

58 | Fifty Eight

The Magazine of The Worcester-Birmingham & Droitwich Canals Society

'Promoting the upkeep of the canals to ensure that the heritage is looked after for all to enjoy'



AQUATIC FRINGE ON THE TOWPATH AT LOWER BITTELL RESERVOIR



Monthly Meetings

Meetings are usually held in the meeting room
behind The Weighbridge, Alvechurch B48 7SQ

**Our regular public monthly meetings will be
reinstated as soon as it is safe to do so.**

Summer Walks

July 6th

Little Radford Model Yacht Club

**(Further details will be circulated via email,
our website and our Facebook page)**

August

Sponsored Walks (see page 8 for more information)

Future Meetings

AGM: 7th September

Walk and Slides on the History of the Water Supply to Birmingham
by Lynn Weaver of Bartley Green (TBC)

The River Arrow and its Influence on the History of Redditch
by Anthony Green (TBC)

*Members will be emailed shortly before any online meeting with information on how to join in.
Please ensure that our Membership Secretary has your current details.*

The Magazine of the Worcester-Birmingham & Droitwich Canals Society

Issue 555 June/July 2021

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We have a vibrant **Facebook** page, why not pay a visit and 'like' us?

www.facebook.com/wbdcs.org.uk

We are also on **Twitter** please follow us @wbdcs58.

View videos on our [YouTube channel](#)

Opinions expressed in Fifty Eight are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the Society, but are published as matters of interest

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Front cover photo by Mary Green

Worcester-Birmingham & Droitwich Canals Society

**'Promoting the upkeep of the canals to ensure
the heritage is looked after for all to enjoy'**

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Chair's Notes

It is with total regret that we inform you that Bill Lambert has stood down as Volunteer co-ordinator. Bill has given a tremendous amount of time to the Canal Society for over a decade and he will be sorely missed. Bill has relinquished the position because of family reasons and he now needs to spend more time looking after his wife. I am sure you will all join me in wishing him all the best for the future.

The volunteers are now under the strict eye of Neil Franklin who has taken over the role of Volunteer Coordinator and has for the past month done an absolutely sterling job in organising a rota system to get 'Cecilia' back in to shape. Again I am sure you will all join me in wishing Neil all the best as he ventures forward in his new role. Bill of course will always be at the end of a phone or email to lend his experience.

I am sure that there will be news elsewhere in '58' but we have decided to hold our AGM on September 7th this year via 'Zoom'. More information will follow as to how to link in.

As you all know we have spent a lot of money on refurbishing 'Cecilia' and it has been suggested that for our August walk we hold a sponsored walk to try and generate some much needed funds. Again you will probably find more details and how you can participate as you read on in '58'.

As lockdown restrictions begin to ease we may look at how and when we might be able to hold monthly meetings again in Alvechurch but I suspect it will not be until October/ November. In the meantime stay safe.

David Wheeler

General Society News

In past editions of '58' we have given mention of some committee positions becoming vacant, as from the next scheduled Annual General Meeting, which is planned to be on September 7th. The society requires a new Secretary as Mary is stepping down and, as stated on previous occasions, other new people interested in joining the committee would be very welcome.

New people bring new ideas and thoughts for the future direction of the society and in these changing times anything along these lines just has to be welcome. Please do consider and just ask any of the current committee for any information at all about how it works.

'58' has been informed that Trevor Hyde, the society's treasurer, is currently going through a bout of ill health and so won't be able to carry out his role in the usual efficient manner that has now become the norm. '58' sends its best wishes to Trevor, as readers will no doubt concur with, trusting that the ill health issues are resolved just as soon as possible. You know where we are Trevor.

Bill Lambert is stepping down as Volunteer Coordinator but Neil Franklin has kindly offered to step in and fill this role.

Don't forget the society's socially distanced walks planned for July and August (*see page 2*). All friends and families welcome.

The society has an annually elected committee that takes charge of society affairs. There is also a 'Cecilia' sub-committee which deals with much of the day to day issues concerning the boat.



Editor's Notes

Hi Readers,

Following on from the last edition of '58' the waterways certainly appear to have really come to life as far as boat traffic is concerned. Following the lifting of restrictions some have also witnessed much kayaking and paddle boarding on the canals which may well be on the increase. Unfortunately the dire weather we have been suffering of late does not encourage everyone to be out and about. Hopefully, by the time this edition comes out things will have improved.

We are however still reminded to remain cautious, particularly in relation to social distancing, as the last thing any of us want to see is more restrictions or even lock down. If we all continue to act responsibly then hopefully we should be fine. Having said that, news from some areas of the country would indicate that the virus is still with us so complacency should certainly not be an issue.

