

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'



Worcester-Birmingham
& Droitwich
Canals Society



Celebrating 50
years since
commencement of the
restoration of the
Droitwich Canals

- Dog Show
on Monday
- Fun for all the family
- Now in it's 11th year
- Arts & Crafts
- Model Boats

**DROITWICH SPA
Vines Park WR9 8LB**

Friday 28th April 5pm - 11pm

Saturday 29th April, Sunday 30th April 10am - 11pm

Monday 1st May 10am - 5pm

• Real Ale & Cider Bar all weekend

Yes, it's almost that time of year again!

St Richard's Canal Festival 2023



Celebrating 50
years since
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restoration of the
Droitwich Canals



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- **Real Ale & Cider Bar all weekend**
- **20 Different Beers • 15 Different Ciders**
- **Live Entertainment every day**
- **Canal boat rides during the days on 'Pamela May 2'**
- **The 'Great Droitwich Duck Race' 4.30pm Monday**



Droitwich Spa Town Council

*** FREE ADMISSION * LATE NIGHT BAR * FAMILY EVENT**

strichardsfestival.co.uk | wbdcs.org.uk | Facebook | Twitter

The Magazine of the Worcester-Birmingham & Droitwich Canals Society

Issue 567 April/May 2023

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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 have to say that I thought that the Annual Dinner was a huge success this year and I would like to thank all those who attended for their support and for adding to the very enjoyable atmosphere that was generated throughout the lunch. We have to say well done to Neil Franklin for receiving the George Bate Trophy. The award is given to the person that members believe has done the most during the previous year for the Canal Society. Neil has taken over the role of Volunteer Coordinator extremely well and the award is well deserved.

We have received an email from Gavin Passmore, Community Engagement Officer for West Midlands Canal & River Trust, advising us that as from 22nd March Canal & River Trust will be issuing a communications about the introduction of charges for third party events taking place on its land and waters. Charges will apply from applications received from 1st June 2023.

"We are introducing charging so that vital funds are not diverted away from our core purpose of protecting and preserving the 250 year old canal network. The introduction of charging will help to offset the cost of processing event applications and will help us in our ongoing work to look after the network for today and future generations to enjoy."

Trusts and Canal Societies like ours find it extremely difficult to get volunteers and to raise funds for their cause. Trust and Canal Societies up and down the country already put a lot of effort and money into helping to preserve the network. My opinion is that this is a bad idea and will do nothing to encourage future events. Events are what Canal & River Trust need to encourage people to become involved with the Waterways so why make a charge on the very people who are doing their best to make that happen? At St. Richard's Canal Festival we have agreed for Canal & River Trust to have a gazebo in a prime position so that they can discuss with the public the workings of the Trust - totally free of charge. If Canal & River Trust pursue the application of a charge for holding an event do we then consider making a charge for their gazebo? The issue of a charge will create more problems than the money it generates. It will create bad feelings just at a time when Canal & River Trust needs all the help it can get.

Talking of St. Richard's Canal Festival, we are now in our final stages of planning and this is a reminder that we will need all the help we can get to make it successful. Please contact Neil if you can offer any time over the buildup, the festival itself or the take down.

David Wheeler



St Richard's Canal Festival 2023

Friday 28th April 5pm - Monday 1st May 5pm





Editor's Notes

Hello Readers

Welcome to the latest edition of your favourite magazine. As the clocks are turned forward we can hopefully look ahead to some lighter and possibly warmer days, as Spring moves on towards Summer? The buds are already coming out, as Mary describes later on, daffodils and other earlier plants are making themselves known. Speaking of which the society's ever growing band of volunteers have been very busy of late with one such task being the planting of fruit trees alongside the towpath in Alvechurch. The event was organised by Emily Cowell from Canal & River Trust and involved some youngsters from a local nursery as well as WB&DCS volunteers. What a difference it has made with society volunteers having a big clean up of the area prior to the planting. More about this and photos in the 'Volunteers Section' starting on page 22.

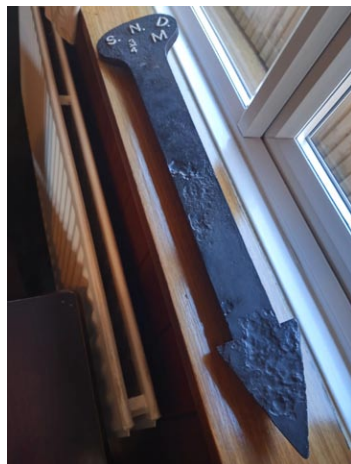
Those of you who were able to attend the society lunch recently will be aware that the coveted George Bate Trophy was awarded to our society Volunteer Coordinator Neil Franklin for all of his wonderful efforts - *very well deserved too!* The previous holder Al Gibbs, who historically receives the votes for any new incumbent, read out a specially written poem for the occasion before the actual presentation, which was very well received. Speaking of poetry, Mary also read out the poem she had written about 'Cecilia' returning to Alvechurch following a repaint earlier this year - again very well received. Those present were then given a presentation from the 'Primrose Hospice' who are in partnership with the society. This was again very well received and more about all of this event appears on page 9.

Changing the subject a little, the society understands that C&RT are wanting to make use of some of the area near Bridge 60 where 'Cecilia' moors. We understand that storage units may be placed behind where the new trees have been planted but nearer to the railway cutting. Does this mean that C&RT are looking to eventually move away from their Tardebigge New Wharf site? It's looking in that direction but time will tell – watch this space!



The society as ever has been very busy including the usual committee meetings and volunteer meetings; not forgetting our well attended February and March meetings described later on. The big event not so far away now is the St. Richard's Canal Festival at the end of April and over to the Bank Holiday weekend. So good readers, if anyone out there fancies helping out in any way at all please do get in touch particularly with Neil, who we know is on the look out for volunteers to help build up, help on site during the actual festival and to take down afterwards. The success of this is down to volunteers so now's your big chance to get involved. No need to be shy, everyone is looked after and no-one is just left on their own no matter how much time you are able to give. Speaking of volunteer time again, many many thanks to everyone who has been able to send things in for this edition of '58' - again all volunteers working for the society. More input is always welcome and also don't forget to try and recruit a friend into membership – it all helps the cause.

‘The Weighbridge’ pub in Alvechurch is very well known for its choice of food and drink as well as being along the Worcester & Birmingham Canal. The society’s monthly meetings also take place in the room just behind the pub. Licensee Chris and staff are always very supportive of the society, including selling duck race tickets, and are wanting to enhance this waterway relationship which is why the shop and ‘Cecilia’ will be present for some of the time at the forthcoming Beer Festival on May 19th and 20th. Chris is also wanting to display any artifacts that the society may have which leads nicely onto the next item. A few weeks ago the society was offered a donation of old rally plaques mounted on a plinth as well as an old print framed in timber from lock 40 on the Tardebigge Flight. We have also given them a three quarter mile vertical post with SND printed on it. This stands for Sharpness New Docks Company.



Chris intends to display these somewhere in the pub as well as other donations already in situ. Let’s hope that these displays, which promote the society, prove to be of interest to pub visitors. Incidentally, the donor of the plaques was Barry Seekings who has indicated that he was in membership of the society during the 1970s and ‘80s. At the time of going to press we are unaware of the name of Barry’s boat. Do any readers remember Barry or his boat? If so do let us know please.

