

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'*



*Members of Hopwood W.I. enjoy a trip on our
society community narrowboat 'Cecilia'*



The Inland
Waterways
Association

Keeping our waterways alive

Corporate Member



Worcester-Birmingham
& Droitwich
Canals Society



www.wbdcs.org.uk

Issue 569 Aug/Sep 2023

Monthly Meetings

Summer Walk

Tuesday 1st August 2023

**A Walk and Guided Tour
around Dunnage Woods
(close to the Shortwood Tunnel)**

Meet at The Weighbridge, 7.15pm.

Meetings

5th September 2023: AGM followed by 'guest speaker', **Danny Spike**, chatting to us about the restoration of the Droitwich Canals.

3rd October 2023: A chance to meet West Midlands Regional Director of Canal & River Trust **Adnan Saif**. He will be briefing us on how C&RT is performing locally, forthcoming plans and answering our concerns. Hopefully he will be joined by local manager **Gemma Hessey**.

7th November 2023: **Tunnel Steam Tugs** on The Worcester & Birmingham Canal - a presentation by **Cath Turpin**.

*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

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CONTENTS

Page 2:	Monthly Meetings/Walks.
Page 4:	Society Contacts.
Page 5:	Chair's Notes.
Page 6-7:	Editorial.
Page 7:	A Donation in Memory of a Loved One. Shop Report.
Page 8-9:	Nature Notes.
Page 10-11:	Canal & River Trust News.
Page 12:	BCNS News.
Page 13:	History Corner.
Page 14:	Report of the June Meeting.
Page 15:	Report of July's Walk.
Page 16-17:	Volunteer News.
Page 18:	'Cecilia' News.
Page 18-19:	Heritage Open Days. Selly Oak Festival.
Page 20-22:	Lapal Canal Trust News.
Page 22:	Did you Know? Below Hanbury Wharf – a poem.

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

www.facebook.com/wbdcs.org.uk

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

View videos on our [YouTube channel](#)

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

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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 start with the news that DEFRA have decided to reduce the amount given to the Canal & River Trust has been reduced. The reduction is not insignificant, it amounts to £millions over a 10 year period and could well have a major effect on the maintenance of our canals. A steering group from IWA, AWCC, RYA BM and NABO (National Association of Boat Owners) are organising a campaign cruise into Birmingham on the weekend of 12th/13th August (see page 9) in support of a campaign to get an increase in the support for our inland waterways. Letters and emails to MPs would help and a draft letter (*reprinted below*) has been posted on both our website and Facebook page.

Our Annual General Meeting will take place in September and as the readers of '58' will know we are looking for someone to take over the running of our shop. The main aim is to increase the profile and knowledge of the Worcester- Birmingham & Droitwich Canals Society and whoever takes over this valued position will have the responsibility of what they do and which events they agree to support. Volunteer assistance is always available.

Hopefully we will try and get our regular monthly meetings onto Zoom so that other members, who cannot make the first Tuesday of each month, are given the opportunity of joining in. The technicals are being sorted but I know that one problem is that sometimes the speaker does not like his or her talk going out on Zoom.

I hope you all enjoy the rest of the Summer.

David Wheeler

I am emailing as your constituent to ask for your support to prevent the long-term closure of parts of our country's canal network. You will be aware that Defra recently announced a new financial settlement for the Canal & River Trust, the charity tasked by government to care for and manage safely 2000 miles of inland waterways in England and Wales.

Whilst the long-term commitment is welcomed, this new government grant settlement represents almost a halving of real-terms public funding for canals in the ten years from 2027 compared with recent years – a total real terms funding cut of over £300 million. This comes as maintenance costs for ageing canal infrastructure – 250-year-old locks, aqueducts, reservoirs, embankments – is increasing due to climate change with more periods of drought and extreme storm events. This poses a significant risk to the care and maintenance of our canals and will ultimately lead to their decline and closures.

The UK's canal network is among the finest industrial heritage in the world and is highly valued by communities everywhere. It offers vital access to nature and spaces to be active and healthy for ten million people, supports 80,000 jobs and contributes £1.5 billion annually to the economy. It provides an important home for wildlife, running through urban areas where green space is so limited. The Trust also acts as a navigation authority for leisure boats, paddle sports and for the thousands of boaters living on the water as well as anglers and towpath users. Our canals have never been more popular.

It is crucial that we do not allow one of our finest national assets and important national infrastructure to fall into disrepair.



Editor's Notes

Hello Readers

Here we are again with your favourite magazine and what a lot we have to say this time. Firstly the usual topic, the weather; June was described in the media as the hottest on record, far too hot to paint any boats and with the subsequent lowering of some canal levels, making cruising somewhat of a challenge in certain places on the system. In fact some areas even had boat movement restrictions in force in order to conserve water supplies. Then along comes July and what a turn around that has proved to be. Too early to say yet whether this will be described as the wettest July on record but that may be a general view as we write. Needless to say that all of the thunderous showers have once again topped up the canals with some instances of unsurprising overflows being recorded. More challenges for those who still need to paint!

