

Two centuries of boating history on display

The Shrewsbury & Newport Canals Trust (SNCT) has been given a 'local communities' slot in the newly reopened Shrewsbury Museum.

This is for an exhibition covering the Shrewsbury and Newport Canals from their construction in the 18th and 19th centuries through to their abandonment in 1944, what has happened to them since then and SNCT's plans for their future.

Open from January 26 to April 16, the display's themes are:

- The coming of the canals to Shropshire (both the original Shrewsbury canal of 1797 and the Newport branch from Norbury in 1835)
- Working life on the canals
- Canal restoration

Historic items, photographs, maps and plans are being used to explore these themes which will also be illustrated by artefacts.

Items from the last two centuries are being loaned by the National Waterways Museum, the Canal & River Trust boatyards at Ellesmere and Norbury, the Saturn flyboat project and by SNCT members and other local people.

Among the subjects are: canal engineering, including the role of smithies and foundries; how tolls were collected; the use of horses as motive power; the domestic lives of boating families; and canal restoration, with particular

reference to the Shrewsbury and Newport canals. The displays include maps, a timeline, 'roses and castles' painted canal ware, horse paraphernalia and a reconstruction of a forge.

A particular feature is an audio-visual display of some of the interviews with local residents that have been carried out by the SNCT's Oral History Project, illustrated by past and present-day scenes of the canal in Shrewsbury.

During the event there will be four different talks on canal-based subjects in the museum at 2.30pm on Saturday afternoons. Forthcoming talks are:

February 6: Neil Clarke on the canals of East Shropshire

March 19: Tony Lewery on the restoration of the Shropshire Union flyboat *Saturn*

April 9: Bernie Jones on the Shrewsbury & Newport Canals and their restoration.

- Tickets for the talks can be obtained in advance from the museum on 01743 258885. The price of £3 per head also includes free entry to the museum (normal price £4).

The Museum & Art Gallery is closed on February 1 and April 10.
www.shrewsburymuseum.org.uk