

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'*



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Vines Park, Droitwich Spa

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Saturday 30th April, Sunday 1st May 10am - 11pm

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- **Entertainment from 12 midday**

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'Ska Bucks' Sunday 9pm

Many more acts to be confirmed

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- **The 'Great Droitwich Duck Race' 4.30pm Monday**



Droitwich Spa Town Council

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The Magazine of the Worcester-Birmingham & Droitwich Canals Society

Issue 561 April/May 2022

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www.facebook.com/wbdcs.org.uk

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

View videos on our [YouTube channel](#)

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

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Worcester-Birmingham & Droitwich Canals Society

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

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Chair's Notes

I would like to start off my notes by saying well done to Ed Butcher and Ian McGarr for passing the National Community Boat Association's Trainers Course. This means that the WB&DCS is now an accredited training centre and can deliver its own CCBM – Certificate in Community Boat Management. When we first took over 'Cecilia', I recommended to the then committee that we should join the NCBA and become a training centre but we did not have any enthusiasm and I ended up running 'Cecilia' on my own. The setting up of the 'Cecilia' sub-committee and encouraging volunteers to join has given us tremendous results and was probably one of the best decisions we have taken in recent years as a Society. I know it has taken nearly 20 years to accomplish but it really makes me happy to see that my original decision to take on the responsibility of 'Cecilia' is now paying off in a big way. My personal opinion is that the NCBA will get as much out of our membership as we will.

By the time you read these notes we will have held our Annual Dinner at Bromsgrove Golf Club. At the time of writing, we have 50 places booked so not a bad turnout and of course we will have presented the George Bate Trophy. We will have more reports on both of these further on in this edition.

David Wheeler



Editor's Notes

Hello Readers, in what is becoming somewhat warmer weather our canals are seemingly attracting even more users, which is good news. The towpaths are busy even where the surfaces are extremely muddy if not dangerous! More craft are now on the move as well. No news, however, from C&RT about the pollution incident reported on last time, despite twice promising to get back, and a similar situation with the orchard moorings. We await any news with 'bated breath'!

There is some news, however, about the reservoir keeper's cottage at Lower Bittell. Canal and River Trust, who own the property, are having work done on the exterior of the building which is great news. '58' understands that the property is to be retained by C&RT but in what capacity, at this moment in time, remains unclear. Perhaps someone from C&RT could advise '58' of their plans as we are all keen to be supportive of maintaining our canal heritage.

(Pictures on next page)



There are several society events which have either happened or are soon to be happening. The society shop has been present at the Worcester Spring Fayre recently- possibly the first time since last Summer? It will also be present at an event in Alvechurch on April 9th (see shop report from Lynne on page 7). This is also the same day that another band of society volunteers intend to bow haul 'Cecilia' from Alvechurch to Hopwood would you believe? The society dinner is due to take place at the Bromsgrove Golfing Centre where the votes for the George Bate Trophy winner are scheduled to be announced. Hope you all managed to get your nominations into Wendy? Society meetings on Zoom have been taking place as well as committee meetings and of course the big one coming up at the end of April – St. Richard's Canal Festival in Droitwich to mark the 250th birthday of the Barge Canal. So lots of activities being organised by your society to go and see or volunteer to help with – no excuses about the weather now please!

Still on the theme of volunteers, regular work parties continue to take place at the Tardebigge New Wharf area, which has been adopted by your society quite a few years ago. While excavation work on the actual lime kiln site is currently suspended owing to the discovery of asbestos, there have been plenty of other maintenance tasks for our volunteers to get on with. This has included the community garden as well as the area around the top lock. However, some other volunteers from C&RT have also been working on the site, largely without any consultation with WB&DCS, and have erected some fencing around the lime kilns. There was also a large mound of earth which had been delivered to the site, spread out and then seemingly removed with some of it being placed alongside the walls of the lime kilns. The very same walls that WB&DCS volunteers had excavated years ago! '58' understands that our volunteer leaders have attempted to get to the bottom of this but at the time of printing had had little response.



