

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'



Our Team of Volunteers at St. Richard's Canal Festival 2025



The Inland
Waterways
Association

Keeping our waterways alive

Corporate Member



Worcester-Birmingham
& Droitwich
Canals Society



www.wbdcs.org.uk

Issue 577 Summer 2025

Society Walks / Meetings

We always do two Summer walks in place of our usual meetings at Alvechurch.

Tuesday 8th July
Summer Walk (See page 21)
Mildenham Mill

Saturday 16th August
Summer Walk (See page 21)
Drakelow Tunnels

Tuesday 2nd September
AGM + short presentation

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

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

www.facebook.com/wbdcs.org.uk

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.

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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

It seems a long time since I sat down and wrote my Chair's report and in that time a lot has happened. The closure of through navigation probably until August, from Birmingham to Worcester caused by the work being carried out on the top lock at Tardebigge, must be the most frustrating. It meant that we could not get 'Cecilia' down to Droitwich for St. Richard's Canal Festival and it must be causing problems for all the hire fleets on the canal.

Back in March we had our Annual Dinner, again a very successful and enjoyable afternoon. Although the attendance figures this year were its lowest ever since we started using the golf club, we continue to get good quality food served by friendly staff. Congratulations to Ed Butcher who was awarded the George Bate Trophy and a big thank you to Tony Brannon for his impromptu quiz.

Over the May Bank Holiday we had the St. Richard's Canal Festival in Vines Park, Droitwich Spa and I have to say it was one of our most successful festivals since we started organising them back in 2011. We were well blessed this year with good weather, and we must have had well over 6000 visitors over the weekend. All our stall holders were happy with the trade; I never heard of any complaints (except for the usual – can we move please?) so all in all we can say it was a success. That success does not come easy and a lot of hard work goes into the planning process with the event build up starting on the Tuesday and finishing the following Tuesday. Thank you to Ed Butcher who took the role of coordinating the volunteers in Neil's absence; I am told that we had 34 volunteers over the weekend; that figure came from the signed-in records from the volunteers tent but I suspect that we had many more volunteers who came to help but did not sign in. So I have to say, "A huge 'thank you' to all volunteers," it was very worthwhile. I have also to say a personal thank you to Nick, Sue and all their family and friends who together created the bar and kept it running throughout the weekend. As most of us know the success of the bar determines the success of the festival. As well as the bar we had another successful Duck Race and the team selling tickets did a good job by selling all 1500 tickets. Well done everyone – let's look forward to 2026!!!

David Wheeler

Easy Fund Raising

In total we have, between those of us that are registered, raised nearly £400. 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 (charity number 500159) as your preferred charity and 'easyfundraising' will do the rest.



easyfundraising

www.easyfundraising.org.uk



Editor's Notes

Hello Readers

Hello readers, since the last edition of your favourite magazine, the largest society event has undoubtedly been the St. Richard's Canal Festival in Droitwich, and what an occasion it was too! More about this will appear further on but as usual, it was a massive effort by the society's band of volunteers as well as help from so many other people, with nothing being too much trouble to attend to. Many thanks to everyone concerned for yet another valiant effort in planning, building up the site in the week prior to the event, being on call during it and taking down the day afterwards. Also special mention to all of the bar staff who worked throughout the long weekend - every one of them volunteers. Very well done to everybody.

Unfortunately and entirely out our control, was the continuing stoppage at Tardebigge top lock. Any craft entering the St. Richard's Canal Festival, particularly from the Birmingham level, had to cruise the long way round to Stourport, down the River Severn and up to Droitwich on the Barge Canal. At least 4 days were required for this journey even though the scenery was spectacular. Nevertheless, there were still many boats present although the number of trade boats was down on previous years.

Tardebigge top lock, being a listed structure, appears to be taking longer to repair than initially anticipated. Apparently an additional lock wall has been excavated which may have been a support for the ill-fated boat lift that was experimented with in the early years of the 19th century. Clearly the current works have some archaeological interest which is good news - however, the down side is the loss of revenue to boat hire companies, boat builders and of course the pubs and additional places of interest for boaters, such as Avoncroft Museum. '58's last information indicated the end of August for reopening to navigation.

We have some recent photos further on in the magazine

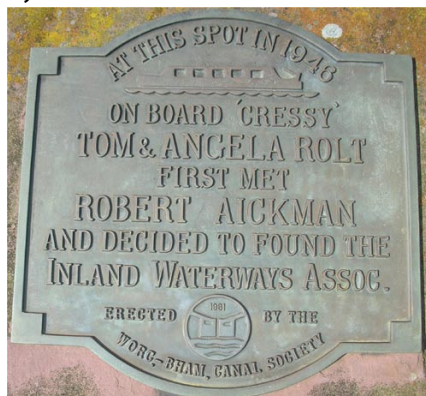
Changing the subject a little, please note that the society's Annual General Meeting is scheduled for September 2nd as per previous years. However, did readers know that it did not used to be at this time of year until 2005? The October 2005 edition of '58' no.410, indicates the following earlier report from the then Chair, Ian Hunter:

"Following the decision to change the Society's Annual General meeting from June to October (this presumably should read 'September') this report covers a period of 15 months and spans two summers."

