

# 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'*



**ONE OF MANY GROUPS AT THE TARDEBIGGE HERITAGE OPEN WEEKEND**



# Monthly Meetings

**Our regular monthly meetings are currently being held online**  
**Public monthly meetings will be reinstated as soon as possible**

*Members will be emailed shortly before any online meeting with information on how to join in.*

*Information will also appear on our website and Facebook page.*

*Please ensure that our Membership Secretary has your current details.*

## **MEETING 5th OCTOBER AT 7.30pm**

Mr Dave Calverley. He is a timeshare owner of a narrowboat. He confesses that he also “fell-into” his part ownership. Quite how is for him to explain. He will be telling us of his exploits, the highlights of his travels and perhaps some of the mishaps. He is also a C&RT volunteer.

## Donations

*We have introduced new and easier ways of making donations to the society.*

**QR Code:** We have the facility to make donations direct to the society. You can simply scan the QR code on our flyers and collection tins or visit <https://bit.ly/3pcfp1C>



**Just Giving:** We have also set up a 'JustGiving' page.

Simply go to the [JustGiving website](#), create an account or log in and then do a search for our society.

## New Member Welcomes

*The following people have recently joined the society:*

**Bob Ryan** from Cofton Hackett. **Simon Rashbrook** from Worcester.

**Stephen Partridge** from Droitwich Spa. **Gerard & Yvonne Nash** from Alvechurch.

**Keith Bredin** from Worcester. **David Overton** from Droitwich Spa who has re-joined from a few years ago and **Graham Vanstone** from Redditch.

'58' offers its customary welcome to the society to all of the above named and hopes to see them at any of our future activities.

# The Magazine of the Worcester-Birmingham & Droitwich Canals Society

Issue 558 Oct/Nov 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](https://www.facebook.com/wbdcs.org.uk)

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

View videos on our [YouTube channel](#)

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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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Copy date for the next issue: Nov 14th 2021

# Worcester-Birmingham & Droitwich Canals Society

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

**(Registered Charity No 500159)**

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# Chair's Notes

It was good to see so many members attending our recent Zoom AGM. Our treasurer reported an upward trend to our finances and with 'Cecilia' now offering day trips let's hope it is a trend that continues. Whilst I am talking about the treasurer, congratulations to Trevor Hyde for being awarded the Bridge 63 trophy (see below). The treasurer of any organisation puts in a lot of work that normally goes unnoticed.

Well done to everyone who took part in the sponsored walk along the Worcester – Birmingham & Droitwich Canals during the month of August. We have raised in excess of £1000 with more to come.

By the time you are reading 58 we will have had a Heritage weekend based at Tardebigge and a sponsored lock challenge and I know from early reports that we can look forward to reading about more success stories in the next 58.

Sunday 20th March 2022 will be our first annual dinner for 2 years at Bromsgrove Golf Centre; let's make it one to remember.

Friday 29th April 2022 until Monday 2nd May 2022 will be St. Richard's Canal Festival to be held in Vines Park, Droitwich.

It all adds up to a vibrant canal society and long may it continue.

*David Wheeler*

## Bridge 63 Award



As in the Chair's report above, the winner of this year's coveted award was Trevor Hyde. Trevor has been elected as treasurer of the society for a number of years and during this past few it has been particularly challenging because of a lack of income and the large expenditure required on 'Cecilia'. Trevor has also been suffering ill health issues to add this pressure. '58' offers its congratulations to Trevor on this well earned award.

*Previous winner, Neil Franklin, presents Trevor Hyde with the Bridge 63 award*



# Editor's Notes

## Hi Readers,

It's that time of the year again for your favourite magazine and there's much to report on further in. The last two months since the publication of the most recent edition of '58', has proved to be quite a busy time for your society. What with sponsored walks, canal festivals, 'Cecilia' trips, Heritage weekends and our friends from the Lapal Canal Trust holding the annual 'Walk the Line', there has been plenty for society members and friends to be involved in.

The largest event the society was involved in was undoubtedly the Inland Waterways Festival of Water held during the August Bank Holiday weekend at Perdiswell in Worcester. Society members and friends helped to position our gazebos, which were also shared with our friends from the Lapal Canal Trust, with Lynne then setting out the stall's wares in the usual attractive way. Visitors to the gazebos were plentiful with many children wanting to make badges that the society is becoming somewhat renowned for. Lynne has subsequently reported that takings from shop sales were very good indeed which is always to be welcomed.

