds

the proportion of people in the UK who believe climate change is entirely or mainly a result of human activity.

Postcard from...Ulan Bator

Wish you were where: Colleagues Graeme Mullin and Mark Whitworth from Envirolink Northwest in Warrington have taken up the challenge of the 2007 Mongol Rally – a journey one-third of the way around the earth from Hyde Park, London to the Mongolian capital, Ulan Bator – in a 2cv.

A grand tour: Green Team 2cv, as they're known, have chosen the Southern route to Ulaan Bator, taking in Germany, Serbia, Greece, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan and Russia, among other holiday hotspots on the road to Mongolia.

Holiday of a lifetime: Maybe not. The rally rules state that your vehicle must have a maximum one-litre engine, so it's just two lads, two horse power,

and 10,000 gruelling miles of open road. The organisers expect around half the 200 teams to reach the finish.

Green credentials: Just to raise the stakes even higher, Graeme and Mark have decided to complete the rally as sustainably as possible. Their customised 2cv will use a solar panel, and Lofrix grease to increase efficiency. The car has been subjected to thermal imaging, and Green Team 2cv will be offsetting their carbon emissions for the entire trip, including their flights home.

Happy campers: Despite the risks, Graeme and Mark are looking forward to getting on the road. Follow their progress online at www.greenteam2cv.com throughout the summer.



How to...train a river rescue dog



Rarely has the phrase gentle giant been more apt. Newfoundland dogs, or 'Newfies', combine the size of a grizzly bear with the temperament of teddy bear.

The dogs have a natural affinity for water – the fishermen who first bred them in Canada's Newfoundland province used them for towing lines between boats. They also

have a remarkable propensity for rescuing people from drowning, and were commonly used as ships' dogs during the nineteenth century – a Newfie on board Napoleon Bonaparte's ship is said to have saved him when he fell overboard one night.

Alan Price of Newfie training group Canis Major regularly brings his three dogs to train at Sale Water Park near Manchester. "From twelve weeks onwards we allow the dogs to go near water," he explains. "It's very rare they don't start swimming instantly. We don't use any force, but use a lot of encouragement. It's a natural instinct and the first time they do it they seem to just love it."

As the dogs mature, they're trained to do specific tasks, such as towing boats. Competitions are held with the dogs

awarded bronze, silver or gold medals according to how well they complete a set of exercises.

"Newfoundland dogs in this country are not used as a safety dog. It's purely for exercise and keeping the dog trained to its origins," says Alan. "But in France and Italy they are used as a rescue dog."

There's also a great social side to the training, he says. "There are approximately 20 people who come regularly, and around about 30 dogs. Ours is just one of about six or seven groups in the North of England that train together. The group has been around for about 20 years – I've been with them for six or seven."

More information:
www.northernnewfoundlandclub.org.uk

Coming...and Going

United Utilities has appointed **John Barnes** into a new senior role – environment and sustainability director. Previously John was responsible for United Utilities' clean water operations. He joined North West Water as a graduate and has worked in various roles for the last 12 years, including tackling leakage reduction after the 1995-96 drought.

The Mersey Basin Campaign's former development manager, **Iain Taylor**, has moved to Peel Holdings to take up the position of funding manager. Iain spent five years leading the Campaign's involvement in local and European projects, most notably the creation of the new Speke and Garston Coastal Reserve in Liverpool, funded by the NWDA and EU.

After less than a year at the helm, the regional director of Natural England - the aptly named **Richard Leafe** - has left to take up the post of chief executive at the Lake District National Park. Leafe was interviewed in the last issue of Source NW – we wish him every success in his new role.



Words Ciara Leeming

Photographs David Oates

Caught in a trap

In the first of a regular new series, Ciara Leeming talks to local campaigners about their project in Witton Country Park, Blackburn.

IT was 20 years ago that the River Darwen's litter problem began to bother Sir Bernard de Hoghton.

Growing up near Chorley during the 1950s, the landowner knew the river was polluted.

But it was on inheriting the ancestral Hoghton Tower estate that the scale of the crisis became clear. By then, endless rubbish and fly-tipped material were choking the river and its wildlife, and something desperately needed to be done.

He says: "The Darwen's a beautiful river but the waste that comes down it is horrendous. I've seen eight shopping trolleys in one day, and we get syringes, nappies and all kinds of other nasties.

"I came up with the idea of a litter trap and did some drawings."

But it wasn't until 2004 that Sir Bernard's inspiration moved off the drawing board and into reality, when Sarah Whitman and chairman Bruce Bendell of Action Darwen Valley took up the cause and began to gather support around the idea.

"We've already had interest from Edinburgh, the Manchester Ship Canal and Thames Water."

Sarah says: "When I started to talk to people about the idea of a litter trap, I was inundated with letters of support. People from all over the area who love the river wrote to say what a good idea it was. The overwhelming response we had helped us to secure funding for the project."

The necessary funding – some £114,000 – was granted by the Peter Moores Foundation, Biffaward, the Healthy Waterways Trust and the Environment Agency, allowing detailed plans to be put into operation.

The trap, at Witton Country Park, Blackburn, was completed in April, and is the first of its kind in Britain. Other authorities are now considering following suit. Created by Leeds firm OPEC, the design draws on the company's expertise in oil pollution control. Two moving booms, stretched across the river channel, deflect

debris of all sizes into a large metal basket, specially imported from America. The litter can then be removed and, where possible, recycled.

As the river rises and falls – the Darwen is prone to flash floods – so too does the basket, which even at its lowest remains raised slightly off the riverbed to allow fish to pass underneath.

The trap can remove up to 100 transit vans worth of rubbish from the Darwen each year. But the ultimate aim is to draw attention to – and eliminate – the litter problem in the first place, so the system can one day be removed.

"The main message we want to get across is that litter belongs in the bin, not in the river," says Sarah. The trap's position, close to the park entrance, was deliberately chosen so that visitors would see the scale of the litter problem.

OPEC managing director James Ilsey believes the concept could be adapted to suit other UK waterways: "It can't be done on rivers where there is traffic, but litter is a problem everywhere, so other areas are watching closely. We've already had interest from Edinburgh, the Manchester Ship Canal and Thames Water."

The project continues to evolve as time goes on. A lockable skip will be put on site, and waste stored – both to let it dry and to cut down on transport.

Blackburn MP Jack Straw, who officially opened the project in June, is impressed. "Our rivers are a vitally important feature of the landscape and dealing with litter and fly-tipping is vital to both the habitat for wildlife and the public amenity," he says.

"The location of this litter trap is also particularly helpful as the river flows through a country park, which is visited by thousands of local residents every year.

"I am sure that it will help to make the River Darwen an asset to the area."

BEST & WORST

BEST

"We chose the right people to work with," says Sarah Whitman, coordinator of Action Darwen Valley. "There was a lot of goodwill and passion involved in the project. If OPEC and our environmental consultants, APEM, had worked to rule when it came to charging for their time, we wouldn't have had enough money to make the trap a reality."

WORST

"We underestimated the weather," says Sarah. "Funding restrictions meant we had to start the installation process in November but we didn't get the trap operational until April. We didn't anticipate the impact of bad weather, and weren't prepared for such long delays."

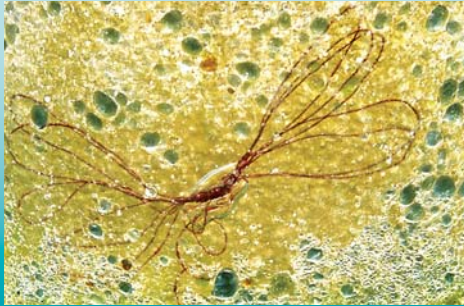


Help us reward the Northwest's unsung environmental heroes with the Unilever Dragonfly Awards 2007

Every year prizes worth over £6,000 are handed out to the region's top environmental volunteers to help fund new and continuing projects.

The awards recognise the outstanding voluntary efforts of individuals, young people and organisations towards improving the region's waters and watersides. They are sponsored by Unilever and run by the Mersey Basin Campaign.

The overall winner receives a cheque for £2,500 while each of the other winners receives a cheque for £1,000. Each winner also receives a handsome trophy made using recycled glass.