What has not yet been discovered was the actual reason behind this decision. Hopefully we can find out for the next edition of '58'. However, if any readers from that particular point in time could let '58' know, that would be very helpful please? Over to you readers!

Another important historical item mentioned in the same edition no. 410, was the unveiling of the correctly dated plaque below the main one by Tardebigge top lock. '58' recalled the story of the unveiling of the main plaque (1981) some years ago but not the smaller plaque below it which incorporated the correct date of the meeting which took place there on board 'Cressy', the boat belonging to Tom and Angela Rolt. The meeting between the Rolts and Robert Aickman led to the formation of the 'Inland Waterways Association' the following year in 1946.

It just so happens that this coming August marks the 80th anniversary of that initial meeting. The unveiling of the newer plaque was carried out by Sonia Rolt, the second wife and widow of Tom, on August 13th 2005. It would be good if both IWA and WB&DCS did something to commemorate this momentous occasion, without which many canals, including the W&B, could easily have closed - both Droitwich Canals had already closed in 1939.



In this edition of '58' we will also read about the society meetings which have taken place during the last few months as well as the Nature Notes which Mary was amazingly able to complete, even though suffering some ill-health issues which are affecting her eyesight. Well done and thank you Mary. We will also hear about evidence of otters on our local canals, news from the Lapal Canal Trust, the society President's painted barrels, Canal & River Trust items, the George Bate Trophy and more besides.

Many thanks to all those who have been able to send things in to us for publication this time and one issue which we should've mentioned last time was offering our best wishes to long standing member Colin Scrivener. Colin is currently recuperating from an operation and so has been unable to attend our meetings and annual lunch. '58' hopes that Colin's recovery is moving forward positively and looks forward to seeing him back in the fold as soon as possible.

Enjoy the read everyone.

John Hemingway

Raffle Prizes

**HELP
RAFFLE PRIZES
NEEDED**

The society's monthly meetings, excluding the Summer walks, take place in the meeting room behind the 'Weighbridge' pub in Alvechurch. The room clearly has to be paid for, for which part of the membership subscription is utilised. However, Sue & 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 hand to any other committee member and it will be passed on.

New Members

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

Andrew Goddard of Bromsgrove

Steven Green of Stoke Prior

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.

Annual Lunch & George Bate Trophy

The Society's Annual Lunch took place at the Bromsgrove Golfing Centre where many members and friends were present. As well as the usual banter, food and drink this is the occasion where the person who has received the most member nominations is announced as the winner of the coveted George Bate Trophy. This year the trophy was presented by a most recent recipient, Ken Robinson, as very unfortunately the last one, our great friend and treasurer Trevor Hyde, sadly passed away. Ken presented the trophy to **Ed Butcher** for his sterling work in getting the society's use of the 'Wanderer' workboat which, incidentally, is still the case now. Ed rightly received much acclamation for this as well as his speech.

The lunch also held its usual raffle again with some superb prizes. Tony also devised a quiz for everyone to take part in and a short thank you speech was given by Adam Siviter from the Primrose Hospice. The occasion was again deemed to be successful with many looking forward already to next year's occasion.



Painted Barrels

Our society President, John Burman, used to be heavily involved with the Droitwich Canals Trust including painting various artifacts to sell in order to raise funds for the restoration. Recently John found some old barrels which he has painted and intends to sell them with any funds going towards the society. This is a very kind gesture which John has initiated.

The barrels are shown below in their newly painted state and will eventually be advertised on Ebay. If any readers are interested in purchasing these beforehand please contact John or this magazine, we will gladly pass details onto John.



Otters on the Cut

Society member and volunteer, Ian McGarr, has been finding out if any otters are present on our canals. Some years ago the society heard a talk about this very subject which depicted signs of these wonderful creatures actually in the centre of Birmingham. Ian has been finding out that there are clear signs of their presence on our local canals. A year or two ago there were some spotted around the Alvechurch area and longer ago still, '58' was shown some footage of their presence in the River Salwarpe in Droitwich; the Droitwich Barge Canal running alongside but on a higher level.

Ian's findings look really promising so if anyone walking, boating or cycling etc. spots any otters please try to take a picture and send to this magazine.





'Nature Notes'

Mary Green

I have eyesight problems recently so can't see all the wildlife as well as I'd like. But I can see the wonderful blossom on all the canalside trees this year. Blackthorn came in March and April, in places then overlapping with the hawthorn (May) blossom which came early this year. This is especially thick and lovely in May. In between the wild cherry blossom was good and I can feel the little cherries set on them already.