Hope to see as many of you as possible at our next meetings and of course St. Richard’s Canal Festival. Enjoy the read.

John Hemingway

New Members

The following people have recently become members of the society:

Jane Colley from Alvechurch. Dr. Nigel Cutress from Alvechurch.

Rosemary and Steve Dewar from Alvechurch. Julia Fallon from Alvechurch.

Ian Harris & Family from Bromsgrove. Doreen James from Alvechurch. Scott Smith from Bromsgrove.

‘58’ offers its customary warm welcome into membership and hopes to see our new members at any of our forthcoming activities. If any members change their name, address or other contact details then please let our Membership Secretary know as soon as possible.

Contact details are on page 4.

Alvechurch Picnic In The Park 2023

This very popular event is due to take place on Sunday, May 28th. We will be having our society gazebo there this year, staffed by our brilliant team of volunteers. We won't be selling anything but are hoping to drum up membership and encourage more people to volunteer for us.

If you would like to help out on the day then please contact our Volunteer Coordinator Neil Franklin. Contact information is on page 4. It was estimated that over 3000 people attended this event in 2022 and it included a fly-over by a Lancaster Bomber. This has been confirmed to happen again this year.

If you're unable to volunteer then do pop along and bring a picnic. It kicks off with a dog show at 10.30am. Lots of stalls and live music throughout the day and evening.

More information can be found on their website: <https://alvechurchpicnic.org/>



Roundhouse: Birmingham

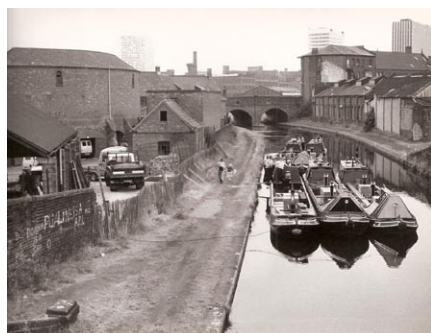
So what was the Roundhouse?

In 1874 this peculiar building was created as a stable and stores for the Birmingham Corporation's Public Works Department (an early version of the City Council). It was home to many trades that were essential for the improvement of Birmingham, including lamplighters, stonebreakers and the ever-so-essential night soil workers.

Known then as Sheepcote Street Depot, the Roundhouse is the last surviving example of a network of 30 depots where people carried out essential work around the clock. If you'd like to learn more about the Workers of the Roundhouse and its history, join a for a free drop-in tour from Thursday to Sunday.

Tours run at 11.30 and 14:00 and are 40 minutes long.

Begins 6th April. <https://roundhousebirmingham.org.uk>



Shop Report

The Worcester-Birmingham and Droitwich Canals Society stall will be at St. Richard's Festival again this year. As usual the stall will be made up of two parts – the shop and duck race ticket sales. Opening times for the stall are 10am – 5pm on Saturday 29th April, Sunday 30th April and Monday 1st May. Any offers of help on the stall either for the shop or selling duck race tickets (or both) would be appreciated.

We are also planning to have our stall at the Weighbridge Beer Festival on Friday 19th May and Saturday 20th May. Full details for this are not yet available, but don't let that stop you from getting in touch if you would like to be involved.

Finally, we are also hoping to book our usual pitch at Selly Oak Festival on Saturday 17th June. Plans for this should be available soon.

If you are able to offer an hour or more of your time for any of the above events, please let me know when you are available. I also have a mailing list for volunteer helpers; if you would like to receive the occasional email with details of volunteering opportunities on our stall at future events. Please contact me with your name and email address.

email: shop@wbdc.org.uk or ring on 07947 712794

Lynne Laniosh

Society Lunch

Mid-March is usually the time of year for the society's annual lunch and this year was no exception. Many members and friends were present at the Bromsgrove Golfing Centre where the coveted George Bate Trophy is awarded following nominations from members. Well done to recipient Neil Franklin who works tirelessly in organising volunteers for various tasks on our patch. The gathering was also treated to some poetry from Al and Mary as well as being appraised of the work done by the Primrose



Hospice (the society's chosen charity). The afternoon concluded with the raffle which raised well over £100 for a good cause.

Many thanks to everyone who supported this event and of course to Gill and David who were the main organisers.





'Nature Notes'

Mary Green

This month I'm looking at a natural canalside habitat I walk by most days. It's in Alvechurch, where the famous 'Cecilia' is moored near Bridge 60. We were lucky recently to have some fruit trees planted here by C&RT – or rather, our volunteers planted them for them! They are in a patch of poor ground with rubble and silt underneath which currently grows mostly brambles and nettles and isn't very biodiverse - a good place to plant trees that will blossom and fruit.

A few native trees are there already: willow and hawthorn mostly. It's next to some old woodland also owned by C&RT. This is a lovely little wood, mostly ash and some very old willow, fairly impenetrable because it's not been managed, but always full of birds. I feel I know the blackbird there personally. It has a wet patch (maybe an old pond) and ancient woodland flowers like dog's mercury. Local people tell me they used to pick wood anemones there.

The degraded rubble patch was a caravan site of sorts, left derelict, then filled with rubble and some canal dredgings. Older people have told me of finding grass snakes there in the derelict phase and even once an adder, our only poisonous snake, now disappeared from this area.

On the other side of the car park, near the road, is a different patch. This has open-ground wildflowers and is wonderful in summer, full of butterflies. It used to be an old plum orchard, neglected by C&RT and overgrown but blossoming every March and great for foraging golden fruit in September. Network Rail compulsorily leased it to park



1



2



3

vehicles and equipment when they widened the nearby rail line ten years ago. Despite our protests, they tore out the plum trees and destroyed the vegetation, though not the soil.

When C&RT had it back, they left it alone, and local wild flowers soon colonised it. It had lots of birds-foot-trefoil, clover, medick and melilot with their accompanying blue butterflies. It had cow parsley, moon daisies, wild carrot covered with small insects, vetches, bedstraw and knapweed. I wrote about it here in September 2015.

A couple of years later, C&RT dredged the canal, and used this patch for vehicles and equipment so the plants were beaten down again and the site reduced to mud. But the flowers came back over the next years. The variety of flowers has been great, changing in the way complex habitat does. It shows me that natural vegetation will recover quickly and in a diverse way so long as the soil is OK.

Open vegetation like this gradually develops into scrub woodland, so this year a local volunteer did a winter cut to stop over-dominance of bramble, dock or nettle, allowing the variety of open-ground flowers to survive. This roughly mimics the effect of grazing in the wild. He did it by hand so was able to find and preserve several young hawthorns that have grown there and will contribute greatly to biodiversity.

I always enjoy watching these three patches – woodland, rubble patch and open patch – as rich wildlife habitats. However, there is some concern now that the area may be used by C&RT as a work base. They have already cut down an inconveniently-growing pussy-willow just in full flower – the wrong time to coppice/pollard, though legal, as willow inconveniently flowers before 1 March when you have to stop cutting. I hope this is a one-off and that whatever they do next will enhance the environment there not destroy it, respect the plants, not cut them according to the calendar



1. PLUM BLOSSOM
2. OLD WOODLAND
3. BLUE BUTTERFLY ON MADICK
4. BIRDS FOOT TREFOIL
5. DOGS MERCURY (SIGN OF OLD WOODLAND)
6. CUT DOWN PUSSY WILLOW

A Rhyme for the George Bate Trophy

If Pam Ayres were a member of our society
She'd really be feeling little anxiety.