Changing the subject somewhat, your society committee has been meeting albeit virtually, with further discussions on whether or not a smaller St. Richard's Canal Festival is possible in Droitwich. We are informed that the Salt Fest is to be held in and around Vines Park in early September but the Stourbridge Bonded Warehouse event held in October is definitely off. The IWA's Festival of Water scheduled for the August Bank Holiday weekend in Worcester has been seen to be advertised as going ahead but as yet is unconfirmed. All of this uncertainty will no doubt be causing frustration for many people who like to attend these kinds of functions either as visitors or traders. The society has been unable to organise any volunteer input for these events which we would normally expect to be doing. Unfortunately that is the current state of affairs that we are in but hopefully (there's that word again!) more settled times are on the horizon. Watch this space.

Last time we described some of the errors in C&RT's boating information concerning planned maintenance work. We are pleased to report that the work has been completed but unfortunately no-one has got back to us about the errors. There have been some staffing changes however, with Tim Booker leaving C&RT, meaning that others may inevitably have had additional short term work to cover. There have also been several fairly new appointments made to C&RT in our area with Bill, prior to his medical treatment, meeting up with one or two. We hope in time to hear more from these new people and share things as we have always tried to do in the past.

The next society zoom meeting is a talk about the Derby and Sandiacre canal restoration project. There are so many of these going on around the country which is really exciting news even though slow and steady progress is the norm. Denis is also arranging Summer walks one of which is intended to be just outside Alvechurch to view the model boats in operation. Some of us saw these in action at the society's 50th birthday celebrations in April 2019 and very good there were too. There is also a possibility of a sponsored society walk in August but as with all of these future events please check on social media or the society's web site for up to date information.

Changing the subject somewhat again, WB&DCS is affiliated to the Inland Waterways Association as corporate members. IWA produce a magazine called 'Waterways' and inside the

latest edition is a pull out section commemorating 75 years since the association was founded. As many members will know, this was as a result of a meeting held on board narrowboat 'Cressy' just by Tardebigge top lock in 1945. The Association was formed the year afterwards.

In 1982 a commemorative plaque of this momentous event was unveiled to quite a large gathering and can easily be viewed on the non - towpath side at Tardebigge. The IWA's magazine shows a picture of this unveiling by Cyril Smith who was President of what was then the Worcester & Birmingham Canal Society. The black and white picture also shows John Gardiner from the society and John Burman alongside possibly Vaughn Welch. Your editor was also present at this gathering when the now defunct, Weighbridge Cruising and Social Club, handed a cheque over to the Droitwich Canals Trust to aid restoration of those canals. At the time of going to print we have not had permission to use this photograph but hopefully so in the future.

Hope to see as many of you as possible at the zoom meeting for members and friends. Many thanks to those who have been able to send things in for publication but as ever we could always do with more please.

Enjoy the read.

John Hemingway

Obituaries

- '58' has been notified that David Rowley passed away very suddenly a few weeks ago. Many readers will have come across David either at the St. Richard's Canal Festival or the society's annual lunch accompanying Margaret, the society's Vice Chair. '58' offers Margaret and the close family and friends of David, our sincere condolences.

- '58' has also been notified by our friends from the BCNS of the passing of society friend Ron Cousens. Ron, who was a BCNS activist along with Sheila, used to live in Alvechurch where their boat 'Druscilla' could be seen by the towpath at the back of their house. '58' sends its condolences to the close family and friends of Ron.

Donations

We now have the facility to make donations direct to the society. Many thanks to Lynne & Trevor for setting this up. You can simply 'scan' the QR code on our flyers and collection tins or visit <https://bit.ly/3pcfp1C>



Sponsored Walks

A Word from our Programme Secretary - Denis Pike

Dear Fellow Members,

You will have not failed to notice the lack of social gatherings for the past 14 months. In July and August though this will finally change. We are being allowed to meet outdoors again.

And so, on July 6th we will be having a trip to Little Radford Model Yacht club, details to be confirmed.

In the first week of August, we are planning to have a 'Society Sponsored Walk'. This theme has been developed after a proposal to have one of the usual summer walks to help raise funds that have sadly depleted while the usual fund-raising events were ruled out over Covid lockdowns.

The proposal has been to band-together into small groups and walk stretches that cover the whole length of the W&B canal and the Droitwich canals too. A total of 38 miles. Difficult for one person in entirety but possible if we were to all pull together as a kind of 'relay' team.

This sounds a big ask but what is envisaged is that everyone has his/her own limitation, and each knows what they might be capable of. If you can manage 1 mile then that is 1 mile towards the goal. Your contribution will be tailored to suit you. It would be a simple task to start in Birmingham and end in Worcester but given today's technology it is possible to carry out a 'virtual' walk where stretches are walked out either simultaneously or even on differing days. Ideally small teams would be able to band together for support and logistical practicality.

