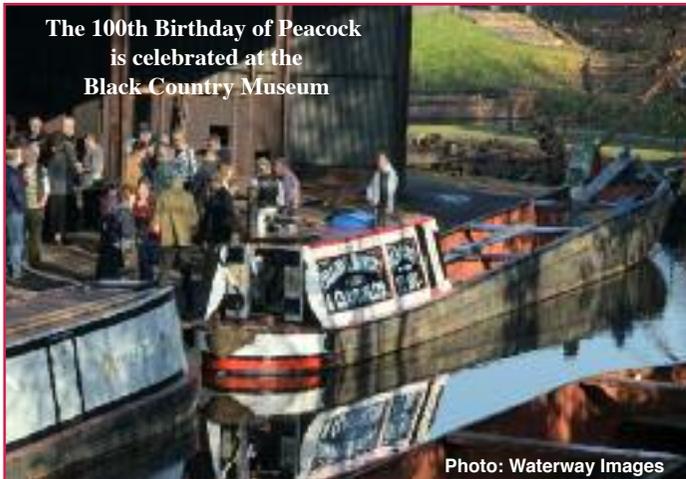




Narrow boat *Peacock* at 100 years old, and the John Hemelryk Award

by Irene de Boo, Curator, Transport and Industry, Black Country Living Museum



Peacock was built at the Birmingham Saltley boat dock of Fellows, Morton and Clayton and was registered on 2nd November 1915. The registration documents show she was built as a fly boat, working day and night carrying general goods, crewed by four men working in shifts. *Peacock* worked with FMC's northern fleet until nationalisation in 1948 and in 1952

British Waterways sold *Peacock* to John Hemelryk.

John Hemelryk looked after *Peacock* for over 40 years and repaired and maintained the boat to a very high standard without converting it. This was exceptional as in the 1960s and 1970s, boats were either scrapped or converted into leisure craft. As a result, *Peacock* is still close to its original form. The inside woodwork of the cabin is original and dates back to the early FMC years and the Bolinder engine - still in full working order - is also an early engine (c. 1935) installed by FMC.

John Hemelryk's novel approach to keeping a narrow boat, remaining close to its original design while at the same time maintaining it to a high standard, inspired many early historic narrow boat enthusiasts. The Historic Narrow Boat Club (established 1966) therefore created the John Hemelryk award for metal and composite boats in recognition of restoration efforts.

Peacock was in Hemelryk's possession until 1993 and was then sold to Birmingham Museums (Science Museum). As part of the sale, it was stipulated that the boat was to be displayed in the water and Birmingham Museums moored the boat in the Birmingham & Fazeley canal adjacent to the museum. From a large window in the museum the boat could be seen. When the Science Museum (Newhall Street) closed and collections moved to the ThinkTank, a canal location was no longer available and *Peacock* found alternative an mooring at the Black Country Living Museum.

Recent maintenance work (June/Sept 2015) consisted of repair to the gunnels; on portside the gunnel had rotted to such an extent that it needed to be part replaced, while on the starboard it required repair of bolt holes and shakes. The pigeon box, engine slide and cabin slide were repaired and cabin doors re-fixed. This work was completed by Rex Wain (Brinklow Boatyard). Paintwork was undertaken by Steve Priest, who stripped the paint from the external cabin and engine room and back deck. All was then sanded down and a protective paint film was built up using an epoxy primer, followed by conventional undercoat and finished in the FMC early colour scheme of black, white, red and red oxide. The work was paid for by Birmingham Museums, with financial assistance from PRISM and National Historic Ships.

Due to limited funding available, the brief did not include sign writing of cabin and engine room. This meant that the boat would return to the Black Country Living Museum without her Fellows, Morton & Clayton livery and thus would look unfinished. The lack of sign-writing

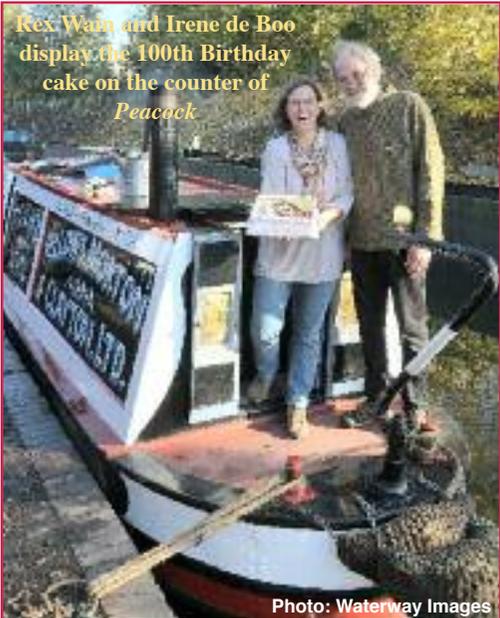


was much discussed among boat enthusiasts and the general feeling was that this should be avoided. After all, **Peacock** was once owned by John Hemelryk, who maintained her so well. As a result, several boat enthusiasts came together and paid privately for the sign writing which was beautifully executed by David Moore.

Peacock returned from Brinklow to BCLM under her own power; the original 1935 Bolinder running perfectly. Before setting off from Brinklow, James Booth - boater and Bolinder enthusiast, inspected the engine thoroughly, repaired parts and applied lots of TLC and oil. James and wife Amanda delivered **Peacock** safely to the Museum on Sunday 27th September during the BCLM boaters' gathering.

Peacock is now looking very well, however - as with all boats - maintenance will need to be ongoing. Further painting is required and funding will need to be raised for new bottom shutts, stands, planks and a top cloth. Most importantly, she will need to be lifted out of the water to check the bottom, most likely followed by some repair, caulking and blacking. Any contributions to this continuing work will be gratefully received, contact Irene de Boo or Bernard Hales.

Most of all she needs to be used, so expect to see **Peacock** on the local canal network in 2016.



Rex Wain and Irene de Boo display the 100th Birthday cake on the counter of **Peacock**

Photo: Waterway Images

On the Cut

In 1985, BBC local radio broadcast a series called On The Cut, produced by Arthur Wood of BBC Radio Stoke, and featuring extracts from interviews with canal people from all over the country, remembering their experience of life working on the canals earlier in the 20th century. Such was the interest that the series was released on cassette tape soon after, and was even briefly available online on Radio Stoke's website a few years ago.

The family of the late Arthur Wood believe they have recently discovered over 70 of the original interview tapes from which the broadcast series was created, amongst a large collection of tapes of his Radio Stoke programmes from the 1970s and 80s.

A team are about to bid for funding for a project, Revealing Voices, to digitise and catalogue this extraordinary audio collection, and make it available for the public to hear. While most of the collection will be of relevance to Radio Stoke's North Staffordshire locality, the On The Cut interviews are likely to attract attention further afield. The team are keen to gauge just what interest there might be in these recordings. Not only will it strengthen their funding bid to be able to demonstrate evidence of interest, but it will also help them develop appropriate community engagement opportunities in response to people's appetite for the material.

If you would be interested in:

- hearing the On The Cut original unedited interviews (eventually!)
- getting involved with the project to listen to and catalogue the recordings
- suggesting links with other canal related projects or events
- receiving updates on how the "Revealing Voices" project progresses

then please contact Jane Wood at: jane@revealing-voices.org.uk