The last actual live meeting was very well attended and was presented by Gavin Hawkins of the Bradley Canal Restoration Trust. Great talk and great interaction with those present but more information about that later on. The planned walk led by that intrepid leader and speaker, Danny Spike, took us along the old route of the Droitwich Junction Canal. We did this same walk a few years ago but it was affected by particularly wet weather. Guess what – same again this time round which may well have affected the attendance, but nevertheless was very enjoyable and informative hearing about what Droitwich actually looked like prior to the redevelopment that has covered up so much heritage. A report about this is featured further on. Our next organised walk is on August 1st from Alvechurch along the towpath to Shortwood Tunnel. Walkers will then be shown around Dunnage Woods by the current owners.

Your society has also been busy with the usual volunteer suspects organised by our society volunteer coordinator Neil Franklin. This has included Selly Oak Festival, several trips and maintenance tasks on 'Cecilia', work parties as well as the society's monthly committee meetings. Lynne organised the shop to be present with a bottle stall at the Primrose Hospice which proved to be very successful. Our friends at the Lapal Canal Trust have been very active again, Whitehouse Wharf official opening springing to mind, with reports on all of these and more further on.

Our next actual meeting, which hopefully should be 'hybrid', will be the society's Annual General Meeting, followed by another Danny Spike presentation about the Droitwich Canals restoration. The society has been operating without a secretary for some time now so we could really do with someone to put themselves forward for election please. We will also be looking for a person to take over the shop although committee has recently indicated that the actual workings of the stall will probably be reduced and so not the same as it has been before. New committee members are always welcome as fresh faces can often bring new ideas and perspectives towards the society, which is run for members by members. If anyone out there wants to find out more please just ask without any obligation at all. Support is always available if required.

Your society will also be involved in the festival at Bratch, near Wombourne, on the Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal on September 2nd and 3rd as well as the Tardebigge Heritage Open Weekend on September 9th and 10th. Once again more on these further on.

Hope to see as many of you as possible on the August walk, and the following month's AGM, and please do give some serious thought towards a committee position as we would not want to see the society contract in any way due to a lack of organising volunteers. Last but by no means least, a massive thank you once again to this edition's contributors. There would not be as much of a '58' without you!

Enjoy the read.

John Hemingway

A Donation in Memory of a Loved One.

A colleague of the editor has in the past given a donation to the society in memory of a still born grandchild. This very kind and sensitive action has been repeated for which the society is very grateful.

Donations in memory of Ava-Quinn Susannah Verrier-Griffiths. Born sleeping 19th January 2016. Greatly missed by her family. Our beautiful star in the sky. Shine bright little one.

If any of our readers are into folk music a relative (Cohen Braithwaite-Kilcoyne), who is a folk musician, wrote a song in memory of Ava-Quinn. Here is a link below to YouTube

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k-XNDuJuznI>

Shop Report

The stall has attended two events in recent weeks. Firstly, Denis Pike organised our annual visit to Selly Oak Festival (*see page 19 for photos*) in June with help from a number of volunteers. The badge making on offer proved to be as popular as ever, with over one hundred badges being made during the event. A large number of children went home very happy - proudly wearing their own unique hand-made badge. Locating the stall alongside that of the Lapal Canal Trust demonstrated our ongoing support for the restoration of the Dudley No2 Canal.

Two weeks later, the gazebos were out again, this time at the Primrose Hospice Summer Fayre in Bromsgrove. The shop was set up alongside our 'Pick a Bag' table. With better weather than last year, visitor numbers were up and we received plenty of interest on the day raising useful funds for the society.

The next booking for the stall is at Bratch Rally, near Wombourne, which will take place on Saturday 2nd and Sunday 3rd September. Plans are well underway, and Neil Franklin, who is organising the stall for this one, will be asking for support with the activities that he is planning. Please look out for further information from Neil and lend him a hand if you can. Last year, those of us who attended Bratch Rally spent two very enjoyable days at this friendly event, which is organised by the Staffs and Worcester Canal Society. If you have a couple of spare hours over the first weekend in September, why not head over to this iconic location near Wombourne and take a look.

At the time of writing there are no further bookings for the shop. As you may have read in the last edition of 58, I will be standing down as Shop Co-ordinator later in the year. I'm not sure what the future holds for the shop, but I do know that the society will continue to have a presence, in one form or another, at as many events around the Midlands as possible.