Your society was also present at the 'Salt Fest' in Vines Park Droitwich. Society members being mainly involved with the staffing of the bar and subsequent clear ups. The weekend event was well supported by the public with our friends from the 'Pamela May Trust' running both the electric trip boat and the duck race.

Mid - September was the Heritage Week and as part of that event the society organised guided walks around the Tardebigge area and very well attended they were too. At publicised hourly slots each group was taken around an agreed route and much of the history of the area was shared with the participants. The end of the tour was by the famous Tardebigge top lock with 'Cecilia' being moored nearby offering drinks, cake and various society information by the band of volunteers. Participants were also provided with a specially prepared booklet highlighting some of the things shared on the tour. All in all a good weekend planned and delivered by committed volunteers.

The 12 page booklet (right) was emailed out to members and is available to download from the society website: [www.wbdc.org.uk](http://www.wbdc.org.uk).

The purpose of this editorial is to demonstrate to readers just what a great bunch of volunteers the society is currently blessed with. Not only do

## Heritage Open Weekend

The Worcester Birmingham & Droitwich Canals Society



heritage open days



*— H. Ames. —*  
A  
DESCRIPTION  
OF THE  
PATENT PERPENDICULAR  
LIFT,  
ERECTED ON THE  
WORCESTER AND BIRMINGHAM CANAL,  
AT  
TARDEBIGGE, NEAR BROMSGROVE.

*It is a Little & a Pond*  
By EDWARD SMITH,  
ESQ. ARCHT. &c. &c.

Illustrated by Engraving, from Drawing taken on the Spot, by  
H. FAWCETT SMITH.

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PRICE ONE SHILLING.

THE PERPENDICULAR LIFT  
from the lower level.



This perpendicular lift was built where lock 58 now is at the top of the 'Tardebigge Flight' on the Worcester & Birmingham Canal

[www.wbdc.org.uk](http://www.wbdc.org.uk)



we have people who help on the day but also people to plan and prepare as well as clear up and transport things from and back to storage. All of the food and drink provided for the Heritage Weekend from 'Cecilia' was prepared specially for the event by society volunteers. The society certainly gained in terms of generating interest as well as kindly donations filling collection tins. All of the above were very good events with many pictures to be shown later on in this edition.

Volunteers are the 'backbone' of this society and so if anyone out there is interested in doing a bit then please do get in touch – you'll not be disappointed!

In terms of future events, unfortunately there will be no Stourbridge Bonded Warehouse event this year and no Christmas event in the Worcester Cathedral cloisters. However, Lynne reports that there may be a Spring event coming up in the new year at which the society stall could well be present. Please let Lynne know if there are any others coming which may be suitable for society attendance.

The society also held its AGM, albeit via zoom, which was again well attended. After the main business Denis showed a film about horse boating which was actually taken on the Worcester & Birmingham Canal on the Astwood Flight. It actually featured some past and present members of the society.

So there we have it dear readers, a busy society run by volunteers for the benefit of all including this very magazine. A big thank you to all of them including those who have sent in items for this edition which is what makes it the publication that it has become. Any other offerings from readers are always welcome whether it be written items or pictures, they are always worthy of consideration.

Looking forward to seeing as many of you as possible at our next zoom meeting on October 5th.

**Enjoy the read.**

*John Hemingway*

## Membership News

Membership Secretary Joe Morley reports that subscription renewals are flowing in nicely up to renewal date (30th September) and we would like to thank all those who have renewed by cheque or BACS methods. Several members have now set up Standing Orders, as they realise that this is the most efficient and painless way of renewing their membership, and Treasurer Trevor Hyde (he of the Bridge 63 Trophy fame) just loves it!

Special mention must be made of one particularly generous donation of £300 made by one member who wishes to remain anonymous. More than you may imagine, we appreciate every single renewal and all extra donations made by members who feel able to do so. Things have been tough for the Society for the last couple of years because of the restriction placed upon our activities by Covid-19 regulations, made even more difficult because of the costs involved in keeping the Society's boat Cecilia shipshape. Hopefully, soon, we may be able to begin operating as in days of yore but, meantime, we are totally dependent upon our membership to keep us afloat! If renewal hasn't been the highest priority on your to-do list, we would really appreciate it if it could go a bit closer to the top. Thank you! Details of ways and means can be found in the last issue of 58, otherwise just ask any committee member.

