

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'



TARDEBIGGE RESERVOIR IN WINTER



The Inland
Waterways
Association

Keeping our waterways alive

Corporate Member



Worcester-Birmingham
& Droitwich
Canals Society



www.wbdcs.org.uk

Issue 560 Feb/Mar 2022

Monthly Meetings

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

No meeting is scheduled for December.

Full details of future meetings will be communicated to members via email, our website and facebook.

Please ensure that our Membership Secretary has your current details.

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.

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Issue 560 Feb/Mar 2022

CONTENTS

- Page 4: Society Contacts.
Page 5: Chair's Notes.
Page 5-7: Editorial.
Page 7: 'Cecilia' donation. Canals on You Tube.
Page 8-9: Bradley Canal Restoration Update.
Page 9: Recovery Fund.
Page 10-11: Nature Notes.
Page 12: Bridge 35 Chandlers. Shop Report.
C&RT Stoppage Notice. Teaser.
Page 13: Lapal Canal Trust News.
Page 14-15: History Corner -30 Years ago.
Page 16-18: History Corner – 20 Years ago.
Page 19: History Corner 10 Years ago.
Page 20-21: Volunteer News.
Page 22: C&RT Work with Volunteers. BCNS News.

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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

Copy date for the next issue: March 14th 2022

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)

PRESIDENT: Sandra Radmore

VICE PRESIDENT: Sir Peter Luff

CHAIR

David Wheeler

01527 833359

chairman@wbdc.org.uk

VICE CHAIR

Margaret Rowley

vicechair@wbdc.org.uk

SECRETARY

Vacant

secretary@wbdc.org.uk

TREASURER

Trevor Hyde

01527 880158 or 07770 971146

treasurer@wbdc.org.uk

Committee

Denis Pike:	<u>programme@wbdc.org.uk</u>	07870 939121
John Hemingway:	<u>58@wbdc.org.uk</u>	0121 445 2223
Lynne Laniosh:	<u>shop@wbdc.org.uk</u>	07947 712794
Malcolm Bates:		0121 421 1368
Tony Brannon	<u>contact@wbdc.org.uk</u>	07763 468893
Bill Lambert	<u>williamlambert729@yahoo.com</u>	07815 986012
Wendy Albutt	<u>bookingcecilia@yahoo.com</u>	07769 551462
Neil Franklin	<u>neilwbdcsvolunteer@gmail.com</u>	07857 294196

The '58' Team

Editor:	John Hemingway	<u>58@wbdc.org.uk</u>	0121 445 2223
Design:	Tony Brannon	<u>fiftyeight@talktalk.net</u>	07763 468893
Advertising:	Joe Morley	<u>morleyj827@gmail.com</u>	07870 303413

Contacts

Membership Secretary:	Joe Morley	<u>membership@wbdc.org.uk</u>	01299 828077
Programme Secretary:	Denis Pike	<u>programme@wbdc.org.uk</u>	07870 939121
Volunteer Co-ordinator:	Neil Franklin	<u>volunteers@wbdc.org.uk</u>	07857 294196
Cecilia Co-ordinator:	David Wheeler	<u>cecilia@wbdc.org.uk</u>	01527 833359
Cecilia Bookings:	Wendy Albutt	<u>bookingcecilia@yahoo.com</u>	
Website:	Brett Laniosh	<u>webmaster@wbdc.org.uk</u>	01527 880118
Media, Print & Website:	Tony Brannon	<u>contact@wbdc.org.uk</u>	07763 468893
Shop Co-ordinator:	Lynne Laniosh	<u>shop@wbdc.org.uk</u>	07947 712794
Historian:	Ian Hunter	<u>historian@wbdc.org.uk</u>	



Chair's Notes

Happy New Year everyone, welcome to the first '58' of 2022.

Lets hope that the new year turns out to be a better year than the last two we have suffered. Can I remind you that on Sunday 20th March 2022 will be our first annual dinner for 2 years at Bromsgrove Golf Centre; I would like to make it one to remember so can you please confirm with Gill or myself. Prices will be similar to previous years at £17 adult £8.50 children. We will be presenting the George Bate Trophy so make sure that you get your vote in.

Planning is now under way for the St. Richards Canal Festival to be held in Vines Park, Droitwich from 5pm Friday 29th April till 5pm Monday 2nd May. We will need as much help as we can get to set up and take down so if you can spare a few hours on any of the days from Tuesday 25th April till Tuesday 3rd May inclusive please let Neil Franklin know so that he can put a plan together. If anyone can sell any Duck Race tickets then please let me know.

Stay safe

David Wheeler



Editor's Notes

Hello Readers

Here it is your eagerly awaited copy of '58' - the first edition of the new year. A new year that so far has been very cold to say the least, not that this appears to inhibit any canal users, far from it as the towpaths still appear very busy with walkers, anglers and the like. There continues to be a few boat movements but not seen or heard of any paddle boarders which may be stretching things a little too far!

In the last editorial, mention was made of the Alvechurch orchard moorings being vacated but for reasons unknown at the time. However, '58' has since been informed that there has been an issue between Canal & River Trust and the owner of the said orchard. While this is technically hearsay, we understand that the fee landowners normally pay C&RT for the use of their water where moorings are concerned, was the point in question. Paying for the water space is fair enough as C&RT are a charity and need to maintain their income streams (pun not intended). However, and again we must stress this is hearsay, '58' has been informed that C&RT demanded from the land owner fees up front for the next 10 years amounting to around £34,000! The land owner could not, or would not pay this amount up front and so the moorings are no more after 50 plus years in situ.

This really does appear to be at complete odds with sound business practice or even common sense. The land owner provides and charges for moorings and C&RT are paid for the water space. Seems that a 'win - win' situation has been turned into a 'lose - lose' for reasons which appear to be unfathomable – unless some readers out there can inform '58' of something different which we will be pleased to consider. Over to you readers please!