Perhaps someone from C&RT could get back to us with any update which sadly appears to be less and less forthcoming these days for whatever reason. We are, after all, meant to be working together and communication issues such as this and the lack of availability of the workboat 'Wanderer', do little to enhance our volunteers' morale and perceived appreciation. Over to you once again Canal and River Trust.

Thank you as usual to all of this month's contributors to '58' and look forward to seeing as many members as possible at either the society dinner, St. Richard's Canal Festival or any of the other activities planned by your society, for you the membership and friends. These things don't just happen, so please do give some thought towards helping out in some way with all of the contacts being on page 4. You will not be disappointed.

Enjoy the read.

John Hemingway

Shop Report

After two years of relative inactivity, the Society shop is starting to get out and about again.

At the end of February we had the opportunity to take part in the Spring Fayre at Worcester Cathedral. This one day event was reasonably well attended and enabled us to get back into the swing of things. It was interesting to see how customers' buying habits have changed - for example, we sell fewer gift bags now that more of us are recycling/reusing the ones we already have rather than buying a new one every time. And, increasingly, the items that people do buy are for someone else rather than a treat for themselves. I think that this year our most popular items are definitely going to be the small gifts. The most noticeable difference, however, is the way customers pay for their purchases with approximately half of sales income now coming from debit card transactions rather than cash payments. The days of being a cash only stall are now well behind us.

Our stall, which includes the shop, is booked into four more events so far:

9th April Table Top Sale, The Ark, Alvechurch.

30th April - 2nd May St Richard's Canal Festival.

14th May Bradley Canal Festival.

25th June Selly Oak Festival.

The shop will need to buy some new stock in the coming months. With all of the above in mind, it would be good to be able to support more local businesses like Corinne Locker (Craft n Make) who supplies our hand painted canal ware. If you know of anyone who might be suitable, I would be pleased to hear from you.

Finally, please support our Second Hand Jigsaw Sale (see below) either by making a donation or coming along to the stall to see whether we have anything to tempt you.

I am planning to have a Second Hand Jigsaw Sale on our stall at St. Richard's Festival.

If, like me, your jigsaw collection is now larger than the cupboard that it is stored in, you may wish to consider donating any spare jigsaws to raise funds for the canal society. Please also ask family and friends for donations too.

Those of you who have access to the shed at Alvechurch can leave donations there, in addition they can be dropped off at my home address (contact me first please) or brought to the event on Saturday 30th April. If anyone has a large number to donate I may be able to collect them from you.

Lynne Laniosh
shop@wbdc.org.uk

Obituaries

It is with great sadness that '58' has to announce the passing of two long standing society stalwarts, Ron and Betty Millward. '58' was kindly notified of this sad news by their daughter Julie, who described Betty's very sudden passing some months ago followed by a slow deterioration in Ron's health. Prior to this Betty had been a full time carer for Ron.

They were both involved with the National Trust as well as supporting the society at various events including St. Richard's Canal Festival. Both were described as lovely people who will be sorely missed. '58' sends it belated condolences to all of their family and close friends.



Seen Near Tardebigge Tunnel

The pictures below show a dinghy with outboard motor and 3 occupants who were apparently testing for invasive species. Although we thought immediately of plants, we were informed later that the people on board were looking for zander- an invasive fish. The boat 'wings' which could spread across the whole canal from the small craft apparently had stunners so that any fish could float safely to the surface and be removed if of the invasive type.



We have to say that we don't think there have been any reports of zander on this stretch of the W&B and not seen these craft before on the canals - unless someone out there can correct that view?

You can find more information about zander fish on the Canal & River Trust website:

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



Annual Lunch

The long awaited society lunch took place very recently at the Bromsgrove Golfing Centre. While the numbers attending were a little lower owing to covid, there was nevertheless a decent turnout on what was a very sunny Spring day.

It was really good to hear society members and friends showing their appreciation of being able to actually meet up face to face, after what had seemed like an age prior to the initial pandemic lockdowns.

At the end of the meal the current holder of the George Bate Trophy usually announces who this year's winner is. Unfortunately, the holder Wendy Albutt, had had an accident and was unable to attend so David read out a well-received message from Wendy to all those gathered. Ian McGarr, who had agreed to perform the task, then announced the person receiving the most nominations - **Alan Gibbs**. Al was somewhat surprised at this and gave thanks to all who voted for him as well as sharing some information about the origins of the term 'tow rag'- which has nothing to do with the way the word is sometimes used nowadays in a derogatory fashion!