So, many thanks again for your wonderful support. Here's to happier virus-free times in future!

*Joe Morley*

*Membership Secretary*



# Droitwich Salt Festival

The weekend after the Festival of Water in Worcester was the Droitwich Salt Fest. A smaller affair than usual in Vines Park which was nevertheless well supported by the public. Several members and friends of WB&DCS were present, particularly helping behind the bar, in what turned out to be a fine and warm weekend for all.

There were many food stalls with a few other traders in what was the first event to be held there since pre lock down.

Below are a selection of photos showing some of the stalls and other activities:





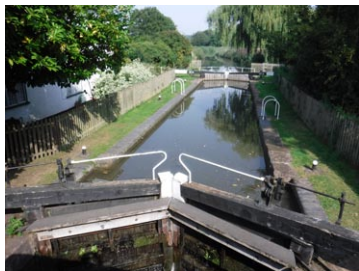
# Sponsored Walks: Walking The Canals

The society recently organised sponsored walks rather than the usual evening walk in August. This was to raise funds for the society and at the same time raise awareness of just how beautiful the Worcester-Birmingham and Droitwich Canals really are. The society has also been able to raise its profile particularly when 'Cecilia' was involved in one of the walks from Alvechurch to The Worcester Bar in Birmingham – and back!

Society Treasurer, Trevor Hyde, has reported some amazing returns on the sponsorships with more due in this coming month. A very well done to all participants, however small or large a distance you managed to achieve – it all counts towards a very well worthwhile exercise (pun intended!).

Here are a selection of scenes that walkers may have passed dependent upon how far they were able to walk. One of the walks consisted of several guest walkers from the Alvechurch Walking Buddies. All of those pictured below, in the first two photos, walked the 12.5 miles from Alvechurch into the centre of Birmingham. The group raised over £300. 'Cecilia' also joined these walkers providing refreshments along the way and a very welcome ride back. Much of the walk was broadcast live on the society Facebook page and attracted hundreds of viewers.

The society wishes to thank all those who have taken part.





# 'Nature Notes'

## Mary Green

I'm writing this in September, so there is still a lot of activity along the canal. On a warm sunny day the canalside plants which are still flowering are full of insects; bees, hoverflies, butterflies and some beautiful late dragonflies. These still need nectar from flowers, and the sunny aspect of the aquatic fringe is the perfect habitat. What you can't easily see is the insect larvae down in the vegetation or in the water. Some stay there for the winter, some form chrysalises before they hibernate. They have been feeding on specific plants while in the larval stage. This year several people have seen the unusual elephant hawk moth caterpillars along here. They feed on willow herb, which is plentiful by water.

The much despised stinging nettle is also a food plant – for red admiral, tortoiseshell and peacock butterflies among others. These may feed as adults on the nectar of garden flowers, but they need the nettles to survive. The stings help keep away other creatures that would eat the caterpillars. Some of these butterflies – red admirals and painted ladies – migrate in and out of Britain as adults.

Dragonflies are a little different as they have a long life in water as larvae and don't have a pupal stage. They are carnivorous and feed on other insects and small organisms.

Some butterflies over-winter as adults in hibernation. One of the most stunning in the early autumn is the brimstone. It's a very distinctive light yellow, and it likes to get nectar from purple loosestrife, so it shows up really well. When it reappears, very early in spring, it likes to feed on primroses and





cowslips so it's harder to spot. It lays its eggs on buckthorn where the caterpillars feed.

Some of the late flowering plants are very common, some more unusual. Ragwort is common and vital for insects. The beautiful black-and-red cinnabar moth lays its eggs solely on ragwort, and their stripy black-and-gold caterpillars feed on it. Lots of flies, moths, butterflies and bees take nectar from it, as with all the flowers in the daisy family. Autumn hawkbit is another of this family, tall with big yellow flowers and always covered with insects.

Gipsywort is less common, though plentiful along our canal. It looks a bit like a nettle at first but has little rings of white flowers all up the stem. It's an old dye plant, giving a dark brown colour. Orange balsam is not common either but another really late flower, very attractively patterned to draw insects in, and being a native it's not invasive like Indian balsam.

