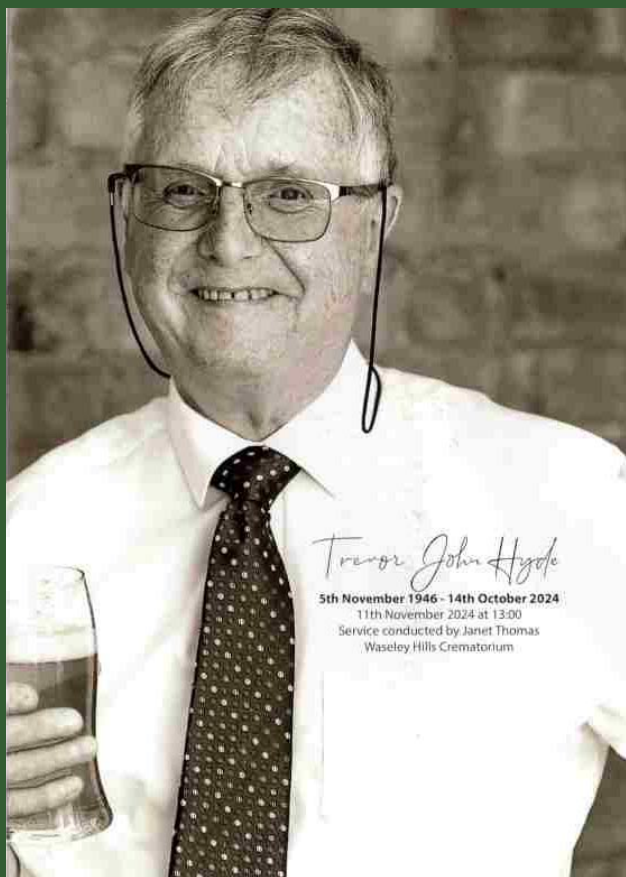


58 | Fifty Eight

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'*



Trevor Hyde
5th November 1946 -
14th October 2024

See articles inside



The Inland
Waterways
Association

Keeping our waterways alive

Corporate Member



Worcester-Birmingham
& Droitwich
Canals Society



www.wbdcs.org.uk

Issue 575 Winter 2024/25

Society Meetings

**Meetings are 7.45pm start
unless otherwise stated.**

Tuesday December 3rd 2024

**Our Annual 'Natter, Noggin and
Quiz Night' with Denis & Tony.**

Please bring nibbles to share.

Tuesday January 7th 2025

'Run-Down River'

**The return of Marine Historian Paul Barnett
who will be exploring the Bristol Channel
and local trade from Sharpness and Bristol
down to Bridgwater Docks**

*Meetings are held in the meeting room behind The Weighbridge pub,
Scarfield Hill, Alvechurch B48 7SQ. All welcome. Free admission.*

*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

The Magazine of the Worcester-Birmingham & Droitwich Canals Society

Issue 575 Winter 2024

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

www.facebook.com/wbdcs.org.uk

We are also on **X** (formerly known as **Twitter**) please follow us @wbdcs58.

View videos on our YouTube channel: www.youtube.com/@wbdcs7419.

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

Copy Date for the Next Issue: January 31st 2025

Worcester-Birmingham & Droitwich Canals Society

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

(Registered Charity No 500159)

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Chair's Notes

I am starting off my notes by paying tribute to Trevor Hyde, probably one of our best ever treasurers. I attended Trevor's funeral, and I was not at all surprised at the numbers who had turned out to pay their respect to a very likeable man. It did not take me long to become engrossed with his easy attitude and I am very proud to say that he became a very close friend. They say time is a great healer, but there are just some things that you never forget and I will never forget Trevor. My personal thoughts and respect go to Isabel, his 2 sons and 2 daughters and all the rest of his family.



Some others that I will never forget were Barrie and Brenda Morris. At the meeting held on 12th November members will have heard about the legacy that they had left the Worcester-Birmingham & Droitwich Canals Society. Over the years Barrie and Brenda served in almost every position on the committee. Brenda took over from me as Chair, so long as I agreed to remain as Vice Chair, and she introduced me as her bit of vice! Some of you will know that when Brenda passed away, we agreed with Barrie to mark her passing with a commemorative garden at the junction of the Worcester and Birmingham Canal and Droitwich Junction canal at Hanbury Wharf. It would be nice to add Barrie alongside Brenda and to keep it in good order.

'58' acknowledges with very grateful thanks, Duncan and Lisa Mytton's announcement at the last meeting, of the very generous legacy left to WB&DCS from Barrie and Brenda Morris' estate -Ed.

I have personally now raised £59.21 so far through 'easyfundraising'.

<https://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/>

In total we have, between those of us that are registered, raised a total of £377.32. Not an insignificant amount. Anyone can do the same when you shop online via the 'easyfundraising' website or app. It's easy and free and the small donations really add up. When signing up just add

 Worcester- Birmingham and Droitwich Canals Society as your preferred charity, 'easyfundraising' do the rest.

We are now at the end of another year, and many will have some memorable cruising experiences, some will have memorable holidays, some will have created family memories. Also, sorrowfully, we have some sad memories. Looking on the bright side, by the time you've read this edition of '58' we will have held our first planning meeting for next year's St. Richard's Canal Festival. I am looking forward to another successful weekend of hard work and a lot of fun.

Can I remind members to put Sunday 23rd March 2025 into your diaries for our Annual Dinner at Bromsgrove Golf Club.

Finally, I would like to wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a prosperous New Year.

