

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'*



Restored Buckby Can - See Page 9



The Inland
Waterways
Association

Keeping our waterways alive

Corporate Member



Worcester-Birmingham
& Droitwich
Canals Society



www.wbdcs.org.uk

Issue 578 Autumn 2025

Society Meetings

Tuesday 2nd September

Annual General Meeting

followed by a short presentation by our

society president John Burman:

**'Waterways of the Western Front -
Untold Stories of World War 1'**

Tuesday 7th October

'My Canal Mania' by Geoff Lambert

Tuesday 4th November

'The River Salwarpe from Source to Severn'

by David Wornham

Tuesday 2nd December

Our Annual Natter, Noggin & Quiz Night

More information about meetings can be found on page 8.

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

The Magazine of the Worcester-Birmingham & Droitwich Canals Society

Issue 578 Autumn 2025

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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.

Copy Date for the Next Issue: November 7th 2025

Worcester-Birmingham & Droitwich Canals Society

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

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Chair's Notes

I think it is something to do with age and the longevity of being a boater and a member of the Worcester-Birmingham & Droitwich Canals Society. Because of that longevity you make a lot of friends – real friends!! But as we get older and the years pass we start to lose them and this month we have lost another. Peter Best, who was the former Chair and President of the Lapal Canal Trust and a very close friend of WB&DCS, sadly recently passed away and his funeral was held on Monday 11th August. I know that WB&DCS were represented by John Hemingway and Ian Hunter, and you will no doubt read more about Peter in John's notes.

We are coming up to our AGM in September and always I praise the Committee for their unwavering support and work they do for the Society. However, this year we had a very traumatic period when we lost Trevor Hyde as our Treasurer, and I have to thank Sarah Trueman who stepped in to take over as Treasurer. Because Trevor's loss was sudden and unexpected it took us months to sort out access to the accounts; Sarah has been golden in first her patience, whilst we sorted out the bank, and since in pulling together the accounts for Sue to audit. This has not been an easy task, and I think the whole membership owes her a huge "thank you" for putting together a set of accounts that she will present at the AGM.

I know that I continually harp on about 'Cecilia' but I remember back in 2000 when it was me, against all the opinions of the then committee, that I agreed to take ownership and I am very proud of the fact that we now have a thriving volunteer base formed around 'Cecilia'. I say all of this because one stalwart of the WB&DCS, who has been the lead on 'Cecilia' for a number of years and an active member of the Committee, has decided to stand down. I would just like to say another "thank you" to Ken Robinson for all his work in the past and I hope he continues in some form because Scousers like Ken don't come around very often!

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

Since the last edition of '58' following soon after the St. Richard's Canal Festival, we have certainly had some challenges to deal with on the waterways. Tardebigge top lock has been one of the biggest issues; closed all year but due to reopen with restrictions very soon, it has almost certainly cost millions of pounds not just the very delicate repair itself but the massive knock on effect for businesses. The lack of traffic has adversely affected boat builders, hire boat companies, pub businesses that rely on boats mooring up, visitor venues such as Avoncroft and not forgetting the private boaters. All of that coupled with record low rainfall and navigational restrictions that have followed, plus the ever increasing (literally) menace of weed growth particularly the invasive floating pennywort, life on the canals continues to be very challenging.



Above: pennywort and algae south of Lock 58

The low water levels may well have been made worse if the Tardebigge flight had been open but in any event this did not appear to deter some boaters from cruising down to the top lock just to have a look at the progress being made on the repair. And what a task it has been for the contractors made even more challenging by the fact that the lock is a listed structure. Several society members have been invited down to the site for an official tour of the massive repair job

and what a task it has proved to be. Congratulations and thanks to the contractors and C&RT should be the order of the day – when it's completed and in full working condition! We have some more photos of this and the current situation on page 19.

Still nothing to report on any progress of re-opening the towpath just south of Shortwood Tunnel and more surprisingly, as mentioned last time, no information from anyone about the reason for changing the date of the Annual General Meeting from June to October in 2005? Someone out there must know the reason for this so over to you readers please, especially those who were in membership at the time.

Changing the subject somewhat, the 80th date of the meeting on board narrowboat 'Cressy' between the Rolts and the Aickmans went past this August with not much happening probably because of the top lock closure.

However our heritage coordinator, Al Gibbs is determined to do something about this which should feature as part of the Heritage Open Weekend of September 20th and 21st. Next year, which will be the 80th commemoration year since the actual formation of the Inland Waterways Association to which WB&DCS is affiliated, your society intends to do something possibly alongside IWA. Watch this space!