In the sunshine the smells have been especially good. Hawthorn flowers have a particularly distinctive scent. Some people dislike it – it's very musky and is said to smell a bit like human bodies! Blackthorn and cherry are fragrant too but much more subtle. All the smells, and the brightness of the white flowers of these three trees, and not there for our benefit. They are to attract insect pollinators. This year I could hear the bees and flies around them – they love to hunt for nectar in the sunshine and pollinate the trees well in a year like this.

These three trees are all in the Rose family, and will have edible fruits later. Sloes (in blackthorn) ripen very slowly and will feed birds later in the autumn (and flavour gin for us). Wild cherries ripen by late June or July and are edible for us – but you have to grab them quick before the blackbirds have them! Hawthorn has profuse red berries in autumn and many flocks of birds in the thrush family descend on them. Most people don't eat them but they are fine and taste like tiny apples – apples are also in the Rose family and occasional along the canal. There are even a couple of wild plum or bullace trees near me on the canalside (same family) so there is a true blossoming woodland strip along the canal all spring and early summer.



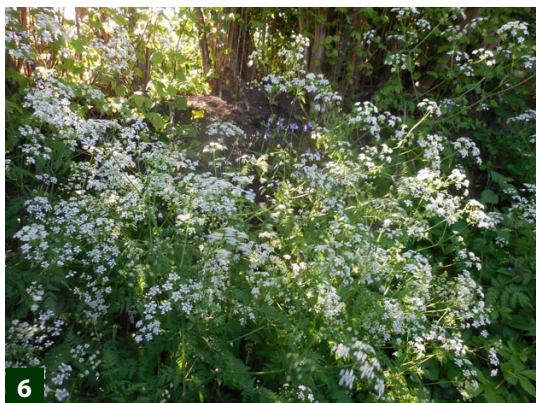
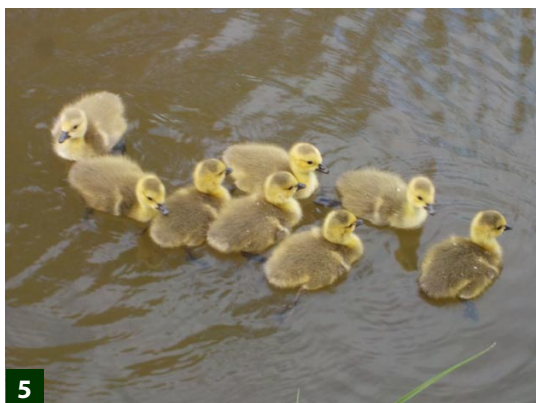
Added to this is a little linear orchard planted by WB&DCS with C&RT- supplied trees a couple of years ago. They have flowered well and I hope they are surviving the recent drought. Bigger trees are fine in drier weather – their roots go deep enough and there is always water there. The little apple and pear orchard had some fruit even last year – I don't know who ate them, but someone did!

Soon the other well-known members of the Rose family, the pink dog-rose and white field-rose will flower, scrambling up into the light. At the same time we'll have elder flowers and then their berries – both also good for insects, birds and us!

I've been looking out for the young waterbirds. I don't think it's just me but I haven't seen so many yet. I have seen mallard ducklings and others have seen goslings nearby and cygnets further down the canal – but not as many as expected. Mind you, someone told me they'd seen a whole family of mink nearby. They are attractive-looking animals but out of place in our ecology, causing harm to the balance of nature.

The land side of the towpath has been awash with sweet-smelling cow-parsley, and scattered bluebells and wild garlic marking remnants of ancient woodland. The water's edge has common sedge in flower and there have been some spectacular kingcups. Now more flowers are coming, buttercups and forget me nots and soon there will be yellow flag irises. As the hedge side flowers die down, the waterside ones take over.

Everywhere is birdsong: blackbird and thrush, chiffchaff, blackcap and willow warbler, robin, wren, green woodpecker, chaffinch – most originally woodland-edge birds – and buzzards mewling overhead. I haven't heard a cuckoo yet, but maybe...