What we need to be able to go ahead with this is YOUR SUPPORT. You as a member may not be able to walk any distance but you could help drive walkers to a drop off point. You might be able to walk a mile (or two or three?). Or be able to take photos along the way of walkers? You might be able to help raise sponsorship monies. We would also like to include families and youngsters too.

We also need your ideas, suggestions and most of all we need your feedback. This will not go ahead if it is left to the support of just half a dozen members to do everything. If you feel you cannot help or are just plain 'not-interested' then we need to know that too. We also need a pretty swift response rather than have it stuck in peoples inbox ok?

Here's hoping I have provoked some thoughts.

Denis Pike

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07870 939121



Editor's note: If members could get back to Denis ASAP please with any observations.



**Canal &
River Trust**

Making life better by water



CanalCast

How we make life better by water



Members may well be interested in a new series of 'podcasts' available on the [C&RT website](#).

Welcome to CanalCast, our podcast series, which opens a window onto our work.

Host Louis Howell (Canal & River Trust Council member and Chair of our Youth Engagement Advisory Group) will be meeting people throughout the Trust as we learn more about our valuable work to look after our vital 2,000-miles waterway network.

Episode 1: Helping Nature Recover

With nature in decline, Louis will be talking to members of our environment team to discuss the wildlife in our canals and on our towpaths and riverbanks.

As well as finding out how we're helping nature to recover, Louis will learn how these blue and green corridors connect nature up around the country and how they help give people a precious connection to wildlife too.

Episode 2: Improving Health and Wellbeing by Water

In our second episode, we explore the health and wellbeing benefits of spending time by water.

We look at how now, more than ever, our canals and rivers are helping provide solutions to the health crisis we are facing. We discover how vital our waterways were during the lockdowns and we find out about some of the projects we are working on in partnership to help restore both the physical and the mental health of the nation in the months to come.





‘Nature Notes’ Mary Green

Last time I wrote about biodiversity, and how important our canal-sides are as wildlife corridors through the countryside and towns. The C&RT have said they want to improve this and make much of “Helping Nature Recover.” I find it impossible to see therefore why they destroyed the native vegetation round here in April, just when the spring cycle of growth was getting going. It is very erratic: some stretches are fine and some cut right down to the waterside. No irises will flower there this year, and the common sedge already in flower ruined. I hope this was a one-off error of judgment by C&RT or their contractors. If so, much of the vegetation will come back and the aquatic fringe, so important for summer, will mostly still flower.

If they persist in this, the wildlife corridor will be lost this summer. Waterside plants hold millions of eggs and larvae of insects, invertebrates and other small creatures. They flower and produce nectar to feed the adult insects, who in turn pollinate them. They provide nesting space for water birds and of course feed them as well. In June and July the trees and bushes along the hedge and the plants under them will have mostly finished flowering, so the later-flowering aquatic fringe is vital for wildlife.

There’s elderflower and wild roses in the hedges, and brambles, continuing the pollen corridor for a while more on the land side. But the water’s edge holds most flowers: yellow irises and water dropwort, then meadowsweet, willow herb, purple loosestrife, marsh woundwort, skull cap, marsh bedstraw and lady’s bedstraw,



hogweed, angelica, gipsywort, melilot, bush and yellow vetches, birds foot trefoil, figwort, clover and many others, a lovely succession of growth. But these will only be there if the edges are not mowed.

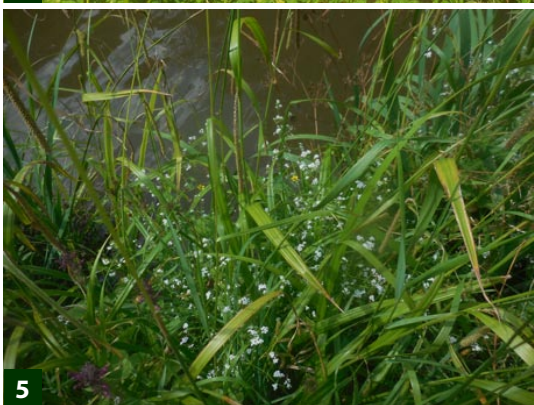
Growing from the water will be water lilies, water plantain and arrowhead – they haven't managed to mow the water yet!

Even in late summer there should be flowers still blooming along the water's edge, including orange balsam and bur marigold. Some of the flowers I have named are common, some are increasingly rare. What matters is the complex of species built up over the years which live in harmony with each other and the creatures around them.

Conflict between the needs of timber for boats and the ecology of the forests in the eighteenth century was highlighted in our May talk. It seems boats and ecology still need carefully balancing!