Latest of all of the waterside flowers is bur marigold, quite a rarity and just about hanging on round here where C&RT have been cutting down the vegetation. It's a small dark yellow flower in the daisy family, with very delicately patterned leaf structures.

The plants that flowered earlier are now in seed, and also important. Birds feed on them, and the seeds are taken to start new plants. Some seeds have downy outsides – like the thistles and all the dandelion group – which spread in the wind. Orange balsam shoots its seeds out like a pop-gun! Others are taken by birds or carried along by passing animals. Birds especially pass on the seeds from berries. They usually don't digest the seed, enjoying the juicy red, pink or reddish black outer parts of the fruit, so the seed passes through them and comes up somewhere else.

It's good to see these plants left to die down naturally, with all their hidden insects, ready for winter.



4



5



6

1. RAGWORT
2. RED ADMIRAL BUTTERFLY
3. HOLLY BLUE BUTTERFLY
4. BRIMSTONE BUTTERFLY
5. AUTUMN HAWKBIT
6. HAWKER DRAGONFLY

The Society's Annual general meeting took place via Zoom in early September with the following persons being elected:

David Wheeler elected as Chair, proposed Mary Green seconded Margaret Rowley.  
Margaret Rowley elected as Vice-Chair, proposed Mary Green seconded Trevor Hyde.  
Trevor Hyde elected as Treasurer, proposed Mary Green, seconded Margaret Rowley.  
The Treasurer explained the society's accounts for past two years and moved them for adoption:

The following persons were duly elected onto the committee:

John Hemingway (proposed Mary Green, seconded Margaret Rowley).  
Bill Lambert, (proposed Mary Green, seconded Margaret Rowley).  
Lynne Laniosh, (proposed Margaret Rowley, seconded Mary Green).  
Malcolm Bates (proposed Jeremy Hand, seconded Mary Green).  
Neil Franklin, (Proposed Margaret Rowley, seconded Mary Green).  
Wendy Albutt (proposed Mary Green, seconded Margaret Rowley).

Tony Brannon, Neil Franklin, Joe Morley and Denis Pike remain in situ for another year within a two year cycle.

Mary Green & Martin Hancox have stood down from the committee.

Thanks to both Mary and to the long serving Martin who was also a past editor of 58.

The Treasurer's reports for 2019 & 2020 are available to download here:

2019 Report: <https://bit.ly/3AUBu9J>

2020 Report: <https://bit.ly/2Y1UNzX>

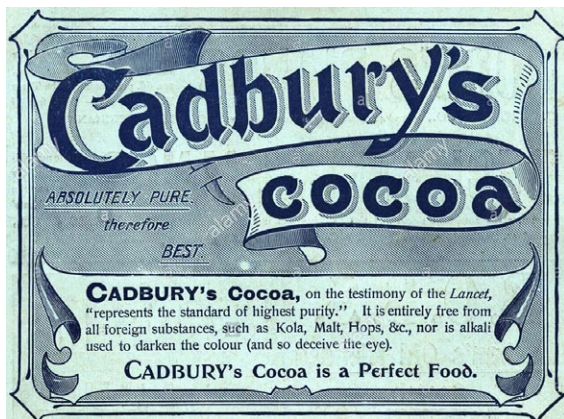
*As readers may have spotted, our society is in need of a new Secretary. If any members out there feel they can help or knows of someone, please let us know ASAP.*

## Local Canals at Work

Around 1960 I was a trainee at Cadbury's Bournville, and after a short time in the transport office I was charged with the job of bringing chocolate crumb from our milk factories near the Welsh border to Bournville.

Chocolate crumb is a combination of fresh milk and chocolate mass, a thick concentrate carried to the milk factories in 12 or 15 ton tankers to be dried with milk which could be held in sacks or silos for six or 12 months until needed. Crumb is made whilst the milk is plentiful and can still be held until needed.

I booked several lorries per day from Frampton on Severn or Knighton in Staffordshire. My boss directed me to book a canal boat to carry 30 or 40 tons every couple of weeks "to keep the boats employed", slow but steady over two days rather than lorries over 2 to 3 hours. In icy periods I sometimes got an emergency phone call from a distant phone box near a trapped boat with the exciting request to "please send the icebreaker" which





was requested of British Waterways perhaps for Charlie Ballinger of Gloucester or Charlie Atkins of Stafford.