As Risk Assessed by our Bill

Volunteers should feel no ill.

But mow and tidy and plant the trees.

We're all about helping the bees.

With Pam on board, we crew Cecilia

With no one falling in and floating like Ophelia.

The trips are helmed and well received.

Volunteers, like swans, no fuss perceived.

By April Pam is at her best

But about to be tested by St Richards Fest.

With fencing and tenting and fetch and carry

White van Pam does not tarry

But strides the stream seeking errant an duck

Our Pam doesn't give a ...

...fig for poor luck.

And Heritage Open Day, I hear you say,

As Pam shows our guests the way

Around the wharf, through the gate

Along the cut to 58

A trip through the tunnel and a cup of tea

Cake and history for a small fee.

Wanderer beckons and it's end of season.

It does Pam's head in, she sees no reason

for all the litter, bottles and scrap

shopping trolleys and doggie walkers.... doggie bags.

In conclusion I like Pam a lot

So we're going to the theatre

To see ... Spamalot !

But wait, you cry! what about the George Bate Trophy

(for rhyme Pam perhaps should have been called Dorothy!)

The 2023 award goes to a man who keeps us all on even keel

Our volunteer coordinator, the worthy, Neil.

Poem by Al Gibbs

Locks

It's St George's day, Shakespeare's birthday
What more English than a narrowboat
Painted by hand with castles and roses
Coming down the long flight of locks
Through a spring midland landscape.
Life slows down to a rhythm, led by the engine
(Shining and green with starry red knobs)
Taken up by four people, who become
Part of the boat and its journey. Two walk ahead
Opening the lock. Two bring the boat into it
One closing the gate, then taking the boat
Through while one opens the front gates
Just timing it to step back on board. You test the gates
By leaning into them with your bum, push
With your body's momentum. At this pace
You can feel the boat and control its heart
In time with your human hearts. In the lock
You go down into greened walls and dark
Your eyes level with the daisies and dandelions
Come back up into the blue and gold of sky
And rape fields and shimmering oak trees
Plum and blackthorn blossom bridal alongside
Like Persephone entering the underworld
Every few minutes, and bringing spring back
Bringing life and the clarity of youth back.
Eyes sharpened, we see a moorhen's nest
Notice the different bricks on each lock wall
The banks of primroses and heliotrope.
Our noses wrinkle at the smells: chicken manure
The oily perfume of rapefields, then the chips
At the pub past the bottom lock, journey's end.
Rhythm and movement, work and harmony
At the heart of England. Happy birthday Will.

Poem by Mary Green

Coronation Weekend 70 Years Ago

Long standing society member, **Colin Scrivener**, recalls what he was doing on our late Queen's Coronation Day all those years ago.

(Will you be doing something similar on the forthcoming coronation day Colin? – Ed)

If any readers would like to share what they did this year '58' will be pleased to publish.

The Queen's Coronation was to take place on Tuesday June 2nd and to allow people to make the most of the celebrations it was to be a Public Holiday, and most industries closed for the Monday as well, making a useful four day break. This allowed a longer outing to be planned for Scomber, my home built outboard powered dinghy. An old school friend Peter Jackson, who now had a home built canoe at Earlswood, came along as crew. We loaded Scomber with food, sleeping bags and an old tent and set off on the Saturday after lunch. With no fixed plans we headed for Kings Norton, where we decided to turn left. Our stop for tea opposite the old brickworks at Wharf Lane was curtailed by the sudden arrival of a gang of lads who started throwing bricks across the canal at us, making a rapid start in the direction of the tunnel seemed a good idea. The ex A.R.P. battery lantern was placed on the foredeck and we set off into 2726 yards of wet blackness, quite an eerie experience in a small boat; luckily we met no traffic. The landlord of the Crown at Withybed Green gave us permission to camp in his field that bordered the canal, and with some difficulty we pitched the tent. After our supper we retired for the night but the lumpy ground was not very comfortable to sleep on so we were up very early the next morning.

We breakfasted, glad of the heat of the primus stove to warm ourselves, and struck camp. Once the boat was loaded we set off in the direction of Tardebigge passing through Shortwood and Tardebigge tunnels which were short enough to see through sufficiently well to navigate without the lamp. Immediately after the second tunnel was British Waterways Tardebigge depot where we stopped to look around. As it was Sunday we were surprised to find Les Thompson in his office and after a chat we bought a windlass off him, so that we had two, and a travel permit to go to Tibberton and back.



British Waterways Tardebigge offices and church

The sunshine of yesterday had been replaced by dull weather but at first we were too busy working down the thirty, the six and the six to get cold. Once on the long Hanbury pound it was very different as we travelled completely blindly through the tall reed beds, wearing every bit of clothing we possessed to try and keep warm. We arrived at Tibberton late in the evening cold and hungry. We tried pitching the tent on the towpath but the ground was too hard to drive the wooden pegs into, but after several attempts we had managed to hold the tent up after a fashion. This was just sufficient to give us shelter for the night. Sleeping on the hard stony towpath was worse than the field the previous night so at crack of dawn we were up and about once more.

After a hot drink and some breakfast we set off back, the air in Dunhampstead tunnel seeming pleasantly warm compared to that outside. The weather gradually brightened and there was some sunshine, but with short sharp showers, as we worked our way back up the flights of locks. Once we were out of the top lock the weather started deteriorating rapidly so we pressed on. As we neared the far end of Shortwood tunnel we could see the rain lashing down on to the surface

of the canal, so we stopped the engine and stayed inside for a while. A pontoon conversion came towards the tunnel but turned round before entering and pattered off back towards Alvechurch with a very sick sounding outboard engine.



Climbing Tardebigge locks



Leaving the top lock

Eventually the rain eased and we ventured forth. Not far along the canal we found the pontoon drifting while the owner tried to restart the engine, so we stopped to see if we could help. The problem was water in the ignition and we had only just found this out before the heavens opened once more. The owner and his wife, with two small children, invited us aboard and we chatted over a cup of tea and with the fug in the small cabin we gradually got a little bit warmer. The boats had drifted against some bushes on the offside and the family decided to just tie to the twigs for the night while they tried to dry out the engine. Reluctantly we left the warmth of their boat, the only one we had seen moving over the four days, and set off once again through the now light rain wondering what to do next.

By the time we reached Hopwood the rain was becoming heavy again so we stopped under the



Our makeshift accommodation at Hopwood

bridge to shelter. After a while we decided to stay put for the night. With the boat still tied under the bridge we snuggled down under the tent that was draped over the pole to make a shelter inside the boat and went to sleep, hoping Charlie Ballinger would not be coming through with the Olive during the night. In actual fact it was the best night's rest since setting out and we woke up on the Coronation morning warm enough to face a grey drizzly day with a little optimism. We still had enough food for a hot breakfast but had to wait for the garage to open as we needed to buy petrol before setting off for home.

Once we had got back through Wasthills tunnel, by the dying light of the battery lantern, the drizzle had stopped but it was still very cold and grey. There was hardly a soul around as we went back through the housing estates along the Stratford canal. We ate on the move and did not stop until we had got back to our home moorings at Earlswood. Once back at home it was so nice to get a good meal, a bath and some warmth, but the whole trip had been very enjoyable despite the cold and wet. It was such a pity that over the whole country Coronation Day had been so miserable, spoiling many street parties and fireworks displays.