David Wheeler



Editor's Notes

Hello readers,

Here we are with the last edition of your favourite magazine for 2024. As usual your society has been busy but unfortunately we have to report yet another very sad loss of our great friend and society treasurer, Trevor. Tributes to Trevor feature elsewhere in the magazine yet there is somewhat of a feeling of irony here in that only a few weeks ago he was nominated, and received, the coveted George Bate Trophy. Trevor was certainly held in high regard by the membership who voted for him to receive this trophy. Trevor is certainly missed by many people both within this society and elsewhere, such was his involvement in several activities.

Changing the subject somewhat, still no news about the towpath on the Tardebigge side of Shortwood Tunnel. This has been officially closed off for over a year now causing much inconvenience to towpath users over what was a very well used stretch. The actual towpath itself is showing some signs of deterioration which none of wish to see having experienced impassability many years ago. Just ahead of this area, Bridge 58, has seen one of the several land drains along that stretch bring so much silt down into the cut that navigation has been made very difficult. Canal & River Trust has placed this on their list of jobs to be dealt with but at the time of writing there's no indication yet of it being cleared.

In the last few years the W&B canal has been plagued with the invasive species of floating pennywort, particularly between Hopwood and Tardebigge. This year is no exception with the plant growing as much as 16 centimetres per day! C&RT did a great job of clearing it last year but this hasn't happened this year yet. Hopefully when the society is able to use the workboat 'Wanderer', our volunteers can remove the small amount C&RT has not been able to get to when they eventually do clear the said growth, which should be this year.



Your society has been holding the usual monthly meetings which Denis usually organises and 'fronts up' [reports further on]. This not only includes organising speakers but also arranging the bookings of the meeting room behind the 'Weighbridge' in Alvechurch. Sue and Martin usually arrange the raffle prizes and sell tickets on the meeting nights, all of which helps to pay for speakers and room hire. Tea, coffee and biscuits are also organised and sold to participants by Maxine or Lynne. If anyone has been inadvertently missed here please let the editor know. To all of these society volunteers '58' offers it profound thanks as without these contributions the meetings would undoubtedly be poorer. Thank you everyone and of course to all of our volunteers which makes the society what it is today.

This edition offers articles about Nature Notes, 'Cecilia' news, Lapal Canal Trust news, meeting reports and C&RT news to name but a few. All are provided by volunteers for whom '58' offers its thanks as usual. However, thinking about succession planning and new thoughts and ideas, how about society members making a special New Year Resolution to recruit a friend to the society? The membership secretary will surely not be perturbed if he has loads of new or returning members to process! So how about it dear readers- recruit a friend please you know it makes sense!

Seasonal good wishes to you all and enjoy the read.

John Hemingway

Obituary



It is with much sadness that '58' records the passing of our friend and society treasurer, Trevor Hyde. Trevor had been ill for some time and had to reluctantly relinquish his role as treasurer some weeks ago. Many society members were present at his funeral where some aspects of Trevor's life were shared particularly by his family. The wake was held at the 'Alestones' in Tardebigge Court.

Trevor had asked that any donations collected on the day of the funeral, or afterwards, be given to Dementia UK as he had been greatly affected by this in relation to a close friend. That was Trevor – always thinking of others.

<https://www.dementiauk.org/donate/>

'58' offers its sincere condolences to Trevor's close family and friends.



New Members

'58' would like to extend a warm welcome to new members:

Gwen Trow of Bromsgrove.

Clive Wilson of Finstall, Bromsgrove.

We hope that you will be able to join in and meet as many members of the society as possible at future meetings and activities.

Raffle Prizes

The society's monthly meetings, excluding the Summer walks, usually take place in the meeting room behind the 'Weighbridge' pub in Alvechurch. The room clearly has to be paid for which part of the membership subscription is utilised. However, Sue and Martin Hancox organise a raffle to supplement the society's costs and prizes are always needed. If anyone has anything which could be deemed to be a suitable raffle prize, such as an unwanted gift, do please consider donating to the society. Sue would be very pleased to receive at any of the society meetings. If by some chance Sue is not available, please give to any other committee member and it will be passed on.

New President

Welcome to our new President - John Burman

Having recently and sadly lost our long standing society President Sandra Radmore, a number of weeks ago, your committee considered and agreed to ask John Burman to fill the role. John kindly agreed with David as Chair being tasked to ask John for some background information, particularly as newer society members may not be aware of his past roles. John sent over the following:

I first got into Canals in 1959 when I helped bow haul a TS Element Joey boat from Tardebigge to Worcester. I cruised the BCN and Stratford Canals on a flat bottomed punt I built myself using an Atco boat impellor. Jane and I bought 'The Blakey' in 1969. It was built by John Stothert and John Williams at Shropshire Union Cruisers. Jane and I joined WBC society about 1966. We were both on Max Sinclair's inaugural Droitwich Canal Trust committee in 1973. I won the George Bate Trophy some time ago and then did a stint as WBC President for some years but tended to neglect my duties as work was 100 hour commitment in those days. I was Chair of DCT from Max Sinclair's retirement until when Margaret Rowley replaced me (and did a first class job which I could not have achieved). Jane and I bought 'Janske' in 1989 and sold her in 2018 during which time we cruised Europe. 'Blakey' was neglected I fear. I cared for Jane for her final eight years suffering from dementia, during which time I did not get out a lot. Hope that is sufficient information. I have log books of every trip we took from 1969 until now on both 'Blakey' and 'Janske' so can tell a few stories. Cheers John.

Thank you John for this brief background history and look forward to seeing you at our various activities – Ed.