Lynne Laniosh
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'Nature Notes'

Mary Green

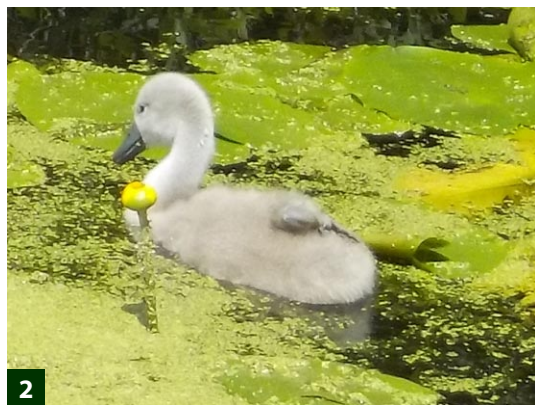
In May and June, I enjoyed two trips on Cecilia, with the different perspective on nature you get from the water rather than the towpath.

In May, our sunny journey from Alvechurch to Hopwood was among glorious May blossom. From the water, you can see clearly how the hedges are allowed to grow up into flower and fruit, providing good habitat for insects and birds. Even the stretch alongside back gardens, which usually has more clipped hedges, had grown out more this year and was beginning to show blossom.

We were delighted to see a pair of swans with five cygnets near Bittell, probably those that nest regularly nearby. On the walk back we saw the first elderflowers and fallen elm flowers. Elms survive on several stretches of the canal.

The June trip was even hotter and sunnier. We saw another pair of swans with two young cygnets, which are living near the Dead Arm, and there were moorhen chicks about.

The May blossom was over, but the canal side was bright with yellow flag irises, water-lilies and hemlock water-dropwort, the hedges with wild roses. We saw water-plantains coming into flower. This was a family outing and one of us, an avid ornithologist, noted 33 different species of bird in the short journey, culminating in the Mandarin drake which appeared just after I said we hadn't seen it for ages! This is testimony to the importance of the canal as a wildlife corridor. As well as water-birds there were dozens of woodland-edge species to be seen and heard, like black-caps and chiffchaffs – and thrushes and blackbirds non-stop.



Water birds' lives are fascinating. Swans are excellent parents, defending their young aggressively, away from other swans and predators. The cygnets take a long time to grow up, keeping their youthful plumage (that beautiful soft grey, not at all an "ugly duckling"!) until well into the winter. They stay with their parents till then and sometimes have to be driven out. Adults moult in summer.

Canada goslings are the opposite. They lose their soft yellow plumage quickly, grow fast, and by August look like adults. Geese look after goslings well, again both parents staying with them, though they mingle more with other Canada geese. The adults moult in summer and don't fly for a while, the young getting their adult plumage at the same time. Then at the end of August they have a pretend migration, wheeling around in large flocks and going nowhere.

Ducks come next as parents. Mallards nest in all kinds of odd places, have quite big broods and often lose several ducklings – they don't keep in control of them like the swans and geese, and the males don't stay around so long. You quite often see lost little ducklings in spring. They have a longer breeding season and this year I saw several big new broods in early July. The drakes moult and lose their bright colours in summer.

Moorhens seem to be the most accident-prone. They nest in fragile spots like branches over water and reeds near the towpath. They are scared easily and will leave the nest if threatened. Often their eggs are taken. They have small broods of lovely black chicks with enormous feet.

Predators are important too – herons eat birds' eggs as well as fish, and it's good to see them thriving. They nest in heronries by Bittell. And just off the canal here, on the reservoirs, are coots, grebes and egrets, with reed-warblers and reed-buntings in the fringes. And we all love to see a kingfisher flash past.



4



5



6

1. SWANS AND CYGNETS BY 'CECILIA'
2. CYGNET AND WATER LILY
3. HAWTHORN HEDGE
4. CANADA GOOSE FAMILY BY 'CECILIA'
5. HERON BY 'CECILIA'
6. WILD ROSE

Canal & River Trust News

In June the Government announced substantial funding cuts to the Canal and River Trust over the 2027-37 period. C&RT are encouraging the public to write to their MP to protest at what, in real terms, amounts to a £300million reduction in funding over the ten year period. Here is the link: Keep Canals Alive Canal & River Trust <https://bit.ly/47mIKvU>. The above is a major blow to the inland waterways most of which are at least 200 years old and if not maintained will seriously deteriorate or close in some places. The Inland Waterways Association, to which WB&DCS is affiliated, has campaigned long and hard to maintain, enhance and re-open abandoned canals. If these cuts go ahead there will undoubtedly be serious consequences for businesses and the general public.



Richard Parry, Canal & River Trust's CEO, writes:

"We have some important news to share with you about the future of the nation's canals which you may see in the press or wider communications over the next few days.

Our much-loved canal network, which is so important to us in different ways, relies on funding from multiple sources: government grant being one of them.