Later in spring or summer these boats were booked to carry 15 or 20 youths on a one week 'camp school' across the Midlands visiting famous factories etcetera on educational trips. Many years later I was handling some big National Accounts which included a visit by the Chairman of Woolworths Ltd (1000 branches!), a meeting with Mr Michael Cadbury sales director of the Cadbury company and myself.

Occasionally the Bournville chocolate department requested carriage of 20 tons of compressed and dried cocoa mass from which the very valuable cocoa butter had been squeezed leaving manhole cover sized heavy slabs. This was sold to a Dutch company who could squeeze a further half or 1% of butter fat for resale. I shipped the slabs to Brentford where they were transferred to major river boats to swing over to ocean vessels so saving handling charges on the seaward side of the vessel. Gradually these delightful journeys expired around 1974 for Cadbury, but in 2010 an old friend then Chairman of British Waterways, told me his apprentices had rebuilt and restored at their headquarters near Runcorn, an old crumb-carrying boat and I was invited to greet that boat when it came to celebrate 50 years of Cadbury work. It was manned by the family of Charlie Atkins. We enjoyed a lunch and a mile trip to Kings Norton and back for old times sake. The BBC had many times shown a film of 'Chocolate Charlie' and I managed to borrow that film back from BBC Bristol.

My final canal work was sometimes skippering the boys' club boat Norman Chamberlain moored at Kings Norton, taking 12 or 18 city lads on adventure camping weekends through the Tardebigge Tunnel and back.

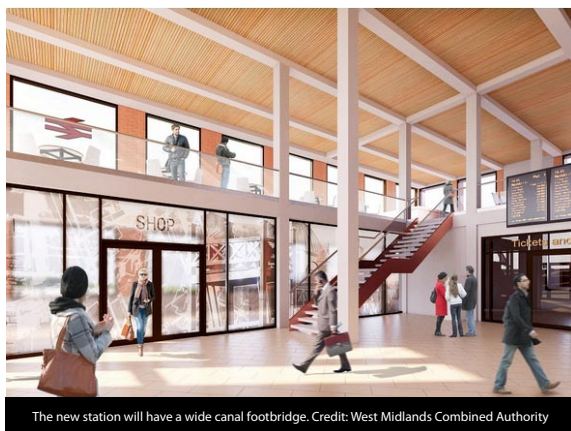
**I still love the canals - Happy Days !!**

*Roger Jones  
September 2021*

## Canal & River Trust News

Work is still continuing across the Worcester and Birmingham Canal alongside the University Rail Station so canal and towpath users should take extra care when in this area.

*Volker Fitzpatrick working on behalf of Network Rail, University of Birmingham and WMCA to redevelop University Train Station require a 29-hour closure 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. We kindly ask customers to take extra care when following the diversion route. Thank you for your understanding.*



The new station will have a wide canal footbridge. Credit: West Midlands Combined Authority

For the latest information regarding Covid-19 and any restrictions or impact it may be having on our waterways please visit: <https://bit.ly/2WJZU7e>

# Heritage Open Weekend at Tardebigge

A big thank you to all who turned out to the 2021 Heritage open day event at Tardebigge on the 18th and 19th of September.

After weeks of planning the volunteers from C&RT and WB&DCS were primed and ready to go. 'Cecilia' was resplendent with flags ahoy and kettle on the boil and the sun had decided to shine on us local history buffs. All we needed was someone to come along for a tour of 200 years of history around Tardebigge top lock, wharf and general area.

And come they did. By 10.00 the first group was so large that we had to split it down into two separate visitor parties. We were up and running.

Marshalls corralled folk at the Tardebigge Church car park and gathered them into groups for their guides. Arms were waved, fingers were pointed and the clock on the familiar countryside was turned back 200 years.

Voices initially tremulous were raised and confidence grew as the groups turning this way and that were entertained from guides who had been committed to gathering their facts and seeking out their anecdotes to good effect.

Visitors heard about canal building, quarrying, brick making, water saving and recalcitrant horses. Legless leggers, tow ragged bow hauliers and sack clothed lime burners all put in an appearance.

The wharf of yesteryear, the original planned lock flight, the experimental perpendicular boat lift, side ponds, tugboats and tramways were painted onto the surrounding countryside.

Visitors were responsive and we all learned a few new things from the locals. Feedback was good and coordinated live over the inter-web.