Changing the subject a little, '58' was informed of a pollution incident involving a diesel spillage between Scarfield Dingle Aqueduct and Shortwood on the Worcester & Birmingham Canal. This may have come from a boat which sank near Bridge 59 and was then refloated but this remains unconfirmed. C&RT have a pollution hotline which was informed with all details passed over and a confirmation of a call back to inform of what was to be done to address this incident. It has to be stated that no such call has been returned and several days afterwards it appears as though nothing has been done to address the pollution. The area by the way was populated by many water fowl which now appear to have gone elsewhere very



fortunately. It remains to be seen what will be done about this as the longer it is left the further it will spread. Once again if anyone out there, particularly from C&RT, can inform us what is/isn't going to happen we will be pleased to hear from them.

Notwithstanding the above, a somewhat different occurrence has come to light near Bridges 60 and 64 on the W&B Canal. An otter has been spotted and apparently pictures of it have appeared on local social media. Along that stretch there are a number of fresh water mussel beds which look as though they have been used as a source of food for the welcomed visitor. Empty shells have been seen along the towpath (*also see photo in Mary's 'Nature Notes' on page 10*).



While noting that evidence of the presence of otters in the canals has been reported in Birmingham, '58' believes that they have not been seen around Alvechurch before - unless someone out there knows differently? Let's hope that the pollution described above does not interfere with this more pleasant news that '58' would much rather report on.

Coming up in the next few months will be the society lunch at the Bromsgrove Golfing Centre on March 20th – see Chair's notes on page 5. A few weeks after that will be the long awaited St. Richard's Canal Festival in Vines Park, Droitwich between the 29th April and 2nd May. An event which like so many others, has been adversely affected by the covid restrictions. This year's event will be marking the 250th birthday of the opening of the Droitwich Barge Canal which should actually have been last year. It should also have coincided with the 10th anniversary of the reopening of both the Droitwich Barge Canal and Droitwich Junction Canal. At the moment, your society and others are busy planning the event which should be a superb occasion always very

well supported by the general public as well as the usual canalaholics! Please put both these dates in your diaries.

Massive thank yous to all of this edition's contributors but we know there are more of you lurking out there just dying to send something in to your favourite magazine as per your new year resolutions! So please don't be shy, your thoughts, views and experiences are always welcome. Hope to see as many of you as possible for our next 'Zoom' members and friends meeting but in the meantime enjoy the read.

John Hemingway

'Cecilia' Donation

Many society members and friends have, in the past year or two, been extremely generous in supporting the society. So many of the society's income streams have been cut during the pandemic and so the additional fund raising such as lock challenges, sponsored walks and general donations have clearly been very welcome, particularly in helping out with further work required on n/b 'Cecilia.'

A rather separate donation has, however, arrived into the society's account from a colleague of the editor. The donor, Ava Verrier, whose middle name just happens to be Cecilia, has asked that her donation be made in the name of her grand - daughter who was very sadly still born some years ago.

'58' is therefore very humbled to acknowledge a donation in memory of Ava-Quinn Verrier- Griffiths who would have been 6 years old on January 19th this year. The society is very grateful to receive this dedicated donation.

Canals on You Tube

If readers are interested in canals you'll probably know there is a surfeit of canal videos on the You Tube Channel, however I would like to bring to your attention some recent videos you may like to watch.

Firstly in the Canal Hunter Series by Andy Tidy, there have been three videos recently released on the Dudley No 2 Canal known to us as the Lapal Canal. They are Hawne to Lapal Tunnel, the Lapal Tunnel and California to Selly Oak. The films are a mixture of still photographs and video. They are particularly interesting if you have walked the line of the canal. The Lapal Tunnel has pictures of how it was before it was closed off and the roof falls that finished it. It is amazing to see how California looked around 1900. If you don't know it's the area of Woodgate Valley in front of the Asda store. Can you believe there were once three Brickworks there? In the future the Lapal Canal Trust would like to see a Marina on the grassed area opposite the store.

For further information visit the Lapal Canal Trust website.

A canal restoration that is further advanced than the Lapal is the Stroud Water Canal that once linked the Thames to the Severn via Stroud. This is covered in a series of videos in the West Country Wanderings stable. I bring this to your attention because over Christmas the Ocean Railway Bridge near Saul Junction, which crossed the canal over a narrow channel, was replaced with a wide canal bridge and trains were running over it again before the New Year. This major civil engineering operation is covered in the videos. The Cotswold Canal is particularly relevant to the Lapal Trust as it has in the past decade managed to carry out a great deal of major restoration work with money from the National Lottery Historical Fund and Department of Transport Community Fund. This in particular has enabled them to take the waterway through a large traffic Island on the A38 and will soon enable them to pass under the M5! Let's hope they have a bigger channel than what the Droitwich Junction Canal has at its meeting with the M5.

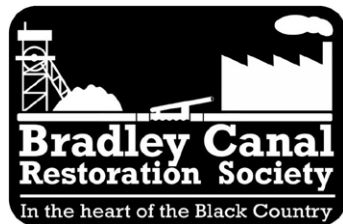
Just released by West Country Wanderings is a video on the Tardebigge Flight! A bit of a stretch I know from the West Country but a pleasant little video just the same.

Pleasant viewing, Neil Franklin.

Bradley Canal Restoration Update

Denis Pike writes...

This article is being given from a personal point of view rather than a factual up-to-date briefing.



Some canal restorations have clearly defined reasons for existing. Like the Droitwich Canals restoration was always to connect Droitwich to the Severn and create the mid Worcestershire Cruising Ring. The Cotswold Canals will link the Severn and the Thames. Bradley though is not so straightforward and will need a lot of promotion for major investment.

Over twenty years ago I was employed by a landscaping company that would carry out various projects for local authorities. One work provider happened to be British Waterways. They needed sub-contractors to carry out various jobs that were over and above the scope of BW direct labour. There was a lot of funding back then from local councils, and charitable money too for towpath upgrades etc. The Black Country canals particularly were an area we were contracted to carry out various tasks. This suited me down to the ground because I was developing an increasing interest. I could work on the Droitwich Canals at the weekend and then Black Country canals in the week in order to earn a crust.

Whenever possible I would stop the work truck, take a peek over the canal bridge and try to work out which canal this was and where it went to etc.