New Appointments

As readers will be aware, your society has been in need of a secretary and recently a treasurer. We are very pleased to report that Margaret Rowley, our current Vice Chair who has been providing minutes of meetings for some time now, has agreed to take on the role on an annual basis all dependent upon nominations at the AGM next year.

Owing to society stalwart Trevor having to give up the role because of ill health, Sarah Trueman has stepped into the role and is currently sorting out all of the paperwork which under normal circumstances would've been part of the handing over process. The role also includes St. Richard's Canal Festival so is quite a task.

'58' offer its thanks to both Margaret and Sarah and welcomes them onto the WB&DCS committee, although Margaret has served on it for many years already.

Birmingham Canal Navigations Society News

2025 BCN Explorer Cruises

Next year the BCN Society are planning three Explorer Cruises so you have a good choice. They will be in May, June & July. The May Cruise will be planned to fit around the BCN Society's Summer Rally. The June cruise has been planned to accommodate hire boaters so starts & finishes on Saturday 7th in Birmingham and lasts just the week. So if you do not own a boat & want to explore the BCN now is your chance. The July Cruise will start in Birmingham on 6th July and end in Titford on the 15th.

All three cruises are available to all boaters, stewards & hirers alike. Please let me know if you are interested and I will send you full details including the itinerary of the month you choose as soon as they are published.

Sunday 6th July to Tuesday 15th July 2025
Saturday 7th June to Saturday 14th June 2025
Friday 9th May to Friday 16th May 2025

Let me know if you are interested in any of them by emailing:

bcns.explorercruise@gmail.com

If you are considering joining a BCN Explorer Cruise you will need to act quickly. Travelling around the BCN in the company of an experienced member of the BCN Society and several other boaters is proving very popular again. There are just 3 places on each of the May & July Cruises & the June Cruise is filling up too.

BCN Marathon Challenge

Our friends from BCNS are organising the well supported BCN Marathon Boating Challenge with details below:

The BCN 24 Hour Marathon Challenge will take place again next year on the weekend of Saturday 24th and Sunday 25th May 2025. The finishing point will be Withymoor Island, where the Trust made a great job of hosting the finish line gathering in 2022.

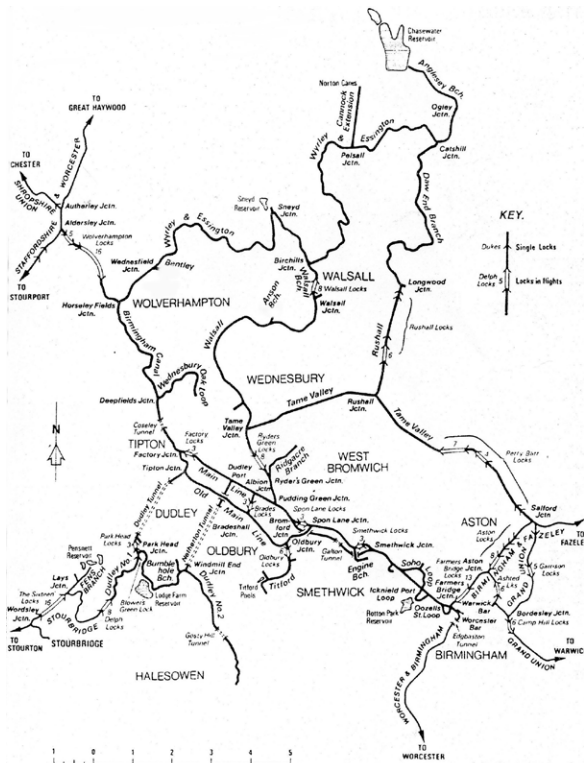
The format will remain similar to previous events.

It is intended to introduce scoring factors for draught in 2025 as part of the ongoing process of trying to even up the scoring system for all types of craft.

If wish to take part contact Jon Pegg on 07746 176503 or email jonathanpegg1970@btinternet.com.

Keep an eye on the dedicated web page on the BCNS website:

<https://bcnsociety.com/bcns-marathon-challenge/>



Jon Pegg, Organiser



'Nature Notes' Mary Green

I have not been able to venture far from home in the last couple of months while recovering from illness. But I have found my local stretch of canal helped my recovery. I don't believe that just "being in nature" is always good for physical and mental health, but I do think it helps when you're somewhere that nature is allowed to grow and flourish fully. Walking past a flailed hedge or a weed-killed field of corn or a mown spring verge is more likely to make me stressed and unhappy. Walking along the canal towpath where there is natural growth at every level and accompanying animal life, though, makes me feel better.

Since I couldn't walk very far or fast for a while, I found myself noticing the small changes through the autumn, not just visually but the smells, sounds and feel of things too. So many people I meet on the towpath these days have earplugs in and are looking at their phones, or running with their eyes fixed ahead.

I noticed how bird song changes in autumn. After the spring when blackbirds, thrushes, finches and blackcaps call, the summer goes quiet. But in autumn the robins take over and start singing away everywhere – there always seems to be one nearby. The mallard ducks are very active, pairing up and ducking and diving, quite noisily, and the Canada geese move around often calling on the wing. You hear wood pigeons a lot – they never seem to go quiet and can breed all the year round.

September smells very distinctive in, mostly from the flowers of ivy which is heavy with pollen then and musky. These flowers attract wasps, bees, flies, and even late butterflies and on a warm autumn day like we had this year the hedge can be humming with them. So you'll find insect-eating birds around them too.



When ivy flowers are over the scent changes to a more mushroomy smell, as fungi appear by the path and on the trees, and the fallen leaves begin to break down. There were various mushrooms along the towpath here, though probably not edible.