1. BLACKTHORNE BUDS
2. FIRST HAWTHORN
3. FIELD ROSE

4. DOG ROSE
5. GOSLINGS
6. COW PARSLEY

Monthly Meetings

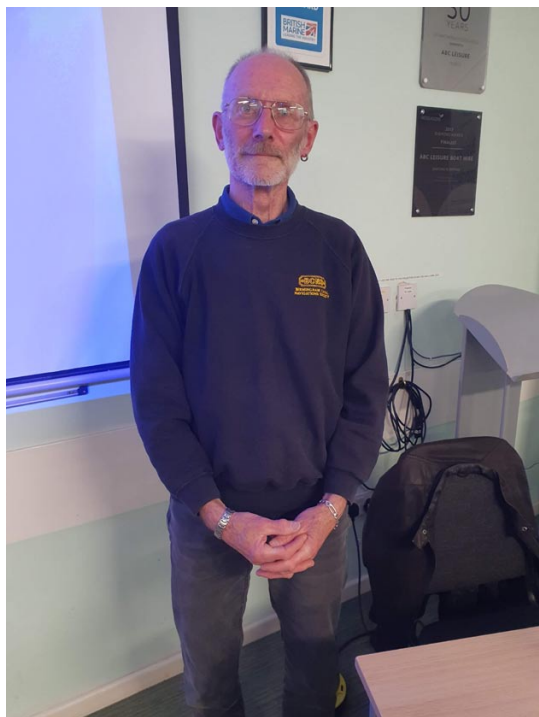
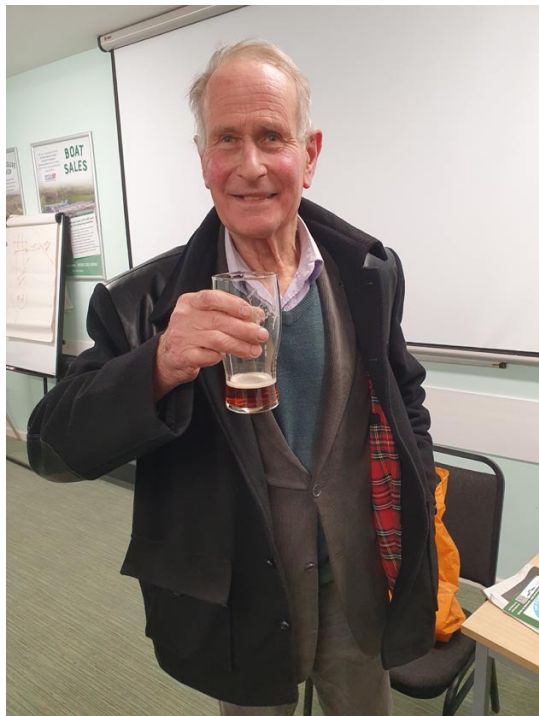
Our monthly meetings continue regardless of anything else the society is involved in with thanks to Denis for organising, as well as the Sue who does the raffle, Tony who does any recording and Trevor, Maxine, Lynne and anyone else who arranges the hot drinks and biscuits.

The **March meeting** was delivered by Graham Wigley (*right*) who is a very well - known and long standing boater from Birmingham. Graham described in much detail his younger life around the Derby area and subsequent relocation to Birmingham. His interest in waterways was kindled from a very young age and developed as the years went by. His recollections were so detailed including the names of many past colleagues and friends. Graham's pictures included his carrying business along both canals and rivers as well as showing scenes now no longer accessible.

Graham could've carried on talking about his life on the canals for so much longer had time allowed. The usual thanks were provided by the packed audience with Graham then drawing out the first raffle ticket.

The **April meeting** was delivered by society friend, local area boater and renowned speaker, Phil Clayton (*right*). Phil's illustrated talk focused on the Birmingham Canal Navigations, its development, workings, decline and subsequent revival driven forward by the BCNS. The BCN was and is somewhat unique to the waterway system in that it's stated that it has more miles of canal than Venice.

Phil described, with illustrations, the development and alterations to the BCN right from the initial opening in 1769 to the present day. At its largest, the system was about 160 miles whereas today it is about 100 miles in total. It included all of Birmingham and the Black Country up to Wolverhampton but not Worcester-Birmingham Canal, nor the Droitwich Canals which were owned by another separate company.



The BCN did not suffer from railway competition like other waterways did as many of the goods carrying craft were able to deliver their cargoes to places inaccessible by train. This led to the system of railway interchange basins being developed, many of which survive today. Goods such as coal, were delivered by rail to these basins, transhipped into boats which then delivered locally to wherever required.

Following the decline of this system came the focus on leisure activities driven forward particularly by the BCNS. In 2019 the BCNS organised a celebration of 250 years since the BCN first opened which again highlighted this unique system.

Phil showed the meeting many pictures, including some of areas sadly no longer apparent, although some areas do demonstrate their past heritage. Scenes depicting 'then and now' were of particular interest to those present. Phil received the usual round of thank yous from the packed audience.

The later than usual **May meeting**, owing to the St. Richard's Canal Festival, was delivered by the society's vice-Chair Margaret Rowley. Margaret, along with many other society members, was formerly involved with the Droitwich Canals Trust, whose primary focus was the re-opening of both the Droitwich Barge Canal and the Droitwich Junction Canal. Many at the time believed this restoration to be unachievable but the DCT, along with such as the then WBCS and the Inland Waterways Association, remained determined in their efforts resulting in the reopening of both canals in 2011.



Margaret showed the audience present many 'then and now' pictures of the restoration with several 'in the process of' pictures. There was also much input from others present who had been involved with the work, which just went to show how important it eventually became. The meeting was shown derelict locks, bridges, spill weirs, navigational blockages and overgrown canal beds. The process of restoration was then shown which included a new channel for the Droitwich Junction Canal where the original canal route had been obliterated.

