

July 2024

GENERATION UPS AND DOWNS

Early on the morning of Sunday April 14th Archie experienced an abrupt power outage that left him spinning madly and sent his electronic control system into a complete meltdown, requiring a total shutdown. Once we had established what exactly happened, we identified the parts whose function might have been compromised and then sent the heavy-duty electrical parts that are not serviceable by us off to be refurbished. These were reinstalled on Monday May 13th by the professionals and after project volunteers had replaced the belts we were able to (cautiously!) restart. We have learned a lot from this experience and additional measures have been implemented that should prevent such an event happening again. This shutdown was particularly disappointing as April was shaping up to be another record-breaker, with the 13,994 kWh already produced taking us to a grand total of 1,926,283 kWh.

Before this happened, Archie had been running well throughout the winter, generating over 30,000 kWh in both February and March and several months surpassing the 20,000 mark. The river was running at just the "right height", and as the storms the previous couple of months had already washed down a lot of the debris that normally accumulates in the intake we lost only a small amount of running time to clearance operations. We had one (very short) planned shutdown in early March to enable us to install a new battery, which is needed to control the sluice gate. The old one, which had been in place for a long time, had reached the end of its useful life.

The recent improvement in the weather means the water level in the Sett has dropped back to its seasonal norm and hence the output is considerably lower than it was in the early months of this year. Our investment in variable speed is paying off however: Archie has been running happily at about 7-9 kWh for a couple of weeks, and 8 kW an hour for 24 hours a day soon adds up! At the end of June, Archie's total generation since commencing operations stood at 1,952,649 kWh.

FY 2022/23 AGM

This year's AGM, which was held on Saturday 27th of April, was well-attended and several substantive items were discussed. The main focus of attention was, inevitably, the incident two weeks earlier and its aftermath, but this was followed by a lengthy and thoughtful discussion of the Society's share (equity) reduction policy and THNM's financial position. We then moved on to discuss priorities for the Torrs Hydro Community Fund, with members favouring a small number of projects with high potential impacts over lots of small grants with small impacts. We also discussed the best way to deal with members who we have lost touch with.

RECENT VISITS

We enjoy meeting the many visitors who stop to chat when we are doing the daily site check, especially the youngsters who love being able to see inside the shed and are excited by the opportunity to walk down to the bottom of the fish pass. We also host occasional prearranged visits by groups, including schools. A recent visit by Year 6 from St Mary's Primary School in Marple Bridge probably entertained us as much as them – children ask the most interesting questions!



NEW MILLS NEWTOWN STATION

The local train stations are being spruced up with some new artwork with local themes. Marple has a series of Agatha Christie books, but most stations have pictures of local buildings and landmarks. Newtown Station now has a picture of Archie in one of its shelters!

KEEPING ARCHIE RUNNING

THNM is completely operated by volunteers. Some of us take care of the vital backroom jobs, wrestling the massive amount of “paperwork” into submission and engaging with the numerous official bodies and their associated permits and permissions that are required for us to continue to operate. Several volunteers with relevant experience have been recruited into the Engineering Group, who develop best practice procedures to minimize outages and are ready to spring into action when a major problem develops. Others perform the day-to-day site checks, dropping by to confirm that all is well down at the site, clearing obstructions from the intake (usually branches and storm debris, but occasionally more interesting things) and making sure minor issues don’t turn into big problems.



Still others turn out for occasional “working parties such as the one shown in this picture. This has been a good year for weeds (all that rain) and an epic weeding session tackled the overgrowth on the stone steps/seating alongside Archie, which were over head-high in places.

Archie’s Angels are a group of volunteers who want to be more involved with the project but are unable to sign up to help on a regular basis. Every so often, Mary decides the site needs a bit of attention and puts out a call to gather a work party to do some clean-up in and around Archie. This could be weeding, cleaning the fish pass or the inside of the engine house, or maybe touching up the paintwork a bit. If you are interested in joining the Angels, please get in touch with Mary (mary@torrshydro.org). The more, the merrier!

Found in the Intake



Most of the soccer balls we retrieve from the intake are no longer fit for use, including the one on the right, but the two in the picture on the left were in pristine condition. It was impossible to identify their previous owners so we donated them to the local hospice shop.



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If you have any comments/queries/suggestions for improvements, please email the newsletter editors, Directors Jan Szechi (jan@torrshydro.org) and Mary Cohen (mary@torrshydro.org). You can also send a letter to us at 90 Market St., New Mills, High Peak SK22 4AA.