Today the Government has announced a new funding settlement, spanning from 2027 to 2037, to follow on from our current grant agreement. Whilst we welcome this further long-term commitment to the nation's historic waterways, the amount awarded represents a steep reduction in funding of over £300 million in real terms over a ten-year period. A reduction that will have devastating consequences.

Such a drastic decrease will inevitably result in a decline in the overall condition of our waterway network, and, alarmingly, the possibility of canal closures. It puts at risk invaluable natural habitats, historic infrastructure and cherished public spaces.

That's why we're reaching out to you, our passionate and engaged community, to join us in our mission to #KeepCanalsAlive.

Please take action by emailing your local MP today."

Email your MP

"I am sure you will share our disappointment at the Government's decision. We are determined to fight to change it, to re-state the case for the funding needed to keep canals alive and to sustain the wide range of benefits they deliver.

With your help, and that of all our other users, partners, boaters, volunteers, Friends and supporters, we will continue our campaign over the months ahead whilst also taking every opportunity to generate funding from other sources, and to deliver our work efficiently. Together we can keep canals alive and thriving for the future.

If you would like to make a contribution to our cause through a one-off donation, or to sign up to become a Friend, please visit www.canalrivertrust.org.uk/donate.

We need and value your support today more than ever."



Canal & River Trust

Making life better by water

Seven Top Tips to Spot a Kingfisher

If seeing a kingfisher in real life is on your tick-list, we've put together some handy tips that might help you spot these elusive creatures along our canals and rivers.

Kingfishers are a beautiful sight along our waterways, with many known 'hotspots' across the network. Measuring only 17cm and shy in nature, catching a glimpse of their unmistakable cobalt



A Kingfisher

blue and bright orange can be tricky - but not impossible.

1. Head somewhere where the water is slow, shallow and full of prey: From fish to newts, shrimps to aquatic insects, kingfishers have a fairly varied diet, so visiting a stretch of water where there's likely to be tempting delicacies will be a good start. They also prefer areas where they can easily see activity below the water – so

shallow, slow-flowing spots are also a good idea.

2. Visit the canal in the early morning: Kingfishers are early risers. They need to eat regularly, so often wake hungry and head out straight away in search of food.

3. Make the most of the spring and summer months: Kingfishers don't migrate abroad, so they'll be present on our waterways all year round. However, April -



Kingfisher with fish in its mouth.

August is when you're most likely to see one. This is during and after breeding season when they've got more mouths to feed.

At this time of year, a pair of kingfishers may have to catch at least 100 small fish every day to make sure their offspring are suitably fed, which means more time on the banks.

4. Look closely at low, overhanging branches: Kingfishers enjoy a spot of fishing from branches that overhang into the water, as these enable them to swoop at speed and catch their prey. Often, they perch on fairly slender stems, not too high up from the surface of the water.



Kingfishers are famed for their blue and orange plumage.

5. Listen as well as look: Kingfishers like to sing. Their single or two-note whistle is loud, high-pitched and can travel some distance. Some refer to it as a 'PEEP' noise. If you hear their call, cast your gaze in that direction and look out for a lightning bolt flash of blue close to the water.

6. Keep the noise down: Kingfishers are shy and can be easily spooked, so keeping quiet and still is also going to

help you on your mission to spot one.

7. Be patient: Even if you're doing all of the above, there's no guarantee that you'll succeed. But don't give up – make peace with the fact that you could be out and about for a little while, enjoy the wonderful surroundings of our canals and rivers, and take some time to unwind in nature.



Kingfishers perch on slender branches close to the water to hunt effectively

Please remember that kingfishers are protected in the UK, and it is illegal to disturb their burrows. Going too close to a burrow may cause parents to abandon their eggs or chicks.

Photo credits: Myles Berners

BCNS News: Funding Britain's Waterways



BIRMINGHAM CAMPAIGN CRUISE. 12/13 AUGUST 2023

This is a message from the Birmingham Canals Navigation Society (BCNS) member Ivor Caplan with his "IWA hat on"

Hi All if you are in the area and feel strongly about the funding shortfall and wish to make your thoughts known and are in the Birmingham area in August - here is your chance - read on.

FUNDING BRITAIN'S WATERWAYS, BIRMINGHAM CAMPAIGN CRUISE. 12/13 AUGUST 2023

A steering group representing IWA, NABO, AWCC, RYA BM and RBOA is progressing this campaign and in support of it is organising a campaign cruise to Birmingham on the weekend of 12/13 August. A formal notice is being delayed awaiting the Defra announcement on the CRT grant settlement, but in the meanwhile we want to give boaters early notification to help them plan their cruising.

The date has been agreed to enable boaters to attend on their way to the IWA Festival of Water at Pelsall two weeks later. Plans have to be finalised but in brief boats will gather on the Saturday at various locations around Birmingham city centre and progress early on Sunday to gather at the Mailbox. There will be no entry charge for boats but an application form must be completed.