The raffle was held afterwards with several prizes being won. All in all a very good afternoon's gathering of like-minded people with thanks to David Wheeler for organising.





'Nature Notes' Mary Green

The young swans, last year's cygnets, that have been visiting here with their parents are now coming independently, the families having broken up ready for the new mating season. There has been a more unusual bird visitor to this part of the canal too. A resident has seen a cormorant around Bridge 59. I've seen them on the Birmingham navigation before but not here. Cormorants usually live by and in the sea, being diving birds that catch fish. However, they move to inland reservoirs sometimes and so along our canal, especially in towns for some reason.

This is one of many examples of our human-made waterways hosting species that live in the wild on rivers, lakes or even sea. The most common sea birds on canals are the black-headed gulls which often come in big flocks. They only have black heads during the breeding season (like now) but retain a black spot on the side of the head. It's unusual here to see other gulls, but you may find herring gulls.

Two species that prefer large stretches of open water are coots and grebes, both of which appear on canals sometimes. Coots are like big moorhens but have a dominant patch of white above their beaks. I've seen them nesting on the Birmingham Main Line as well as on the reservoirs round here.

Grebes are delightful diving birds – quite small despite being Great Crested Grebes. The even smaller little grebe is seen occasionally too. At this time of year, you can see grebes mating and then nesting. Their mating consists of a dance where they crane their necks at each other, often making a



heart shape. I saw them recently on the Bittell reservoir, and I've seen them on Tardebigge reservoir often.

The familiar water-birds that actually live on the canal, nesting alongside, include swans, Canada geese, moorhens and mallard ducks. Other birds like herons spend a lot of their time on canals, but usually nest elsewhere. They make huge heronries in trees to raise their young. There certainly isn't one near me though there's nearly always an adult heron about. Kingfishers too can live here, not actually water-birds, but living on fish.

In the last issue our editor wrote about otters. They have definitely been seen round here on the canal near Alvechurch. I'm sometimes suspicious of sightings by people not familiar with otters, as they may have seen mink, quite common here. But otters have been seen by people who know the difference. A family has been seen in a stream in one of the dingles near where I live, close to the canal. It may have been otters that fetched out the freshwater mussels I mentioned last time (or that could have been mink). Otters are a great addition to our ecology, having nearly died out in the mid twentieth century. They even keep down mink, a difficult invasive species. They eat fish but have territories which mean they don't usually over-fish their own area.

All of these birds and mammals, and some of the rarer ones like water voles, depend on the banks of the canal being kept natural with proper well-grown vegetation. Round here the fringes have been over-cut recently and I hope it won't happen this year. Similarly, the birds we think of as song-birds or garden birds, which are really woodland edge birds, rely on hedges that are allowed to grow properly and flower and fruit. Usually the hedges along the towpath are full of spring birdsong, but some stretches are over-cut and fall quiet. It's all connected.



1. MATING SWANS
2. ADULT & YOUNG SWANS
3. NESTING SWAN
4. BLACKBIRD BY THE CANAL
5. CANADA GOOSE NESTING
6. COOT AT UPPER BITTELL

Lapal Canal News

The moment we have all been waiting for has finally commenced! The new winding hole at Selly Oak opposite the soon to be restored Lapal Canal section into Selly Oak Park, has now begun.

March 2nd was the official commencement date, with many interested parties turning up to witness this historic occasion, despite some miserable weather. The Mayor of the West Midlands, Andy Street, was present to ceremoniously make the first dig with subsequent supportive speech.

The actual task will take several weeks to complete and it's then intended to have some sort of gathering/event to celebrate this and to further promote the restoration which certainly requires further fund raising. Hopefully this can involve other groups such as WB&DCS. Watch this space!

Here is a selection of the many photos taken on the day as well as some since demonstrating the progress. More may be seen, with the press release, on the LCT website or via the link on the WB&DCS website.



Lapal Canal Trust News cont.