Meanwhile the young of some waterfowl are late coming this year after the coldest April for 60 years with frost most nights. Mallard ducklings and moorhen chicks which normally appear in April came in May, but the geese hatched right on time in May. The Canada goose pair that has nested here by Withybed for the last six years moved up a bit and hatched three, another pair had two on Withybed Marina, and I've spotted a pair nesting up near the dead arm, with a very watchful gander. It is natural that some are lost to predators, including herons, gulls and rats, though we could do without the introduced mink that are common along the canal.

I understand the swans are nesting by Jacob's Cut again, so I hope they manage to keep their brood this year. The swallows arrived at Bittell in April, though not so many this year, I think, in the dry spring. It's a bit early to hear the reed-warblers there yet but I shall go to look for them soon, and once again I haven't heard the cuckoo yet, but am still hopeful.



1. MALLARD WITH DUCKLINGS
2. IRISES
3. EDGE NEAR ALVECHURCH
4. MELILOT
5. MARSH BEDSTRAW
6. WATER PLANTAIN

Biodiversity Day

22 May is International Biodiversity Day and this year WBDCS celebrated it for the first time. I led biodiversity walks along the canal from Cecilia's moorings in Alvechurch. Apart from anything else, it was the first time we had got together and talked to the public for 14 months, so a big thank you to Tony Brannon, Lynne Laniosh and Neil Franklin for that.

The theme of my talk was how the canal, a human-made waterway made for commercial trade, has become a wildlife corridor through the cities and countryside. To be a wildlife corridor it needs to have continuous flowering plants through the spring and summer and their fruits and seeds in the autumn. Then you get all the insects and then the bats and birds that feed on them, and so on. You need undisturbed soil so everything under there can thrive too.

What our canal here has done is maintained some of the ancient habitat of the midlands. Here we would have had open woodland with grassy/ flowery open spaces and scrubby areas, which would have provided food for everything else through the whole year. Most of this was destroyed by farming – far more than was destroyed by housing.

Parts of this habitat remain though along our roads, lanes and the canal. Most of the roads and lanes have their hedges flailed and verges mowed, so are no longer biodiverse, though some are. But the canal is generally managed in such a way that it keeps the old habitat all the way along and all the year round.

We looked at remnants of old woodland, along the hedges and flowering now, and also at the aquatic fringe vegetation which has plants which like to be near water, and flower later in the summer. We looked at properly grown tall hedges, flowering at the tops, and trees up to 500 years old, much older than the canal. Unfortunately, we also saw areas where the vegetation had been repeatedly mown and was not much good for biodiversity. We also saw where hedges had been flailed low, not by C&RT but by the landowners.

On one of the walks, we were lucky enough to have Paul Wilkinson, C&RT's ecologist with us. He was really good at spotting things in the water, like uncommon pondweeds. He also found us some otter spraint (poo) and told us about otters and how they contribute to biodiversity, even helping control alien mink. He showed us bat habitat. Of course, the bats only survive if the insects are there, and they only survive if the vegetation is there. On the other walk someone noticed how the insects hovered over the water in a particularly biodiverse spot – and when the sun came out for a while! We also noticed how much birdsong there was in the areas with the most complex growth.

The bad weather meant we didn't have very high numbers. But those who came said that really looking in detail at what was there helped them see how good the canal can be.

Our canal is rightly recognised as a Local Wildlife Site all the way along. It has little protection in law despite this, so we rely on the C&RT and local landowners to look after it. Many people who walk it every day, and boaters, sense its importance without necessarily knowing why. It's good to think we have a little strip of what remains of our equivalent of rain forest – our old habitat.

Mary Green



Alarum Theatre

New Audio Trail

Earlier this year, we were commissioned by Creative Black Country to create an audio trail for a section of the Dudley No 2 Canal, from Windmill End Junction to Coombeswood. Walking along this stretch today, it is difficult to imagine that it was once lined with collieries, claypits and heavy industry such as Stewarts & Lloyds, Doulton's and Old Hill Iron Works. Using stories and memories collected from Black Country locals, the recording takes the listener on a journey, sharing recollections through poetry, song, interviews and music.

Rhythm In Your Fingers, Rhythm In Your Feet

From di-Da di-Da to tiddley-pom, we will play with syllables and stresses to give our writing a sense of rhythm. After looking at examples in song lyrics and poetry, we will write our own poems, both individually and as a group.

We are offering our Summer 2021 workshops on a Pay What You Can basis. The minimum payment is £5 (£5.12 with the booking fee); after that the sky's the limit!

We have raised our minimum from £1 because we found that people registered and then didn't attend, meaning that others on the waiting list were disappointed.