Watching the trees, you could see clearly this year which ash trees were getting infected with ash dieback – they lost their leaves early and messily – and those which were healthy, which went a glorious yellow colour. After a slow start the leaves of most trees turned colour fairly quickly and by November there was lovely golden brown in the oaks.

Hawthorn berries are quite profuse but other fruits have not been good. Holly berries are sparse and it's not a good acorn year. Fortunately the ivy is forming lots of good berries now – they come late in the year and are a life saver for many birds, especially wood pigeons. Berries that are poisonous to us are usually edible to birds. They only digest the fleshy part, the seeds passing straight through - and being spread, to the benefit of the tree.

Flowers along the aquatic fringe have set good seeds this year, so there is small bird activity among the seed heads. One or two flowers come back in a mild year like this, and I've seen new blooms on white dead nettle and hogweed. These provide nectar and pollen for remaining insects.

My local pair of swans are still here and I've noticed how much they come to the side to browse on the vegetation as well as do their winter preening. Many water birds do this: the field opposite me had been full of Canada geese grazing, until the sheep came back for the winter.

[Thank you Mary – sounds like a good ad for C&RT 'Making Life Better by Water' - Ed]



1. GRAZING GEESE

2. ROBINS SING ALL WINTER

3. IVY FLOWERS

4. HAWTHORN BERRIES

5. HOLLY BERRIES (SCARCE THIS YEAR)

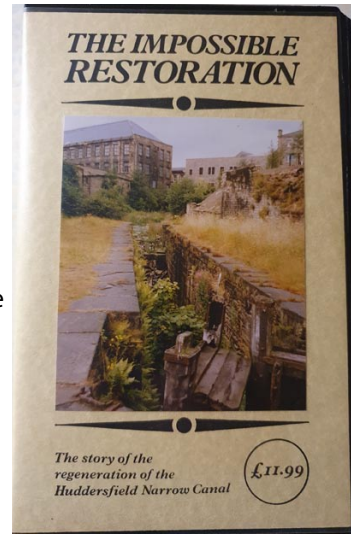
6. PREENING SWAN

Meeting Reports

October Meeting

This offered society members and friends the opportunity to hear about the journey to, and over, the Huddersfield Narrow Canal into the Manchester area. The meeting was shown a Huddersfield Canal Society video of the waterway, which had been abandoned in 1944, both before and during the restoration in what at the time was dubbed 'The Impossible Dream'. 74 locks and the longest and deepest canal tunnel in the UK made the navigation a monumental task to build, as well as maintain, and subsequently to restore. It was, and still is, the shortest canal route over the Pennines but a very challenging cruise which really does need more traffic using it.

There are several comparisons with the WB&DCS waterways in such as the total number of locks and the financial difficulties experienced by the canal companies at the time. There was also the abandonment, which also happened to both Droitwich Canals, with all being eventually restored to full usage.



November Meeting

This was addressed by Buckinghamshire Canal Society activist Geoff Lambert, who had travelled up from Luton to deliver his presentation along with his dog 'Archie'. After giving a brief update on the progress being made with the Buckinghamshire Canal restoration, Geoff introduced his dog 'Archie' to the meeting. 'Archie' was described as one of the many trained medical dogs who

are able to sniff out diseases and infections that some human beings suffer from. Several examples of these were given by Geoff, particularly cancers, but what appeared to really fascinate the members and friends present, was the suggestion that the dogs may be able to detect illnesses which have not previously shown up on such as a medical scan. Geoff described some examples and also the trials which are currently being worked on which are also involving medical professionals.

This was a really interesting and different presentation which was well received by those present; so much so that a voluntary collection for the 'Medical Detection Dogs' charity raised almost £100. Further details can be found at www.medicaldetectiondogs.org.uk or facebook.com/MedicalDetectionDogs.



Christmas Cards & Mugs



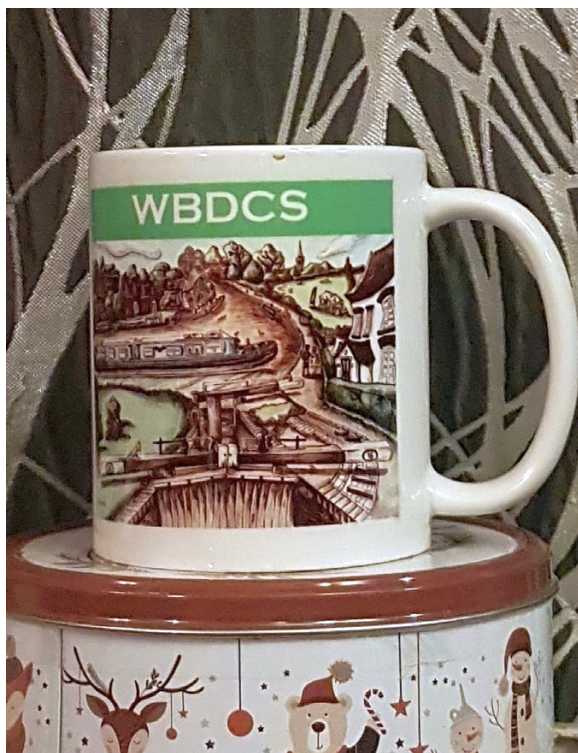
A very special Thank You to society member **Bob Ryan** for designing this year's Christmas card.

We had 70 printed and very nearly sold out at the last society meeting on the 12th November.

If there's enough demand we could get more printed.

If you are interested in buying some, at £1 each, then please phone **Neil Franklin** on 07857 294196 to let him know your requirements.