One day, I passed over another bridge and stopped the truck. I happened to be on the Gospel Oak Road (between Bilston and Wednesbury). Strangely enough I could see what I knew was a derelict canal. A brick structure in the distance was obviously an abandoned lock. On the opposite side of the road though there was nothing. The line was filled in and now public green open space. A great sin had been committed I thought.

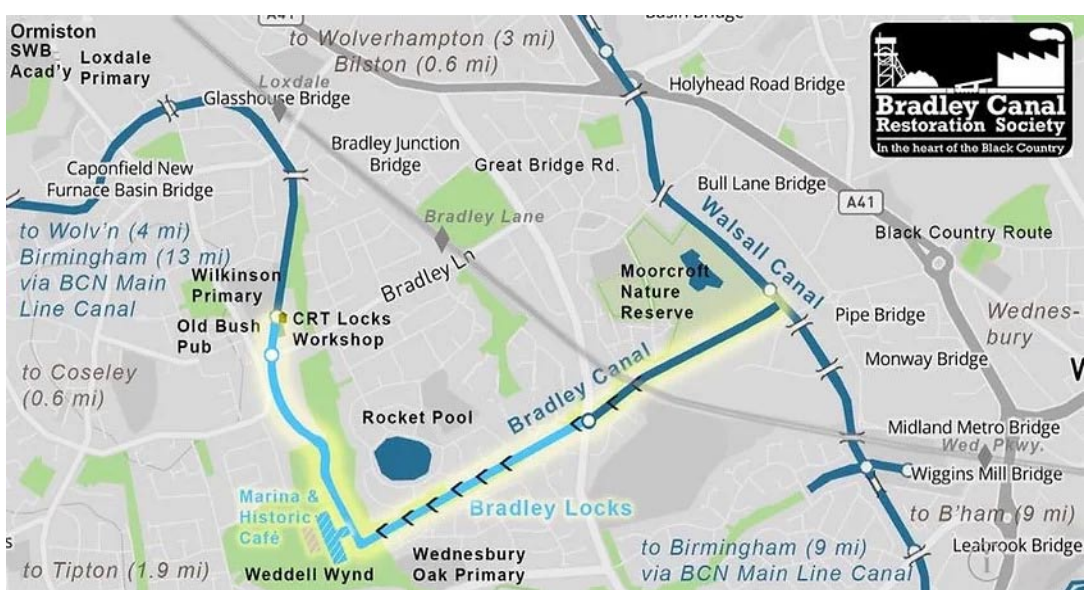
A few years later I began to work directly for Waterways. Bankstaff we were called. I actually got paid for working directly on the canal. A dream had come true for me.

One of my occasional tasks was to drive the seven and a half tonne HIAB lorry to collect a top-end lock gate from a place called Bradley workshops. (Bottom end gates needed a far bigger lorry.) Bradley is just south of Bilston and it is now one of only two workshops in the whole country that construct lock gates. I found that the workshops were actually sited on the canal and gates could actually be loaded aboard a boat for delivery and installation. They were too distant for W&B locks though. Bradley is also the site of 3 pumps that lift water from old mine workings into the canal in times of shortage and really dry weather. They are only used when Chasewater is running empty as electricity for pumping is jolly expensive.

The canal now ends at the workshops but I found out later that the dead arm would have connected to the abandoned lock(s) that I mentioned earlier. From the third lock in the flight it is a simple straight flat stretch down to the Walsall canal.

About three years ago I had heard that moves were afoot to restore the whole section of the Bradley joining the two ends again and restoring navigation. Covid has obviously had a negative impact but over the last winter work has proceeded. Work parties are taking place every fortnight throughout the winter. Bradley Canal Restoration Society, together with other elements of BCNS, have cleared many overhanging branches from the sides of the Moorcroft Junction end. This remains in water though it is too shallow for anything other than canoes.

Altogether though, a satisfying start towards a restoration that I have waited over twenty years for. I look forward to more drastic improvements before too long.



Recovery Fund

Green Challenge Recovery Fund Project

The Canal and River Trust has been awarded £1.7m by the Heritage Lottery's Green Challenge Recovery Fund for waterways, wildlife and a well-being project.

The project will be in place until April 2023 and includes a number of activities in the West Midlands Region including the following:

- Urban Green Infrastructure Sites – Birmingham (city centre); Perry Barr (locks to Ocker Hill); Smethwick (Galton Valley); Walsall (city centre and locks); Wolverhampton (21 lock flight); Coventry (basin to Hawkesbury Junction); Leamington Spa and Worcester.
- Improvement to Sites of Special Scientific Interest – Belvide Reservoir, Staffordshire (shoveler duck, birds); Bittell Reservoirs (grasshopper warbler, little ringed plover, waterfowl, aquatic plants, invertebrates); Brewin's Cutting, on the Dudley No. 2 Canal (geology); Cannock Extension Canal (aquatic plants); Chasewater Heaths, Staffordshire (birds, heath land); Fens Pool, Brierley Hill (Great Crested Newts and amphibians); Shrewley Canal Cutting, Warwickshire (geology).
- Improvement of waterway habitat – The Worcester & Birmingham and parts of the Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canals are priority for developing wildlife corridors. Hedge and grassland management are being reviewed with a view to improve biodiversity along with dredging and community orchard planting.

The aim is that the Worcester & Birmingham Canal projects will connect people to nature, including 100 community champions involved in citizen science projects. Five community orchards (500 trees) are planned between Worcester and Wolverhampton, forming a linear orchard with some fruit trees being planted in canalside hedgerows. About 300 orchard trees are due to be planted in a field near Tibberton, once used for grazing by horses which towed the historic narrowboats and is now owned by C&RT. Planting is due to begin in February.

Margaret Rowley



‘Nature Notes’ Mary Green

Since I wrote last, a swan family has visited a lot here – one adult and two grown-up cygnets, still with brown-and-white plumage. I thought it was the same family as before with one adult missing. Then I saw the family of two-plus-two followed by these three in the same day – so we have two families! A kingfisher has re-appeared along this stretch, probably a female I’m told by those who know. I hope she’s nesting. The legend is that female kingfishers built their nests on water at the winter solstice, and that around this time there was a calm spell of weather called the “halcyon days” after the old name for the kingfisher. We did have a halcyon spell in mid-December.