Please register your interest now to fbw.birmingham@waterways.org.uk and we will keep you informed and forward an entry form in due course.

Help us to get the message across to government that increased funding for Britain's waterways to avert their decline really matters to us. Apologies if you receive this notice more than once but we want to ensure a good coverage promptly.

The BCN Society, a Company Limited by Guarantee, is a registered charity (1091760) first formed in 1968, which exists to conserve, improve and encourage a wide range of interests in the 100 mile network of Birmingham and Black Country waterways known as the Birmingham Canal Navigations.

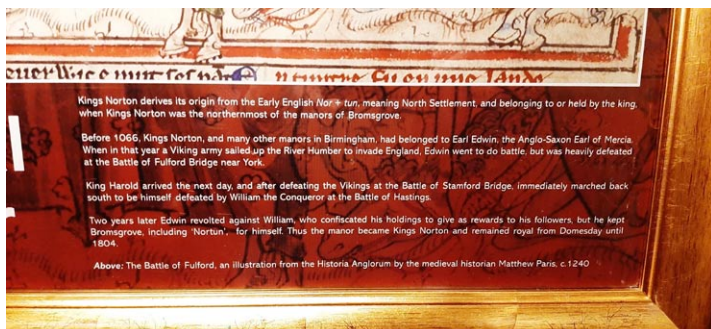
Take a look at our website <http://bcnsociety.com/>



History Corner

Kings Norton is an important area of the Worcester & Birmingham Canal. As we have heard elsewhere the Junction House, which has just been renovated, became a critical part of both the W & B and Northern Stratford Canal who shared its usage. This area is not only famous for its long canal tunnel but also became a link canal between the Dudley No.2 (Lapal) Canal, where such as coal from the Black Country, could be shipped to areas like Stratford or London.

However, Kings Norton itself, has a history which actually determined both its position and its name. The pictures below are currently on display at the 'Navigation' pub in Kings Norton, now a 'Wetherspoons', and '58' acknowledges with thanks their presence from that source which a reader forwarded to us.



Kings Norton was also famous for having its own mint which made substantial use of the W & B canal for its shipping needs, particularly coal. The picture with accompanying text below gives a good insight into as to just how important to the nation this once was.



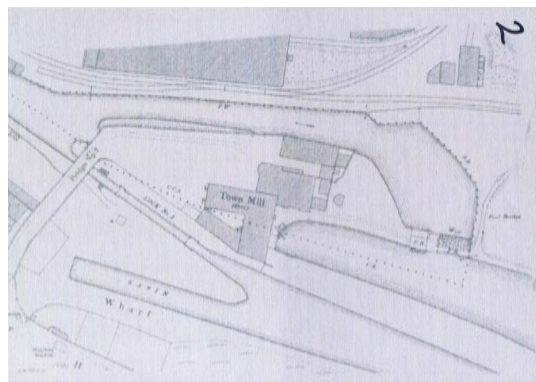
Society Meeting: June 2023

The last live open meeting the society held was delivered by Gavin Hawkins (*right*) from the Bradley Canal Restoration Trust. Gavin went into great detail about the history of this link canal and made much use of the large screen to show the audience 'then and now' scenes with his first hand local residency knowledge being apparent throughout.

Some of the past pictures brought back a few memories particularly one when society member, Peter Freakley, identified himself and boat as actually being featured on it in what was possibly the last known cruise before the canal was sadly filled in.

Plenty of questions were fielded from the interested audience including how much had been achieved so far, the condition of the infilled locks and the attitude of local residents who are very supportive. One family in particular, who have flooding in their house, being involved in the project as a restored canal would probably solve their problem.

Following the presentation and the many questions, Gavin was roundly applauded for what was a very informative talk about possibly the second nearest canal restoration project to WB&DCS.



The Old Town Mill of Droitwich Worcestershire.



The original canal-bridge of 1853 can be seen here on the far right, and the arched tail race exit can just be seen to the left. Photograph by the author 23/8/12.

bricks that once marked the edge of the mill leat could also be seen next to the concrete bridge as it is quite close to the mill.

Society Walk: July 2023

During early July, society members and friends were taken around Droitwich to explore the remains of the original route of the Droitwich Junction Canal, by that renowned canal explorer Danny Spike. The weather was wet which may have deterred some walkers but was nevertheless very interesting with two people joining in who had heard about the walk on social media.

Walkers collected in the car park opposite Vines Park; from there they crossed the main road and went along the Barge Canal, then crossing another main road to walk up the Hanbury Road for a short distance, before turning down towards the River Salwarpe.



It was from here the history of the area was explained, with prepared illustrations, showing just how much industry was present before the current development almost obliterated it. Old names of companies were still in evidence as well as some of the old junction canal's long disused lock chambers.