The initial down pour on Sunday did nothing to dampen spirits as the intrepid guides led their flock through the flooded side road and on to the glories of the IWA monument.

The end of trip cakes at 'Cecilia' were munched in a most satisfactory style. The charity tin was a bit heavier, the organisers a bit lighter in spirits and the refreshment team working like navvies!

Well done and thank you to all who gave their time on the day and in preparation for the event.

Over 120 people were guided over the 2 days. For the rest of you who missed such a treat there will be no excuse to miss it next year when Tardebigge 2: Flight of Fancy, goes into production.

Although no substitute for the full on force of a wind milling arm of an enthusiastic guide there is a booklet designed for the day which is available on the society website and at no cost is an absolute treat for all history lovers.

We cannot guarantee all anecdotes are absolutely true but they add to an accessible and entertaining glimpse into the social history of the area. Our thanks to George Bate.

My personal thanks to all who gave up their time on the days and in the preparation of site and guiding content beforehand.

*Al Gibbs*

*WB&DCS Volunteer.*

*Heritage open Day 2021 Organiser.*





## I Dig Canals - Dates

Kate Saffin & Heather Wastie of Alarum Theatre are delighted to announce an extra show on Thursday 21st October for our upcoming mini tour of our new show: I Dig Canals. The show is based on the oral histories of the women who campaigned to save the Black Country canals in the 60s and 70s.

So, stand by for winching and rocking, pulling and sweating, bucket-hoists of mud and canal-clearing clobber. It's 1970, and we're off to a rally of boats on the Staffordshire & Worcestershire Canal. On the way we'll meet Sheila and Josie, Tina and Jean as they put on their sturdy boots and roll up their sleeves. Women labouring, cooking, boating, organising... united by a common cause - to save the Black Country waterways. Shows lasts about an hour.



Dates are:

Fri 8th Oct 7.00pm Urban Moorings, Wolverhampton (outdoors)  
Sat 9th Oct 2.00pm Urban Moorings, Wolverhampton (outdoors)  
Thurs 21st Oct 7.00pm Ashwood Marina and the Clubhouse, Kingswinford

Visit the [Alarum Theatre website](#) for more information.

## National Poetry Day



To celebrate National Poetry Day, Heather Wastie is holding a very special writing workshop with the theme of 'choice'. The workshop will take place on Wednesday 6th October, the day before the annual poetry celebration.

We make choices constantly - whether to add blueberries or apricots to our muesli; the brand of washing machine or fridge to buy... So many choices each day!

Heather will share examples of poems written by several poets and guide you through the process of writing your own.

You are welcome whether you have lots of experience of writing poetry or none. It will be a very relaxed supportive session in a small group (max10) and you can share as much or as little as you like.

Links below to sign up:

Heather's 'Choices' writing workshop for National Poetry Day

<https://bit.ly/3AS2lha>

(p.s. if you can't make the 7th Oct and still want to get involved, pop Kate's next workshop in your diary now: Wed 3rd November).



*Kate Saffin*



*Heather Wastie*



# Lapal News

The Lapal Canal Trust has been busy with their usual promotional and fund raising activities as well as the recent annual 'Walk the Line'. The Trust also shared gazebo space (right) with WB&DCS at the recent Festival of Water in Worcester.

The 'Walk the Line' venture was probably the best ever in terms of attendance with about 50 people present including WB&DCS members. The weather was very good with trust members providing homemade refreshments at the end in Leasowes Park Halesowen.



After a very good day seeing both the old line and the new, transport back to the Selly Oak end was provided by the Trust for those who required it.

The latest news is that at long last the new winding is due to be excavated at the Selly Oak end opposite the entrance to the new canal. The latest date for commencement is October 4th and '58' hopes to bring news of this next time. More up to date information as work progresses can either be found on the society's web site or on [www.lapal.org](http://www.lapal.org).

NOTICE IS GIVEN that the Annual General Meeting of the Lapal Canal Trust will be held on Monday, 25th October, 2021 at 7.00 pm as a Virtual Meeting on ZOOM.

All welcome to join, you don't need to be a member.