Withybed Green seems to have become Canada goose headquarters this winter. They graze fields during the day, forage the water’s edge, then the skeins fly home at dusk to settle around the moorings.

There’s been other interesting species here too. A neighbour showed me a lot of shells where there is a thick patch of water-growing sedge and iris. This patch has been very busy with Canada geese, swans and ducks. The shells are freshwater mussels, either the kind called duck mussels or swan mussels. They are quite common (unlike the freshwater pearl mussel which only lives in proper fresh streams in more remote places). The shells are empty, so they have obviously been foraged by other wildlife.

They were made visible because the C&RT contractors had done the full winter cut of growing plants along the canal extremely early this year. They used to do it in January,



then it was December, and this last year in mid-November. They always do a winter cut so that woody plants don't establish and grow into the canal banks. Of course, this could be done by hand, taking out just the unwanted woody plants, and letting the rest die down into its roots naturally. That's what I do in my wild garden. But it's too labour intensive for them to manage along the whole canal.

The winter cut doesn't harm the plants too much, though it does reduce nutrients going back into the soil and reduce carbon capture. It also has an impact on some insect larvae and other small creatures that live among the vegetation.

All the hawthorn and holly trees packed with berries along the canal were stripped by mid-December. I didn't see the redwing flocks come but I guess they joined the blackbirds and thrushes briefly as usual. I did see a grey squirrel working its way across a hawthorn bush gobbling the berries, in the absence of acorns and nuts this year. People have told me jays have come to their feeders for the first time. It's a hungry new year for some birds and mammals.

In the mild spell around new year the vegetation began to come back quite well, with green leaves of cow parsley and goosegrass and even some flowering white deadnettles where the cut has missed. There will soon be coltsfoot and celandines in February. The songbirds are getting going too. Great tits call from Christmas on, with their two-note song, but I also heard blackbirds and thrushes starting up in the warm new year spell. I even heard woodpeckers drumming in January, which they usually do in March! It's the greater spotted woodpecker that drums. We get the green woodpecker along the canal here too, especially in the ant-hill field near Scarfield Dingle. They have a laughing call ("yaffling") but don't drum. Spring is waking, though there's still time for cold.



- 1. ADULT SWAN & CYGNETS**
- 2. CANADA GEESE FORAGING**
- 3. FRESHWATER MUSSEL SHELLS**
- 4. THE FIRST CELANDINE**
- 5. WINTER FLOWERING NETTLE**
- 6. SQUIRREL WITH SLIM PICKINGS**

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Our friends and society members from Bridge 35 Chandlers have decided, after several years, to sell their well-respected shop at Hanbury Wharf. If any readers know of anyone interested please ask them to contact Jackie and John directly.

Shop Report

Lynne has booked a table at the Worcester Cathedral Spring Fayre on Saturday 26th February. This will be the first event in the Worcester Cathedral that we have been able to attend since the pandemic started, so if anyone is around there on that date do please look in.

<https://www.worcestercathedral.co.uk/whats-on/spring-fayre-in-the-cloister>

If anyone comes across any other potential events please let Lynne know.

Canal & River Trust Stoppage Notice

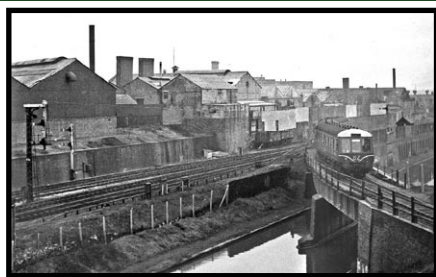
In Canal and River Trust's information for boaters, notice is given of a stoppage at lock 19 on the Astwood Flight of the Worcester & Birmingham Canal, which is scheduled to continue until 18th March. The stoppage is required to carry out gate replacements, brickwork and ladder improvements.

However, once again as has been reported in '58' on previous occasions, C&RT has got the nearest winding hole information incorrect. The downstream winding hole certainly is just above lock 18 by the lock keepers cottage, however, the nearest upstream one is not Tardebigge. It is in fact just above lock 23 where the Black Prince Hire Boats are moored. Unfortunately the map C&RT has used does not, for some reason, feature this so hope boaters don't end up navigating another 35 locks upstream.

However, our message must be getting through now as a 'map correction reporting tool' has now appeared and yes '58' will be inputting to it.

This Month's Teaser

Do readers recognise where
this past scene is?
Answer in next issue.



Lapal Canal Trust News

Our friends from the Lapal Canal Trust have sent '58' the following contribution for which we are grateful.

Does any reader recognise the older image at the end of this section? Answer in next '58'



Approval to start work on the Winding Hole is agreed, waiting now for our appointed contractor, Land and Water, to confirm a start date. The term winding hole does not do it justice, its much larger and we hope a destination for Birmingham trip boats, 55 minutes from Gas Street.

Our planning application for a less expensive variant of the canal is held pending a structural engineer's report on the pile of soil to be left on site, canal width is reduced from 9m to 6m. After the pandemic discussions have restarted with the Battery Park retail units on moving the fence and the two pinch points, all is agreed. Now waiting on lawyers to draw up the agreements.

Our application to the Community Lottery Fund for boat trips for the disabled, elderly and schools

has been submitted. The application is for a £10,000 a pilot programme. If successful we hope 'Cecilia' will be available to participate. A steering group including Active Wellbeing Society, Age UK, Sense, and Lapal Trust members including WB&DCS, will be set up. A SENSE trip was arranged in December, January trip was postponed with our organiser, Jon Fearn catching Covid.



We have applied for a WRG summer camp to construct a disabled turnover path. We are being considered for a one week camp in August. Big thanks to WRG for helping to design the path. Our volunteers were busy Litter Picking near Weoley Castle.

Please follow us on:

www.facebook.com/lapalcanaltrust

30 years ago the following two articles appeared in '58'.