The walk continued along the Salwarpe, which is part of the current route of the Junction Canal, with further explanations shared both by Danny himself ably assisted by local resident and society member, Ed Butcher. The walkers were shown an old bridge arch which used to go over the old junction canal but is now a storage shed in a neighbouring garden.

With the rain pouring down, and some of the group receiving an extra dousing when returning to the main road in order to access the remains an old lock chamber, the walk was cut a little shorter than originally planned. Some members walked up to the Hanbury Three Locks, which are the original chambers, and saw how the side ponds work in order to save water coming in from the W&B canal just ahead.



Despite the very wet weather, several of the group made their way back into Droitwich to be suitably refreshed. This was a very interesting and well prepared walk which may well happen again in the future, hopefully with drier conditions. *Thank you to Danny Spike and Ed Butcher.*

Volunteer News

There are lots of items in this issue of 58 about volunteers and volunteering so I will just mention some highlights of the month.

Firstly was the opening of Whitehouse Wharf which 'Cecilia' attended. What a job our friends at the Lapal Canal Trust (LCT) have done to get the Wharf opened.

The Trust also have their annual 'Walk the Line' event on 16th September (TBC) where everybody can walk the route of the Dudley No. 2 Canal (Lapal Canal) which they hope to re-open. It's a good walk and you will need to allow 4 hours for it. Bring a picnic/snacks for a stop at California. The start will be from the Selly Oak Scout Hut, Gibbins Road, Selly Oak B29 6QR (time to be confirmed). They arrange pick-up to take you back to the start point. More info on our own Facebook page and website when exact timings are finalised..

We have had some good work days at Tardebigge recently enlivened by discussions around our adoptions which have given us plenty to think about. We also met Yas from Worcestershire Wildlife Trust. Yas gave us lots of ideas about how we can husband the gardens at Tardebigge. We need to reflect on involving local schools and other societies. We are also looking at "Let's Activities" (C&RT initiative) on the grassed area in front of the Lime Kilns.

In the C&RT West Midlands Review of 2022/23 (pictured right) our work in establishing the orchard at Alvechurch is acknowledged. The Lapal Canal Restoration also features as does the Junction Toll House at Kings Norton. We are still working to get the finger post refurbished here. Any help or ideas would be appreciated.

On the 2nd and 3rd September our Gazebos are booked into the Bratch Festival just outside Wombourne south of Wolverhampton. It's a handsome historic flight of locks and a great little festival. We need volunteers for the weekend, so if you are free please sign up to help (and the Pumping Station next door is worth investigating).

Which of course brings us to the Heritage Open Days on the 9th and 10th of September. We need your help to prepare for the event and then to make it a success. So make sure you get in touch with Al Gibbs if you can give us just an hour of your time.

You can download a copy of the publication pictured here from the C&RT website: <https://bit.ly/43BoTpH>



Neil Franklin
Volunteer Coordinator



To Mow or Not To Mow at Tardebigge

You may have noticed that NO MOW is over on the grassed island opposite the Tardebigge Yard! We decided early in the year to follow C&RT's maxim of mow less, growing more to help nature and enhance biodiversity and wildlife. So NO MOW MAY was followed by JOYFUL JUNE. However this was followed by OVERGROWN JULY. So we decided to cut the island as most of the seeds were set. Next season we might be more proactive and spread native wildflower seeds and



manage it so it not so much a wilderness but more of a meadow. We were helped in the mowing by Mike Ryan (*far left*) who used his own mower as at the moment C&RT have not provided us with a mower.

In the garden below the Tardebigge Lime Kilns things are a little different :-

We had a visit from Yasmina Ashcroft (known as Yas) who's the Worcestershire Wildlife Trust Youth and Community Officer. She advised us on the management of the area and how it could be enhanced.

Broadly speaking the area is not particularly special and could be semi managed as an area of meadow land and scrub. This would be a planned intervention that could sustain appropriate cutback and species diversification planning, including the introduction of new plants.

A range of supports from WWT may be available as long as the project has a community based focus which would involve us supporting and initially coordinating new volunteers into the project.

Yas will be providing some information for us to propose a development plan for the society volunteers to review and then submit to C&RT. We continue to welcome input from the C&RT ecological team.

Mowing wise, we will leave this until mid-September - then we won't MOW but we will SCYTHE!



'Cecilia' News

The modifications to the interior of 'Cecilia' continue.

The cupboards in the stern crew area had become full to overflowing with buoyancy aids and other equipment, which not only looked untidy but made it difficult to find exactly what was wanted at any given time.

On one of the regular working days Ken and Trevor transformed a wasted space in the middle of the boat into a specially designed storage area for all the buoyancy aids. Easy to get at and we can now see all the sizes at a glance.

They also customised the cupboards so that now all the equipment has its own space and can be easily seen.

A new cooker top (*right*) has been installed by M J Craft, Marine Maintenance.