We have had some lovely mugs produced for the society. Current price is £8 per mug. If we can get lots of orders we may be able to negotiate a lower price on a bulk purchase. To register an interest please contact **Al Gibbs** on 07398 709048. The picture on the mug was originally created by **Rosie Philpott**.



Lapal Canal Trust News

Our friends from the Lapal Canal Trust continue to be busy with the restoration of the derelict section of the Dudley No.2 canal. The last edition of '58' showed the progress made in Selly Oak Park with the new access ramp and steps - many thanks to IWA's Waterway Recovery Group.

WRG have also been busy at the other end of the waterway near Hawne Basin in Halesowen. Organised by Coombeswood Canal Trust, part of the canal bed and wall between the basin and Mucklows Hill, has been cleared in yet another step forward towards extending the current navigation. The bridge over the canal before Hawne Basin has also been cleaned down and repainted.

Work parties in Leasowes Park will be recommencing soon so please watch this space! Further details of the more recent activities are shown below.

Very well done to all involved with the Lapal Canal Trust holding its Annual General Meeting on November 25th, details are on the LCT's facebook page and WB&DCS social media outlets.

In 1993 the Halesowen Abbey Trust rebuilt the bridge over the Dudley No2 Canal. This has just been refurbished by the Coombeswood Canal Trust, Dudley Council and the Halesowen Abbey Trust. The project was managed by Roy Burgess, who is also a founder member of the Lapal Canal Trust. In the main photo are Bob Fox Chair of the Coombeswood Trust, Lady Mayoress and Roy Burgess.



Roy Burgess kindly showed the results of the one week of work by the Waterway Recovery Group. Huge thanks for their effort. They cleared 120 yards of canal wall, removing over 30 years of growth and rubbish. Roy is a founder member of the Lapal Canal Trust, and he recollects that in 1991 a group of volunteers from the Lapal Trust and the Coombeswood Trust last cleared the tow path. In the short term there will be more moorings at Hawne Basin, and it's a step to reopening the link to the Leasowes.

Photos next page.



Hawne Basin



Canal holding water



Rubbish collected



Cecilia News

Since our season started in March we have, so far, completed 37 trips with a further 4 Christmas trips planned for December.

Our popular Lock Challenge has been undertaken by Kings Norton Sea Scouts, Worcestershire Young Carers and The Malvern Cube youth group. At the end of the challenge each young person who took part received a Certificate of Completion in recognition of the challenge they had undertaken.

A large number of groups have returned time and again and we love to see them each year - testament to the work we do with 'Cecilia' on our beautiful canals.

We have also welcomed a number of new groups including The Kidderminster Dementia Group, Bromsgrove Memory Cafe, Prostate Partners Support Group and The Birmingham SEND activities group.

A number of trips have been funded from our collaboration with The Lapal Canal Trust. This has allowed us to reach out to new groups who may not necessarily have been on our radar.

Our Christmas trips have been booked for Leapgate Activity Centre - who provide support to adults with learning disabilities, TP Partnership - for adults with acquired brain injuries and 2 groups from Birmingham SEND Activities - young people with special education needs and disabilities.

Still to come.... In 2025 we aim to continue with our established partnerships but also look forward to creating relationships with other groups and organisations who may benefit from trips onboard Cecilia.

None of this would be possible without our dedicated team of helms and crew who support our trips and also support me when I'm planning rotas - so a BIG THANK YOU to you all.

[Very well done to our volunteers yet again -Ed]

Wendy

Volunteer News

Review of the year 2024 - The Team Comes Together

Before I start my review of the year I must mention two people who will be sadly missed. Firstly Gill Grice, Paddy's wife who died in such tragic circumstances earlier in the year and secondly, Trevor the treasurer whose funeral was only last week. They were both big parts of the society's life and will be greatly missed.

I would like to thank Wendy whose review of the year appears elsewhere in '58'. She has continued to do a great job in organising the 'Cecilia' trips for us to crew. She ensures everything is sorted so all we have to do is turn up and take the groups out. Wendy has reached out to different people to give us a busy year; she has also cemented our relationship with the Lapal Canal Trust to enable us to subsidise many trips.

The year began by 'Cecilia' getting new windows and front doors fitted, with a big thank you to Mark Saunders who planned the detailed requirements, and to 'Crafted Boats' who carried out the work; particularly Aaron at Stoke Prior and Malcolm and his team at Tardebigge New Wharf. Apart from a few teething problems they have been a great success. This was to be followed by Ken winning the 'George Bate' Trophy for his work on 'Cecilia', which has continued with him pushing us on to strip the paint from the roof and redo it. (Yes I know but it needed to be done again!) We only have the grab rails to do now. Inside Ken led the volunteers to paint the new galley unit doors and worked with Trevor to remove the redundant shower tray from the toilet - work only just completed. We also have a new toilet. All we have to do now is touch up the paint work fore and aft (front and back).

The St. Richard's Canal Festival started with a bump last April when we found that the age limit on driving the vans had gone from 75 down to 70 unless we pay for medicals. Thank you to both Al and Mark for stepping into the breach and doing a great job bringing the equipment, from its winter home in the Black Country, to Vines Park Droitwich.

So we still need volunteers to drive the vans in 2025 please. Our volunteer crew at the festival know the score and sorted the festival out like a dream, particularly helped by David getting the marquee company to supply the stage, and to Paddy and Peter for knowing everything! However, volunteers are still needed please, as we are not getting any younger!