FATHER CHRISTMAS AT TARDEBIGGE

Father Christmas may have been a little late calling on you this year - if so it may have been because he spent two whole weekends in Tardebigge Tunnel! By 22nd December more than 1,300 visitors, young and not-so-young, had cruised silently into the secret grotto where the jovial Old Gentleman waited to greet them, dispensing good cheer and presents in full measure.

This was the third year of the Tardebigge Christmas event, but so popular has it proved to be that Waterway Manager Glyn Phillips decided to extend it this year to cover the two weekends before Christmas.

Nick Fazey, of the Dudley Canals Trust, told '58': "The two boats the Trust has made available are almost fully booked for both weekends, and our visitors are having a great time despite the ice on the canal!"

Comments in the visitors book confirmed this. "MAGICAL! HAPPY CHRISTMAS!" - "EXCELLENT - WILL COME AGAIN NEXT YEAR" - "FATHER CHRISTMAS PROMISED ME A WIN ON THE POOLS!"

Nick was keen to thank Glyn and other stalwart BW men for their help and support, and, of course, his own team of boat steerers, mince pie and punch servers and balloon blower-uppers! (Sarah Jones, Margaret Jones, Dawn Fazey, Chas, Mike and Harry, Mick Hansford, Denis Parker and Dave James all deserve special thanks).

Ann Morley and her WBCS Shop, along with other crafts and gifts stalls, did good trade - Ann is now able to recite the scripts of six "Rosie & Jim" episodes by heart....

JFM

The Santa boat trip into Tardebigge Tunnel proved to be extremely popular at the time with many people being unable to book a place. It ceased some years later for some health and safety reasons. Perhaps if the H & S issues could be addressed it could well prove to be another good income stream for C&RT. The cabling which was used for the actual Santa boat is still evident inside the tunnel. The article appears to have been written by the then editor of '58', a certain person by the name of Joe Morley, who still serves today as society membership secretary.

JACK'S JANUARY WORK PARTY

10.30am Sunday 12th January 1992

Tardebigge Old Wharf

A Work Party will be held on Sunday 12th January to complete work undertaken last November.

At that time a section of towpath between Tardebigge Old Wharf and Shortwood Tunnel was cleared and made passable. In the process a quantity of vegetation and tree prunings was piled against the fences of adjoining farmland. This will now have dried out and be ready for burning. We have permission to do this on the farmers' land, so that is our task: **COLLECT & BURN!** What could be nicer on a cold winter day? What with the fire and the glow of inner righteousness you will be as warm as toast!

Assemble at the Dartline base at 10.30 with gloves, wellies and any tool you think might help. The more the merrier! Work off the Christmas excesses and enjoy yourself in the process! See you there.

Jack Simson

The work party described by the then organiser Jack Simson, did a superb job on that section of the towpath which was largely impassable in those days. No volunteer co-ordinators then! There is a commemorative bench to Jack and Irene Simson just off the towpath opposite the cottage at Lower Bittell. They used to moor their boat, 'Impeller', on the orchard at Alvechurch.

History Corner - 20 Years Ago

20 years ago these appeared in '58'.

This edition of '58' had an insert which commemorated the life of one of the society's stalwarts at the time, Ernest Phillips. A number of other past and present society members are mentioned here which just goes to show the importance of maintaining involvement in the society.

Ernest Phillips 1922-2001

Born in 1922 in Ledbury, Ernest Phillips came to Birmingham to take up an apprenticeship at the Austin Motor Works. He was called up into the Army during the Second World War and served in Palestine. After marrying Hazel in 1942 he settled in Rubery. While working at the then British Leyland he met Joe Taylor (Editor "58" 1974-84, and Lester Burford (WBCS Chairman 1990/92). Before he was bitten by the boating bug Ernest was heavily involved in amateur dramatics and even now is fondly remembered for this by many local people. In March 1975 after building a small cruiser in his back garden, Ernest joined the WBCS. He subsequently gave the boat which he christened "The Ark", to two of the younger members of the society who put an outboard on the back and had many happy days on the canal system. Ernest served on the committee and was our Chairman in 1979 /81 and again in 1988/90. His first term as Chairman was a particularly difficult time for the Worcester Birmingham when lack of maintenance resulted in tunnel closures, water shortages and many restrictions, Washill tunnel was closed for almost the whole of Ernest's term of office. Nevertheless there was much fun to be had and we can now finally "out" him as the perpetrator of the infamous "Bridgman" cartoons which first appeared in the "58" in the late 70's and continued into the 90's. There were many Society events in those days and Ernest was to the fore, he showed his dramatic talents at a Society "Tramps Supper" when he was voted "the most disreputable looking person present. Ernest crewed for the Wones family on "Barkley" and for Rene Dowler on "Lapal" At that time the two boats often cruised in convoy and many an hilarious evening was spent together, with Ernest and Jack reminiscing about their days as "virgin soldiers". When Lester & Mary Burford collected their new boat from Peter Nicholls, Ernest & Hazel helped to bring it home to Hanbury. Ernest became very attached to "Bluebell" and after Lester's death he was a great support to Mary in looking after the boat at Stoke Prior until it was sold to our own Brett Laniosh and family. In the 80's Ernest & Hazel joined other Society members for 3 very happy holidays on the French canals. Also in the 80's Ernest was involved with others in giving slide presentations to interested groups in order to promote our Society and waterways generally. Ernest was a man of many interests and spent many hours helping his son Neil to restore an Aston Martin, some of you will remember him giving a talk to the Society about it. He continued to keep an eye on WBCS procedures and made sure that the constitution was upheld at the AGM. To those of us who were fortunate enough to call Ernest our friend he really was a great guy, witty, intelligent and fun to be with, though he didn't suffer fools gladly. He certainly enriched the early days of the Society and we shall miss him. We send our condolences to Hazel and to his children and grandchildren.

CHAIRLADY'S CHAT

A happy new year to all. Hopefully with a towpath we can use and no F & M around. Dredging. Summer cruising. Dredging. Towpaths cut for safe mooring. Dredging. (I think I mentioned that before).

We are trying a change in the arrangements for the annual dinner this year. We are holding it On Sunday lunch time at Tyler's Lock on the 21st of March. We could stroll down to the lake afterwards, or just have a natter and noggin if the weather is bad. We can still be home before dark. Tickets will be on sale next club night, see Sandra. I am not sure of the price at the moment but we will know by then.