National Community Boats Association (NCBA)

Our Society Achieves Registration as Accredited Training Centre Within The NCBA

We are pleased to confirm that following a period of intense training and examination, the society has now been registered as an Accredited Training Centre within the National Community Boats Association. The qualification sessions were held over 2 full days of intense examination on 'Cecilia', which had been preceded by a fairly tough, "back to school", theory session requiring a fair amount of homework to be done first!

Thanks are due to those members who supported the NCBA days by acting as on-board caterers and cabin crew - particularly Bill Lambert and Neil Franklin. Thanks also to Chair David Wheeler and Treasurer Trevor Hyde for coming along to greet the NCBA representatives.

The NCBA is an important umbrella organisation that represents the interests of nearly 50 charities around the country, operating similarly to our society, with trip boats to carry up to 12 passengers under the small passenger boat code.

Our status as an ATC now allows us to deliver training to our own volunteers and external candidates ranging from crew competence, safe lock operation, through to helming skills and onto the important Certificate in Community Boat Management. This then qualifies helms to operate 'Cecilia' while carrying passenger groups. The qualification equals the RYA/IWA helm certificate which our current passenger carrying skippers already hold.

The ability to train our volunteers to this level in-house is important in that it allows us to avoid the expensive external training that we would otherwise have to pay others to deliver.

Our two qualified trainers, Ed Butcher and Ian McGarr, will now be structuring helm practice and formal training sessions to take volunteers through the levels of competence required to safely operate 'Cecilia'. This will cover various purposes, up to and including the carrying of our regular passenger groups, to holders of the CCBM. Visit the National Community Boats Association website for more information: <https://national-cba.co.uk>

Ed Butcher

(Very well done to all involved – Ed)



Bradley Canal News



'58' has been notified of the Bradley Canal Restoration Society's Annual General Meeting to be held on April 27th commencing at 7pm with the venue being "The Backroom" at the Café Metro in Bilston (WV14 0AH).

The Bradley Society is also involved in organising the event on May 14th and 15th at the Bradley workshops near Wolverhampton.

BCNS News

Our friends from the BCNS, in conjunction with the Bradley Restoration Society, are organising an event for the weekend of May 13th, 14th and 15th at the current limit of navigation, just by the Bradley Workshops, Bradley Lane, Bilston WV14. Lynne is planning to take along the WB&DCS stall as several society members will be present, some on their boats. Members of the public will be encouraged to attend this previously postponed event, which intends to highlight the proposals to re-open the canal from the event site down to Moorcroft Junction.

Those wishing to attend by boat will find the entry form on our society website:

www.wbdcs.org.uk

BCNS, Canal & River Trust & Bradley Restoration Society



On the 24th, 25th & 26th June the Birmingham Canal Navigation Society are organising special cruises to promote, along with Canal & River Trust, the Commonwealth Games due to take place in and around Birmingham this year. The idea is that boats will depart from Smethwick and

proceed down the mainline into Birmingham, possibly via the old loops, and then onto the Worcester and Birmingham Canal, winding at the Vale and cruising back into the city. The parade will hopefully be repeated on the Sunday.

Those wishing to attend by boat will require an entry form which is available on the WB&DCS website: www.wbdcs.org.uk



History Corner - 20 Years Ago

The following article appeared in the February 2002 edition of '58'. The magazine editor at that time was the late great Jon Axe.

LAPAL CANAL CLEAN UP

59e Shooters Hill Road
Blackheath
London SE3 7HS
Tel. 020 7710 3233 (w)
020 8293 9744 (h)

12th November, 2001

Dear Colleague,

Clean up of Dudley No. 2 Canal (the "Canal") – 23rd & 24th March 2002
As you know, the Lapal Canal Trust (the "Trust") is promoting the restoration of the redundant Canal which once linked Selly Oak, Birmingham with Halesowen.

You may be aware that 12 months ago the Trust was re-constituted with a new Board of Directors. Since that time, we have made significant progress in raising the profile of the Trust and also the restoration project as a whole.