If you would like to make a nomination please complete and return this form by **7th September 2007.**

Please send it to:

Bev Mitchell
Mersey Basin Campaign
Fourways House
57 Hilton Street
Manchester M1 2EJ

Telephone: 0161 242 8212
Fax: 0161 242 8201
E-mail: b.mitchell@merseybasin.org.uk

Your Details

Name

Your Contact Details

Address

Telephone

E-mail

Your Nomination

I would like to nominate

Contact Details for Nominee

Address

Telephone

E-mail

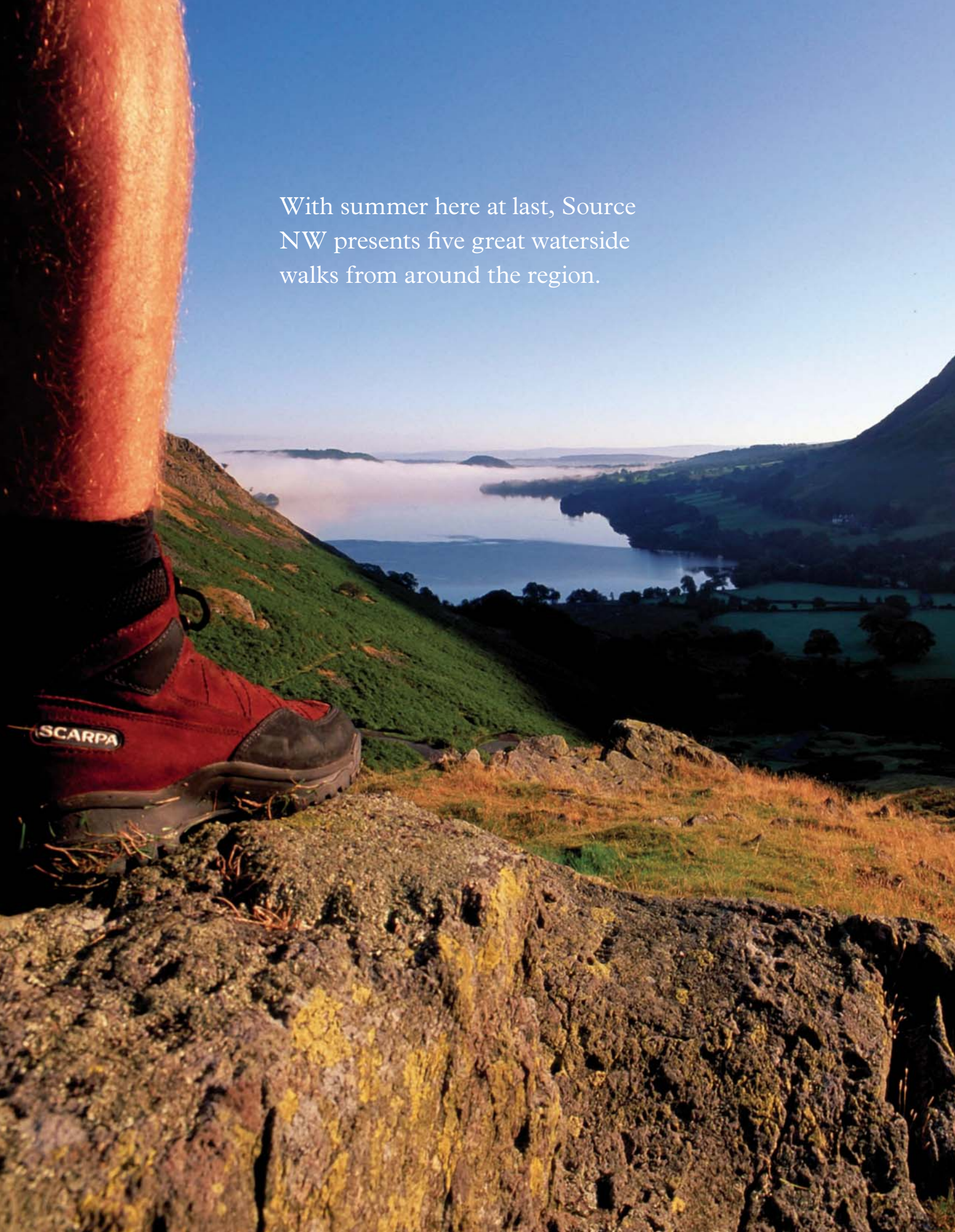
Length of involvement in project

Has the nominee received any other award(s) for their work?

Reasons for nomination

Please use this section to say why your nominee should win an award. Please feel free to use an extra sheet, or add supporting information.



A close-up, low-angle shot of a person's leg and a red Scarpa hiking boot resting on a dark, mossy rock. The boot has a black sole and a small black label with the word "SCARPA" in white. The person is wearing a black sock. In the background, a vast landscape unfolds under a clear blue sky. A large, calm lake or reservoir is visible, surrounded by green hills and valleys. The foreground is a rocky outcrop with patches of yellowish-green moss. The overall scene is bright and clear, suggesting a sunny day.

With summer here at last, Source
NW presents five great waterside
walks from around the region.

WALKING ON WATER

01: Merseyside: Wigg Island



Hemmed in by the Manchester Ship Canal on one side and the River Mersey on the other, not that long ago Wigg Island was just another brownfield site, a strip of derelict, contaminated land left over from the heyday of Halton's chemical industry.

Now a 25 hectare community park, this is the perfect place if you fancy something easy-going and not too strenuous on the legs, where the only sound you'll hear is birdsong and the most pressing decision you'll need to make is whether to turn right or left.

I chose left, and was soon in the shade of a rich tapestry of broadleaved trees and thick hawthorn hedges. Rambling dog roses scrambled up into the higher branches, while deep purple foxgloves nosed their way up against the foliage.

In the tree canopy I caught the odd glimpse of a chirping flock of goldfinches, while swallows skirted over the grassland hunting for flies. Ospreys have been sighted and marsh harriers are also occasional summer visitors.

It wasn't long before I came to the first of several viewing screens looking out across the Astmoor Saltmarsh, with the Fiddlers Ferry Power Station lurking in the background. Looking back the other way, the majestic sweep of the Jubilee Bridge glistened in the sun.

With a gentle breeze coming in off the Mersey, it's great to just sit and scan the reed beds waiting for something to pop over and perch on one of the poles or twisted tree stumps that jut up from the marshes.

A broad tarmac path runs around the edge of the park, while much of the centre remains closed to the public, although guided tours can be arranged to see how the wildlife is thriving in these more protected areas.

Crossing rough grassland carpeted with buttercups, a flight of steps takes you down to an intriguing disused stretch of the Latchford canal. The path now sweeps round past the saltmarsh and doubles back through more woodland and wildflower meadows.

Wigg Island is well signposted from Runcorn town centre but it is slightly off the beaten track and there's nowhere close for refreshments, so best to bring your own food and drink. There are regular events all year round, from butterfly weeks to bat walks, and a new award winning visitor centre opens later this summer. Find out further details by calling 0151 907 8300. Or call Cathy Elwin at Mersey Waterfront for more waterside walks in Merseyside on 0151 237 3947.

[CONTINUED OVER]



02: Manchester: Chorlton and the River Mersey

If the mood takes you this is one of those walks where you can just go on and on. In fact, not only is this stretch of the Mersey part of the Trans-Pennine Trail, but it's also a section of the European Long Distance Path that starts in Cork and will eventually take the intrepid walker all the way to Istanbul.

Starting in the car park at Chorlton Water Park head left around the lake. It's hard to believe now, with its mature trees and reed beds, that the lake's actually man-made and was created by the extraction of gravel in the 1970s, which was used to build the nearby M60 motorway. The park opened in 1978 and is now a popular oasis in south Manchester that's home to an ever increasing list of birds, including kingfishers, kestrels and a whole host of wildfowl that over-winter on the lake.

After a couple of hundred yards leave the water park and join up with the path along the river, but staying on this side of the Mersey as it meanders along. The river's broken up in places by strategically placed rapids which help to aerate the water as well as slowing its passage when storms over the Pennines add to its considerable swell.