The final part showing the completed project was truly amazing. Many businesses have subsequently benefitted from the canals being reopened which also includes the Droitwich Spa marina just below the Hanbury 3 locks on the Junction Canal.

Much credit was mentioned concerning the late Max Sinclair, whose determination proved inspirational to others. The Droitwich Barge lock is named after him. However, the efforts of many many other people was clearly apparent in what has become possibly the most successful of canal restoration projects.

Margaret was rightly given the usual vote of thanks by all those attendees to hear and see this fascinating presentation.

John Hemingway

St. Richard's Canal Festival May 2025

A very successful festival. Great weather helped.
Here's a round-up of photos for everyone to see.



We have no way of really knowing but an estimate puts the number of visitors to Vines Park at around 6,000.



Volunteer News

Volunteer Coordinator Report

As you may imagine my report this month is all about our two big events, the St. Richard's Canal Festival and our appearance at Alvechurch Picnic in the Park.

St. Richard's Canal Festival.

A massive thanks to everyone who volunteered or anyone who turned up to support the event. We had over 45 volunteers on the festival days so thank you all. Unfortunately we had a disappointing start to the festival. Due to lock 58 being closed we couldn't get 'Cecilia' down to Vines Park for the festivities. However we didn't let this get us down. We sold out all the 1500 duck race tickets and all the bottles on the bottle stall. In this we were ably assisted by volunteers from the Primrose Hospice. Our volunteers also looked resplendent in their new blue hi-viz jackets.

In the big marquee the bar team were kept busy with people intent on trying the excellent beer on offer, particularly the Titanic Plum Porter (thank you David). Bar team included Nick, Sue, Pete, Sophie, Daz, Em, Stefan, Tom, Gina, Gemma, Dave, Brett, Nikolaj, Ellie, Irene, Wendy, Paul and Emela with Mark Saunders, Mark Rogers and Graham Pope the bar builders, also requiring a mention.

There is also a big thanks to Ed who took over the organisation for the first Tuesday and the Wednesday - no wonder it went so smoothly! The van drivers, Denis Pike, Phil Goff, Nick Hadley and Adrian Smith were brilliant. A special welcome back to Adrian and his wife Carole whom we have not seen for some time owing to ill-health. Unfortunately the drivers are all getting older and soon some will be unable to drive due to the insurance age and medical criteria! So if you are eligible and available next year please let us know.

Once again the bands and choirs were a big hit, thanks to David who saw all his plans come to fruition, including some vintage cars being on display.

Finally well done to Paddy, Peter and Peter on the electrics, it's not easy putting the festival together and dismantling it on the last day!

So once again a successful festival which is hard work but enjoyable. Bring it on 2026.

Alvechurch Picnic in the Park

For us this is a walk in the park thanks to the team putting it together and taking it down. Due to the good weather we had an easy time pulling the people in. Thanks must go to Ken and Chris for putting it together and Nick, Tony and Ed for the transport. Again it was a successful day; we sold out on the bottle stall and made lots of friends in Alvechurch. Very important as it's our home area.

That's our May excitement over with and we now look forward to the Heritage Open Days in September. We may also have some representation at a Bellboat Race event taking place by the canal at Selly Oak on 13th September. More information in the next edition of '58'.

I look forward to you all volunteering for our next society activities!

Neil Franklin
Volunteer Coordinator



Volunteer News cont.

Workboat 'Wanderer' Report

As was reported in the last edition of '58' we have a new working arrangement with C&RT to maximise the use of 'The Wanderer' workboat to help maintain both the W&B and Droitwich Canals.

The big change being that instead of using 'Wanderer' for a fixed 2/3 month period, usually December through to February, we now have access to the boat on a weekly basis throughout the year. Using a regular work party of WB&DCS members who are also C&RT volunteers, we have been focusing on the cutting back of overhanging offside foliage, cleaning off lock chamber approaches and walls, and removal of litter and flotsam.

Since developing our new system of working, which ensures regular communication with C&RT to plan activities, we have achieved weekly outings taking the boat from the bottom of the Tardebigge flight down to Diglis, before taking a break for the preparation, operation and clear-up of St. Richard's Festival. (That's some break ! -

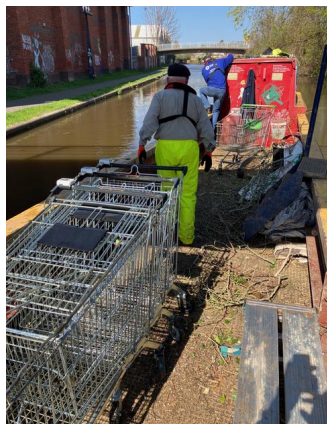
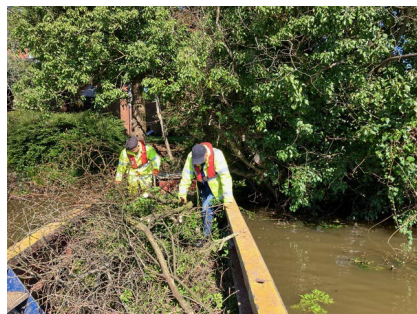
Ed). Offside cutting of overhanging foliage soon fills the hold. The next issue is always finding a sensible place to offload.