Primrose Hospice

Our Society has recently teamed up with the Primrose Hospice in Bromsgrove.

Wendy Albutt describes how it all came about....

Over the past couple of years our society has been working closely with Primrose Hospice & Family Support Centre to provide trips on 'Cecilia' for clients at the day centre, the children's team and the bereavement group, as well as supporting events where possible. Feedback from our trips show that these trips are well received and often tick off something on a bucket list.

One review from the children's trip said *"It was great and amazing, I loved it. I would do anything to come again"*. Doesn't that say it all?

We are proud to say that we have now adopted the Primrose Hospice as our charity of choice. Last week we met with some of the team to celebrate our adoption and to discuss ways we can support their fundraising events. One event under discussion is our role in facilitating corporate groups doing the Tardebigge flight lock challenge raising money for the hospice. Always a favourite.

Many of us will be aware of the Primrose Hospice based in St Godwalds Road, Bromsgrove, the Primrose Hospice shops, their fundraising activities which are well documented on social media and in the local papers, but may not be aware that in order to provide their services to the patients and their families in North Worcestershire they need to raise over £1.95 million each year.

There is also The Primrose Unit at the Princess of Wales hospital which provides specialist palliative care for up to 6 patients. I can vouch for the wonderful care they provide both to the patients and their families.

It was with all this in mind that the 'Cecilia' team wanted to show their support and the way we have been able to do this was to offer trips to their service users. We have been able to take out groups of patients who are receiving care at the day hospice, young people attending the children's centre and people from the bereavement group. We have received such positive feedback it's with pleasure that we're welcoming them back on board this year.

The 'Cecilia' volunteers were in agreement that we'd like to adopt the Primrose Hospice as our charity of choice. So this was the proposal we put to the main committee and without hesitation this was agreed unanimously. We, as a charity, can't offer financial support and we may not wish to do a skydive or a Santa run but we can do what we do best...which is to provide trips, support events and facilitate ideas for the fundraising team to turn into activities.

We have kindly been given signage to display on 'Cecilia' by Lee Guest at GUEST ESTATE AGENTS, St Godwalds Road, Bromsgrove, who are also supporters of Primrose.

We are proud to support

**primrose
hospice**
Care Compassion Community

Registered Charity No: 700272



Bradley Canal Restoration

Annual General Meeting

26th April 2023 (7:00pm)

The third AGM of the Society will be held in 'The Backroom' at Café Metro in Bilston on 26th April 2023 (starting at 7.00pm).

The main business will be to approve the Trustees Report and Annual Accounts, and to elect members to serve as Officers and the Executive Committee.

Following the formal business, we shall be joined by Graham Worton who leads on the Black Country Geopark project. Graham will give an update on the Geopark project so far and where Bradley Canal fits in with future plans.

Café Metro, (The Backroom) Church Street, Bilston, WV14 0AH



Wildlife near Loxdale Sidings

Lapal Canal Trust News

The Lapal Canal Trust has been holding regular work parties particularly at the Halesowen end of the project. These have now rightly been suspended because of the bird nesting season.

Meanwhile at the Selly Oak end the 'Just Giving Fundraising Campaign' continues to raise money for the reopening of the bridge under Harborne Lane.



Help us open this towpath

We would love you to be able to walk through the tunnel under Harborne Lane.

Help us raise the £80K required via our Just Giving Campaign Page.

Thank You!



Please use the QR code to donate. Thank you!



This will give towpath users the enormous benefit of going from Selly Oak Park to the 'Battery Park' site, and vice versa, without having to manoeuvre a very busy main road.

Please visit the Just Giving Internet page below to find out more and donate if you can:

www.justgiving.com/campaign/openharbornelanetunnel?

For further details please visit: www.lapal.org

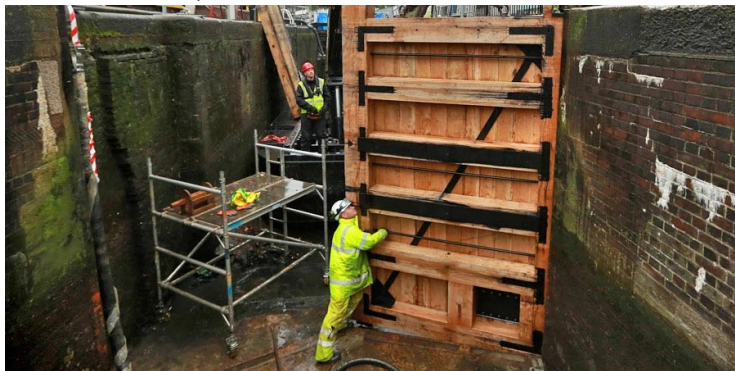
Despite the cold many thanks to Joe and his colleagues, of the Birmingham University Conservation Volunteers, for their help in litter picking and removing growth along the Canal route in Harborne Wharf. We expect to complete the link to the Worcester Birmingham Canal soon.



Canal & River Trust News: Richard Parry

A reflection on our funding challenges, by Chief Executive Richard Parry

As you read this, we are approaching the end of our extensive programme of winter maintenance and repair works to help protect and preserve the nation's historic waterways. This mammoth effort, delivered by skilled Trust employees and our contractor partners, and increasingly well-supported by active volunteers, consists of vital work on nearly 50 waterways across the country.



Workers fixing a lock gate in a drained canal

It is made up a wide range of projects including repairing masonry and brickwork, fixing leaks, replacing over 100 lock gates and delivering a range of running repairs to dozens more.

These works often involve temporarily draining canals and stopping boats and we do this during the quieter winter months (despite the short days and the harsher

weather) to minimise disruption in the warmer summer months when demand for using the network is at its greatest.

Vital programme of major works

In addition to the more familiar canal maintenance works, we are also continuing a vital programme of major works to improve reservoir safety and strengthen the resilience of high-risk embankments, culverts and other significant historic structures.

All those who use and enjoy the waterways network will be aware that the pressures it faces are as great as they ever have been. Whilst the pioneering canal engineers from 250 years ago delivered a network that has stood the test of time, they would never have imagined how their canals would be playing such an essential role in our society today – for people's leisure and recreation, supporting local economies, a haven for wildlife and nature, and enhancing the health and wellbeing of millions of people. They equally couldn't have known how severe the impact from a changing climate would be. The network today plays an important part in the nation's water and utilities infrastructure as well as in protecting communities. But more frequent and intense extreme weather events – heavy rainfall and droughts alike - are exposing the network's vulnerability.

Impact of climate change

This expanded work programme is facing rapidly rising costs, often increasing by more than the headline inflation figures. Conversely, many of the Trust's income sources are growing more slowly and our annual Government grant, which is fixed with no allowance made for inflation over the period to 2027, is therefore reducing significantly in real terms. Beyond 2027, it now seems very likely that the Government will seek to reduce its annual grant contribution, piling further pressure on the resources available to look after the network in the longer-term.

Whilst we are fortunate to have growing numbers of fantastic volunteers and active partner

groups, and our funds benefit from generous donors, there is a growing gap between the resources we have available and the cost of giving the whole network the care and attention it requires whilst also meeting all of our legal obligations.