These are exciting times for the Trust. Sainsbury's are proposing to re-develop a significant area of Selly Oak in Birmingham which contains the infilled line of the Canal. They propose to reinstate the former junction of the Canal with the Worcester and Birmingham and to create a basin along the line of the Canal. The Trust, supported by British Waterways and certain local Councillors, are proposing the restoration of the line of the Canal through to nearby Selly Oak park. Such a project would represent a significant step towards restoring the Canal through to the Eastern portal of the redundant Lapal Tunnel.

We do not, as yet, have a firm commitment from the City Council that they will require Sainsbury's to (at the very least) protect the line of the Canal from an adverse development. Additionally, there is a very real threat that the proposed relief road designed to ease congestion in Selly Oak and unlock the site for redevelopment may obliterate the line of the Canal.

We are working to secure the line of the Canal and restoration through to Selly Oak park.

To this end, we are proposing to draw on the experience of other restoration trusts and organise a high-profile mass clearance of the route between Selly Oak park and Lapal Tunnel. We hope to generate interest from local residents and the media and generally raise the profile of the restoration

project.

Timing of the weekend is critical if we are to avoid the bird nesting season (April onwards). In order to avoid clashing with the national canal clean-up (and to secure the valuable support of WRG BITM) we have decided on the weekend of 23rd and 24th March, 2002.

The City Council - who own that section of the Canal - have granted permission for the operation on these dates.

We are extremely eager to secure the support of local canal societies. As a society interested in the local canal network, we do hope that you will support the initiative and also publicise the weekend within your organisation and membership.

It would be great if you could confirm to me that you can help and, if you are able, the ways that you are able to do so. Clearly, the success of the weekend and its impact in supporting the campaign to protect the Canal in the Birmingham area cannot be underestimated. We need as many people as possible to turn up and lend a hand and we need to publicise the weekend as widely as possible.

The organisation of an event of this size needs to be started early, especially with magazine copy dates to consider, so a very prompt response would be much appreciated.

Thanking you in anticipation
Yours sincerely
David Carson
(General Secretary)

DROITWICH CANALS VIDEO

Mike Suter has produced a video of the Droitwich Canals. The 45 minute video is being offered at £9.50 through the WBCS shop, or can be ordered from Jon Axe with an additional charge of £1.50 p&p

The video was shown at the DCT Members Night in November and received an appreciative reception from the well attended meeting.

This weekend was indeed a massive event with people travelling from many different places to join in which meant several skips being filled with rubbish. It was at this event that the idea of a marina at California was first mentioned.

The actual line of the Dudley No. 2 (Lapal Canal) which joined the W&B at Selly Oak, was still at this juncture, going to be the preferred route to be excavated. However, as we all found out over 10 years later, Sainsbury's decided against this reinstatement of the original route. This is why the Lapal Canal Trust is currently having to spend so much time on a new route which will eventually join the W&B nearer to the Bristol Road over bridge.

History Corner - 30 Years Ago

The following appeared in February 1992's edition of '58' when the editor was a certain Joe Morley. The Lapal Canal Trust is featured again and it is noticeable that the society's AGM is advertised for May that year. Do any readers recall why and when this changed to September as it is now?

WHAT'S ON - WBCS EVENTS

WBCS Monthly Meetings (*) are held in the upper room at the Boat & Railway, Stoke Works, Bromsgrove on the first Tuesday of each month (except July & August) beginning at 8 pm. Everyone, whether a member or not, is always cordially welcome.

* Feb 4th: "Tales from the Tiller" by boat painter Mike Partridge.

Feb 8th: Skittles Evening, High Duty Alloys, Redditch.

* Mar 2nd: "The Lapal Canal Trust" - Dave Necklin.

Mar 20th: WBCS Annual Dinner, Old Rose & Crown, Rednal. MANY MORE TOMBOLA PRIZES TO DI GREENHALL PLEASE!

Apr 5th: Association of Pleasure Craft Operators Open Day at SARABAND, Hanbury Wharf.

* Apr 7th: "The Worcester Birmingham Canal in the Making" by Society Historian the Rev Alan White.

* May 5th: ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING.

May 9/10th: WBCS Gathering of Boats and Work Party, King's Norton Junction. Planned signpost refurbishment.

* Jun 2nd: Return visit by Mr David Allison of BW - more lively discussion with the powers-that-be!

