

## A GRAND DAY AT THE DOCKS AS SHARPNESS CELEBRATES 150 YEARS

An historic milestone for the opening of Gloucestershire's international shipping connection to the world was celebrated March 30 to celebrate 150 years since the opening of Sharpness New Docks.

With the original dock at the end of the Sharpness and Gloucester Canal opening in 1827, the arrival of ships during the Victorian era that were too big to travel to Gloucester forced a rethink and the new floating dock was opened in 1874.



One of the historic images which will be on display.

**A century and half on, despite perceptions of decline and a dramatic reduction in employment since its heyday, Sharpness remains a significant import and export point, with regular dry bulk and mineral traffic and busy operations from Canada and the Baltic (predominantly timber) and Spain (cement), as well as trade in grain and animal feed.**

But while casting light on the inception of the port, Mike Sudden, who is part of the organising team coordinating this year's celebration, said #Sharpness150 will also seek to capture and preserve more recent memories - many of which will otherwise risk being lost forever.

Mike said: "One man who worked here a few decades ago was telling me how you could walk across the docks from one side to the other by stepping over the ships, the place was so busy. That's the kind of recollection we are trying to capture - we want to collate an oral



Sharpness Hotel was built in 1871 to serve the navvies who came to build the new docks. Archive image courtesy of Gloucestershirepubs.co.uk.

and visual history of the docks and now is such a good opportunity as, in three years' time, we will also be looking at 200 years since the canal itself first opened."

As a true labour of love from the community, the #Sharpness150 campaign is jointly being organised by three volunteer organisations: the Vale of Berkeley Railway, Stroud Vintage Transport and Engine Club and the Canal and River Trust.

As yet, the trio have no confirmed business sponsorship for their project, which aims to create a website that archives the docks' history and which will be linked to visitor boards around the area that will bear QR codes linking key information.

After the initial day, an exhibition for visitors aims to run throughout the year on Saturdays.



How the port developed - image credit: Steinsky.

# LATEST ACTIVITIES & EVENTS AT SYDENHAM HOUSE

## Springing into Spring

“The older we get, the faster Time goes by”, or so they say. 2024 certainly seems to be bearing this out; our newly printed photographs of Christmas and New Year are distant memories, and already we’re looking forward to the Easter holiday season!

Maybe time has flown because we’ve been enjoying ourselves in Sydenham House? There’s always something to Celebrate around here, it seems!

Christmas extended through January to encompass a traditional Wassail in January, which involved hanging toast in our pear tree and drinking perry and cider. After that, Valentine’s Day involved quite a few boxes of chocolates, bunches of flowers and visits with friends and family, and then Pancake Day was upon us. We all remembered tales of tossing pancakes and had fun choosing our own toppings for the feast. From strawberries and cream to chocolate spread, honey, jam and even a poached egg, our heart’s desires were catered for by our lovely kitchen staff.

In Sydenham House we don’t “give up” anything for Lent – we “take up” activities instead! Now that we have the use of the Conservatory we’ve taken up planting some seeds so that we

can grow our own vegetables, flowers and fruits in containers on the patio, and our seedlings are doing well on the window sill.

We can pick and choose our day to day entertainment with the blessing of YouTube, so those who like Ballroom Dancing can relax and remember to the sound of Victor (Slow, slow, quick, quick, slow) Sylvester and his band, or others who like a bit of Country and Western can have Dolly Parton and Jim Reeves on demand.

We’re enjoying having more visitors, many of whom share their interests and skills. We’ve had an afternoon of making and tasting dips with a talented cook, and we’re always happy to see fresh faces, hear new news and chat with friendly folk, especially if they bring their children, grandchildren or pets with them.

“Charm” and “Bill” are regular visiting dogs, and we just love to stroke them, take them for walks in the garden and give them treats.

Sydenham House is a real “everyday story of country-folk”, and many of us have fond memories of our pet dogs and cats as well as working animals like the cider-man with his horse and cart, and our memories of life on farms and

smallholdings. Photographs are great memory-aids, so if you have any pictures of our pets from the past, do bring them in!

Mothering Sunday marked the halfway point of Lent, and with Cheltenham Race Week upon us “We’re Off!” in the race towards Easter and Spring. We have some racing enthusiasts among us, so in March several afternoons are spent happily shouting encouragement at the TV with a glass of sherry or shandy by our sides and a few “nibbles”. We had Daffodils for St. David, and Guinness for St. Patrick along with a few fiddle tunes, and we’re building up to celebrate St. George in April with – well, not sure yet but we’ll think of something! All suggestions are welcome, especially those which involve Food!