As the charity that cares for this historic network, we are committed to, and intensely focussed on, our core mission to keep the network operational, safe and available for people and boats, for today and for future generations.

Difficult choices ahead

But that means that there are difficult choices ahead; as a stand-alone charity, we have to work within the funds we have available. We have a substantial endowment but that delivers a vital long-term income stream and has to be conserved if the waterways are to have a secure future. So we can only do the work we can afford within the available funds and that means we have to prioritise carefully and be both innovative and efficient in delivering our work, seeking to find ways to save costs and raise funds wherever possible.

Even before we finish this year's programme of winter works, colleagues at the Trust are looking further ahead, putting in place plans and prioritising where we target our work for next winter and beyond whilst we also look hard at how we can do things most efficiently. We are clear that the core spend on the infrastructure, the work that maintains the basic fabric of the waterways, is the priority; the canals themselves are the foundation on which all the benefits – whether for boats, communities, people or wildlife – are built; without that, the nation's canal network would once again fall into a cycle of decline, become neglected and derelict.

Come together for our wonderful waterways

Whilst we continue to do our best to deliver the service you expect, we need the wider canal community to come together to make the case for a sustainable future for our waterways and, in particular, to secure the funds that it needs. In the meantime, some of the difficult choices we will be forced to make, to ensure our funds stretch as far as possible, may not be popular, but we will continue to act in the long-term interests of the waterways and the people who benefit from them. We're grateful for all the support you give and urge you to continue to support us in speaking up for our vital waterways.

Other Canal & River Trust News

Thank you to Canal & River Trust in allowing our society narrowboat 'Cecilia' to moor by Bridge 60 in Alvechurch. A new sign has been put in place. We are hoping this will become permanent very soon.



And another thank you to C&RT for displaying St. Richard's Canal Festival posters in all their notice boards along the Worcester & Birmingham Canal.

Birmingham Canals Navigation Society

Phil Clayton writes....

'IRIS'

Early in 2022, Denis Pike, a friend and supporter of the Worcester- Birmingham and Droitwich Canals Society, put a photo on social media showing two iron plates carrying numbers 1751 and 2191. He'd found them while tidying his garage, was unsure about what they were but was happy for them to find an appropriate home. Thanks to the wonders of Facebook and knowledgeable canal folk, they were quickly identified as BCN boat plates originally affixed to Iris (1751) and Ampic II (2191). A little further research in BCNS archives revealed that the Wulfruna Coal Company's 'Iris' had been gauged at Tipton on 24 February 1933. She was 88 feet long, 7' 9½" wide and could carry 58 tons – an 'Ampton or Wharf boat. These were constructed oversize, as they passed through no locks, to carry coal from the Cannock pits to locations along the Old Main Line, the limiting factor to their size being the turn at Horseley Fields. Iris was built of wood and possessed a cabin.

The Wulfruna Coal Company was originally established at Bridge Wharf, by the Bilston Road Bridge in Wolverhampton in 1850, but in the 1930s, acquired another site at Minerva Wharf off Horseley Fields in the town. The firm is still trading – one of the last of scores of canal side coal yards around the BCN – and I know the present proprietor, David Walker. I contacted David who said the boat had been one of two tied up in the arm beside the yard after boat deliveries had ceased in the 1960s, but that its gauging plates had mysteriously disappeared several decades ago. He mentioned the boats sometimes being surreptitiously visited by canal enthusiasts!

Time, holidays and other commitments intervened but I eventually managed to arrange to meet Denis for him to hand over the plates. This happened at the Society's November Rally at the Pumphouse and, because Covid was an issue, it was reminiscent of a scene from Eyam during the Plague year with Denis outside the gate handing them through to me in the yard! I then met David one lunchtime in the Great Western pub near Horseley Fields and handed over Iris's plate to add to his collection of Wulfruna memorabilia.

Further delving in BCNS Archives reveals that, during September 1934, the Wulfruna Coal Company of Waterloo Road Wolverhampton, paying tolls through their own account, carried 532 tons of slack from Brownhills Colliery to the Manor Iron Works (possibly Manor Rolling Mills, part of Joseph Sankey's Works on the Bradley Arm), 311 tons of coal from Brownhills Colliery to Minerva Wharf and 62 tons of coal from Minerva Wharf to the Manor Iron Works.

Information relating to Tickets issued in September 1937 at



***Wulfruna Coal Arm & Yard
photo: Keith Hodgkins 1975***



***Boat plate and David
Walker in the Great Western***

Birchills Toll Office shows Iris passing through Birchills six times between the 7th and 28th of the month on trips between Brownhills Colliery and Minerva Wharf. She was carrying loads of coal weighing between 42tons 15cwt and 47tons 10cwt often composed of different grades. For example while on September 7th she had been gauged at 3pm carrying 42tons 15 cwt of Nuts, on the 24th she stopped at Birchills at 11.22am and the load was 42tons 15cwt made up of ½ Washed Peas, ¼ Washed Slack and ¼ Nuts. The boat steerer's name is not listed though the Toll Clerk is named, usually R.Mallaband but on one occasion R.A.Guest, while the initials of the employee gauging the boat is also included.

Incidentally, 2191, was gauged at Tipton on 7th June 1944. She belonged to the Shropshire, Worcestershire and Staffordshire Electric Power Company of Stourport and was a wooden cabin boat, 70' 6" long, 7' 1" wide with a 39 ton capacity. She was no doubt employed on the Power Station coal traffic. Any further information about Ampic II would be gratefully received.

There is a vast amount of information in the BCNS Archives just waiting to be unlocked!

Some sources used...

BCN Gauging Registers: compiled by Pete Harrison from sets held by BCNS

BCN Traffic, Sept 1934 : monthly account noting firms, toll payers, origin of load, destination, type of load and weight.

Slag Tickets: September 1937 record of traffic passing Birchills Toll Office

BCN Deed Plans: detailed plans of the BCN largely dating from late C19

And thanks to Denis Pike, David Walker and Martin O'Keeffe.

Alarum Theatre

Changes afoot (or possibly afloat) for Alarum.

Farewell to Heather and Welcome Joanna! Since Kate Saffin and Heather Wastie (*below*) started working together in February 2016 as Alarum Theatre and then Alarum Productions, our achievements and adventures have been plentiful. It's been an incredible seven years. Now, Alarum Productions is entering an exciting new phase and, for personal reasons, Heather is stepping down as Director. We hope she will pop up for a workshop or a performance from time to time but, sadly, she won't be involved in the day to day running of the company.

Heather sends her best wishes to everyone involved in future Alarum projects. "I'm very pleased to see the Braunston project blossoming and look forward to seeing it come to fruition later this year. I know it will be a great success, and it will be good to watch it unfolding without having the pressure of organising it!"

We are welcoming a new director, Joanna Matthews, who is currently an important part of the Braunston 1920s:2020s project as Creative Producer.

She is a Performing Arts specialist with a range of experience in administration and arts admin, publicity, direction and production management. She and Kate have worked together on a number of projects and she brings an incredible range of skills to Alarum.

Her current role is as Creative Producer for the Braunston 1920s:2020s project but she is also a writer and dramaturg (MA in Writing for Performance and Dramaturgy, Goldsmiths University) so, in addition she will be supporting the writers with script development. And, finally, making sure that everything we do in the project (research, writing, performances) is as accessible to everyone in the Braunston community as possible.