The bar team was ably led by Sue and Nick. They worked so hard but really do need help to staff the bar. Please, if you are available to give them a hand, let us know with all training provided. Once more thank you to everyone who helped out at St. Richard's Canal Festival and do please come forward next May bank holiday and volunteer with us!

Our other big day was our Heritage Open Days in the field at Tardebigge New Wharf. This year the Saturday clashed, in a good way, with the Tardebigge Festival, so we were busier than normal. I think this was a good thing and we could join the festival officially next year. Let me know what you think?

On the water we started using the 'Wanderer' alongside the river by the replacement bridge works on the Droitwich Barge Canal. Between us and C&RT work parties we soon had the work done. This winter we have been promised by C&RT that we will have the use of 'Wanderer' north of Tardebigge top lock. Ed and Ken have also had medicals and are cleared to helm the boat. So clear the decks and get ready to join us in the New Year for clearing vegetation and things endangering navigation.

As you can see we have enjoyed our time on the canal this year. This included the day at 'Primrose Hospice' so very wet in the morning but we came up smiling. The Alvechurch 'Picnic in the Park' - again a damp smile! Lock challenges are hard work but enjoyable! The visit to 'Ellesmere Port Canal Museum' was full of interest, as well as the 'Anderton Boat Lift' on the way home.

The only thing that was problematic was our giving up our adoptions at Tardebigge. This is still not settled in our hearts. We are meeting C&RT in January and hope to reset our relationship with the team at Tardebigge. We do need help in looking after the tug boat 'Birmingham' and the lime kilns. If you, like Tom Rolt, enjoy looking after the canals then please let Bill, Al and myself know. We really need your assistance.

On the positive side of things, please visit the wharf at Alvechurch and see the bug hotel and the linear orchard - thanks to Ian for the former. We hope to talk to C&RT about making this a new adoption!

We have a lot to do in the New Year so please come along and volunteer with us - you won't regret it. We are truly wonderful people so it's a delight to volunteer with us.

[very modestly put Neil - Ed !]

Merry Christmas, see you all at the Christmas do, and a Happy New Year.



*Neil Franklin
Volunteer Coordinator*

St. Richard's Canal Festival: 2025

St. Richard's Canal Festival has very recently had its first planning meeting and following on from the last festival we are looking for additional volunteers but in particular, bar staff. The last festival was so successful that the bar staff really struggled to keep pace with the demands of the role. For this next festival, due on the early bank holiday next May, the committee would really like to engage with more volunteer bar staff. If this is something any of our readers could help out with, ideally on a shift basis, please do get in touch and training will be provided by our experienced organisers Nick and Sue. Also if any readers know of anyone else who could help out then again please let us know asap.

Thank you from St. Richard's Canal Festival Committee.

Waterways Restoration Conference 2025

The 2025 Annual Restoration Conference, jointly organised by The Inland Waterways Association and Canal & River Trust, is taking place on Saturday 26th April 2025 at the National Waterways Museum in Ellesmere Port, Cheshire.

With its collections and archives focussed on Britain's inland waterways, including canal boats, traditional artefacts and historical photos, the National Waterways Museum will provide a unique and exciting location, with the chance to visit the Island Warehouse, the Power Hall and the blacksmith's forge where the ironwork for the canal and its boats was made.

The conference is a valuable chance for those involved in waterway restoration to experience new insights into the important topics facing restorations today. Delegates will have the opportunity to network, and attend in-depth sessions and workshops led by experts across the field.

The conference will run from 9.30am with an optional tour of the Museum in the afternoon.

More information including the programme of the day will be published in due course, together with a booking link.

Any questions you may have, please email verena.leonardini@waterways.org.uk or call 01494 783 453 Ext 607.

More information can be found on the Inland Waterways Association website:

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



**INLAND
WATERWAYS**
ASSOCIATION



C&RT has recently published a 10 point plan to improve boating which is shown below:

Boater and boating are at the heart of what we do. This is why we regularly survey boaters to find out what we need to improve on. We have listened to what you've said and developed a ten-point plan with the help of your boater representatives on our Council (who were elected by boaters). We also had the expert help of other boater volunteers who give up their time as part of our Navigation Advisory Group.

The plan was a leading topic at last week's Annual Public Meeting (if you missed it live, you can watch a recording on our website). Our plan will prioritise things that will improve navigation and target issues that will make the experience of boaters better. We will do this by:

Forming a new boating sub-committee of our board which David Orr CBE, our chair, will lead. It will oversee the implementation of a better boating plan and the general boating issues. Keeping our canals open for navigation will be central to our next ten-year strategy.

Fixing all outstanding broken paddles by spring 2026 and set a target from April 2025 to repair any paddle faults arising as soon as possible (but no longer than four weeks).*

Targeting more resources on planned preventative maintenance (PPM), prioritising re-greasing and clearing vegetation at locks and swing/lift bridges in the spring and early summer ahead of the busier boating periods.

Spending more delivering improved grass-cutting in 2025/26. We will also review where and when we cut grass – ensuring grass is cut at locks and mooring sites and cutting more towpaths to the water's edge, making it easier for boaters.

Updating our tree management standards and programmes to increase tree surveys. This will inform more winter tree works and assign higher priority to the clearance of fallen trees blocking navigation and towpaths.

Promptly fixing our water, Elsan or pump-out boater facilities if they break.

Reviewing refuse collections at our busiest sites to reduce overflowing bins and take measures to help tackle fly-tipping. We'll roll out segregated waste, recycling and food waste collections at our sites in England by summer 2025.

Developing a Boater App, that many have requested, to make it easier for boaters to access the online services provided by us when and where they want. For example, you'll be able to report faults and find out what has been reported already.