A BIG thank you to Ken and Trevor for their work.

In addition, we're looking forward to seeing amongst others, two local W.I. groups welcoming refugees who are currently in the Evesham area, Malvern Cube Youth Centre, a group of friends celebrating a birthday and our friends from the Pamela May Trust in Droitwich - all joining 'Cecilia' for the first time.

(The 'Cecilia' volunteers always seem to be busy promoting the society in some way or another for which '58' is very appreciative – Ed).



'Cecilia'
recently hosted a trip for
a group of Afghan refugees.

Wendy Albutt, Cecilia Bookings Coordinator

Heritage Open Days: September 2023

Our society would like to do something a little different from time to time and some of you may remember our efforts at last year's Heritage Open Days (HoDs).

For those of you unfamiliar with this event, it took place around the Tardebigge New Wharf area and consisted of our member volunteers, along with some volunteers from Canal and River Trust, showing members of the public around the top lock and wharf area giving a guided view of how the area would have looked when in full industrial swing.

The event days themselves are part of a national fortnight of heritage events coordinated by the National Trust and in our case supported by C&RT.

This year we plan to do a similar event and are inviting people to take part as guides or helpers on the day. As previously we support volunteers in visiting the area beforehand and walking

around the site to familiarise and provide some local information and anecdotes. These may then be used when taking a small group around the area on a short walk and showing them the historical features.

There is no pressure to memorise a script as most people from last year said they remember what they found interesting and can show others these items referring to a crib sheet if there are other things they wish to impart. Last year's event was well supported and all had a good and interesting time.

The event dates are the weekend of September 9th and 10th, 2023 with our event submission being accepted and now on the Heritage Open Day website; just type in Tardebigge in the events search box.

We will also staff a publicity gazebo for the society and plan to invite C&RT to also have a display present. These will offer information and provide refreshments for walkers and guides.

The society community boat, 'Cecilia', will also be moored up for support and if we have large enough volunteer numbers, we may be able to offer short boat trips through the Tardebigge tunnel and return after winding at Tardebigge Old Wharf.

If any readers are interested at all or want more information, please drop me an email: alanguibbs456@btinternet.com or call/text me on mobile 07398 709048.

*Alan Gibbs,
WB&DCS Volunteer.*

Selly Oak Festival: June 2023

As reported on page 7 we were represented at Selly Oak festival by several of our volunteers. We were primarily making badges for the children but it was also an opportunity to speak to visitors about our society. We were pitched up next to the Lapal Canal Trust gazebo. Here are some photos from the event.



Lapal Canal Trust News

Whitehouse Wharf

Neil Franklin has sent in the article below about 'Cecilia' taken to Birmingham in order to take part in the official opening of the new Whitehouse Wharf in Selly Oak. Several boats and many people attended this ground breaking event including society friends from the Little Radford Model Boat Club. They were so pleased with the venue that they want to return at some future point.

Many WB&DCS and LCT members were present as well as people from BCNS, IWA, C&RT, CCT to name but a few. Lapal Canal Trust received a monetary donation from one of the groups represented, as they now need to raise many more funds in order to reopen the section opposite Whitehouse Wharf, which leads into Selly Oak Park.

Boating to see the Mayor of West Midlands

We were called by John Hemingway to journey into the heart of Birmingham to be part of the opening ceremony for the new Whitehouse Wharf, at Selly Oak, which is to be the start of the eastern end of the Dudley No2 Canal. This marks the rebirth of the original Birmingham bypass. It looks like a winding hole but is much bigger to accommodate some moorings hence the name Whitehouse Wharf, named after a family run business there a long time ago.

We set off on a sunny Wednesday to sail to Edgbaston Wharf (The Vale) to leave Cecilia with John ready for the opening on Thursday and return on the train. We of course left plenty of time as you do on a canal trip, however, fate intervened as we passed Bittell reservoir when we were stopped by Adam, Simon and our mate Kevin from C&RT. They were testing their equipment for damming the canal should the Bittell dam, for that's what it is, burst. I looked around for their equipment and saw none except a small compressor connected to a brick box. No stop planks, no hammers and chisels, no panic! It turns out that C&RT have moved out of the 19th century and put a stainless steel stop board on the bottom of canal. When required it is lifted to the vertical position by a special bag underneath it that is filled with compressed air. They were carrying out a maintenance check and asked us to wait whilst they proved the system. We can confirm that it works! Obviously the stop plank channels are only there to allow maintenance on the machine.

We eventually cruised on through Wast Hills Tunnel to the gloriously restored Toll House. We were pulled in on a mission to see if the finger post, which our society erected 40 years ago, was available to refurbish. Previously it had had scaffolding too close to it for us to gain access should we possibly raise the resources to do the work. We managed to talk to Ash the site agent who told us the work on the Toll House was due to be finished in 6 to 8 weeks. I told him it does look really good from the outside. I didn't get invited in, but he did say that the Building Consultant Mathew O'Farrell was trying to see if they could refurbish the finger post as part of their work! Unfortunately we have since found out that their budget would not stretch to this so we are still looking at ways to get the work done. The opening date is actually Friday 4th August to which we've been invited.