<https://alarumproductions.org.uk/>



Society Meeting: February 2023

Keith Hodgkins 'Wartime Boatwomen'

The February meeting as usual took place in the meeting room behind 'The Weighbridge' where the many present were treated to the true story of wartime boatwomen working the canals between Worcester, Tipton and beyond. Daphne March and her daughter Margaret, from a professional background whose family had actually purchased the boat for weekends and a little cargo carrying, undertook to skipper 'Heather Bell' during the Second World War in order to support the war effort as so many boatmen had been called up into the forces.

They transported goods such as flour and coal during the war years which Keith described in great detail with many illustrations. Some of the photographs showed scenes on the canals no longer in situ. For example, the warehouse on the site of what is now Coronation Gardens in Tipton Green Basin and the Tipton Flight of locks and Toll End Communication Canal. These pictures can also be seen in the Summer 2012 edition of 'Narrowboat' magazine. '58' has got access to this so if any readers are interested in seeing please let us know.

Keith took several questions and comments including the actual boat itself 'Heather Bell' being moored by the University of Birmingham in the 1980s. A fascinating insight into times long gone and a great reminder to us all of the really tough life that these boat women undertook on behalf of the war effort – *many thanks Keith for a very well received presentation.*

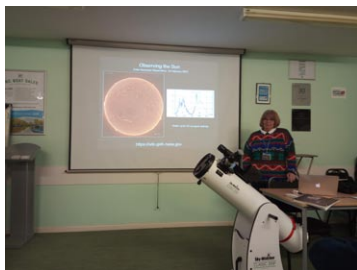


Society Meeting: March 2023

Bromsgrove Astronomical Society

The March meeting was as different again with the theme being delivered by the 'Bromsgrove Astronomical Society'. Those present were given some illustrated background information about the different kinds of telescopes and what to look for on clear nights and as luck would have it, the night was clear. Members then went outside where some telescopes were already set up so that everyone who wanted to could observe the moon from a seemingly nearer perspective.

A very different sort of meeting but nevertheless very enjoyable with those present showing their appreciation. '58' offers its thanks to Denis Pike for organising such variety for the membership.



Monthly Meetings

Tuesday 4th April 2023

Roger Butler makes a return after almost 9 years. He has a new talk entitled Wonders of the West Country. Cornwall, Devon and parts of Somerset were completely stand-alone from the rest of the canal network. They had completely different styles of engineering and solutions to create navigations. Little known canals such as Bude, Rolle, Liskeard and Looe, Stover, Glastonbury and Chard will all be examined here.

Tuesday 9th May (Note - not the 2nd May)

to be confirmed.....

Hopefully Gavin Hawkins of Bradley Canal Restoration Trust will visit to give an update on efforts to restore this short route through the Black Country

Meetings are held in the meeting room behind The Weighbridge, Scarfield Hill, Alvechurch B48 7SQ. 7.45pm start.

Free admission. Small charge for hot drink and biscuits.

Non members very welcome.

For those members who only receive a printed copy of '58': please go to our website for the most up to date information.

www.wbdcs.org.uk

St. Richard's Canal Festival

This is a call to ACTION! We need volunteers for the St. Richard's Festival please!!

Things break down into a number of stages. We need volunteers for all these stages so please don't hesitate to let me know if you are available for any, or part of the dates below:

STAGE 1. We cruise Cecilia down the flights to Droitwich.

The first part of this stage is a 'Celebrity Lock Challenge' on Thursday April 20th with staff from the Primrose Hospice. We want to sell them The Lock Challenge down the Tardebigge flight as a way to raise funds. This applies to all our members as well! So if you want to see how these things work and have a good time on the flight. Come along and join us for the day.

We cast off from Alvechurch at 9.30 and enter Lock 58 at 11am.

The second part of Stage 1 is the trip from the Queens Head to Droitwich and mooring at Netherwich Basin on Friday April 21st.

STAGE 2. Setting up the festival on Tuesday 25th April, Wednesday 26th April and Thursday 27th April. This is when we need anyone who is capable of breathing, putting two words together and taking directions. If you fulfil these requirements then please come along on any of the following days and help us put the festival together. Added to this is the chance to collect equipment and see parts of the Black Country you never knew existed!

STAGE 3. The Festival Weekend on Friday 28th April, Saturday 29th April, Sunday 30th April. We need volunteers to help us ensure the festival runs like clockwork, from opening up early – looking after the general public – to closing down and erecting the security fencing at night.

STAGE 4. Monday 1st May - The Great Droitwich Duck Race. Enjoy the excitement of running the biggest ever Duck Race in Droitwich. You could sell duck race tickets or even carry the Jemima mummy duck around the show ground and introduce her to all the darling children? Ask Ed, he loved it last year!

STAGE 5. Tuesday 2nd May. Clear the festival site.

Workboat 'Wanderer'

Sadly the Canal & River Trust community workboat 'Wanderer' has now left us. We have taken her down to Diglis for C&RT to look after her. Since we last reported on her progress she has spent time on the north side of Wast Hills Tunnel clearing the water of everything from lighter gas cylinders to shopping trolleys. We even found the front of a motor boat hiding in the reeds.

We also cleared the winding hole at Hopwood of the branches from a fallen tree. Unfortunately the tree trunk was too big for us to move. However, we did notify C&RT who have said they will get contractors to remove it. The winding hole is now available for turning if you happen to have a maximum 70ft canal boat available to turn.

One of our first jobs was to remove floating pennywort from water. C&RT have told us they have put weevils on the weed in the dead arm! I have looked everywhere but can't find a weevil anywhere.

Our main occupation was clearing overhanging branches from the banks of the cut and removing anything lurking in the waters that may be a danger to navigation! We have made a good start in returning the banks of the canal to the standard they were at before the lockdown. We will be back next year to complete the job.

See a selection of photos from our work parties on the next page.

Volunteer News



Volunteer News

'Cecilia'

Our boat has had the bottom blacked by Malcolm from Crafted Boats and, as he said she was in good condition, didn't need any sacrificial anodes replacing. So all was fine, the dry dock was filled and we brought her home to Alvechurch where she has a new official mooring. Due to hard work by Ed and our Chair, we have agreed with C&RT that we can have a new official mooring place immediately north of Bridge 60. This means that when we take her out we can reserve our mooring position with a sign and be confident there will be a mooring for us when we get back. This also came with an agreement as to access for transport to the area. C&RT are arranging to provide additional moorings further along by extending the pilings.

Sheds

With apologies to Wendy - we need to talk about sheds. Our little plastic storage shed that we keep our garden kit in at Tardebigge yard needs replacing. Our metal store shed at Alvechurch needs putting on a proper footing. So the plan is (*are you still awake Wendy?*) to move the metal shed to Tardebigge and then rebuild the foundation for a new shed at Alvechurch; obtain a new shed to be erected at Alvechurch but to do this we need someone with a pickup or trailer to move small amounts of building materials; a shed that is new to us 6ft x 5ft would be ideal and some 2ft x 2ft concrete garden paving slabs. If you have any of the above or can help in anyway please let me know. (*You can wake up now Wendy!*)

Flora and Fauna: Alvechurch

We worked together with C&RT's Emma Cowell, the Ecologist Pollinator Recovery Project Officer, to plant the longitudinal orchard along the towpath at Alvechurch (*photos page 17*).