Improving our stoppage notices system, making sure the information for boaters is clear and accurate – adding photos so that boaters can see the cause of the stoppage and what we're doing to resolve it. Our booking system for operated structures and pre-bookable moorings will be updated to make it more customer-friendly and easier for boaters to use.

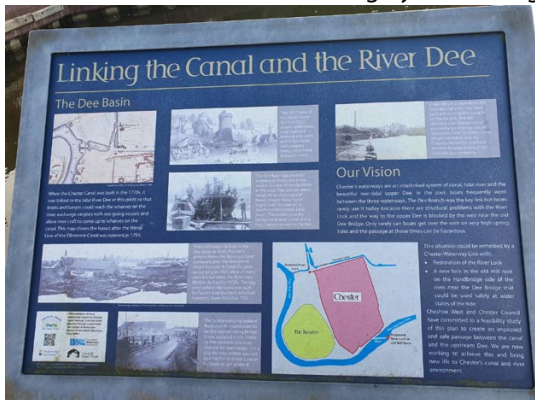
Improving how we communicate with boaters. This Boaters' Update e-bulletin will increasingly focus on the work being done day-to-day around the network to keep it navigable, and we'll increase our social media boating activity. We'll provide more opportunities for boaters to meet and speak with our colleagues and will publish a 12-month calendar of boater meeting dates.

We will publish a dashboard with specific measures to monitor implementation of the plan by 31 March 2025.

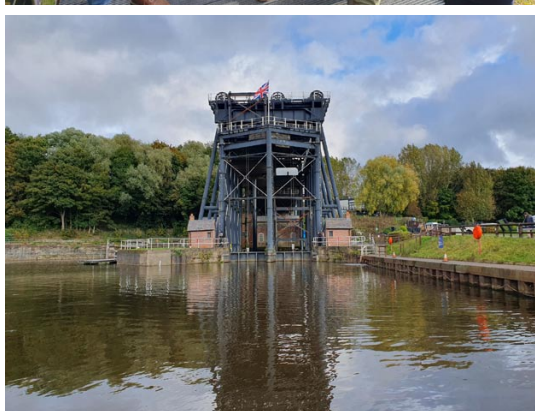
'58' welcomes the plan and looks forward to hearing from society members on how this delivers improvements particularly next year.

Volunteers Trip To Chester

In early October a number of society volunteers organised a trip to the Anderton Boat Lift and Ellesmere Port Museum. Travelling by car sharing there was a stop over in Chester.



When the group attended the Anderton boat lift, it was seen to be a magnificent site with the visitor centre helping us appreciate the scale and ambition of industry led canal building ingenuity. The group took part in the heritage tour on a boat down the lift and along the River



Weaver. It was staffed by Canal and River Trust volunteers who were very good, particularly the boat tour guide, who was outstanding in his knowledge and information giving. It was also fascinating and amusing to hear that they also had a story about "tow rags"!

Volunteers Trip To Chester

The day of the visit to The National Waterways Museum at Ellesmere Port actually followed the museum being closed for the filming of a historical drama about the Guinness family. As such we were lucky to see the remaining set props dotted about the wharves which added to the feeling of travelling back in time. Some other areas were under wraps in preparation for the following week's filming for Peaky Blinders.

The open-air museum site and indoor exhibits were both fascinating and immersive, particularly the "have a go at ice breaking" interactive exhibit. The enjoyable trip included seeing the Tug boat 'Worcester' – the restored sister boat to 'Birmingham' whose preserved hull lies in Tardebigge New Wharf yard. The shop and café were a welcome end point to warm up.

As the Society has supported the upkeep of the 'Birmingham' hull for the last 20 years, looking at the restoration of its twin was a treat to see. Many thanks to Cath and Mike Turpin, volunteers for the museum, who hosted our small group taking us around the site and updating us about the 'Worcester'.



Mike and Cath were part of the original team who supported the preservation and siting of 'Birmingham' at Tardebigge. Cath produced the display boards that are on site. In discussion with Mike, it is hoped that our society volunteers can support a working group to review the needs of the 'Birmingham' compound, display boards and the hull itself.

Thanks to all who attended for making a memorable trip. It is hoped that this sort of planned group visit could be organised for future society canal themed days out.

Blacking On The Droitwich by Denis Pike

Some of the pleasant sides of boating:- chugging along with bright sunny skies; the slow speed compared with the mad rush of urban life; the breeze as it passes across your hairless scalp; the reflection of the sun on the water; wildlife such as herons and kingfishers that you rarely see back in the town and being part of a community who are usually helpful and friendly.

Some of the unpleasant ones are:- rubbish floating in the canal; finding a mattress wrapped around your propeller; graffiti on the walls adjacent to the canal; finding out that the next pound is empty after an act of vandalism; being struck in the face by a low branch and stepping off the boat and into something squelchy.

One of the most unpleasant though has got to be the harsh reality of having to maintain your boat. In particular the underwater bit. For those that have not had to carry out this bi-annual task welcome to the world of "blacking". Once upon a time blacking was a way of inducting freshers into public schools. It would have involved boot polish applied to a newcomers' groin area. Sadly, this term does not apply to this article. It may have been much more interesting if it had.

Blacking involves removing the boat from the water, pressure-washing most of the crud that is never normally seen and then scraping and wire brushing the rust and loose bitumastic from the lower half of the hull. A rotary wire brush on an angle grinder really speeds things up. It does make the old blacking fly everywhere and so dust masks and goggles are an absolute necessity. It can irritate the skin too so if you can access a Hazmat suit it will help prevent this.