## Join Zoom Meeting:

[https://us04web.zoom.us/j/75574757306?](https://us04web.zoom.us/j/75574757306?pwd=SmZYY3lzZ29aWnNQMWU3WDk1QlJxdz09)

[pwd=SmZYY3lzZ29aWnNQMWU3WDk1QlJxdz09](https://us04web.zoom.us/j/75574757306?pwd=SmZYY3lzZ29aWnNQMWU3WDk1QlJxdz09)

Meeting ID: 755 7475 7306. Passcode: Lapal

## Little Radford Boat Club

Our friends from the Little Radford Model Boat Club, whom some members will recall from last July's walk, were present at the IWA's Festival of Water (*more info next page*) and what a show they put on!

The models were on show in their display tent as well as demonstrating their manoeuvres on the Worcester and Birmingham Canal. The club members even put on a show of illuminated model boats during one of the evenings which received a well deserved round of applause.

Many thanks to John Newey and his team for such a fine display.





# IWA Festival of Water 2021

The Inland Waterways Association celebrated its 75th anniversary year at Perdiswell Park in Worcester. The IWA Festival of Water during the August Bank Holiday weekend attracted thousands of eager visitors keen to join in the fun.

Close to 100 boats moored along the towpath for the festival. Traditional working boats and modern narrowboats decked with bunting, flags and flowers attracted a constant stream of admirers.

Visitors also enjoyed the Worcester heritage walk, following the waterways from the centre of Worcester to Perdiswell Park. This included a short length of the River Severn, Diglis Docks and the Worcester & Birmingham Canal.

Children had plenty to do in the 'Find it Do it' Worcester arena, 'Wild over Waterways' marquee and Victorian funfair. The quality of delicious food – from pizzas and doughnuts to stew and irresistible duck fat roasted potatoes – was excellent. The sun brought out queues of people to sample the real ale. Likewise artists in the Entertainments marquee, including local groups, played to full houses.

## A fitting celebration

Councillor Adrian Gregson, Deputy Mayor of the City of Worcester, opened the festival on Saturday. He said he was delighted to welcome The Inland Waterways Association back to the Worcester & Birmingham Canal, where its formation was first mooted just a few miles away at Tardebigge. Since then, many hundreds of miles of waterways have been restored by the 75 years of campaigning work of IWA.

Volunteers worked tirelessly for the past two years to put on this event – despite it having to be cancelled in 2020 owing to Covid. Paul Rodgers, National Chair of IWA, said: "I am extremely grateful to the team at Worcester City Council for their unwavering support, to the caterers and stall holders who held the faith and to all the volunteers who gave their time and put in so much effort to ensuring the event was such a success."



# Is Tardebigge On The Level?

.....and if so, precisely what level is that? This is a short explanation of the system of Ordnance Survey Benchmarks. Firstly, let's have a definition of "benchmark" as used in everyday English. (Dictionary:- Benchmark:- a standard, or point of reference, against which things may be compared). We'll come back to that later!

The "thing" in question here being the level of water in the canal at T'bgg, or anywhere along the canal's length, usually in comparison with the level of the River Severn at Diglis, as in "how many feet does this flight of locks go down then?", a question often asked of lock keepers.

The starting point here is the water level in the long level pound that runs from T'bgg all the way to Gas St Basin. That water level is generally quoted as 453 ft above sea level. Below that, the Worcester and B'ham Canal descends through 58 locks to the river at Diglis, where the nominal water level is 46'6" above "ODN". Which stands for Ordnance Datum Newlyn. Which is in effect, sea level, as far as the Ordnance Survey are concerned. (Anyone confused yet?)

Yes, it all starts at Newlyn Tidal Observatory, where the basis for "mean sea level" was decided upon on 30th April 1921, and which sets the altitude of zero on UK maps.



From this starting point, the O.S. over many years measured, by using spirit levels, the altitude of some 190 "Fundamental Bench Marks", and marked those by carving, into a building or bridge structure, an arrow and a line to mark the benchmark altitude. From this mark, surveyors would set a level bench on which to measure the altitude of whatever they were working on.





Simple really! From the original carved marks the system was developed to calculate thousands of “second level benchmarks” often marked by a cast metal plate, with a number to identify the location. There are several of these easily visible along the T’bgg lock flight, for example BM 468 at the road bridge by Lock 41.

There is a variation, some benchmarks consisting only of a plain metal rivet, driven into stone or brickwork, and with a carved arrow, which are very difficult to locate. There is one such rivet recorded at Lock 45, but it can’t be seen, and may well have gone.