A month later in that same year, dredging the Worcester & Birmingham Canal was again a hot topic as it still tends to be now in places. A little later on in this past article, which is not included here, reference was made to the use of licensed dredging tips. The only one available being at Alvechurch which presumably was the land between the railway and the canal between bridges 60 and 61? Dredgings nowadays are taken elsewhere for safe disposal.

AND MORE ABOUT DREDGING.....

In 1991, in common with other Midland waterway user groups, we received a request from the Inland Waterways Amenity Advisory Council (IWAAC) to comment on the need for dredging operations on 'our' canal, highlighting areas which we considered required particular attention.

This was done by your committee and, when the observations received from other groups had been collated by IWAAC, they were forwarded to BW's Midland Region for information and comment. Mr Stewart Sim, BW Midland Region Manager, then produced a paper highlighting the main problem areas on each canal, with comments and plans for 1991 from each Waterway Manager.

What follows, then, may seem like old information, but it has value as a means of reviewing progress achieved last year, not only on the Worcester Birmingham, but on other Midland canals. To forestall criticism, and to save you postage, it is worth mentioning that this information has only recently become available to us!

Worcester Birmingham Canal.

- * Kings Norton to Worcester Bar
 - alongside the University
 - Edgbaston - alongside the new towing path walls constructed during the winter 1989/90.
 - Lifford Lane Bridge to Selly Oak Railway Bridge (north of Selly Oak Station).
- * Kings Norton Tunnel to Wharf Lane Bridge
- * Immediately north of Tardebigge Old Wharf - about $\frac{1}{2}$ -mile of canal.
- * Worcester - the Lowesmoor Pound.

Volunteer News

Dear Colleagues

What a busy time we have had volunteering on the cut. We are now back to monthly meetings of the volunteers and 'Cecilia' committee at the 'Weighbridge'. Don't forget if you want to know what's really going on you are quite welcome to come along.

National Community Boats Association (NCBA) this is the really big news. Ed and Ian have worked very hard to get us designated as a project with the NCBA (*more information on page 14*). This means we can run training sessions for our own people who want to become certified helms and eventually offer training sessions to people from other societies. On the first day of their training session David and Trevor came down to Alvechurch to welcome the trainers from NCBA who appreciated that we took the day seriously. We also had Bill on hand to look after them and the other independent trainees. On the Sunday I took over that role and saw how keen the trainers from NCBA were. Ian and Ed are now working to prepare training days that we hope to start towards the end of the month.

On 'Cecilia' I am heartened to report that progress is exceptional. We have nearly finished painting the inside including painting the galley units - grey! This work has been ably lead by Ken with Maxine on painting and Steve on carpentry work.

Maxine has also been involved with organising the new upholstery from J&H Upholstery of Kingswinford. She visited them and organised their quotation. Trevor agreed to us spending the cash and we should have them on board before the start of the season.



We are due to have special Buffalo Boarding fitted over the engine compartment of the rear deck. Steve is sealing the edges of the boards and then will fit them in time for the new season. Ken and Ed have cleaned the oil and water out of the bottom of the engine compartment by soaking babies' nappies in it.

Out at Tardebigge during Bill's work parties, we have continued to remove the ivy from the garden wall ably assisted by Gerrard and Mark. C&RT are due to rebuild the wall. John gave us the number of the chap who owns the land on the other side of the wall. Bill rang it and talked to a delightful lady in Northern Ireland. She said he was a lovely man but she didn't want to continue the relationship!

We would like to talk with C7RT about the future of our adoptions at Tardebigge but we are yet to do this.

'The Wanderer'

The Community Work Boat 'Wanderer' has started to be used by C&RT as we agreed but we still have our worries about how she is perceived by the Trust.

She was originally sourced by the community and until covid intervened was run by a community committee. We don't see why this has changed and are concerned that she may become fully part of C&RT and even painted in their livery. The boat is a C&RT/Community asset and should stay that way.

We have also been promised that two of our helms will be trained to helm loaded boats to enable us to take 'Wanderer' out to clear the canal of debris in the winter. This is not practical as we need a minimum of four people to be trained. We all know how holidays and sickness can take two people off our available list so we will continue to talk to C&RT.