In this we were assisted by the children and staff from the Alvechurch and Bordesley Nursery School (*based at The Station House, Alvechurch*) and our very own biodiversity expert Mary Green. We would particularly like to thank Joceline Whittaker who organised the local nursery children to join us on the day. They have promised to keep an eye on the saplings and water them from time to time.





Flora and Fauna: Tardebigge

Following the planting at Alvechurch we received a number of apple tree saplings that we have planted in the garden at Tardebigge. We also continue our work at Tardebigge clearing the bracken and preparing the area for spring.



Volunteer News

Volunteer Coordinator Neil Franklin writes.....

On behalf of the society I recently attended two meetings.

Canal Restoration Conference Saturday 18th March

Held in the ornate rooms above the Winding Wheel Theatre, Chesterfield (the place with the Crooked spire).



Winding Wheel Meeting Rooms



Julie Sharman CRT Chief Operating Officer



**George Rogers Development Manager
Chesterfield Canal Trust**



**Evie Challinor Lead Ecologist & Environmental
Scientist, Richard Harrison Project Manager**

(Photos kindly supplied by Rod Autones)

This small conference was run by the Inland Waterways Association and Canal & River Trust.

The day was commenced by Julie Sharman, Chief Operations Manager at the trust, who told us that "there was nothing volunteers can't do!" This is true but they just need money and time!

We were then introduced to George Rogers, who is the Development Manager at the Chesterfield Canal and directly employed by them. This was the theme of the day. George made it clear that it's not easy restoring a canal even if you have the money and the support of both the Local and County Councils. Chesterfield have all of this and in George the person to get it done. He did however, run through the labyrinth of consultants and contractors they need to have on board and control, just to get a small section of canal re-opened.

The Chesterfield Canal was opened in 1777 and is similar to the Lapal Canal in that it has a tunnel with a collapsed roof in the middle of it. They have parked this temporarily in order to address in the future, and who can blame them? The big difference is that they have numerous land owners to deal with and it is in an area that needs regeneration. We saw this when we went

out see a section at Staveley that they have restored and is in water - an excellent piece of engineering in a past industrial landscape where the Stanton and Staveley works once was. They used to make pipes and fittings and I remember their catalogue for cast iron drain fittings. Does anyone remember Viking Johnson Couplers known as VJs? They made them as well.

The Chesterfield Canal Trust certainly has their work cut out but we wish them well I am sure in time they will get the job done. If you want to know more there are some excellent videos on YouTube about the restoration of the canal.

The second part of the conference was about Environmental Sustainability - a big subject that is fraught with difficulty. Every operation that is undertaken on a waterway has an environmental consequence. This must be taken into account and addressed, including cray fish and frogs, and the environment they need to survive. The discussion was led by specialist ecologist and environmental scientist Evie Challinor, alongside Richard Harrison C&RT project manager, who I know from the Diglis fish pass project. Both of these specialists work on the Montgomery canal and I wish them well. Not only do they have to deal with environmental legislation but also need to take into account the local community and the environmental evangelists who will never be satisfied no matter what they do. Some seem to think of only allowing horse drawn boats on a newly reopened section of canal because the plants in the cut may not be able to deal with the movement of water from the propellers of powered canal craft.

This was a good day, meeting people who want to restore and improve our canals. Thank you to both IWA and C&RT.

Canal & River Trust User Forum

This was a totally different meeting in the evening with the Trust at Aston Fields Social Club in Bromsgrove. We sent our questions in and they were at the top of the list, so well done to C&RT for that. The main take away was that C&RT are cash strapped and are having to make decisions in this environment. Tardebigge is not going anywhere (at least not in the foreseeable future) so don't worry.

They did put weevils in the floating pennywort at the dead arm. You can't see them because they live inside the plant. We hope to get Charles Hughes their Environmental Scientist to come to talk to us about these creatures and other environmental challenges they face.

The Trust is fully aware of the Lime Kilns and other features at Tardebigge as well as the generally built heritage that is the canal system. They are keen to work with us on this. They are shortly taking on a new heritage officer who they are sure will be keen to visit the area and talk to us about the future.

Finally we asked them about the recently confirmed proposal to charge for events held on the canals. They said it would be only be a charge for the administration costs of processing applications. We now know its £90 + vat for events that host more than 25 participants.

Summary of Upcoming Events:

- St. Richard's Canal Festival: 28th April - 1st May
- Alvechurch Beer Festival: 19th - 20th May
- Alvechurch Picnic in the Park: 28th May
- Selly Oak Festival: 17th June
- Heritage Open Days: September 2023

If you can volunteer to help out at any of these events then please contact Neil Franklin. Details on page 4.

Volunteer News

Community Workboat 'Wanderer'

A recent report published to the C&RT Volunteers Worcestershire Facebook page.



'Wanderer' passes through Tardebigge flight on it's way back to Diglis at the end of the current four month attachment to the Worcester-Birmingham & Droitwich Canals Society. Since Dec 1st the boat has been kept busy by a variety of volunteer crew members clearing floating debris, litter picking, and cutting back off-side overgrowth.

As the summer season approaches, clearing the stretch of the W&B up to and including King's Norton Junction has presented a few challenges, not the least of which was clearing hundreds of butane gas cartridges continually

dumped in the cut just to the north of Wast Hill Tunnel. It really makes you wonder!

Many thanks to my helming colleagues Neil and Ken, and many thanks from us all to the various volunteers who have crewed work-days, sometimes in cold and less than pleasant weather. Too many to list, but you know who you are. Now it's back to nb 'Cecilia' for a new season of Charity Community Trip Boat operation. And thanks to our colleagues at C&RT for the support of 'Wanderer' operations over the last 4 months.

Ed Butcher

Worcestershire Waterways User Forum

Newsletter: March 2023

From the Chair: Recent years, particularly during the Covid lockdown periods and recovery, have seen a decline in willing attendance at Forum meetings, not helped by various authorities not having attendance high on their list of priorities! (Except Worcs. City). Our objectives could possibly be met more effectively by fewer actual forum meetings and more circulated information that might be interesting or useful. To that end, here are a few topics of concern, with links to find out more:

Canal & River Trust: The Minister for DEFRA Rebecca Pow has still not announced the financial support for the coming years, which was promised last July – then delayed until November – promising announcement 'forthwith'. Now we expect to hear in March. Just how much longer must we wait! Meanwhile locally, IWA have received an update to CRT's structure and personnel list, since the West Midlands Forum meeting last year (well attended by boating groups).

Environment Agency: The Environment Agency is under fire on a number of fronts – spectacularly underfunded, their navigations are experiencing neglect, and at this moment in time water quality in rivers and streams is being noted as being polluted to record levels. The lack of action 'policing' of offenders (agricultural as well as water authorities) is resulting in sewage and intensive farming run-off being effectively uncontrolled. This is unsatisfactory, to a criminal level. Our River Severn is affected by effluent entering up-stream as well as in our own county. Please support any campaign of your choice to address this, as there are several.