When it comes to collecting flotsam, or other stuff that's found its way into the channel, it can be a bit more challenging. At Bridge 5 near Lowesmoor these 3 supermarket trolleys were locked together, sticking up above the water surface, and a clear hazard for boats. They took some serious effort to get on board. They were returned to their home at a local store where staff seemed happy enough to have them back.

After the break for St Richard's we resumed activities, picking up

'Wanderer' from Droitwich where the C&RT Thursday workparty had last moored the boat. The first priority was then to clean the lock chambers of the Hanbury Flight locks 3-1 which were fairly well covered with a variety of green stuff. Some of which comes off easily enough, some not so simple to strip. The picture shows a little of the before and after. It also rained all day.

At the time of writing, we are next due to work the boat southbound from Hanbury Wharf, to continue offside the trimming of overhanging foliage which will have regrown significantly since we were last down that stretch in early March. With Tardebigge closed until the end of August there is little point in going north as yet. I am due to meet with C&RT staff during the first week of June to discuss forward plans for 'Wanderer' with the aim of getting the boat north of Tardebigge at the earliest opportunity to tackle offside overgrowth and flotsam towards Hopwood.



Ed Butcher

(We can all now see why Ed was the recipient of the George Bate Trophy - Ed)

Lapal Canal Trust News

Our friends from the Lapal Canal Trust have been as busy as ever raising the profile of the restoration project and fund raising at the same time. One of the benches at Whitehouse Wharf in Selly Oak has been named in memory of volunteer and well known boater Bob Broomhall. Bob was also a member of WD&DCS. Many people were present for this occasion including Joan, his former partner, Bob's daughter and granddaughter. A commemorative speech was delivered by IWA and LCT activist Dave Pearson.

Bob was a great supporter of the Lapal Canal Trust's restoration project and did much to promote it as well as volunteering at work parties. Further information is available on the LCT web site and Facebook pages.



LCT was also represented at IWA/C&RT's Restoration Conference this year held at Ellesmere Port. Topics covered included 'Water Transfer using Navigable or formerly Navigable Inland Waterways', Working with Young Volunteers, Changing Heritage, Restoration of Waterways Today. The conference, as usual, was very well attended with several thought provoking ideas shared for those present involved with waterway restoration projects. Richard Parry, the current CEO of C&RT was present and gave a farewell speech to the conference.



Lapal Canal Trust News cont.

Lapal Canal Trust was also present for the very first time at St. Richard's Canal Festival where much information was shared with an interested public.

In the meantime, much work continues to progress, albeit slowly, with regards to funding applications. A new person, Justyna Kordala, has been engaged by LCT to focus on fund raising applications. Justyna was also present at Vines Park with the LCT information stall.

Also at Droitwich was the organiser of the young peoples' paddle boats who has informed of a water based event at Whitehouse Wharf in Selly Oak where other paddle boats are moored, around September 13th. LCT, along with others, may be present subject to confirmation.

Watch this space!

LCT's 'Annual Walk the Line' is scheduled for October 11th subject to confirmation.



Canal & River Trust News

New Chief Executive announced:

Campbell Robb will be joining our charity on 6 October, as chief executive, replacing Richard Parry who steps down this summer.



Campbell joins the Trust after six years leading the social justice charity Nacro. Prior to that he headed-up the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust, as well as seven years as chief executive of Shelter. Campbell also brings government experience as the first Director General of the Office of the Third Sector, an adviser to HM Treasury, and was previously Director of Public Policy at the National Council for Voluntary Organisations.

David Orr, Chair of our Trustees, comments: "The UK's

navigable canals represent an extraordinary and enduring link to our industrial heritage. Today they play multiple roles, offering communities the chance to engage with nature and boost their mental and physical health, providing essential corridors for wildlife and biodiversity, and even helping to mitigate the effects of climate change. As age, reduced funding, and extreme weather take their toll, our charity's mission of caring for them has never been more important. I am delighted that Campbell will be joining the Canal & River Trust as its new chief executive. He brings a wealth of experience from across the charity sector. I look forward to working with him to secure the longer-term future of our canals."

Campbell Robb comments: "The role of chief executive of the Canal & River Trust is one of the most exciting roles in the public and voluntary sectors and one I am delighted to take on. To act as a steward for the history and protect the future of these amazing living monuments will be a challenge, but also an opportunity. I am also committed to the importance of community. In everything I do I wish to support, create and be part of communities. The canals and rivers are vital for those who live there, work there and volunteer there, as well as the wildlife they foster and support. To be part of that and to help them all thrive will be a privilege."