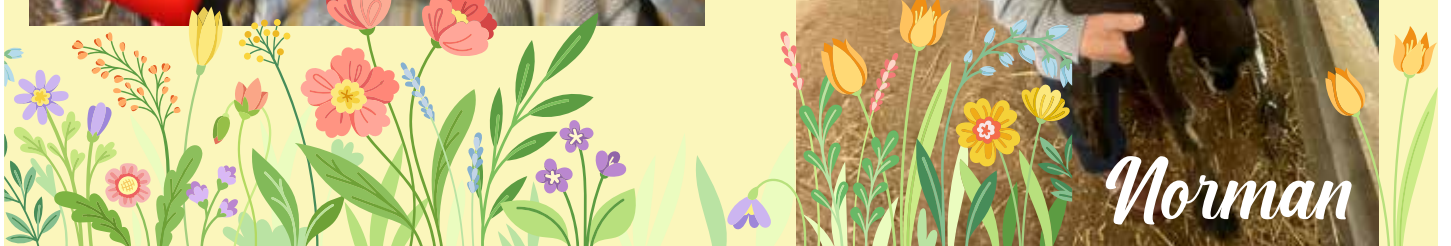
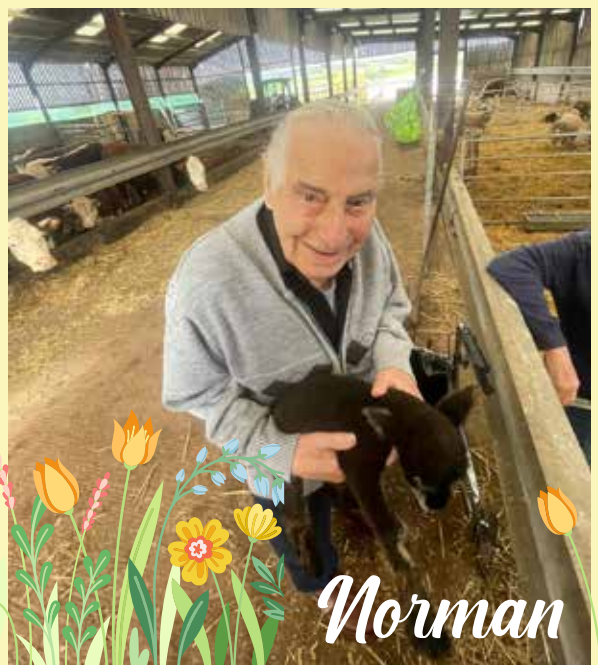
As the weather improves we’re looking forward to getting out and about more, and hoping that there will be some local events in Blakeney village which we can attend.

The monthly craft market in the village hall was popular last year. It takes place on a Saturday, and there are regular morning church services just up the road on a Sunday, so if friends and relations would like to take us out, just tell

our wonderful Care staff and they'll get us suited, booted and ready for an outing.

We're on the look-out for friends with skills or interests to share. Do you enjoy needlecrafts, gardening or handicrafts? Can you put a simple flatpack kit together, or find information on our Smart-screen? Can you spare an hour or so to share your skills with us, talking to us, listening to us and learning with us? If so, speak up! Tell Mary or Lyn and we'll be delighted to welcome you into the Sydenham Circle.

Coming up, all the Usual Suspects of Musicians and Entertainers are booked and eagerly anticipated, from Tickled Pink's "Broadway" production to Anteck, Mindsong and many more. We love a bit of music, so if you have skills in that direction here's your chance to shine! Dust off that guitar, bring it in and give us a song - we've got a great bunch of singers here, you won't be alone with a few old favourite melodies!



# Forest of Dean's 'Agony of De Feet' to walk 100km in tribute to Armed Force

A team of six people from the Forest of Dean area will be taking on the 100km Frontline Walk in October in commemoration of members of the Armed Forces.

Beginning at Lochnagar Crater located at Somme battlefield, Marcus Gartside, Paula Tippins, Paul Burton, Lou Brice, Darren Smith and Amanda Lock will be trekking the 100km to Menin Gate in Ypres over three days.

Agony of De Feet, as they have called themselves, will now take on fundraising events to raise the £7500 needed between them by October.

So far, they have raised a total of £3783.83 from generous donations.

The team thanks everyone for their continued support, in particular, the support from their sponsors, The Crown Inn in Coalway and The Globe in Berry Hill. Marcus Gartside said: "Everyone in the Forest are so keen on supporting members of the armed forces and from that we have had so many donations already.

"We've had a lot of support from so many people and we are very grateful for that."

On day one of the walk, Agony of De Feet will be covering 35km. Day two is 34km, finishing with another 31km on day three.

Admitting they have got quite the challenge ahead, Paul Burton said: "It really is going to be hard but it doesn't compare to what they did. So, we will be gritting our teeth and just getting on with it."



'Agony of De Feet' before taking on their 10 mile practice walk

## Wye Valley River Festival returns celebrating it's 10th anniversary

The popular Wye Valley River Festival returns this May celebrating it's 10th birthday. People across the Wye Valley will be able to enjoy vibrant street parades, live shows, workshops, installations and film screenings during the largely free arts and environment festival, which is in its 10th anniversary year.

Held every two years since 2014, the 2024 Wye Valley River Festival runs from Friday, May 3 until Sunday, May 12 in locations from Hereford to Chepstow. Artistic director Phillippa Haynes said: "We are delighted to be celebrating the 10th birthday

of the Wye Valley River Festival in style with a programme which aims to delight audiences both local and from afar, all inspired by the region's glorious landscape and our relationship with the earth. The 2024 programme has quiet reflections upon past festivals, with a strong eye to the future.



Merry Monmouth Day 2022

## Inspirational Quote

“ It is during our darkest moments that we must focus to see the light. ”

*Aristotle*

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