The Future

The New Season Starts on 4th April

This is the time when our volunteers' thoughts turn to sunny days spent on the cut boating along with the sun in your hair and the wind on your face. Don't forget if you would like to help us in taking people, who don't usually get the chance, out on the water then contact me. You will not regret it.

Sponsored Boat Haul

Saturday 9th April 11am

You may know of this big event in the Alvechurch Calendar!

No? Well that may be because we have never run it before. So if you want to follow in the footsteps of the original 'tow rags'. Contact our 'tow rag in-chief', Al Gibbs, who will rope you in on the team! 07398 709048

St. Richard's Canal Festival

Coming up at the end of April is the St. Richard's Canal Festival. All leave is cancelled for our volunteers! Please do your best to ensure you are available from 26th April to Tuesday 2nd May. We need as much help as possible to set up the festival, run it for 4 days and take it down afterwards. If you can give us a day, or all the days, please contact me so I can put you down as one of the team.

It's not all work as there's the duck race and the bar!

Neil Franklin
Volunteer Coordinator
07857 294196

Tibberton Community Orchard

On Saturday 4th March Tibberton residents joined C&RT staff and volunteers to plant 300 trees to create C&RT's biggest pocket orchard in the West Midlands. Situated between Tibberton and Oddingley on the Worcester & Birmingham Canal, the field was used to provide grazing for the horses that towed the historic narrow boats.

The orchard has been funded by the Heritage Lottery's Green Challenge Recovery Fund and is part of a linear orchard which is being planted in canal side hedgerows along the Worcester & Birmingham and parts of the Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canals.



The orchard is near to a public footpath in addition to the towpath and will have benches and picnic tables where people can come and enjoy their orchard. Future activities will include winter pruning of the trees, spring blossom days, summer pruning and fruit pruning, and of course autumn picking sessions and apple days.

Wild flower growth will be encouraged around the hedgerows which contain much blackthorn, the food of the larvae of the brown hairstreak butterfly.

Margaret Rowley

Canal and River Trust are having a big push on planting trees across the whole network making use of a grant from the People's Postcode Lottery. It's really good to see this happening on our local canals – very well done to the volunteers involved – Ed.

Richard Parry, C&RT's chief executive, said: *"Built to move goods and materials in the Industrial Revolution and still used by record numbers of boats today, canals have also become vital wildlife highways across England and Wales. The trees being planted will be enough to cover 21 football pitches, however by targeting the planting to create continuous hedgerows and transform unloved areas into woodlands and orchards, the total benefit will be much greater than the sum of its parts."*

Brain Teasers

In the last edition of '58' two old photographs were shown asking if any readers could offer any information about them. The first one was correctly identified by both Malcolm Bates and Barrie Johnson who stated it was where the old Harborne (Chad valley) railway line left the main line from New Street, went over the Birmingham New Main Line Canal, on its way up towards Harborne. The bridge supports are still there in the canal even though the railway is long gone. The track bed now forms an attractive suburban walkway.



The second picture, which was much older and in sepia, was again correctly identified by both Barrie and Malcolm. They confirmed that it



had been taken from the Bristol Road overbridge in Selly Oak, looking North up the Worcester & Birmingham Canal towards Birmingham. The original Selly Oak Junction with the Dudley No.2 Canal (Lapal) can just be seen on the left with the now infilled canal arms on the right at Whitehouse's (Goodman's) Wharf. In the distance is a steam hauled train on its way towards Birmingham.

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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.

SPONSORED

Boat Haul

Alvechurch to Hopwood
April 9th 2022 Start 11am

Please support our wonderful team of 'boat haulers' who will be pulling on the ropes of our society narrowboat 'Cecilia' to haul her all the way from Alvechurch (Bridge 60) to Hopwood House (Bridge 67). The engine will be switched OFF for the whole trip and only muscle power will be used. The sensational Alvechurch Choir will be making a guest appearance at the start and finish of this epic journey. You can sponsor our heroes by donating to The Worcester Birmingham & Droitwich Canal Society 'Just Giving' page, by cash or cheque direct to the person you are sponsoring or by bank transfer (details on request from contact@wbdc.org.uk).