Campbell Robb replaces Richard Parry, who joined the Trust in 2013, a year after its creation, and who has led the Trust through its critical formative years.

Worcestershire Prostate Cancer Support Group

Our friends from the Worcestershire Prostate Cancer Support Group were at St. Richard's Canal Festival. They have published this article in their latest magazine: <https://worcspcsg.com>

Thanks to society members Wendy & Trevor Albutt for the information

AWARENESS DAY AT ST. RICHARD'S CANALS FESTIVAL

Wendy and Trevor Albutt, who are members of our group and also of the **Worcestershire, Birmingham and Droitwich Canals Society**, invited us to put up a stand to raise awareness of prostate cancer in the Droitwich area. The Canal Society had chosen us as their charity of the year, and as a result there would be no charge for the pitch for our stand.

Val and I arrived at 8.45am on a gloriously sunny morning but with a noticeable chill in the air. Our pitch site overlooked a very picturesque view with narrow boats moored up and down the canal. The footfall at the event was quite heavy during the morning but began to tail off in the afternoon as the weather cooled. A number of our volunteer members also attended to help spread the word, and we issued a great deal of literature to the public. We were also approached on numerous occasions by individuals thanking us for taking the time to raise awareness of prostate cancer. I felt that there was a greater understanding of prostate-related issues among the people of Droitwich that I spoke to than I had experienced in other areas of the county.



Left to right: Tim Bawler, Paul Markall and Phil Goodall

I also met **Councillor Neil Franks** who covers the constituency of Droitwich East and we spoke for quite some time about prostate cancer issues. He was particularly interested in promoting a PSA testing session via the local council and gave me his contact details. In all, this had been another good awareness event to promote WPCSG in the county.

Paul Markall

BCNS News: Titford Gathering

Society friends from the Birmingham Canals Navigation Society recently held their boat gathering at the Pumphouse on the Titford Canal. Some members of WB&DCS visited the event by road as the stoppage at Tardebigge gave insufficient time to cruise there. There were plenty of boats present even though the level of the water was somewhat low and, as usual, the atmosphere was very welcoming to any visitors.



Summer Walks 2025

Tuesday 8th July - Please note: NOT THE FIRST TUESDAY OF THE MONTH.

A Visit to Mildenhall Mill, Egg Lane, Fernhill Heath. Worcester. WR3 7SA.

Ten years or so ago, society members were invited to look around Mildenhall Mill which is situated alongside the Droitwich Barge Canal. Bill Bayliss used to own this property back then and sadly nowadays he is in a home. The Mill building had had a partial restoration in the seventies and was in fairly good condition.

WB&DCS suggested that members may have missed that opportunity to visit at that time. There are now new owners, and I have contacted them. They are willing to offer a visit but this has to suit them obviously with other commitments.

We have agreed a time slot of 7.30pm. Parking is available at Mildenhall Lock side on Egg Lane. Please bear in mind that the Mill is not the easiest to find and for those who may need help to get there then we can try to travel in convoy. I suggest that the meeting point will be Droitwich Sports Centre at 7pm for onward travel to the Mill no later than 7.10pm. The easiest route will be to Ombersley and then use the A449 towards Worcester.

For anybody who uses the 'What 3 Words' app the code is 'monks.guess.bill'.

Those who use Google maps the address is above.

The remains of the evening may give us the opportunity to walk along the canal to Linacre bridge, restored by DCT in the seventies, weather permitting.



Saturday 16th August

Drakelow Tunnels / Shadow Factory / Coldwar Bunker.

It has been proposed that we travel to Drakelow near Kinver to go on a guided tour underground. These tunnels are privately owned but tours are given by volunteers who are working to preserve them. 10am start.

The volunteers only give the walk/talk at weekends and they are only announced approximately 6 weeks in advance.

The cost will be £7.50 but that price I can guarantee is more than worth it. I need to know numbers quite closely in advance. Initially expressions of interest are appreciated. Email me: programme@wbdc.org.uk or Whatsapp me on 07870 939121.

Denis Pike

(Thank you for arranging these activities Denis and now over to you readers- Ed)



Tardebigge Top Lock: Heritage

Lock 58 repairs.

Restoration and conservation work continues at Tardebigge top lock and society members continue to take interest in progress. The following interpretive account is based on discussions and photos provided by Caroline Ossowska from Canal and Rivers Trust Heritage and Kier Site Manager, James Meally.

With the lock walls firmly braced the team have safely removing the towpath interior facing wall of the lock to expose the original lock wall. These facing bricks will be cleaned, treated and replaced following work to stabilize the walls.

Speculation continues as to how the exposed structures relate to previous lock repairs and potential structures that may have been around at the time of the experimental boat lift.