Once you've past Jackson's Bridge, with the Jackson's Boat pub on the other side, the path starts to follow the edge of Chorlton Ees Nature Reserve. The Ees are a natural flood plain to the Mersey and the reserve was, until the early 1970s, the site of the sprawling Withington Sewage

Works. Take the steps down to explore the shady footpaths and ponds, and you'll soon discover evidence of the vast Victorian enterprise, such as the waist high walls of blue engineering bricks that were used to separate the old settling tanks.

Back by the river, after roughly 3 km cross over to the south bank using a bridge shared with the metro system. Here you can continue along the Mersey or skirt round the edge of Sale Water Park, another legacy of the M60's construction. The lake is now a popular watersports centre complete with its own restaurant, Deckers (0161 962 0118), on the far shore.

This is also a great place to see Chorlton's resident cormorants, which are often perched high up on the electricity pylons when they're not out on the water fishing.

Passing Jackson's Bridge once again, Sale Golf Club stretches out to your right and there's the option to take a detour into Kenworthy Woods where over 30,000 trees have been planted in recent years, along with a community orchard which, at the right time of years, offers up a feast of berries, plums and cob nuts.

Crossing over Bailey's Bridge, you're back at Chorlton Water Park where, if you're lucky, an ice cream van may well have pitched up in the car park.

Mersey Valley Rangers/
Chorlton Water Park
0161 881 5639

03: Cheshire: Anderton Nature Park

Anderton Nature Park, where this ramble begins, is just one part of the fabulous Northwich Community Woodlands.

I say ramble rather than walk because that's the best way to explore this diverse corner of Cheshire countryside, which links the majestic Marbury Country Park with various reclaimed sites that have become a haven for wildlife.

The whole area is criss-crossed by the River Weaver and the Trent & Mersey Canals, and dotted with meres, ponds and flashes, which means in the heat of summer you're never far away from a cooling expanse of water. And of course, it's also home to the famous Anderton Boatlift.

The first part of my route, which started from the car park next to the boatlift, took in the park's wildflower trail (leaflets are available from the boatlift visitor centre nearby).

The unique conditions in this part of Cheshire, where salt, lime, ash and clinker have been dumped and extracted for years, has allowed an alien ecosystem to develop, where plants which thrive in difficult conditions have taken hold. Excellent markers along the trail tell you what to look out for and the best times to see it, from fragrant orchids to the strange, slightly prehistoric looking Butterbur, and the pungent ramson, or wild garlic.

Strolling along the Weaver, dragonflies flit between the reeds and rushes, but it's the birdlife that really stands out. In fact I counted close on 30 different species during my

walk, including a couple of bold and beautiful bullfinches that teased me as they darted among the silver birches, posing for the camera one minute than taking off just as the shutter clicked.

After walking for a couple of kilometres an unusual site greeted me at Neumann's Flash. The flash is a large stretch of water, once used to store lime waste from the chemical industry. Again this has changed the make up of the soil, allowing orchids and other plants not native to Cheshire to take over, as well as providing habitat for the scarce Dingy skipper butterfly.

As I approached, five large birds were standing on a spit of sand, their heads tucked under their wings as they took a snooze. I presumed they were common-or-garden Canada geese until I got closer and one raised its head, revealing a bright red bill. They were in fact black swans which, a group of local birders informed me, had been there for a few months now, although they had them down as escapees on the run rather than migrants blown off course.

Heading back I stopped off at Haydn's Pool where a heron was prowling the shallows, while overhead a buzzard rode the thermals and a curlew flew past, squawking its unmistakable call. This really was bird watching paradise.

www.andertonboatlift.co.uk
Visitors centre 01606 786 777





04: Cumbria: Buttermere

This is an easy, 6.4 km walk around one of the prettiest Cumbrian lakes. There is a bus service linking Keswick and Buttermere. If arriving by car, park at the pay and display car park, behind the Bridge Hotel (GR 173169). Recommended map - OS Outdoor Leisure 4, English Lakes NW Area.

THE WALK

From the Bridge Hotel, return to the road and turn right. After a few metres, bear right, through Syke Farm (signed PUBLIC BRIDLEWAY, LAKE SHORE PATH). Once past the farm buildings, there is a view of Buttermere, High Stile and Sourmilk Gill.

At the next farm gate, go right, following a permissive path between the field boundaries, down a short flight of stone steps to a path through Pike Rigg woods to the lakeshore.

After the third kissing gate, look out for Hay Stacks and Warnscale Beck at the far end of the lake. The path goes through park land (look out for sycamore, oak, lime and the occasional sweet chestnut) and, after the next gate, through a rock tunnel. Watch out for the low roof! Back in daylight, you drop to a tree-lined, shingle beach.

Leaving the trees behind, you go through another kissing gate, past a fir plantation and ahead of you is a dramatic view of Fleetwith Pike.

Keep to the shore and eventually the path climbs to join the road. Keep close to the wall and watch out for traffic.

After a few minutes walking, cross the road bridge over Gatesgarth Beck and turn right, along the permissive path between Gatesgarth Farm and the beck. This takes you around the farm to a cluster of gates. Go through the small gate signed LAKE SHORE PATH and across the fields. On the left, there is a tremendous view of Fleetwith Pike, Hay Stacks and Warnscale Beck.

At the far side, the path forks. Turn right (signed PUBLIC BRIDLEWAY: BUTTERMERE). You cross a vigorous stream, then leave the bridleway to go right, along the lake shore and into Burtness Wood. Like most of this area, the wood is owned and managed by the National Trust.

A short distance into the woods, the path forks. Go right and keep to the shore for a view of the woods at Hassness, on the far side. Continue through the wood to arrive at a pair of gates. The path left climbs to Red Pike and Ennerdale. Keep right, across the pair of wooden bridges, over Sourmilk Gill and Buttermere Dubs.

Now you have a choice. Straight ahead joins a farm lane leading back the village. The more attractive alternative goes right, along the edge of the lake for a classic view of the lake and mountains. This is the route we take, but bear in mind that it may be closed during lambing time.

The path hugs the shore before crossing a beck and veering left to join the outgoing path. Turn left and back into the village.

05: Lancs: Glasson Dock Walk

A circular, 5.5 km walk along part of Lancashire's Coastal Path, returning via the Glasson branch of the Lancaster Canal. Park at Glasson Basin car park (follow the signs for East Quay). Recommended map - OS Landranger series 102.

THE WALK

Leave the car park via the main entrance and cross the road to join the wide, gravel track (signed CONDER GREEN, ALDCLIFFE & LANCASTER).

Turn right and stroll along the embankment. This gives a splendid view of the estuary and, in the distance, the Lakeland fells. The track is part of the Lancashire Cycle Way and, if you want to avoid bikes, there is a footpath on the other side of the concrete wall (but don't let dogs and children roam onto the marsh).

After fifteen minutes easy walking, cross the River Conder via the old railway bridge and come to a sign post. Turn sharp right, onto a tarmac lane, and follow this to the main road, beside The Stork Hotel.

Cross the road and turn left. After 50m, turn sharp right, down a narrow lane. Take care as there is no pavement.

After 100m or so, another road comes in from the right. Continue straight on, leaving the meandering River Conder behind and heading into open countryside.

You pass a number of cottages and a couple of footpath signs on your left. About 150m after Conder House, the road goes sharp

left. Look for the public footpath sign in the hedge on your right, just on the corner, and go through the wooden farm gate.

Keep to the hedge on your left (around the stock pen) until you come to the stile in the far left corner of the field.

Cross the footbridge and the right of way goes straight across the field to a pair of gates in the far left corner. (If feeling benevolent, walk along the field boundary.) Go through the right gate and then diagonally across the next field to the far right corner (or around the boundary). Look for the solitary tree and you'll find a footbridge beside it. This takes you over the River Conder and into a narrow field.

Go straight across to the gate opposite and you are on the towpath beside the canal. (The actual right of way stops at the gate, goes right and climbs to a bridge. However, the stile down to the towpath is a concrete mess, almost impossible to negotiate if you are over size 0 or have a dog).

Turn right and follow the canal back towards Glasson Dock. There is a variety of wildlife along here, from swans and coots, to narrowboats and their owners. You also pass The Mill pub and restaurant, a good spot for a drink on a hot summer afternoon.

Eventually, the towpath arrives back at Glasson Basin. Make sure you explore the dock and sample the excellent tea and chips at the Lock Keeper's Rest.