So the next time anyone asks about rise and fall of canal levels, a little research into the Ordnance Survey Benchmark Archive can provide a precise answer. Except, that is, for the location of the important “Fundamental” benchmarks, which the O.S. only releases on a need-to-know basis. And keen walkers will of course be used to knowing altitude from O.S. maps contour lines.

Returning to the dictionary definition, one can also find , “A surveyor’s mark cut in a wall pillar or building and used as a reference point in measuring altitudes”. And that’s where the current general use of “benchmark” comes from.

And just for the record, the altitude of benchmark No 468, at lock 41 just below the halfway point of the T’bgg flight, is 101.072 metres, or 331’ 7¼” in English.

Ed Butcher  
Sept 2021

*A fascinating piece of research from Ed which has been raised a few years ago.  
Any questions or comments about this please get in touch - Editor.*

## The Mighty Tardebigge Flight Charity Fundraiser!

**Home Edventures (Midlands)** are a community group run by volunteers, who arrange educational events and activities, for home educated children in our region.

We have worked with Worcester Birmingham & Droitwich Canals Society for many years, running educational trips, with our families joining the society and becoming volunteers themselves. Because of these close links, this month our children from age 7, took narrowboat 'Cecilia', down the mighty Tardebigge flight, our local and Britain's longest lock flight, to raise money for the society.

Our children worked the 30 locks learning how to handle the boat as they went. All sponsorship will be used to keep WB&DCS narrow boat 'Cecilia' well maintained and operating for the use of all community groups and charities.

The challenge set off from Tardebigge top lock around 11am on the 23rd of September, working its way down the flight over the day, arriving at the Queens Head around 3pm.

On the 24th of September they left the Queens Head around 10.30am travelling up the flight and arrived at Tardebigge top lock around for 2.30pm.

We couldn't have done this without the fantastic support of WB&DCS volunteers and Canal & River trust lock keepers who turned out for us on the day. We hope to raise a good sum to say thank you for all that WB&DCS have done for our group and so many others over the years.

It's not too late to donate. We'd appreciate your support through Just Giving using this link: [www.justgiving.com/team/TardebiggeChallenge](http://www.justgiving.com/team/TardebiggeChallenge)



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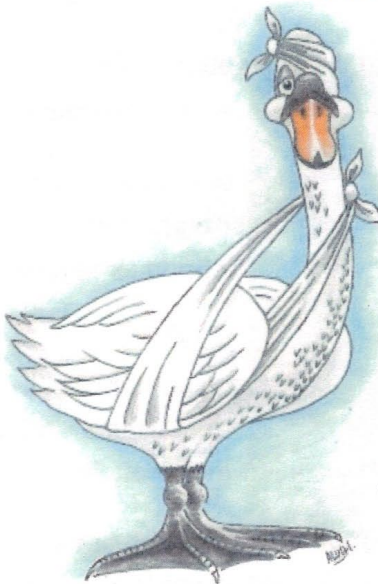
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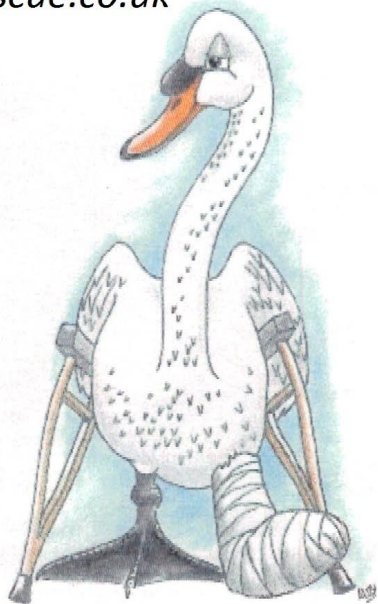


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If you are interested in canals, angling, boats, boat crewing, natural history, walking, cycling, photography, industrial archaeology, local history, canal work parties, preservation and enhancement of the environment as well as meeting up with like-minded 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 The Bridgewater Canal, Coal For The Ashby Canal, Cotswold Canal Restoration, Idle Women, The Cadbury Story, Lapal Canal Trust Restoration, Hereford & Gloucester Canal Restoration, The Montgomery Canal, The Wiltshire & Berkshire Canal and Chance's Glassworks.

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\*

*\*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](http://wbdcs.org.uk)**

**(where you can also download a membership application form)**

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