Worcester City: The Riverside Park project has been running a few years now, albeit with a modest start but achieving the 'Green Flag' status that was sought. As part of the ongoing commitment to the Green Flag award process they held a stakeholder update meeting for the

Riverside Park on 15th March 2023. This was held upstairs at the Guildhall Worcester in the Assembly Room at 10:30am.

Droitwich Waterways Trust: Activity is limited currently due to both Droitwich Canals being closed for CRT to carry out maintenance work. The Pamela May will be providing short trips at an Easter Kids Fun Fest which is being held in Vines Park on Easter Saturday. The Trust has assisted with planting trees between the M5 and the Junction Canal, and with some vegetation clearance using the Wanderer workboat. Unfortunately no work has been carried out to control the reeds on the Barge Canal so far this year.

Worcester-Birmingham & Droitwich Canals Society: The Society's trip boat Cecilia has undergone a refit as a day boat over the last few years. Last autumn she was repainted at Evesham Marina. A number of helms, crew and supporters accompanied her on the 47 mile journey to and from Evesham, involving 64 locks (9 on the river), 3 lift bridges and the over 1.5 miles long Wast Hill Tunnel. After six weeks away Cecilia returned to Alvechurch to a champagne reception attended by Marc Worrall, Chairman of Alvechurch Parish Council as well as WBDCS members and volunteers.

Earlier in 2022 the Society had been designated as an Accredited Training Centre of the National Community Boat Association. Ian McGarr and Ed Butcher are the Society's certified trainers and have fully trained 3 new helms already. The Society offers the full range of training from the NCBA.

The Society is again organising St Richard's Festival in Vines Park, Droitwich Spa from 5pm on 28th April until 5pm on Monday 1st May. Information is at www.strichardsfestival.co.uk and booking forms can be downloaded from www.wbdc.org.uk. Private boat entry is free (£5 for a plaque) and trade boat entry is £25 inclusive of a plaque. A real ale and cider bar is open all weekend along with live entertainment, finishing with the 'Great Droitwich Duck Race' at 4:30pm on Monday 1st May.

The Worcester Canal Corridor Group: was established in 2017 to bring together partner organisations from Diglis to 6 Ways to find ways to work together to improve the canal for everyone. It meets quarterly, usually on Zoom though the May meeting in 2022 was held at Diglis Island and included a visit to the fish pass project. At the latest meeting in January the City Council and voluntary group representatives discussed progress with various initiatives taking place within the Corridor. Paul Wilkinson, CRT Ecologist, described progress with the linear orchard project.

The Inland Waterways Association's local Branch still hold social meetings at Coombeswood (Halesowen) and Worcestershire members often meet up in the Wyre Forest District for work parties and also to support other work such as the Lapal project on the Worcs & Birmingham canal. This year's Festival of Water will be on 26/27 August at Pellsall, to the north of Birmingham (remember the successful one at Perdiswell?). More electric boats are being built in the Wyre Forest District. The IWA Report 'Waterways for Today' published in September, has been well received by waterways organisations and Parliament alike, proving useful for information and data. Available both in print and on-line. www.waterways.org

Stourport: The first meeting of a group to promote and apply for Heritage Inland Port status for Stourport will take place on 18th April. Local organisations are involved.

River Avon: We were pleased to see an article in Waterways World February issue which forms a good guide to the Stratford river, 30 miles of which lie in Worcestershire.

*David W Struckett, Chairman (dstruckett@aol.com)
Margaret Rowley, Secretary (amargaretrowley@aol.com)*

Bank Holiday Monday
1st May 4.30pm

TICKETS
ONLY
£1

Duck **Race**

Vines Park,
Droitwich Spa

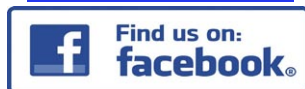
1st
prize
£100

2nd
prize
£50

3rd
prize
£25

Available from the Worcester-Birmingham & Droitwich Canal Society stall during the festival

 **WYCHAVON**
DISTRICT COUNCIL
good services, good value



Promoter: David Wheeler, 13 Harvington Road, Bromsgrove B60 2BA

EASTER VINTAGE GATHERING & MODEL SHOW

Stoke Prior Sports & Country Club
Westonhall Road, Stoke Prior, Bromsgrove, B60 4AL

Sat 8th & Sun 9th

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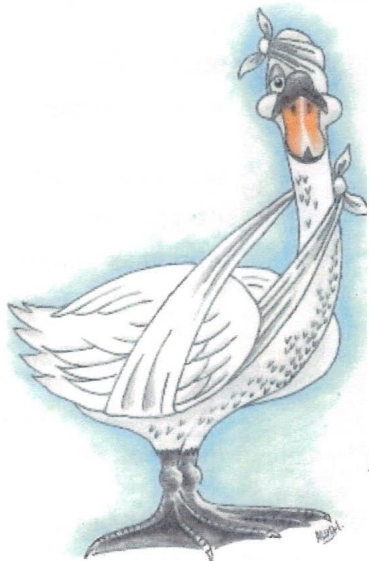
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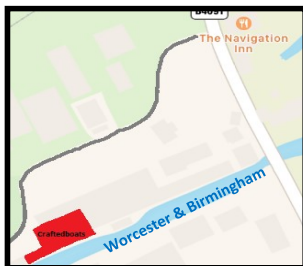
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Our friends and society members from Bridge 35 Chandlers have decided, after several years, to sell their well-respected shop at Hanbury Wharf. If any readers know of anyone interested please ask them to contact Jackie and John directly.



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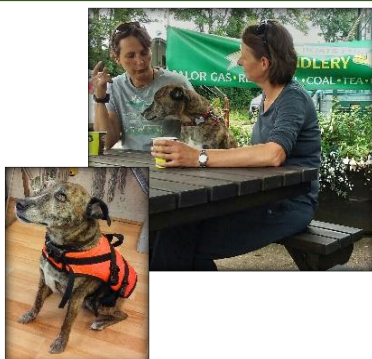
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If you are interested in canals, angling, boats, boat crewing, natural history, walking, cycling, photography, industrial archaeology, local history, canal work parties, preservation and enhancement of the environment as well as meeting up with like-minded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

We hold our regular monthly meetings at the Alvechurch Boat Centre, Scarfield Wharf, Alvechurch, B48 7SQ (*just behind the award winning Weighbridge pub*) on the first Tuesday of the month at 7.45pm (disability compliant). If you are in the least bit curious then please come along, as non-members are always welcome (*we publish the programme on our website, Facebook and Twitter pages*). We usually go on summer walks in July and August.

Presentations have included The Bridgewater Canal, Birmingham Roundhouse Restoration, Cotswold Canal Restoration, Idle Women, The Cadbury Story, Lapal Canal Trust Restoration, Hereford & Gloucester Canal Restoration, The Montgomery Canal, The Wiltshire & Berkshire Canal, Stourbridge Extension Canal, and Chance's Glassworks.

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.

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 (*fully crewed*) for use by groups or individuals for half day and day trips (*Terms & Conditions Apply*).

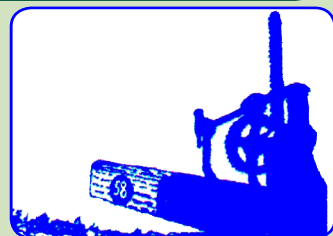
We hope to welcome as many new faces as possible from members of the community.

Please visit our website: wbdcs.org.uk
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