To end our day we sailed through the flotsam and jetsam to the winding hole at The Vale. We moored up in a deliciously wooded area and jumped on the train back to Bromsgrove ready to meet the mayor on Thursday!



Lapal Canal Trust News cont.

On arrival back at Edgbaston I took the parking ticket off the mast only to be met by a boat completely changed! Cecilia had been attacked by web footed vandals who had treated her like a toilet, and she was covered in it. We set to and cleaned off the droppings as best we could. In our enthusiasm to get Cecilia looking her best we nearly missed the opening ceremony, but never fear we made it and swelled the number of boats present to see the Mayor do his thing, which he



does very well. So Whitehouse Wharf is officially open and very nice it is too. I recommend that you visit it and sit on the benches that I helped put in with Denis. Let's hope that the Lapal Canal Trust get the money together and continue the good work. I for one am sure they will.

Crew Wednesday: Neil, Trevor Albutt, Mark Saunders, Ian Barley.

Crew Thursday: Neil, Trevor Albutt, Ian Barley, Ian McGarr

Neil Franklin

Just in from Denis! "It was me who did all the work on those benches, Neil just held the drill!"

Lapal Canal Trust News cont.

Lapal Link

The latest copy of 'Lapal Link' newsletter from the Lapal Canal Trust is available for download. It's been rather a long time coming, but well worth the wait! It has information about recent achievements and future plans, including an update on funding. There are also articles and pictures explaining how LCT have benefitted from grants from the National Lottery Community Fund – boat trips for the elderly, disabled and school children; and the Dulverton Trust - benches by the canal.

You can read the newsletter by visiting their website www.lapal.org



Did You Know?

A recent message on social media from C&RT came to the attention of '58' which we had not heard of before:

"Dredging on offside moorings is the responsibility of the mooring operator."

If any of our readers, particularly mooring providers and boatyards, have heard of this before '58' would be pleased to hear from them as there are certainly some moorings on our local canals which are badly in need of silt clearance.

'Below Hanbury Wharf' A poem by Mary Green

There are three old bridges on this stretch
Accommodation bridges, serving farms and houses
Coffin bridge is highly humped and narrow
Just big enough, I guess, to carry the dead
To the old church among the trees
Hadzor bridge is inaccessible now
But beautiful, with its carved stone number
Hammonds you can cross, a footpath leading
You down to the settlement and farm
Not till the fourth do you find a road.
So it is quiet, with high reeds and willow-herb
And shade on a hot summer's day.
Nearby the railway and the motorway
But here the old main way is gently crossed
By bridges only suitable for feet
Human or animal, quietly from field
To field, from life to death.



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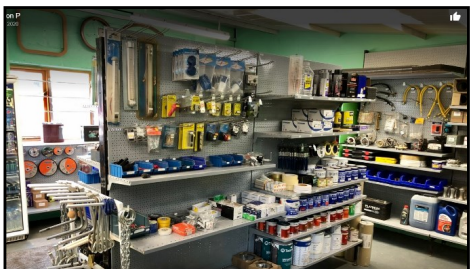
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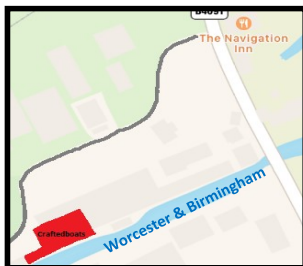
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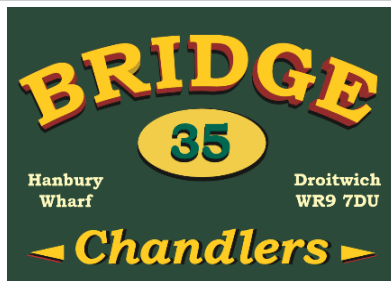
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Our friends and society members from Bridge 35 Chandlers have decided, after several years, to sell their well-respected shop at Hanbury Wharf. If any readers know of anyone interested please ask them to contact Jackie and John directly.



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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, Chance's Glassworks and Bradley Canal Restoration.

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 and full day trips (*Terms & Conditions Apply*).

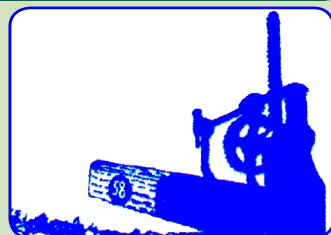
We hope to welcome as many new faces as possible from members of the community.

Please visit our website: wbdcs.org.uk
(where you can also download a membership application form)

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