WEST- WARD HO!

In the second instalment of articles drawn from the upcoming book *Mersey: the river that changed the world*, Manchester music legend Antony Wilson immerses himself in the musical history of Liverpool.

Every phase of my life has been touched, sprinkled religiously perhaps, by the waters of the River Mersey. No surprise since I think of myself as a Lancashire lad, spurning the linguistic aberrations of some early seventies Whitehall civil servant, and as a Lancashire lad, it is this river which rises in the black-brown moors to the east and kisses the Irish sea in the west that flows right through my homeland.

I was born and spent my first five years above my Mum and Dad's tobacconist's shop on Salford's Regent Road. I look back to a fifties heyday when Regent Road was one of the great shopping streets of the North. And why? It could hardly be unconnected with the fact that less than half a mile away, just down Trafford Road, were the magnificent gates of the docks of the Port of Manchester, the designated terminus for the equally magnificent Manchester Ship Canal, built by Manchester men to combat the hegemony and high taxes enjoyed by the Port of Liverpool at the far end of that River Mersey.

Without the Mersey, there would, of course, have been no logical entrance for the great ships that went on to cross the fields around Warrington. Eastham, on the south side of the estuary, was indeed the entrance to Manchester, our Ostia. Salford, and in particular Cross Lane Corner where I was brought up, were the intentional and alternate universe to the great port of Liverpool.

Those tall stately African seamen I sold snuff and cigarettes to; I was told they were "Lascars". Knowing now that real Lascars were in fact men of smaller stature recruited from East India, although the word had come to be used to describe any foreign or African seaman serving on British ships under "lascar" agreements.



Age five it was off to the country and a pleasant new detached house on an estate perched on the side of Strines Road in Marple. It was the simplest thing for us kids on the estate to climb over a low wooden fence and head off down the steep sided, fern layered hillside, crossing a stone and iron railway bridge over the Hayfield railway line and then down an even steeper slope, encouraged by the sound of fast running water below, down, down to the Goyt.

There, just across a mossy stone bridge over the Goyt, was a muddy forest full of wonders. Beneath the ferns and trees, the remnants of old stone buildings would lie, wet, lichen covered, mossy and inviting to a curious bunch of pre-teens; and then great tunnels and unfathomable constructions of the same millstone grit. By the age of ten I had discovered that these were the ruins left behind by Samuel Oldknow, a gentleman who had founded his mill and even an orphanage on the banks of the Goyt; kindness or exploitation? Who knows; though history treats

him kindly: "He was the zealous promoter of every useful and benevolent measure calculated to aid the progress of general civilisation and local improvement."

I did my first piece of 'adult' work in my last year at primary school, doing a project on Oldknow and illustrating it with blurry black and white photos taken on my new Kodak Brownie 127.

Those ruins were our Chitchen Itza; just like the Mayan remains on the Yucatan, these cracked towers seemed to grow out of the jungle and at the same time seemed to be at the very point of being sucked back into it. Maybe it's the natural origins of the locally quarried stone from which these temples – to industry – were built but they seemed then as much part of nature as part of man.

And of course these discoveries on the banks of the Goyt were my first real encounter with the Industrial Revolution. Dampness is all. But for Samuel Oldknow it was more than the dampness that helped the weaving; it was the power of that water coming down off the Pennines. He re-routed the Goyt to feed the 'Wellington Wheel', which drove his spindles through an underground shaft. The underground stone-lined tunnels, from millponds to drive wheels, were the stuff of adventure and dreams for young kids like us.

And grist to the Victorian marketing boom, which renamed the biggest of the millponds as the "Roman Lakes" and later went from tourist attraction to fishing mecca.

My next step towards the sea, took me as surely to the port at the end of the line, as the Goyt, would rush on, merging with the Etherow just beyond Marple and then deep in the belly of Stockport, the Tame, going on to flow all the way to the sea. But it was only a short walk from the ruins of Samuel Oldknow's empire, to a friend's house on the banks of the Peak Forest Canal (of which, incidentally, our old boy Samuel was principal promoter and chairman of the committee which financed and directed its construction).

Liverpool at the dawn of the 60's – a fresh, vibrant youth culture based on the music of black America.

It was December 1963, and I can clearly remember the Hayes family front room and that twelve inch black and white object/trophy that seemed more important than that coming Christmas, more important than the death a few months back of the American President, more important than anything. And maybe it was. With its knowingly "art" sleeve, with its four moody head shots, it was, arguably, the first album.

[CONTINUED OVER]

Yes there had been long playing records around for several years, there had been collections of singles and cover versions, but there hadn't been a thing called "an album"; the world, my world had changed, and it was this black and white thing that had come down the East Lincs Road via the road called Abbey, that embodied everything that was new and exciting in our lives.

Give Andrew Loog Oldham the credit for knowing the world had changed; he burst into the kitchen of the Chelsea flat where the Rolling Stones lived, waving this two tone icon in his hand; "Start writing songs lads." "But we've just got these great new Chuck Berry tracks, Andrew." "Screw that, start writing." He knew history when he saw it. And this album, with most of the songs self-penned by Lennon and McCartney, was going to change everything.



With The Beatles, their second long playing record, their – and the world's – first album, was history. The previous spring, in the school playground, we'd heard rumours that one of the sixth formers had a mate in Liverpool who was going to bring this new band over who'd just had a minor hit with a single called Love Me Do. Excitement rose as Please Please Me smashed into Number One. A visit from the Beatles. Too good to be true. It was. It never happened. But we were all in on the ground floor, poring over our transistors on a Sunday afternoon, so proud when She Loves You stayed at number one for a record number of weeks. As if it was us. But it was us. It was youth. It was our youth. It was the revolution. And it came out of the mouths and minds of these four young heroes from the other end of the A580. No longer was Liverpool the place to board the ferry to Douglas and the Isle of Man. It had become the centre of the world.

And the role of the port on the Mersey is mythically acknowledged as central to this great spark of creativity. Rock and roll was, is and always will be about influences flowing over and around each other and the constant and most vital influences are always Africa and Europe. By 1962, the epiphany kicked off in Memphis by Elvis Presley had waxed old and cold. Rock and roll had become East Coast high school pop; saccharine and empty. In Britain all you had was the low-cal Presley copies like Tommy Steele. But the undercurrent which inspired Elvis and his confreres, rhythm and blues, race music, was feeding the hearts and souls of a new British underground. And the steady drip of this raw, emotional, "new" music was travelling with the Gulf Stream, across the Atlantic.

I asked my friend Mike McCartney about the role of the port in the late 50's, when passenger liners still made regular crossings to New York. He described this culture of R&B aficionados, a British working class version of Normal Mailer's White Hipster, clutching their rare imported R&B recordings. He told me how Long John Baldry, a London blues singer, would make regular trips to see him and his brother and their mates and they'd all show off the latest sounds from the US, brought in for Baldry through the docks in the East End, while his new Liverpool chums would share their trophies acquired through those great docks on the banks of the Mersey.

When he explained this phenomena to me, a loud bell of memory went off in my head; "they were young sailors who knew exactly what the demand was back home for these rare pieces of plastic."

Liverpool at the dawn of the 60's, a fresh vibrant youth culture based on the music of black America; and the chance to be top dog when you walk down the home gangplank.

As Michael described these junior sea dogs, full of themselves 'cause "they'd heard these things before everybody else" I immediately thought of my first year at university and the Easter term of 1969. I knew people who knew people who were in the Oxford and Cambridge Drama Group, an occasional touring amalgam of the two universities' aspiring theatricals.

That Christmas they had taken Twelfth Night or some other Bill Shakespeare classic to New York. And there they had seen the movie, "Easy Rider". My God, they were the kings of the King's Parade. The hottest folk in East Anglia. They had seen the film of films. They could say things like "far out" and "do your own thing in your own time" and they knew how it should sound. For three months they were princes amongst men.

Just like those sailors returning to the Mersey Estuary, laden with priceless gifts, not of frankincense and myrrh but of shellac and vinyl. And Paul and John ate them up, digested them and regurgitated a music that would change the world.

This album was going to change everything.