There are two free places on every workshop for anyone who would find the minimum donation difficult. If you would like to apply for one of these places please email kate@alarumproductions.org.uk

The workshop will be via Zoom so you will need a computer with speakers and internet connection. Your computer or laptop should have either a built-in camera and microphone or a webcam so that everyone can see and hear everyone else. A web link will be sent to participants before the workshop. If you haven't used Zoom before, you will need to download the software here <https://zoom.us/support/download> and we will make sure everyone is comfortable with it before we begin.

Please note this event has a limited capacity of 10 places – early booking recommended!

<https://bit.ly/3pbB9uw>

More about Alarum Theatre can be found here: <https://alarumtheatre.co.uk>

Mikron Theatre Company

Our friends from the 'Mikron' Theatre Group usually travel on or near our canals presenting their own brand of comedy music and story lines. Unfortunately they could not travel last year and this year has some restrictions due to covid again. However, they are touring but unfortunately will not be performing on our canals. The nearest performances, which have to be booked and paid for beforehand, are possibly at the Two Boats Inn at Southam, Camp House at Grimley, Rowington Village Hall, The Bridge House by lock number 2 at Lapworth, Tontine Gardens in Stourport – on – Severn and Springfield Park in Kidderminster. Further details can be found on www.mikron.org.uk

The two productions involve the fight for women's football and canine comedy capers. The first 'Atlanta Forever', is set just after WW1 when women's football teams were pulling in large crowds to raise funds for wounded soldiers. Despite this popularity their biggest opponent of all was the Football Association.

The second production 'A Dog's Tale', features a rescue dog called Gary who is pursued by security through the halls and history of Crufts.

If any readers are lucky enough to see any of these productions, please let '58' know how it all went even with the current restrictions.

Cecilia News

As many readers may already aware, 'the 'Cecilia' volunteers have been hard at work getting the boat ready for use by groups which should be commencing very soon. Even though volunteering generally has had to be restricted due to covid, some of the 'Cecilia' volunteers have managed to do some heavy work. Their lifting technique is just amazing!

(Do not try this at home! – Ed).



Photos taken by Al Gibbs

Such is the talent of this intrepid group, or maybe just bored, one of them even found the time to compose the following:

A Lock Keepers Lament.....

When Corona is just a beer again....
And Donald is only a duck,
When Boris has just had a haircut,
And Hancock has run out of luck,
Will we all go to Barnard Castle,
And there try to test our eyes,
So we can all then read the bar charts,
And Chris Whitty holds no more surprise,
Is that when we'll know it's all over,
And life is returning to norm,
When lock 58 is leaking again,
And the beer in The Queens is still warm,
And the madman is back on his bike again,
And Kevin is back on the quad,
Is that when we'll get back on duty, and
Jenny's still walking the dog.

We'll be looking for ABC boats
And fretting 'bout hirers again,
And trying to stop the daft buggers
Open both ends of a lock even when,
It's clear that the water's escaping
On it's way down to Diglis post-haste
And even the side ponds at Hanbury
Aren't able to control the waste...
It's then that we'll know we're all back on the
flight,
With windlasses shiny and bright,
And waiting for someone to say about four-ish.
"That's it, well I'm off for the night."

Ed Butcher.

*Thanks Ed, your poetic licence is hereby granted
although Mary may have another opinion!*

Society Online Meeting: April 2021

Chance Glass Works

Members had a real treat of a talk in April, from Mark Davies of the Chance Glassworks Heritage Trust. Like most I knew of these impressive old buildings along the Main Line canal in Smethwick or from the M5, but I didn't really know much about them. Mark was such a good speaker, a Black Country lad himself who obviously loved the place and knew it well.

The history was fascinating. The Chance family began the glassworks in the early 19th Century and we saw a print from 1857 showing the extent of the buildings both sides of the canal. It was one of the largest glassworks in the world and included three schools where employees' children were educated. They famously made the glass for the Crystal Palace, Big Ben and the Houses of Parliament, but are perhaps not quite so well known for their speciality of lighthouse glass. There are hundreds of their lighthouse lanterns in England and thousands all round the world. They also made beautiful stained glass, float glass, rolled glass, optical lenses and the first ovenproof glass (later Pyrex), cathode ray tubes and sunglasses. They even diversified from glass, making generators, pumps and foghorns. Unfortunately, the research needed for all this innovation caused cashflow problems, so they allowed Pilkingtons to buy up shares, to the point where they took over, and eventually closed them down.

Sitting between the Main Line and the Brindley line (where the M5 is now) the works made extensive use of the canals. There are two bridges by the main buildings, one of which, the Chance Bridge, had separate slopes for pedestrians and wheeled traffic. The Trust hope one of the disused canal arms could be opened up later in the restoration.