Bookings are coming in for the coach trip to the Peak Forest canal (Bugsworth basin and Whaley Bridge) so put your name down with a deposit soon if you don't want to be disappointed.

British Waterways are due to share an evening with us The first week in January so please have your questions ready as some issues are becoming serious. One issue involves the saplings that are destroying the stone edges. We saw one B.W. man removing these on his own on the Macclesfield canal, by cutting them to about a foot from the ground. Tying the stumps to the boat and driving off, with the stump being wrenched from the ground. Surprisingly little damage was done to the bank. He had done quite a few miles like this in a few weeks of spare time from other work. So much better than cut and spray with goodness knows what chemical. And then of course I must mention Dredging, lots and lots of it. If something is not done soon

Sustrans will be riding on the canal and boats will be in the Museums. If this happens, fishermen may even join forces with bcaters to protest. Now there's a thought.

I have just received the draft of a plan for Crown Meadow. I am not sure that we will be able to back the scheme fully as there is some sort of artistic monument at the canal entrance to the Moorings. Also an artistic feature of some sort made out of (wait for it) Dredgings. A B----by big mud pie perhaps, that will probably be out of keeping with the natural style of the canal. Can't people enjoy nature as it is without leaving a monument to show that they were involved in spoiling it. There is also some confusion with the position of locked gates and motor cycle barriers. It is difficult to see how secure the sight will be. The Society is basically for the Crown Meadow scheme, especially as there is such a shortage of moorings on the W&B canal. I cannot help wondering however, why this area now surrounded by houses, is preferable to the unobtrusive, purpose built, and far more suitable sight at Hopwood.

Brenda

TREE PLANTING

An area near the lock at Perdiswell has been chosen for tree planting by the Worcester City Council. Any of our members who can manage to help, please let me know, as we have provisionally offered a work party for the morning of the 19th January 2002, from 10 am till 12 am. They are short of adults as this was a children's Millennium project, continued due to its popularity. Spades will be supplied but if you can bring one there is then no rush to return it by twelve.

So Perdiswell (Bulford top lock) on the 19th at 10 am.

Lets get in training for a few more bridges.

The 'Chairlady's Chat was provided by the then society chair, the late great Brenda Morris. At Hanbury Wharf Junction picnic area there is a society erected milestone which commemorates Brenda's life, her large contribution towards the society and waterways generally.

The F&M Brenda referred to was the awful foot and mouth disease which had been a very real problem for waterway users and the country as a whole. Brenda alludes to a draft plan for Crown Meadow which is the parcel of land caused by the re-routing of the W&B at Alvechurch, thus creating what we now know as the 'dead arm'. A copy of this plan is still available and it proposed to develop the area into boat moorings. However, the plan did not materialise, partly because there was no access to utilities, which has now left us with an untouched valued nature reserve which supports much wild life.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

The Society warmly invites visitors to all of our meetings. Unless other details are given, all meetings take place on the first Tuesday of each month (except, usually, for July and August) at the 'Boat and Railway', Stoke Works, Bromsgrove, with a 7-30 for 8 p.m. start. Please ring our secretary for further details.

Speakers and Events for 2002

8th January 02 – Jonathan Green – BW update

5th February 02 – Barry Watson – The agony and ecstasy of a hotel boater

For further details please ring 01527 402360
or consult the web site www.wbcs.org.uk

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

March 24th Annual Dinner

May 19th Coach Trip to Peak Forest Canal

Tickets £22 Includes Sunday Lunch and Boat trip

June 1st to 4th DCT Jubilee Summer event

Clean up of Dudley No. 2 Canal – 23/24 March 2002

The Lopal Canal Trust is organising a 'Clean Up' of the route of the Dudley No. 2 Canal between Selly Oak Park and the site of the Eastern Portal of the Lopal Tunnel near Weoley Castle. This is planned to be a high-profile mass clearance which it is hoped will generate interest from local residents and the media and generally raise the profile of the restoration project. The weekend will be supported by the Waterways Recovery Group and the Trust is seeking the support of other local canal societies.

The Committee of the Worcester Birmingham Canal Society are particularly committed to supporting the restoration of the two canals which join the Worcester and Birmingham and therefore hope that Members will join in supporting this event on Saturday 23 March. The Sunday is of course the date of our 'Annual Dinner' but we hope that you will all build up a healthy appetite by joining in the scrub bashing the day before!

More details next month but in the meantime put Saturday 23 March in your diaries.

Ian Hunter Secretary

Also in this edition is another reference to the Dudley No. 2 (Lopal Canal) restoration as well as the society dinner and even trips out – something the society may wish to consider resurrecting in the future. Ian Hunter, who was secretary of the then WBCS, currently responds on behalf of the society, to any planning applications affecting our canals. He is also the society historian.

History Corner - 10 Years Ago

From Dr Peter Best, Chair, Lapal Canal Trust

HARBORNE WHARF REVEALED!

Using little more than their hand-held garden tools, a 20-strong team of men swung into action along the former Harborne Wharf in Selly Oak on 3rd December. Fuelled by their consumption of sausage and bacon butties expertly prepared and served by a team of Lapal Ladies, they soon recovered the "lost" towpath and wharf wall from beneath its five-year carpet of grasses and brambles. The thicker scrub did not defeat them either as they soon despatched that with the aid of not one but four simultaneous bonfires. The weather was very kind with sufficient breeze to disperse the smoke safely.

The purpose of this joint initiative was to expose the entire section to full inter-visibility again so that it reveal the compelling context for getting it back into water and connected to the W & B via, of course, the proposed Battery Park development. After all, there is nowhere else in the West Midlands where a short length of tree-lined canal is bounded at one end by the oldest bridge and at the other by the newest bridge on the entire BCN!

My grateful thanks go to all participants including friends from the BCNS, the Lapal CT, Coombeswood CT, the WB&DCS, and some of the 113th Ariel Scouts who had allowed us to use their splendid HQ for refreshment breaks. There is now a plan for some further work on Saturday 28th January 2012.