If you think of those first singles, they were centred on pop, with the R&B influence lurking only in the inspirational background. In fact it wasn't until the fourth or fifth release, the Twist and Shout EP, that one got a real feel of the vibrant, shouty, blues background to this teen combo. But that must have been George Martin and EMI smoothing out the early records because many years later in the late 80's, a lovely old sound man at Granada called Gordon told me a story of how Johnny Hamp,

planning a mini-documentary on two groups, a brass band and a beat-bunch called the Beatles, had taken Gordon to the Cavern with a tape machine. The piece never happened and it was in a studio session six months later, festooned with Liverpool Echo headline cuttings, that the fab four made their debuts. But Gordon told me he still had the tape and would I like to hear it. Would I?

Next day we go to the music library and Gordon puts on the tape. Cacophonous, messy, unbelievably loud and violent, well, noise. Unbearably exciting. And it reminded me of only one thing. The sound of the Sex Pistols that first night in Manchester on June 4th 1976. Yes, it was that fucking amazing.

I was shocked to the core. And delighted. As Mike said to me, "After Hamburg, they had really changed." Robert Johnston went to the crossroads; the Beatles had been to Germany. Maybe both had sold their souls to be able to play the blues. Whatever, it was a good deal.

Old men and women, don't think that the Beatles and the Sex Pistols are the last time this happens; I saw a trance-emo group from St Albans, called Enter Shikari, on the 26th of October 2006 and they sounded exactly as exciting as Gordon's tape and Malcolm's band – which shows the true power of the culture of the plantations that found its way to Liverpool.

And therein lies the sweet and bitter irony of cultural history, that again, without this great river and its great port, none of this happens. For without the 18th century's noxious trade in brutalised humanity, there would never have been the blues and without those flattened seventh notes, no rock and roll. No life. No Beatles. To quote the Fugs "Nothing, nihil, nada."

And yes, the Beatles were never as bluesy as their contemporaries, the Stones or the Animals or Georgie Fame from Leigh; but it was still the heartbeat of the revolution which they led from the front.

Ah yes, Liverpool and the slave trade. Or rather Liverpool's. By the 1750s, after Liverpool had seen off the ports of Bristol and London and began to dominate the Atlantic triangular slave trade, there were two more Liverpool's, one on the River St Paul in what is now Liberia and another to the north on Rio Pongas in modern Guinea. Both were slaving centres.

But it's somebody else's job to talk about these failures of humanity. Mine to recount the one truly remarkable by-product of those miserable journeys for so many of the people of West Africa. The creation of the music that has covered the globe for the last fifty years.

At first it was a bit of shock for we civilised westerners; "Why savages who have never developed a musical or other art should be supposed to have more refined aesthetic sensibilities than the peoples who have cultivated music for centuries passes my poor powers of understanding." H.E. Kriebel in 1914 used the word "poor" rhetorically. In fact he was entirely accurate – his understanding was worse than poor – and entirely misguided, as the civilised western folk who six years later were dancing to the West African Ashanti dance, or Charleston, could have told him.

Just like those sailors returning to the Mersey, laden with priceless gifts of shellac and vinyl.

The blues is only as old as slavery, or more particularly the end of slavery, for its profound development comes only with abolition and the movement of the American Negro into the world beyond the plantation. But it begins with the American work songs, which of course have their origins in West Africa. L. Jones, whose book "Blues People" I will now shamelessly steal from (well isn't that what Eric Clapton and Pete

litanies in those American fields. His sons and daughters and their children began to use America as a reference."

At the heart of this new American music was what was long misunderstood as primitive or the unskilled nature of the primitive (when will we ever learn?) seen as the strangeness and out of tune quality emanating from their "crude" instruments. Classical musicologists spoke of the "aberration" of the diatonic scale in African music. That geezer Kriebel quite beautifully describes the "tones which seem rebellious to the Negro's sense of intervallic propriety are the fourth and seventh of the diatonic major series." Ah, the flattened seventh, the augmented fourth. You naughty boys. It just didn't occur to these white supremacists, as we should justly call these blinkered art critics, that perhaps the Africans were not using a diatonic scale but an African scale, a scale that would seem ludicrous when analysed by standard western musicology. The flattened seventh, like the E-A-B7 chord sequence, are not the blues; they are just faltering efforts of one music culture to define the other in its own terms.

For example, it leaves out rhythm, and though the Negro slave had to pretty soon leave out rhythm himself – drums were forbidden as seen as provoking passion and revolt – quite rightly – the syncopated patterns that had been used for communication, so much more complex than the primitive Morse code we westerners had once imagined as the use of drums, were actually the phonetic reproduction of words themselves.

Add to this the counter calling of the work song and its development into the

rasp of the early Dylan) and finally add in emancipation.

As Jones points out; slavery didn't create the blues, emancipation did. For it was only when this culture came out of the field, when there was no point in singing about bales of cotton or catching fish in a long forgotten Africa. The slave diaspora spread to the cities and instead of writing songs for a work team to sing, it became songs for an individual to sing. It became personal. For all the incredible gifts of African tonality that changed popular culture in the West, the personal theme of the blues also lingers on monumentally.

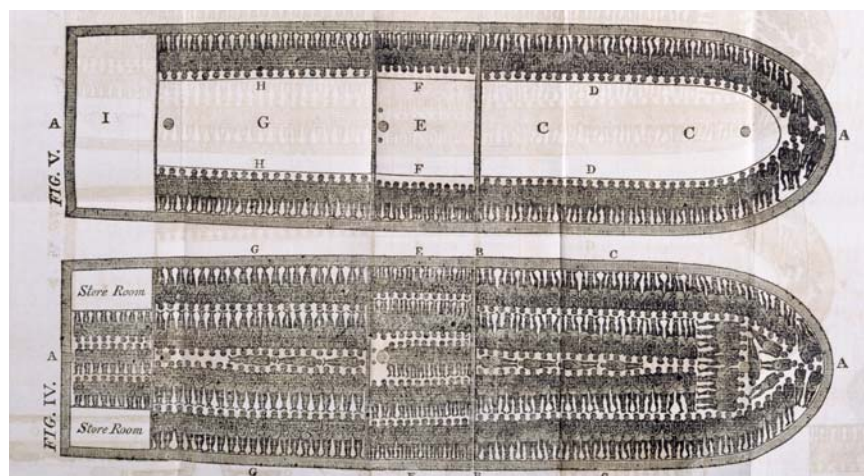
Oh, Lawd, I'm tired, uuh
 Oh, Lawd, I'm tired, uuh
 Oh, Lawd, I'm tired, uuh
 Oh, Lawd, I'm tired a dis mess

"So tired, tired of waiting, tired of waiting for you", wouldn't you say, Mr. Davies? But enough of plagiarising the Mr Jones who did "know what was happening" and let me refer to my beloved guitarist Vini Reilly, the renowned instrumentalist of the Manchester band, the Durutti Column, but also, to me, the source of profound mathematical insight into music (and music is maths and vice versa). He explained to me that "in our classical world, in a Perry Como song, the intervals are mathematically correct, they are logical and expected. But when you hear the blues notes, the augmented fourth, the flattened seventh, they are not logical, they are a shock. In simple terms they are wildness. You expect, deep down in your psyche, a note to go some place, but it goes somewhere else. You are surprised, you are shocked, and you are excited."

Vini went on to talk about Gershwin's desire to feed these different intervals into his work only to be frustrated by the solidity of a concert orchestra. Vini points out the role of the guitar where notes can be bent, and highlights the role of the bottleneck so beloved of BB King and all the white blues players; whether or not this was used because of fingers damaged by intense manual labour, certainly it makes the notes as fluid as the tonalities of their West African origins. He also told me about that other blues standard instrument, the harmonica, how the tines wear down quickly and notes begin to wander, again allowing this all-vital blending and distorting of melody. And then there's the chord structures that grow out of this non-diatonic system and inform the entire world of rock and roll.

And again Vini defines the unexpected nature of this non-European mathematics; "a sound, a feeling that is shocking, that is extreme, that is at heart rebellious." How appropriate, how inevitable, that the sound of an oedipal culture is defined by the rebellious mathematical progressions of the blues from Western Africa via the slave ships of the Mersey and the plantations of the Southern states.