What remains (now that the resident skip hire firm has been removed) is a Scheduled Monument, a set of buildings in a variety of conditions, mostly basically sound and many Grade 2 listed. There is a bell tower and there was a demonstration lighthouse, a pump room and various furnace houses. One of the most amazing structures is the tunnels under the furnaces and linking into the canal. The Trust hopes to regenerate the buildings and create an urban village, with leisure, retail and residential spaces as well as educational and museum facilities. Mark said they even had their eye on eventual World Heritage status.

They are in the process of creating a Community Benefit society with shares for the local community: this was held up by Covid and is soon to be relaunched. They are seeking funding from a wide range of funders and hope to link into the Commonwealth Games (there are 3,400 lighthouses in the Commonwealth!). They are now getting some support from Sandwell Council, and have architectural students from Wolverhampton University involved in their plans... including a lighthouse. Phase 1 will be to renovate the main 7-storey building, and the public can contribute ideas via their website. The involvement of the local community is perhaps the most impressive aspect of the whole project.

Their urban renewal area is mostly the piece between the two canals. The other parts of the original site belong to other owners, and the remaining school building isn't even listed. Much of the site south of the Main Line has become an industrial estate. But what they have, along the north side, is a wonderful piece of industrial history and a vision to turn it into something for the 21st Century. As one of our members said, how did such a wonderful heritage site ever get into that sad state? It should now become a real asset to the community.

To find out more about the Chance Glassworks please visit:

<https://www.chanceht.org/>





• Dr Gale Pettifer came on 'Zoom' for our May meeting to talk to us about a fascinating subject – **"Hearts of Oak"**. It was actually the story of the New Forest and its connection with shipbuilding. Gale said that timber, especially oak timber, in earlier centuries was a bit like oil in modern times – a vital raw material which could lead to all kinds of wars and shady politics.

The New Forest was so named by William the Conqueror when he took it as his hunting ground. That is what a "forest" was initially – open woodland/ scrubland/ pasture held as a hunting ground. Most were owned by the King and aristocracy, including Bishops (like the one in Alvechurch). The deer were protected: the trees weren't. In fact, in these "woody grounds with

fruitful pasture," deer were valued more than people.

Most forests gave special rights to the people living there, the commoners. They could graze their animals there – all forests were grazed – and maybe had rights to collect spare wood and cut peat. The New Forest is interesting because there are still commoners with these rights, and the area still resembles the wood/scrub/heath/pasture mix it had. It's a good ecological mix

Gale explained that in the reign of George III there was a fear that there was a lack of wood for the all-important warships. The country was more or less perpetually at war during the eighteenth century and Britain's sea power was crucial. Parliament took over the Crown estates from the King and they became a political asset. The navy was called "hearts of oak" and the oak tree became symbolic of Britain.

The government wanted to enclose parts of the forest and increase the tree cover there, making them a timber-growing estate, and sell off the rest. Clearly, deer and the other grazing animals like wild ponies, not to mention the commoners' domestic animals, would be detrimental to this. So, they would be fenced out. Gale described this as changing an ecological system into an economic one. Two prominent economic and political thinkers, Adam Smith and Edmund Burke, thought the Crown lands should be sold off.

This change did eventually happen in some forests, but not in the New Forest. It was the prime candidate as it is so near the key naval and shipbuilding ports of Southern England. But it turned out that maybe there wasn't a shortage of wood – fake news! The shipyards were mismanaged and wood went missing, and there was even worse management of the Crown estate which hardly made any money. There was actually no need to make these huge changes. It wasn't helped by the fact that the prime mover of the Bill to sell off and enclose the New Forest, one George Rose, was found to be feathering his own nest. He had numerous titles and interests including an estate in the middle of the New Forest. The Bill was never passed and the New Forest stayed as it was.

The irony, which we all appreciated, was that parliamentary sleaze and fake news were behind the near-fall and rescue of this great piece of ecologically-balanced land. Most of our forests weren't so lucky.

Gale was thanked for her talk and several attendees suggested a trip to the New Forest in future!

Forthcoming Closures On The W&B

Volker Fitzpatrick working on behalf of Network Rail, University of Birmingham and WMCA to deliver the redevelopment of University Train Station, require a series of 29-hour closures of the canal and towpath, to lift large sections of the station building framework and canal footbridge across the canal. The canal closure coincides with a closure of the railway. A towpath diversion route will be displayed at the nearest access points. To minimise the effect of the closure, the contractor has agreed two windows to open the canal to allow boats and towpath users to pass through the site. Therefore, the canal and towpath will be open between 12.00 -13.00 and 16.00 - 17.00 on each Sunday.