Peter Best



Before > > > > > > > > > and After!

DROITWICH MARINA BREAKTHROUGH

(From the official Droitwich Spa website www.droitwichspa.com)

Approximately 10 million gallons of water from the Tardebigge reservoir filled the basin at the new 238 berth Droitwich Spa Marina on 23rd December and it is well on course for a launch in the Spring of 2012. There is a planned open day from 10am to 3pm on January 21, 2012 before of the site's completion in February.

The facility, based near the town's rugby club in Hanbury Road, will be an integral part of Droitwich Spa benefitting from the £12 million restoration work unveiled in July. It will help accommodate the predicted increase in the number of boating visitors attracted to the town. The Marina has received support and interest from the community and narrowboat owners up and down the country.

The landscaping will include the extensive use of aquatic plants at the waters edge to further encourage wildlife to return. The site will then be finished with services to each jetty, including water and electricity, shower and bathroom facilities, office, fuel/pump out service areas and associated footpaths.

The completion of the marina creates a new chapter in the history of Droitwich Canal, originally the 'Droitwich Barge' canal was built by James Brindley and opened in 1771. It served the Droitwich salt industry, linking the town to the river Severn and the world beyond. The Droitwich Junction canal was built by R Boddington and opened in 1854 and was one of the last canals to be completed. Both canals declined due to competition from the railways and were officially abandoned in 1939. Then in 1973, Droitwich Canals Trust and a team of volunteers set about getting this canal restored.

10 years ago these appeared in '58'

The article written by Dr. Peter Best, the current Lapal Canal Trust President, shows once again how the partnership between the two canal groups continued to flourish as today. The society had by this time become known as WB&DCS following the closing of the Droitwich Canals Trust due to the re-opening of the two canals.

The second article alludes to the newly opened Droitwich Spa Marina just below the Hanbury 3 locks. This is now well established and well worth a visit.

This particular edition of '58' sadly, had a number of obituaries which were either printed individually, or formed part of specific articles submitted by members. Robin Walden who lived on his boat 'Greylag' in Alvechurch Marina; Horace Foster known as 'H' from Wolverhampton Boat Club; Jon Axe a former editor of '58' and DCT volunteer; Mr. and Mrs. Osborne from Shenley Fields who passed away within 9 days of each other; Jack Simson who was a past society Chair and work part organiser as mentioned earlier in this history corner.

In researching past editions of '58', it does appear that many more members in those days, wrote into the editor far more than appears to be the case currently. So if any readers wish us to recount any other past society events, however long ago, please do let us know in the usual way and we'll be pleased to include.

Volunteer News

Neil Frankin writes...

Hello readers, I trust you all had a good Christmas and didn't eat too much or drink yourself too silly. May I wish everyone a Happy New Year for 2022. Let's hope it's a good one - it can't be any worse than the last two!

One of the problems with the Covid Pandemic is that it has wiped out the last two years and 2019 seems lost in the dim and distant past. This seemed to be the case with the St. Richard's Festival (remember that?) Those warm sunny sun kissed days sitting on the grass in Vines Park, a nice pint in your hand and the sweet echo of the Rock Choir wafting through the marquee and John Hemingway offering to buy you another one. Well perhaps that's a bit far-fetched but I am sure you have vivid memories of the premier festival in Worcestershire. Well dear Volunteers, have no fear, it's back this year bigger and better than ever before. Yes a tremendous Bank Holiday awaits us and all we need is every volunteer to be available from Tuesday 26th of April to Tuesday 3rd May inclusive. Volunteers please keep this time free in your diary as we will be asking for your help during this time. We can also report that the C&RT have not forgotten us and are assisting with the supply of the fencing and bins, a big thank you to Gemma and Nick for their help.

Another thing that may have slipped from your memory is the 'Wanderer' Work Boat. She has also been out of action during the pandemic. However C&RT have organised a team of volunteers to keep her ship shape and she is ready for action. We, along with the Droitwich Pamela May Trust and the Worcester Volunteer Community, are meeting with C&RT to get our Community boat back out on the water asap. Unfortunately due to our other commitments we are unlikely to get our hands on her before next autumn.

Do you remember Christmas? Well I can report that we had a very successful Christmas meeting in the Weighbridge, As well as a productive meeting we also had games organised by yours truly followed by a buffet. We also managed to raise £54 for the Primrose Hospice.

'Cecilia': We have kept working on the old girl and I can report that the three most leaky windows have been taken out, had their surrounds cleaned and returned being embedded in Butyl Tape. Their inside frames have also been replaced. Unfortunately in carrying out these works we found that a work top was so badly water damaged we will have to replace it.

There is still a long way to go and we encourage anyone who is available and reasonably active to come down to the boat and give us a hand. You don't have to be skilled to work on 'Cecilia' even I can do things.

The upshot of all this is that we cannot confirm a start date to the 2022 season. We are however reasonably confident that we will be able to be on the water, taking the kids out, from the beginning of April. Watch this space!

Bill's Work Parties: Apart from Bill throwing himself to the floor and twisting his ankle we don't have a lot to report. We have cut down the bushes etc. and cleared the climber from the wall before it pulls the wall down. C&RT have fenced off the Lime Kilns. We are hoping to meet them to discuss the future of our adoptions.

History Open Days: We intend to hold the History Open Days again this year where the theme is going to be 'Astounding Inventions!'

Boat Pull: not satisfied with sailing serenely down the cut on 'Cecilia' waving to the walkers and anglers, some of our volunteers have taken it into their heads to PULL 'Cecilia' along the canal between Alvechurch and Hopwood. Not only that they intend to ask you dear readers, to sponsor them!

None of this is certain yet so again watch this space.

What's the Catch?

Just through that door,
the one you've passed
every day for as long
as you can remember,
is a whole world, hidden.

Just through that door
shines a spectacular place,
people-run and practical,
through that door is history,
something ancient and new,
something we can learn from
and build together.
We'll open it for you.

We run on goodwill,
the shoulders of communities

That's all folks from your Volunteer Coordinator – for now at least!
(*Neil has excelled for this edition hasn't he readers? – Ed*)

intent on sharing passion.
because when passion is shared,
it grows stronger, more resilient
something we can be proud
to hold, as we build a heritage
of kindness and wonder.