And how strange that my story begins in the hills below the moors, on the banks of the Goyt, with my first taste of an Industrial Revolution, and takes me downstream to the Irish Sea and to the two great progenitors of the Industry of Revolution that has shaped my life and, thank God, continues to do so.



Townsend did for heaven's sake from the great blues guitarists) points to the music – songs – of the second generation of slaves: "The African slave had sung African chants and

repetition of the first three lines of the classic blues; add to this the rejection of "beautiful singing" and the preference for raucous, husky, natural tones (and here all I can think of is the almost unbearable

Words Matthew Sutcliffe

Martin Beaumont

Chief executive of the Co-operative Group, whose leadership on green issues recently won him a Northwest Business Environment Award.

These days everyone from politicians to pop stars claims to be at the forefront of the fight against climate change. It is, they say, a question of leadership.

So it's instructive that the first thing you notice when visiting the Manchester head office of Martin Beaumont, chief executive of the Co-operative Group, is where it is. Or, more pertinently, where it isn't.

Where it isn't, is at the top of the CIS tower, commanding majestic views over the rolling Pennines, the Cheshire plain and the bustling Manchester skyline, as might befit the captain of the Northwest's biggest company.

“98 percent of the group's electricity comes from renewable sources.”

Instead, Beaumont's seat of power is next door in a rather humbler block, in the shadow of the CIS tower. Perhaps though, this suits him better, for it allows views not from the tower, but of it. And what a view, for the tower is now clad in the UK's largest array of solar panels. It is his company's ability to ally business with the environment that Beaumont has agreed to talk about.

“Companies today with any medium to long term perspective can see that their business will be damaged unless, a) we successfully start tackling the impact of climate change, and b) they are seen by consumers as a brand that can be trusted with the environment.”

Fine words, but any forward thinking chief executive worth his salt these days needs to be able to speak the language of climate change. Think of Jeff Immelt at General Electric, Wal-Mart's Lee Scott or Stuart Rose at M&S. Question is, what is the Co-op doing to prove its environmental credentials?

The answer is quite a lot.

“We've undertaken a whole series of initiatives – almost all the electricity we use is now green,” says Beaumont. In fact, 98 per cent of the group's electricity comes from good quality renewable sources – including, of course, those solar panels on the CIS tower, which generate enough electricity to make nine million cups of tea a year.

“We are looking to generate about 15 per cent of our own energy. We built our first wind farm on our land in Cambridgeshire, with eight turbines. We want to increase that to 14, and we have three other wind farms in the planning stages,” adds Beaumont.

The group has also increased its energy reduction target to an impressive 25 percent by 2012.

“We are spending £7 million in our stores to reduce the amount of electricity they use, but the payback is massive. You are talking about a 12 month payback time, so there's a very, very strong business case.”

The company also runs the country's largest recycling centre for office waste paper, collecting 5,000 tonnes every year (by electrical powered lorry) and turning it into Co-op loo rolls and kitchen tissue.

Beaumont is as brand conscious and media savvy as any chief executive you could wish to meet. But that's not what drives the company's commitment to the environment. It is, he says, at the heart of the company and what it stands for.

“Our brand is essentially the fact that we are consumer owned. We were originally established by customers to supply reliable, safe food, and 160 years later we are still at the forefront.

“I think we are at a real turning point.”

“We are there to provide the services and products that our customers want but to do it in a way that addresses their concerns about how business operates, and climate change is now almost certainly their number one concern.

“Failing to respond to that challenge would be hugely damaging to our brand and to our ownership structure and everything else because that is what we are there to do.”

No surprise then that the Co-op's environmental leadership was recently recognised with the Queen's Award for Enterprise. But how does Beaumont see his own leadership role within the company?

“Leadership on a matter as important as this has to come from the top. And I believe that we will only meet our goal if our staff are completely aligned to it and committed to it and support it and extol it to our customers.”

It's to demonstrate to staff the commitment of senior management that Beaumont is happy to be photographed opening wind farms or unfurling the flag of the Queen's Award for Enterprise.

Looking to the future, Beaumont says: “Our major competitors are clamouring to get on board with many of the things that we at the Co-op have been doing for years. I think we are at a real turning point.”

TURNING POINTS

1971 Graduates from Cambridge University with a degree in Economics and Land Economy. Starts work as a trainee accountant with KPMG.

1990 Joins United Co-operatives as chief financial officer.

1992 Becomes chief executive of United Co-operatives.

2002 Becomes chief executive of the Co-operative Group.

2007 Announces his retirement to spend more time following his beloved Everton FC and looking after his flock of Soay sheep.

Words Jo Birtwistle

Photographs Courtesy BUPA and United Utilities

Great Britain Days

Why are businesses giving their money and employees' valuable time to help the communities in which they work?

In June this year government ministers proposed creating Britain Day, an extra bank holiday on which people would be encouraged to give time to their communities, recognising the "local focus" of people's contribution to society.

But many Northwest businesses are already giving their staff time off to volunteer for charitable and community causes.

“You've got to get the experts in and you've got to build on that process.”

Bupa and United Utilities are two such companies. They work with Business in the Community (BITC), a charitable organisation celebrating its 25th anniversary this year, which arranges community events for companies to get involved in.

'Cares' is the BITC vehicle for employers to support their staff to get involved in the communities in which they operate – addressing local needs and strategic business issues at the same time. Membership packages are based upon a set number of team challenges a year for each company. In 2006/07 a gold package, offering up to 88 employee volunteer places, costs £5,000 plus VAT; silver (up to 55 employees) costs £3,000 plus VAT and bronze (up to 22 staff) costs £1,500 plus VAT. Individual volunteer packages and one-off team challenges can also be arranged.

As United Utilities' Liverpool 2008 sponsorship manager, Sue

Woodhouse arranges community events for employees in the area. She says the package is worth the cost: "Having someone else source the challenges is worth paying for.

"Somebody else has gone out, they've carried out a recce of these community organisations and they know what needs doing and how many people are needed. That would be a lot of work for me."

Louise Hanlon, human resources community connections consultant for Bupa, agrees: "Initially you need that support and guidance. You can't just jump out, attract community partners and get it right. You've got to get the experts in and you've got to build on that process."



Both Woodhouse and Hanlon tailor the challenges to benefit volunteers on a personal level. Both say they are a good tool for assisting career development. Team challenges are appointed a team leader, who is trained by BITC, and who is expected to take on responsibilities such as sourcing the materials needed for a project, which in turn develops negotiation and communication skills.

Team projects are also great for morale and team building, while the opportunity to work on projects with other businesses gives a benchmark to compare how they go about things and an opportunity to share best practice.

Woodhouse admits that there is no commercial gain to community engagement for United Utilities – people won't spend more on



their water bill – but says benefits are still tangible, such as giving staff a chance to gain a better understanding of the communities they work in. "A lot of the challenges are in the less affluent areas of Liverpool. People go over there and see things they wouldn't normally see," she says.

Awareness that companies encourage such active engagement is also helpful when it comes to attracting new staff. "It just gives that wow factor," says Hanlon. "There is a lot of discussion in the company about getting more out of corporate social responsibility than just good will in the bank. Yes, there is a PR element but that's secondary."

Joanne Birtwistle is a journalist for North West Business Insider magazine.

BITC is just one of many organisations that deliver business volunteer programs. Here are some more to consider:

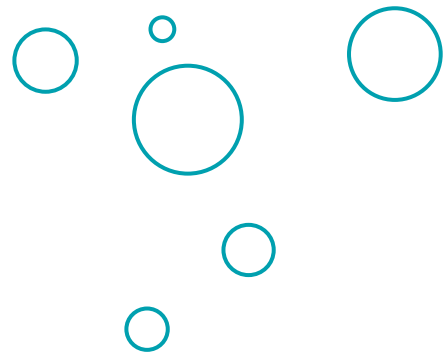
Charity **BTCV** has a successful history of environmental conservation volunteering throughout the UK. Employee volunteering with BTCV can be arranged in several ways, depending on what you want to achieve, and it offers team challenges, secondments and individual volunteer days too. Visit www.btcv.org.uk or ring 01302 388 888

CSV (community service volunteers) is the UK's largest volunteering and training organisation. The charity was founded in 1962 by Mora and Alec Dickson, who also founded Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO), with the philosophy that everyone should be able to take part in the life of their community. Visit www.csv.org.uk or call Lesley Nicholls, employee volunteering development manager on 020 7643 1427

The Mersey Basin Campaign's own Mersey Basin Week is taking place between 28 September and 7 October 2007. This annual event aims to encourage people and businesses to get involved with practical activities on and around the watercourses of the Mersey and Ribble basins. Last year over 5,000 people took part in more than 280 events and conservation activities such as clean-ups, habitat creation and footpath maintenance. Contact Bev Mitchell on b.mitchell@merseybasin.org.uk or 0161 242 8212.