Dates are:

- Sunday 27th June 00.30 – Monday 28th June 05.00
- Sunday 4th July 00.30 – Monday 5th July 05.00
- Sunday 8th August 00.30 – Monday 9th August 05.00
- Sunday 5th September 00.30 – Monday 6th September 05.00
- Sunday 26th September 00.30 – Monday 27th September 05.00
- Sunday 3rd October 00.30 – Monday 4th October 05.00

We appreciate that these stoppages will have an impact on anyone needing to pass through this area on these dates, but following our representations to them, we're satisfied that, with the provision made for passage twice each day, they're keeping the disruption to a minimum.



Artists Impression of the new station at University

Droitwich Canals Open Weekend

The Official Opening of the Droitwich Canals will take place Friday 1st July with celebrations going on all over the weekend of July 1st - July 3rd.

The Water Festival will be organised in conjunction with the Droitwich Musical Festival. Plans are very much in the early stages but you can be assured of a full weekend's programme of entertainment both in Vines Park and in and around the Town.

Friday 1st July

The Official Opening Ceremonies will take place in Vines Park between 1pm and 5pm. The cutting of the ribbon will be around 2pm.

Boat parade led by at least 4 working boats.

Unveiling of plaque in Netherton Basin around 3.30pm.

Bar will be open in marquee after the official ceremonies are over followed by live entertainment 8 till late.

Saturday 2nd July in Vines Park

11am - 12am unveiling of a plaque to commemorate the volunteers who have diligently given time and money over the past 30 years.

Boat parade led by at least 4 working boats from 10am - Craft Stalls and stalls belonging to all water affiliated Trusts and Societies.

Canoe demonstrations - Fire Fighting demonstrations - Appellation Dancers

Bar will be open in marquee 12 - 5pm

Lunchtime we will have a blues/folky band playing 12 till 3pm

In the evening - bar will be open 7 - 11pm with live entertainment by 'Meet on the Ledge'.

In Shopping Precinct:

Music 11am - 4pm

in Victoria Square:

9am - 2pm Farmers Market

in High Street:

11am - 4pm Craft stalls and buskers

Sunday 3rd July in Vines Park

Boat parade led by at least 4 working boats

from 10am - Craft Stalls and stalls belonging to all water affiliated Trusts and Societies.

Canoe demonstrations Fire Fighting demonstrations

Appalachian Dancers

Bar will be open in marquee 12 - 5pm

Lunchtime we will have a jazz band playing 12 till 3pm

In the evening - bar will be open 7 - 11pm with live entertainment.

In Lido Park: Brass Band - times to be confirmed

We hope you will be able to come and support what will be an historic weekend of entertainment.

10 years ago the big talking point throughout the whole waterway system was the official re-opening to full navigation of both the Droitwich Canals in July. What an event that proved to be with the crowds flocking to see the reopened canals and all of the associated events and activities in and around Vines Park. This was arguably the fore runner of the now annual St. Richard's Canal Festival which has unfortunately been unable to run last year and so far this year, because of covid restrictions.



The Droitwich Canals Trust Ltd

Dear Sir,
18th April, 2011

With the restoration of the Droitwich Canals now almost complete it has recently been agreed by the membership that the Droitwich Canals Trust Limited should be dissolved in the autumn. The reason for this being that the main purpose of the trust will have been successfully achieved. The official opening of the fully restored Junction and Barge Canals will be taking place on the 1st July.

It was further agreed by the membership that a new successor charitable trust should be established forthwith to be called the Droitwich Waterways (Pamela May) Trust Limited. This new trust will continue to operate the Pamela May as a community boat and to promote interest in the local waterways in and around Droitwich.

As a result the new proposed Droitwich Waterways (Pamela May) Trust Limited is now seeking trustees, who live locally, to manage the new trust which should be both an interesting and exciting venture. Should any of your readers wish to become involved in this way then please contact the undersigned, at 3, St Augustine's Close, Droitwich Spa, WR9 8QW by the end of May. It is expected that these new trustee appointments will be made towards the end of July.

Yours sincerely,

Hugh C. Hamilton
Secretary,
Droitwich Canals Trust Ltd

But what of the core body, along with many others including this society, responsible for this great achievement? Another feature in the same edition of '58' evidences the forthcoming changes which are still with us to this day. The WBCS became the 'Worcester-Birmingham & Droitwich Canals Society' with the closing down of the Droitwich Canals Trust having completed its objectives, while another trust was formed as named in the article using the 'Pamela May' trip boat to promote the newly re-opened canals. As the expression goes 'the rest is history!'

JUST DOING HER JOB

THE wife of a lock keeper says she was assaulted when she tried to stop a woman using the canal towpath outside her cottage near Droitwich, **put** out of bounds by the foot and mouth epidemic.