Several episodes of past building work and repairs are being recorded by the engineering and archaeological team with a view to building a picture of the history of structures found which will be reported upon in due course.

Part of the structures revealed include a set of buttresses or supporting pillars behind the wall. It is not yet clear when they may have been added but part of their role seems to be to brace or secure the wall by brickwork and with large timber struts seemingly securing the wall to the pillars.

Some physical examples of these “H” shaped jointed oak beams needed to be removed during current work as they are water damaged and will not be replaced. Having been recorded and realistically being of little value for preservation or museum interest, some have been offered to the society.

We have accepted three part timbers (*below*) demonstrating the “H” bracing structure (not the timbers completing one complete structure). The photos show them in situ within the brickwork. We hope the timbers will dry out without losing too much integrity and can be used as interesting “show and tell” aids along with our local history descriptions of the historic boat lift.

From the two photos (*below*) you can see one side of the “H” which would have been built into the pillar, the middle bar then being put through

the wall with a connecting timber across the inside face of the wall. All were then covered as the brickwork was built around the brace.

Our continued thanks to C&RT volunteer lead Sam, who keeps us in mind by arranging site visits for C&RT volunteers and putting us in touch with the site archaeologist for future updates.

For more information please contact **Al Gibbs**:
heritage@wbdc.org.uk email.



Tardebigge Top Lock: Repairs

As many readers already know Tardebigge Top Lock 58 is currently closed. This is, of course, preventing navigation taking place around this area. The lock walls have basically collapsed and major repairs are taking place. You are still able to walk this area and a pontoon has been floated across the canal to allow walkers to continue their journey. We have been down to the area recently to see just what is happening. Further information is available on the Canal & River Trust website via this link: <https://bit.ly/3FEEG0T>





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CANAL CLOSED FOR EMERGENCY REPAIRS

Tardebigge Top Lock 58

What's happening?

The lock chamber wall needed immediate stabilisation to prevent further damage. We have completed this work and are carefully testing it down to investigate the reason why it failed before repairing it. This intervention will help protect the longest lock flight in the UK.

Stay updated at

www.canalrivertrust.org.uk

What to look for: We're looking for volunteers to help with the repair work. If you're interested, please contact us on 01273 835900 or email volunteers@canalrivertrust.org.uk.

Support our canal! Help us keep these beautiful waterways alive by donating today.

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How does this affect you?

The canal is closed to navigation until repairs are complete. However, the pontoon bridge across Lock 58, the channel has been repaired with a new concrete wall and concrete apron on the canal.

When will the navigation resume?

We're working as quickly as possible, but due to the complexity of the repairs, the canal is expected to remain closed until August 2023.

Thank you for your patience. We appreciate your understanding as we carry out this vital work.

canalrivertrust.org.uk

Dreaming Spring

The barnacle goose is suddenly there, two-tone back
Sitting neat and pert among the Canada geese, making
Them seem ungainly, negativizing their black and white heads.
Every year in this unlikely place. Sometimes I think
I dream him up, like I conjure up the kingfisher
Flashing through the winter brown. Today I dream spring
The sun brighter behind the harsh wind
Little red hazel flowers opening themselves
Below the lengthening catkins, making ready,
Drakes and ducks in a nodding dance of foreplay
Rosettes of goosegrass shooting under the hedge
And a chaffinch, just trying out his song, not quite
Getting the roll but making the run-up.
And I dream the sun going through my thin skin
Into my wintry bones and making my body whole.

Alders

Alders are forgotten trees
No pretty blossom, dull green
No vivid red or yellow leaf
In autumn, sitting quietly
Beside the water, growing fast.
The suddenly the twigs burst
Into red catkins, softening the lines
Of the bare branches, like blood
Rising into your fingertips
As morning arrives, spring arrives
And you wake up rejoicing.

Mary Green



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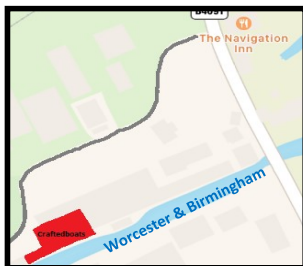
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If you are interested in canals, angling, boats, boat crewing, natural history, walking, cycling, photography, industrial archaeology, local history, canal work parties, preservation and enhancement of the environment as well as meeting up with like-minded 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*).

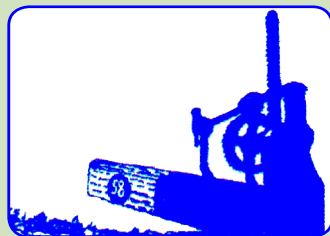
We hope to welcome as many new faces as possible from members of the community.

Please visit our website: wbdc58.org.uk
(where you can also download a membership application form)

[Facebook.com/wbdc58.org.uk](https://www.facebook.com/wbdc58.org.uk)



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