Edwin Colyer is a Manchester based freelance journalist who has written for the Financial Times and New Scientist. He is a regular contributor to Source NW magazine.



THE LIFE AQUATIC

This summer Liverpool played host to the World Canals Conference, the annual international gathering of canal and boating enthusiasts, as it came to the Northwest for the first time. Source NW took the opportunity to ask people who enjoy the life aquatic around the world why they love their unique lifestyle.



France Bill & Nancy Koenig Barge Eclaircie

“The idea of barging in France came to us out of the blue while we were deciding what to do in retirement. We had been planning to do a road trip around the States with friends, but when this boating idea hit, we knew it was a better choice for us. We had rented boats a couple of times on the Burgundy Canal, and been to France several times on vacation, and we knew right away that barging in France was the right idea for us.

This is our very first boat, so we had no idea how nice this life would be. The warmth of the boating community was a wonderful surprise for us. This is the first place we have lived where it doesn't matter what you do or used to do in life. There is that common bond of boating – that's all you need. There are not many communities that are as diverse, as interesting, or as welcoming as the barging community. We feel very lucky to live in this 'moving village'.

For the last six years, we have wintered in Roanne from October to April, and cruised peacefully along France's 8,000 km of waterways from spring to fall. Last September we came to Paris, and now we plan to stay here for at least a couple of years to experience city life. There is no other way of life where you can moor in a beautiful French village, and stay there for a week or two if you like, then move on and live in the heart of a city.



We love everything about boating, the peaceful country moorings, the excitement of cruising somewhere new and the pleasure of returning to favourite and familiar moorings, but the best part of boating is the people.

From the moment we bought our barge, we were welcomed into the boating community by new friends who were Australians, New Zealanders, Swiss, Dutch, British and Americans. In our last homeport of Roanne most of our neighbours were foreign like us; now in Paris all of our barge neighbours are French, many of them young families, like the French doctor, his wife and two small children who are our next door neighbours.

“We were welcomed by new friends – Australians, New Zealanders, Swiss, Dutch, British and Americans.”

It is not necessarily an easy life – there's constant boat maintenance – but never once has this life fallen under our expectations. We had no idea that living on a barge could be so much fun.”



Belgium Frederic Logghe Barge Watergeus

“I’ve really got into boats over the past seven years, since I’ve been working with friends and helped them restore old boats and refit barges. But living in a boat has always been a bit of a boy’s dream for me, though my parents never liked the idea and I thought I’d never have enough money. I was lucky and bought an old barge cheap off a friend so I have been living my dream for a year now.

It is particularly the boat itself that attracts me to the lifestyle. I don’t like seeing boats scrapped, especially historical boats. I’m trying to renovate and fit this boat in a historically accurate way.

Most of the people I know here in Belgium don’t move around with their boats. When barges like this become houseboats they are usually not fit for sailing – that’s why they’ve been converted in the first place. And houseboat people often don’t have experience of piloting one. There are 14 house barges in Bruges. Only one is owned by an ex-skipper and he only takes the boat out occasionally.

Houseboats used to be a cheaper living option, but now it is hyped so it has become very expensive. There was a time when you could get an ex-commercial barge for

20,000 euros; they don’t go for less than 60,000 now. It is getting hard to find a mooring too. In Belgium it is still OK, but in places like London it is practically impossible – and can be expensive too if they charge by the length of the boat

Fortunately in Belgium there’s a fixed price for mooring so I have plenty of space in my 38m boat at no extra cost!

“Living in a boat has always been a bit of a boy’s dream for me.”

Maintenance on an old boat like mine can get expensive too. I have hatches that are leaking and it is going to cost me 3,000 euros to get them fixed. Plus, all the time your boat is rusting away. You need to constantly maintain it and every five years take it to the boat yard for an inspection and the possibility that plates need doubling or replacing.

Some people think you are freer living on a boat. I just think it is something you have to choose because you really want to do it, and I’m proud that I did.”



Canada Barrie & Carole Grant Narrowboat Mañana

“We are used to watery living. In 1990 we sold our house in Canada and moved onto a 45ft sailboat in Vancouver, then moved just over the border to Seattle. But the winters were too cold so we sailed south to San Diego and stayed there for a year or two.

Then we headed even further south and set up a marina service business in Puerto Vallarta, Mexico. We stayed there for ten years, but during that time bought a narrowboat in England. To escape the deadly hot humid Mexican summers and our work we would fly over to England and drift down the ‘cut’ for 3-4 months every summer until we had been on almost every canal in England.

We always said that once we were no longer having fun where we were, we would move on. Doing business in Mexico got really frustrating, so 18 months ago we left and took up residence in our English canalboat, but that’s not the end of the story. We’ve just advertised our 45 ft sailboat and our narrowboat for sale and bought a Dutch barge – or the shell of one – in Sandwich, Kent, which we will fit out before going off to explore the 10,000km of European waterways.

You get used to the small space, although our new barge will feel huge in comparison to the narrowboat. The narrowboat has all the normal mod cons

“We sailed south to San Diego and stayed there for a year or two.”

– a double bed, fridge, shower, electricity and butane stove. The toilet is a portaloos type which you have to dump every four or five days and you have to keep on top of the laundry, although it dries wonderfully in the engine room. But the inconveniences are small.



If the weather is bad and you can’t get out, you just pull up on the side of the canal and read a book. Living afloat is just about making a few lifestyle choices.

That’s what we’ve done and we thoroughly enjoy it.”



Ireland
 Colin Becker
 Gentlemans Steam Yacht
 Chang Sha

“I just love messing about in boats. I love the water and watersports and it’s only since I’ve spent a long time on boats that I’ve got interested in industrial archaeology, particularly old boats. We don’t live on our boat, but we do use it all year round. During the winter it is a like a weekend cottage in the water, on Lough Derg at the bottom of the Shannon.

Once summer comes we might take a weeklong trip up the Shannon and then across to Lough Erne, or just mooch around locally and visit some of the other harbours.

The inland waterways network in Ireland is much less extensive than in England. The main haunting ground is the Shannon-erne system, which is mainly river and lake navigation. There’s also the Grand Canal and Barrow Navigation and the Royal Canal which is due to re-open next year.

We tend to make our longer trips in a series of long weekends. The car shuffling can be a real pain in the neck, driving to where you start out and having to drop off a car where you expect to finish, but it is still worth it. It’s the relaxation.

There’s been a real change here in Ireland. When we started boating it was kind of amateurish with people buying old boats and converting them. But the Celtic Tiger economic boom has brought in a huge amount of money.

“People have bought boats that wouldn’t be out of place on the Med.”

Large numbers of people have gone out and bought a luxury boat that wouldn’t be out of place on the Med. They’ve come onto the system with no previous experience and aren’t afraid to spend money on their hobby.

The growing number of boaters is putting pressure on the system, especially the waterside amenities and sanitary services. The Shannon is heavily used in a few critical places, but there are still plenty of places you can hide and no-one will find you for days.”



England – Oxford Canal
 Mike Ballinger
 Narrowboat Branwell



“A long time ago my wife and I didn’t know where we wanted to live - we thought if we had a boat we could move around. If we got a job up north we could just go there on the boat.

The first time we got into our boat we’d never been on one before.

That was 15 years ago and now we have our two boys. Joe is five years and Isaac is 22 months. Four people on a narrowboat can get quite interesting, though we are lucky because we’ve bought a field next to our mooring so there’s room for the boys to run around outside. Our boat is also well designed, so the boys can have a bedroom each.

It can be quite cramped, but the boys love it. Joe has only fallen in once! We’ve taken them swimming since they were three months old. Joe is now a strong swimmer and he just swam to the bank.