Together, we ignite newness,
from Sheffield's drains
to Europe's trains
we set stories in motion.

It's all thanks to the people
who hold the doors open,
welcome us into a world unfurled -
clearer, brighter,
free and waiting.

SUPPORT OUR VOLUNTEERING - Bill's Work Parties

Your new chance for 2022!!

We are now into a new year, so may I wish everyone good fortune and good health for the coming year. However, I also appreciate some of our members are undergoing various medical treatments at the moment so may we wish you, in particular, all good fortune and our best wishes go to you. Good luck with everything with which you are dealing.

I hope you all had a happy Christmas as best you could with family and friends, but I suspect that covid put constraints on many best laid plans. In spite of all that I hope you will be comforted and re-assured that our Tardebigge work parties will still continue as usual. If you need the opportunity to work off of those extra mince pies, then we are the people you need.

Having already commenced in January our next dates are as follows: -

February - Sat. 12th Sun. 13th then Wed. 23rd Thur. 24th

We will start at 0930 and end around 1530.

We will continue with cutting back on the bramble thickets that have gained a foothold during the covid lockdowns. We will need hand tools such as large hand shears, secateurs, loppers or slashers, and heavy-duty rakes. Clothing will need to be the usual heavy-duty gloves, safety boots etc. I appreciate that covid remains a concern for many people. Our present work parties will be out of doors with lots of social distancing available. I will observe the same safety measures that we used last year. I will also have a bucket with face masks and sanitiser and gloves if people require them.

Please let me know if you are able to join us. Hope to see you there. . .

My thanks to you all.

Bill Lambert, Volunteer Member

Tel: 02476 726924 or Mobile: 07815 986012

Email: williamlambert729@yahoo.com

Canal & River Trust Working With Volunteers

Ian McGarr writes...

In praise of...

Two Canal and River Trust operatives who cleared out a highly invasive plant that was spreading through parts of the canal near Alvechurch.

(American) Floating Pennywort is a highly invasive water plant. On the canal it settles in wash holes as can be seen in the photographs below. Once it takes hold it quickly proliferates. It took hold in the Dead Arm recently. On the surface it was several inches thick and probably much



thicker below the surface. If left unattended it spreads quickly and would eventually close the canal, especially if we had a repeat of the total closure of the canal as in the first lockdown.

Our two trusty operatives had a small tub boat with a scoop bucket to lift out the wanted plant and dump it into the tub, which they manoeuvred with a vessel equipped with an out board motor. The problem will not go away but you can now go and see the difference their work has made.

In praise of...

The prompt action of staff/volunteers from C&RT.

A member of the public who was walking her dogs saw volunteers working on our narrowboat Cecilia. She reported that she had slipped and almost fallen when stepping onto the sleepers that separates the tow path from the car park. She asked if anything could be done to avoid an accident.

These sleepers possibly cover the line of the Sky fibre-optic cable (other Internet service providers are available) so care had to be taken. Anti-slip strips were applied (right) to the surface of the sleepers. Problem solved, accidents averted.



BCNS News

Our friends from the BCNS have kindly sent '58' some information about their forthcoming meetings. Further details on their web site.

Feb 3rd - Andy Tidy "The Churchbridge Branch - backdoor the BCN".

March 3rd - Mark Davies of Chance Heritage Trust "The past and future of the Chance Glassworks".

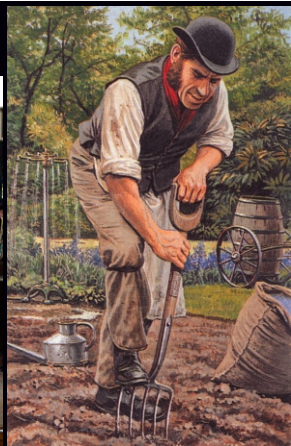
April 7th - Keith Hodgkins - 'In search of the Horsley Bridges'.

Additionally, members may be interested to know that the Railway Canal Historical Society is having a 'Zoom' talk on **15th January at 14:00**

'The Birmingham Canal Navigations, the other 60 miles - a new interpretation' (Duncan Moore)

More information can be found here: <https://bit.ly/3GfnZmS>

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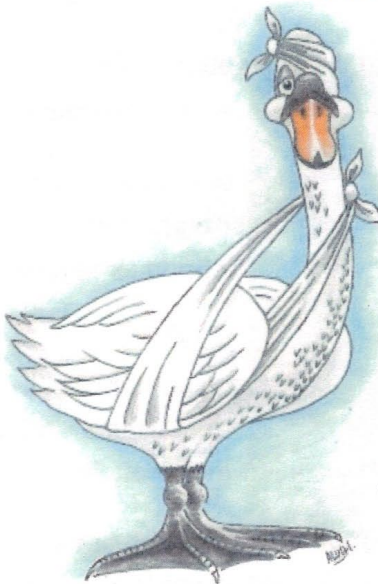
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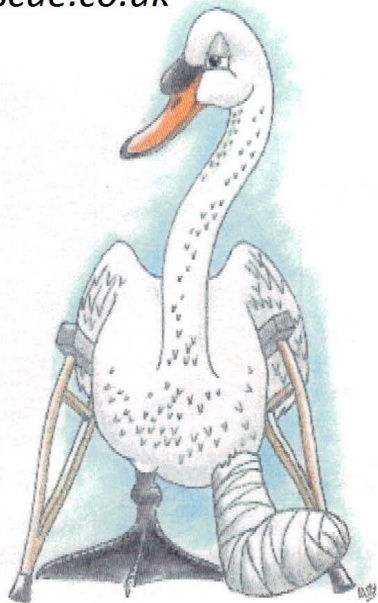


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We usually hold our regular monthly meetings at the Alvechurch Boat Centre, Scarfield Wharf, Alvechurch, B48 7SQ (just behind the award winning Weighbridge pub). Meetings are currently being held on 'Zoom' on the first Tuesday of the month at 7.45pm. 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.

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(where you can also download a membership application form)

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