Barbara Troth, from Astwood Lane, Hanbury, was knocked to the floor when attempting to carry out a British Waterways ban on pedestrians using the towpath.

Offenders found guilty of flouting the law can be fined up to £3,000.

Barbara has also suffered verbal abuse from walkers who insist on using the path near canalside home, despite warning notices that it is closed.

On both occasions, the last was on Easter Monday, she reported the incident to police as outlined in a British Waterways directive but they failed to respond.

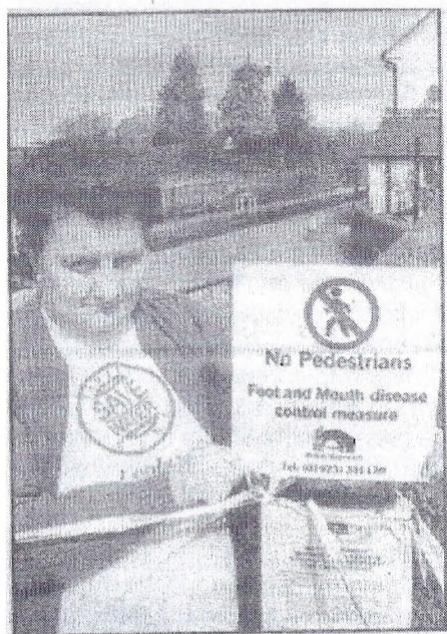
Barbara, whose husband, Alan, is a lock keeper on the Worcester and Birmingham Canal, said: "They just didn't want to know."

She believes the "countryside is open" message put out by the Government is confusing, especially when the canals are open while some towpaths are closed.

Boat people are required to disinfect footwear when leaving or returning to their vessels.

The Worcester and Birmingham canal runs through farmland which has seen several outbreaks of the disease. A British Waterways spokeswoman said some towpaths are open but notices are clearly displayed on those which are closed.

Worcester police could not be contacted for a comment yesterday.



A WARNING SIGN: Lock keeper's wife Barbara Troth with one of the towpath ban notices. Photo: JULIAN REYNOLDS.

Ref: 43068

20 years ago the country was in the grip of another sort of pandemic – Foot and Mouth Disease. Restrictions on movement particularly in rural areas was strictly enforced with fell walking etc. being banned for the duration. This also included some towpaths even though the canals were generally open to navigation. Unfortunately, as we have seen very recently, a minority of people think it does not apply to them or they know better than everyone else.



Maddie's Do You Know?

Series 2: 7. Canal Lock and Gate

In today's episode Maddie is finding out about different gates that open and close. She visits a canal lock to find out how canal boats travel up and down hill. Maddie jumps aboard with her special steady camera as the canal boat moves through a lock so we can see the gates in action. Next, Maddie visits a blacksmith's workshop to find out how a decorative steel gate is made. We see the pieces of steel being cut and welded together. Maddie uses a special thermal imaging camera to see the sparks fly, and how hot the metal becomes, when it is joined together. [Read more](#)

Readers may remember that our society was involved in the filming of an episode of the BBC's 'Do You Know' programme. The episode that we featured in is currently being shown on the BBC IPlayer.

Graffiti

Sadly graffiti seems to continually plague our canals. Here are a selection of photos taken only recently. We understand that some have now been removed.



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If you are interested in canals, angling, boats, boat crewing, natural history, walking, cycling, photography, industrial archaeology, local history, canal work parties, preservation and enhancement of the environment as well as meeting up with like-minded people, then please consider joining this friendly Canal Society.

We usually hold our regular monthly meetings at the Alvechurch Boat Centre, Scarfield Wharf, Alvechurch, B48 7SQ (just behind the award winning Weighbridge pub). Meetings are currently being held on 'Zoom' on the first Tuesday of the month at 7.45pm. If you are in the least bit curious then please come along, as non-members are always welcome (we publish joining instructions on our Facebook page). You do not need to be a boat owner as most of our members are not. If you require any other assistance please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Presentations have included Historic Environment of the Canal in Worcester, Coal For The Ashby Canal, Cotswold Canal Restoration, Idle Women, The Cadbury Story, Lapal Canal Trust Restoration, Hereford & Gloucester Canal Restoration and Canal du Midi to name but a few.

Further details are available on our website, Facebook and Twitter where you can find out lots more about us (details below).

Our own society narrowboat 'Cecilia' is available for use by groups or individuals for half day and day trips* (currently suspended due to Covid restrictions).

**Terms & Conditions Apply.*

We hope to welcome as many new faces as possible from members of the community.

Please visit our website: wbdcs.org.uk

(where you can also download a membership application form)

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