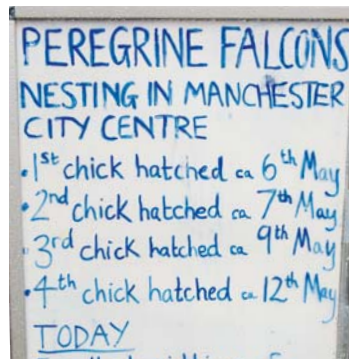
We love the freedom to go out on the boat. We do two or three trips during the year (we are less flexible now Joe is at the local school) and a long cruise each summer. You see things you just don’t by car. It is a very different journey to go into Birmingham or Manchester by boat. You have no inkling you are in a big city until you step off the boat and wham – you are in the metropolis!

“Joe has only fallen in once!”

Modern society is stressful for a lot of people – they are living for their mortgage, their car, their holidays. Boating is very relaxed – you can tell whether people are at the beginning or the end of their boating holidays. When you live on a boat the slower pace of life slowly gets instilled in you. People don’t seem to be quite as stressed. A boat is a good stress reliever.”

High-rise heroes

Source talks to Sarah Williams, information assistant on the RSPB's Manchester Peregrines – Aren't Birds Brilliant project. Sarah has spent the summer watching the nesting falcons in Manchester city centre, and encouraging the passing public to get to know their feathered neighbours via a camera linked to the BBC's nearby Big Screen.



Q What's been your role in the Manchester Peregrines project? I'm one of three paid staff who manage the project day-to-day. That means standing out in Exchange Square in all weathers – often with a big plastic sheet over our table to stop everything getting soaked! We keep the public informed about the falcons' activities, as well as raising awareness of the RSPB and its work. We're helped by a team of RSPB volunteers, aged 18–70.

Q How did you get involved? I actually studied languages at university, but afterwards I went travelling to South America. I first got involved with conservation work on a project in Ecuador. I'd seen lots of amazing places, like the Galapagos Islands and the rainforest, which really opened my eyes to our environment and the way it's under threat. Before this project, I worked on promoting recycling, so I'm trying to gain as much experience as possible.

Q Why did the RSPB decide to focus on the Manchester peregrine falcons? They knew the peregrines had been here for about four years. Last year they had four chicks, thanks to the Manchester Birding Club putting up a nesting box, and now they've returned to the same site. Also, the peregrine falcon is a popular bird – it's the fastest in the world, travelling at up to 220 miles per hour when it swoops – and the fact that they're now coming into our cities gave the

RSPB an ideal opportunity to reach people who wouldn't usually visit our reserves or be aware of birds at all. The organisation was actually founded in Manchester, in Didsbury, so it's great that this project has been able to show Mancunians such an amazing bird on their own doorstep.

Q What kind of reaction have you had from people in Manchester? People have been overwhelmed and excited – often they haven't believed us at first. We've had to really encourage them to come over to the telescope and see for themselves that there's a real peregrine up there. A lot of people have come back for a second or third time, and some visit on a weekly basis to check the chicks' progress. Most people don't expect to see any nature in the city centre, but there's so much if you look far enough. I think this has opened people's eyes to notice birds and insects and so on in the future.

Q Has the media picked up the story too? Yes, the falcons have featured in the Manchester Evening News and they've been on BBC Northwest Tonight – the chicks were even named by viewers. Lots of people came specifically because they'd seen them on TV. It's like a soap opera, because the chicks change every day. We think we're watching them, but I think the male is really watching us – his eyesight is 300 times stronger than ours.

Q What's the commonest question you've been asked? Why have they chosen to nest in Manchester? The answer is that peregrine numbers are increasing, and they're searching for new territories. For them, the tall buildings of Manchester are very similar to the cliffs they'd nest on in the countryside. They can sit up there safely and observe their territory. And the food supply is great, as they catch small birds like pigeons and lapwings on the wing. It's important to note, though, that they'd never dent those populations in the city.

Q What does the future hold for the falcons? The chicks will learn to fly, then stay for another six to eight weeks until they've got their adult feathers and their wings are strong enough to fly away and hunt for themselves. They'll be told when to leave the nest – their parents won't tolerate them staying longer, because they do like their own space.

Q Will you miss them? I will. We've become very attached to the chicks, having watched them grow. We've worried when we couldn't see them, as if they were our babies too. But I think there's a good chance that the project will return next year, if the falcons come back.

For more information, visit www.rspb.org.uk

Emma Jones is managing director of Redbrick Enterprises, a consultancy that specialises in encouraging and supporting home enterprise. She also edits the homeworking website www.enterprisenation.com. Emma's company is currently managing a project called Homeworking in England's Northwest that aims to increase the number of home-based businesses and homeworkers across the region.



DO YOUR GREEN HOMEWORK

Want to be greener and more efficient at work?
Then stay at home, says Emma Jones.

Earlier this year I experienced a momentary surge of emotion, albeit mixed, on reading the news that the government is to issue 'green pledge cards'.

This is how David Cracknell, political editor of *The Sunday Times* (surprisingly balanced in its environmental reporting), covered the story:

"Households across the country are to receive a "green pledge card" and leaflet from the government about how they can help to combat climate change and do more for the environment."

So far, so good. (I was ignoring my concerns about the government's wisdom in sending out pledge cards in the first place, which smacks of the nanny state, in deference to supporting any effort to encourage environmental responsibility).

The article continued:

"Families will be encouraged to buy energy-efficient light bulbs, drive their cars less, cut down on short-haul flights, recycle their household waste, properly turn off televisions and computers, buy more seasonal and locally produced food – and even consider adopting changes to their diet."

Ah. All fine suggestions, but where is the mention of homeworking? Rather than changes to one's diet, how about changes to one's working practices? Changes that mean staying at home and working in a home office for the day rather than clogging up the roads and motorways by commuting to an office where, frankly, you will get less work done anyway.

Why clog up the roads and motorways commuting to an office where, frankly, you will get less work done anyway?

The evidence that homeworking is good for the environment is overwhelming. The case is particularly well made by BT. The company says that, over a 12 month period, its flexible working scheme, which includes homeworking as a key component, has saved employees the equivalent of 1,800 years of commuting time.

This not only makes for a happier workforce – BT home-based employees are seven per cent more content than office based peers – it also makes for a significant contribution to the environment. The same BT employees that are saving thousands of hours

in commuting time are also eliminating 47,400 tonnes of travel-related CO₂ emissions.

BT is not the only company to have seen the economic and environmental benefits of homeworking. German electronics and engineering giant Siemens is also at it. A report in 2004 by James Goodman, a sustainable development expert at the respected Forum for the Future, showed Siemens saving up to 12 miles per day, per employee, by introducing homeworking.

The same report calculated that homeworking reduces private car traffic by three percent, with a potential for this to rise to a saving of ten percent by 2010.

The RAC Foundation agrees. Its report *Motors or Modems* predicts that flexible working could cut the worst peak traffic by up to ten per cent within five years. Achieving a reduction of this size in commuting, business travel, shopping and personal trips would save 14.5 billion miles a year. This equates to 17 million cars foregoing a trip from Land's End to John O'Groats, or about three years' growth in car and taxi traffic at today's rates.

As well as reducing peak traffic congestion, homeworkers make efficient use of buildings, as proven by a study of home-based civil servants in Sheffield. The study found that homeworkers use half the energy of office-based colleagues during working hours.

These are just the kind of savings that the government is looking to achieve and so should surely be encouraged on that little green card.



With increasing pressure on the world's natural resources, we believe that promoting sustainable water use is more important than ever.

The Water Adventure Centre,
winner of a Unilever Dragonfly Award 2006.

That's why we're proud to have sponsored the Unilever Dragonfly Awards for the last 15 years, recognising the volunteers whose efforts have revitalised the rivers and watersides of the Northwest.

Over the years the awards have honoured some outstanding and inspirational volunteers, and the search is now on to find this year's winners. To enter or make a nomination, contact Bev Mitchell on 0161 242 8208 or b.mitchell@merseybasin.org.uk

Our concern for water quality is also why Unilever continues to support the Mersey Basin Campaign, which for 20 years has played a crucial role in the transformation of the region's watercourses.