So where can we go to put ourselves through such a hardship? Local to Alvechurch for instance we can use Tardebigge Dry Dock, Diglis Dry Dock or Stourport Dry Dock. As the term implies, you can arrange with the Dock operator to enter the dock on a given date. Once in the dock the water is slowly pumped out or slowly released until the boat settles on the bostocks. These are baulks of timber bolted into the floor of the dry dock that allow for inspection and work to the base plate of a narrowboat.

There are alternatives to dry docks. Alvechurch Marina will lift narrowboats out of the water using a crane. I believe that staff at ABC are detailed to carry out all the blacking works. The other alternative is Droitwich Spa Marina where neither a crane nor dry dock are used. What is used here is a slipway and a very large 180 horsepower tractor and many thousands of pounds worth of real heavy duty trailer.



The Marina was opened in 2013, shortly after full restoration of the Droitwich Junction canal. Soon after this it became apparent to Manager Nick Parkes that there was a demand for a facility for boat owners to be able to work on their boats while removed from the water. So a further £100k was mortgaged and invested into building the slipway alongside a pump-out and refuelling wharf.

Now Nick is a former farmer from the Cleobury area. He was born to use a tractor and reverse trailers like he has done it all his life. In fact he probably has. He has a trailer that he reverses down the slipway. The narrowboat is pulled by hand onto the sunken trailer. The trailer uses its' hydraulic lift ability to raise a narrowboat up and then it is towed up the slipway. Just like daddy's dinghy only bigger.



Using this method Nick can remove as many as 6 boats from the water in a day or return as many to the water. There is enough space for around ten narrowboats to be on the hard stand at any one time. Nick does tend to leave one bay free for emergencies. These can vary from a sudden leak appearing, to boats losing a propellor or damage to the 'skeg' holding the bottom of the tiller in place.

Advantages and disadvantages. Dry docks these days are mainly covered facilities that allow work to be undertaken regardless of weather

conditions. Droitwich is completely open air but can be lovely on sunny days. Nick is always to hand to give advice when needed. For some boaters south of Tardebigge, the flight can be daunting but Stourport Dry Dock involves a day and half of boating to get there.

My dry dock experience is that with a dry dock, you get just one week to do all the work you need to do. With the land-based option, you can extend by the week. If you come across any issues, (new anodes? new chines?) then you can pay for an extended week in order to carry work out. The downside of that is that any outside contractors such as a person who can weld might not be as prompt as you might expect. They might not turn up promptly at 7.00am just because you are ready to start work.

All-in-all, the Marina experience is different. The Manager and staff will go out of their way to help where they can. I give them 10 out of ten and thoroughly recommend them but whichever way you decide, just don't let your boat corrode.

If You Are Intending To Buy A Boat

If any readers are considering purchasing a boat the following, somewhat 'tongue in cheek', interpretations may be worth bearing in mind!

What the ad states

Traditional engine
Timber cabin with traditional feel

Appeals to enthusiast
Suitable for DIY enthusiast
Restoration project
Dramatically reduced
Beautifully repainted and refitted
Reluctant sale due to ill-health
Will sell to right person
New condition hardly used
Live aboard, suitable for single person or couple

Loads of storage space
Reasonable offers considered
Regrettable sale due to changing circumstances

What it may mean

Won't start and throws oil everywhere
Leaks all over the bed, is draughty and smells of fuel
No toilet
Sunk
Burnt out and sunk
Was horribly overpriced
Spruced up for quick sale
Sick of stopping it sinking
Needs money and a pulse - optional
Engine won't start up
Couple living on board will become single within a month
No furniture
Any offers considered
It sank

'58' acknowledges Ray Butler from the 'Historic Narrow Boat Club' for these interpretations.

Poetry Corner

This poem was written after a canal walk at the end of winter.

Nothing To Write Home About

Just watch. Listen. Smell. What else to do?

On the hazels the tassels are long and loose

They seem to have been waiting so long

For the little red flowers to flame out

Here they are, poking from their buds

A cherry plum flower shakes against a dark branch

A rampage of goosegrass shoots under the hedge

Moss is so thick it would clothe me if I stood still

Air smells of dung and damp and green shoots

Last year's crab apples melt into the sedge

Blackthorn and holly are peppered with buds

The weak sun is held in fractal oak branches

A woodpecker hammers in its urgency

And that is definitely a chaffinch singing

Strange to be silent half the year then find your voice.

Mary Green



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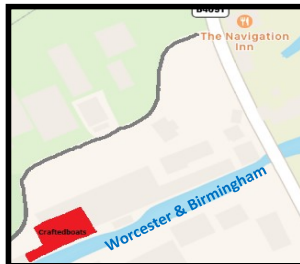
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If you are interested in canals, angling, boats, boat crewing, natural history, walking, cycling, photography, industrial archaeology, local history, canal work parties, preservation and enhancement of the environment as well as meeting up with like-minded 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 River & Canal Rescue, Bradley Canal Restoration, Staffs & Worcester Canal, Life and Times of a Canal Coalman, Chance's Glassworks and lots more.

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*).

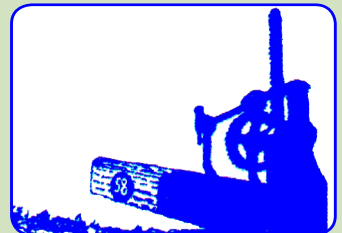
We hope to welcome as many new faces as possible from members of the community.

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

Facebook.com/wbdcs.org.uk | X (formerly Twitter): @wbdcs58



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