

AVON NAVIGATION TRUST NEWS RELEASE

IN PRAISE OF MR AVON

Mr Avon - Dudley CB Matthews MBE - would have been delighted that his memorial event is being used to launch his beloved Avon Navigation Trust's new guide. In fact he planned it.

The lifelong promoter and protector of the river left strict instructions to his son, ANT General Manager Clive Matthews, to make sure the celebration of his life would also embrace the new River Avon Navigation & Visitor Guide, which helps raise much-needed funds for the Trust's work. 'Dud' knew what he was doing. Clive has already had over 100 - and rising - requests to attend the event.

The lengthening list includes ANT Patron Timothy West, river users who are grateful for the work he did and representatives from national organisations including the Inland Waterways Association and the Canal & River Trust.

"It is a great comfort to know that my father was so well thought of and that his work and reputation reached so far," says Clive, whose father passed away peacefully on August 12, aged 95.

Long-time volunteer Dud and his late wife Enid were also behind the original Trust Guides. This year's, which includes the new feature Avon Canoe Trails, was the first he'd not been involved with.

Ever since he helped a friend build the 24ft motor cruiser Gauntlet in the 1940s, Dud has been a champion of the waterways.

He joined the IWA and the Lower Avon Navigation Trust in the 1950s, was involved in the restoration of the Lower Avon and then the Upper Avon.

Dud's long list of achievements include being ANT's founder member, director, President Emeritus and Chairman of Reach Masters & Associates.

Tony Hales, Chairman of CRT, commented: "Dudley Mathews was a giant figure in the movement for saving our waterways for future generations. The people around the Avon owe Dudley a particular debt. His influence lives on through his work and his family. We are all thankful for, and celebrate the life of, a great and loved man."

The October 3 Memorial and Celebration event will be held at the Wyre Mill Club, which he helped to found and where his boats were moored.

The River Avon Navigation & Visitor Guide, which includes a foreword by Canal Laureate, Jo Bell, is available from ANT (email office@avonnavigationtrust.org) and local bookshops and visitors.

AVON NAVIGATION TRUST OFFICIAL OBITUARY FOR DUDLEY MATTHEWS MBE

WHEN Dudley CB Matthews MBE passed away peacefully at the age of 95, tributes flooded in for the man who did so much for the Avon, its river-users and its local communities.

'Dud' had dedicated over 61 years to restoring, protecting, promoting and keeping everything running smoothly in a wonderfully wide variety of ways, from getting down and dirty on repairs to marshalling the army of volunteers who are the life blood of the system.

He retired from the civil service in 1983, but would often work 40 hour weeks in just one of his volunteer roles, as Tugmaster, for the Lower Avon Navigation Trust.

He received his MBE in 1998 for his services to the inland waterways cause, which never wavered. He went on to be a powerful force in new developments, including the amalgamation of the Upper and Lower Avon Navigation Trust into the Avon Navigation Trust, of which he was founder member, director and which honoured him in 2014 as President Emeritus.

Born in Stechford, Birmingham, Dud was about to start a career as a management trainee when he was called up in 1939.



He fought at Dunkirk, in the Western Desert, North Africa and Italy. He was mentioned in despatches twice, and received six campaign medals.

He met his wife Enid, who he married in 1953, while he was training to be a senior tax inspector, and she proved to be the catalyst in their immersion in the waterways world, as well as his anchor.

Dud's family had moved to the canal-side village of Penkrige and his stepfather George Matthews was also a fan of the Avon. However, the defining moment was when Dud crossed the Staffs and Worcs canal on the way to see his wife to be.

He saw, to his horror, that it was dry and wrote to the Inland Waterways Association to find out why. A natural doer, he joined the IWA and then LANT, and so it began.

Dud and close friend Ron Burrowes had built the 24ft cruiser Gauntlet and converted a 38 foot former RNLI lifeboat Daphne.

They became proactive members of the Severn Motor Yacht Club, and attracted the attention of Douglas Barwell. Douglas had launched his crusade to reopen the Avon between Tewkesbury and Evesham, and wondered whether Dud and his friend would like to help working on some locks. Actually Dud's first job as a 'Barwell Boy' was to repair the lock to the ladies' loos, but he went on to put in countless hours to help restore navigation to the lovely stretch of river.

When LANT was considering moving on to the restoration to Stratford, Dud powered on. He is a cast iron link between all the river's major milestones.

He was a founder member of the UANT that pressed on with the restoration and had already started the Wyre Mill Club with Douglas Barwell. The club honoured its Director and Harbour Master with the title Commodore Emeritus.

Dud and Enid managed to get some leisure time on the river, on their boats Dalreh and then Gloster Rose, which were moored at the club. But a great swathe of time was spent for the river, including the couple's work in the Trust guides.

Dudley helped with the first production of Gateway to the Avon in 1966 and by 1971 he took over as editor, helped by Enid.

It is almost impossible to find the space to list all the good that Dud did. As well as Tugmaster and Harbour Master, he gathered and ran the volunteers to man the newly opened locks and he took over the chairmanship, from Douglas, of the volunteer Reach Masters, who are crucial in maintaining the river as a thoroughfare.

Dud will be sorely missed. He was a much-loved husband, father, friend and colleague. He was also a man who was dedicated to championing the cause of the Avon.

Tony Hales, Chairman of CRT, pays this tribute: "Dudley Mathews was a giant figure in the movement for saving our waterways for future generations. The people around the Avon owe Dudley a particular debt. His influence lives on through his work and his family. We are all thankful for and celebrate the life of a great and loved man."

The picture accompanying this obituary sums him up: a happy man in his Reach Masters uniform, with a glass of cheer outside the Wyre club he helped to found, and that ever-present mobile in his pocket, because he was always on call.

It's a portrait that celebrates all that's glorious about Dud and all volunteers and the enormous difference they make.