All money raised will be for funding our community narrowboat 'Cecilia'. This boat is for use by people in the community for non-profit. The boat costs a lot of money to run and keep in good condition. It is there for use by any groups, societies or charitable organisations and for people who can't afford to pay out for regular canal boat trips.

Please visit our website for more information.

The Worcester-Birmingham & Droitwich Canals Society is a registered charity (500159)



Boat Haul Practice

Our intrepid bunch of volunteers have had a practice at hauling 'Cecilia' from Alvechurch, Bridge 60 to the 'Dead Arm'. '58' was on hand to take some photographs.



Monthly Meetings

Our regular monthly meetings are currently being held online.

Public monthly meetings will be reinstated as soon as possible.

On Tuesday 5th April at 7.45pm we will be having a Zoom talk by Lizzy Thomson, Heritage Advisor Operational Projects for Canal and Rivers Trust. The subject of the talk will be 'Recent Regeneration of the Birmingham Roundhouse', a hidden gem alongside the BCN Old Main Line on Sheepcote Street Birmingham. Formerly owned by Canal and Rivers Trust it is now a charitably owned entertainment venue.

Future Meetings: Full details 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.

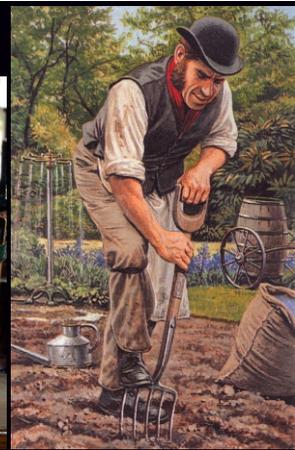
QR Code: We have the facility to make donations direct to the society. You can simply scan the QR code on our flyers and collection tins or visit <https://bit.ly/3pcfp1C>



JustGiving

We have also set up a 'JustGiving' page. Simply go to the JustGiving website: <https://www.justgiving.com/wbdcs>

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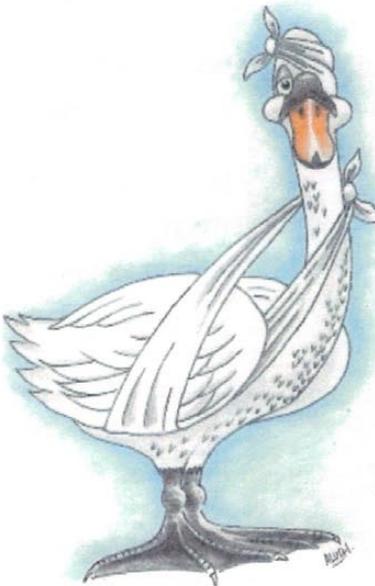
BASES AT CHIRK ON THE LLANGOLLEN, NAPTON ON THE OXFORD, ACTON BRIDGE ON TRENT ON THE TRENT & MERSEY, PEAK DISTRICT (STOKE ON TRENT) ON THE TRENT & MERSEY, STOKE PRIOR ON THE WORCESTER & BIRMINGHAM, FALKIRK ON THE FOURTH & CLYDE, ELY IN CAMBRIDGESHIRE, BRADFORD ON AVON ON THE KENNET & AVON, CLIFTON ON DUNSMORE ON THE NORTH OXFORD

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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

(where you can also download a membership application form)

[Facebook.com/wbdcs.org.uk](https://www.facebook.com/wbdcs.org.uk) | [Twitter: @wbdcs58](https://twitter.com/wbdcs58)



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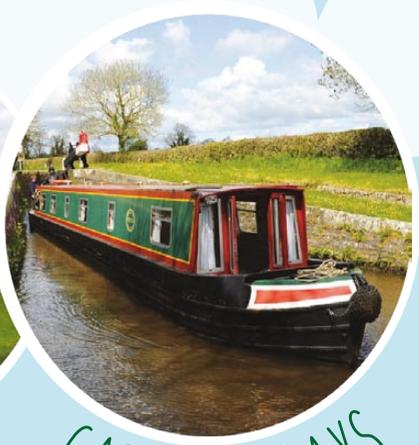
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