In this edition of '58' we will have articles about Lapal Canal News, Mary's Nature Notes, the Heritage Open Days, reports of the society walks and please don't forget the Annual General Meeting which will be followed by a short talk about the canals from society President John Burman. There'll be plenty more besides so many thanks to all of the contributors who give unstintingly of their time and expertise all in the cause of your canal society.

Enjoy the read everyone.

John Hemingway

Bridge 63 Trophy

The Bridge 63 Trophy is awarded every year at the Annual General Meeting. It's a trophy that's decided by the committee to award to the member, who they think, has made a significant contribution to the society over the past twelve months.



New Members

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

Phil Hanks of Alvechurch.

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.

Obituaries

It is with sadness that '58' sometimes has to report the passing of society friends and members.

Alan Richardson from the Little Radford Model Boat Club in Alvechurch, has recently passed away following an illness. Alan was one of the model boat club people who are seen regularly at St. Richard's Canal Festival and elsewhere exhibiting their superb working models.

Peter Best, also mentioned in the Chair's Notes, recently passed away following a period in care. Peter was a real driving force behind the early days of the Lapal Canal Trust becoming both Chair and subsequently President. It was Peter who used to lead the 'Walk the Line' and it was Peter who sought more involvement from WB&DCS culminating in several members serving on the LCT steering committee. Thanks to Peter, the old canal line in Selly Oak was preserved under the new ring road and he also acted as a media spokesperson, particularly when real progress was announced.

'58' sends its deep condolences to the close family and friends of both Alan and Peter.

Future Meetings

WBDCS Programme: Autumn 2025

Tuesday 2nd September:

Society AGM

This is your chance to have a say in how the committee looks in the year ahead. It could be you who has a say if you are lucky enough to stand. You might also wish to nominate somebody you don't like. After the business of the evening we have our presentation.

Waterways of the Western Front. Untold stories of World War 1

Slideshow and talk given by President John Burman F.R.I.C.S. with assistance from Danny Spike.

Tuesday 7th October:

My Canal Mania by Geoff Lambert.

Many of our members will remember this name. He is the owner of Archie, the medical detection dog that came and checked us all over back in November 2024. On this occasion he will be describing his travels of the canals walking almost the whole of the system with Archie. This is a completely different talk but was too long to combine the two talks, hence another visit.

Tuesday 4th November.

The River Salwarpe from Source to Severn by David Wornham.

David is a retired CRT volunteer Lockkeeper and a resident of Droitwich. He knows the area and it's waterways well, both navigable and ex-navigable. He will be speaking to us about the river that "throws up salt".

Tuesday 2nd December:

Natter, Noggin and Quiz Night.

The return of our festive season social with nibbles.

Please bring along nibbles to share and a plate to eat from!!!!

Front Cover

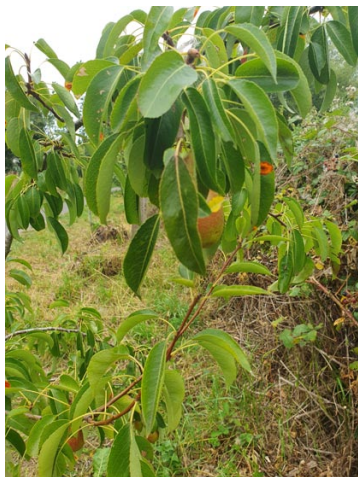
The photo *on the front cover* is of a 'Buckby' can expertly renovated by our President, John Burman. Buckby cans were originally used for carrying fresh water on cargo carrying narrow boats. However, they are now mainly seen as traditional canal décor on the roofs of many different types of narrow boats. This one was originally on the narrow boat 'Lapal', which was owned by now departed society activist, Rene Dowler.

The donated 'Buckby' can will now be used for display purposes by The Lapal Canal Trust. *Here are a few more pictures.*



Linear Orchard

Many readers will remember our society's involvement with the planting of a linear orchard, close to Cecilia's mooring, in Alvechurch. The trees are now growing well and many have bore fruit this year - albeit quite small. Here's a few photos of how the trees are currently looking. Many thanks to our team of volunteers who look after the site.





'Nature Notes'

Mary Green

It was a pleasure to walk along the canal this summer when it was hot and dry. In most stretches near me the trees and hedges alongside the canal are now allowed to grow to a good height, and only face-trimmed to keep the path clear. This means that there is shade – and that tree flowers and fruit form. Most vegetation under these hedges stops flowering in summer, because there isn't enough sunlight there, meaning the land side of the towpath no longer provides nectar and pollen for insects.

However, on the waterside there is sun and light, so later flowering plants take over here. The presence of water means they thrive even in dry weather. High summer plants include meadowsweet, marsh woundwort, purple loosestrife, bedstraw, angelica, figwort and great willow herb. These take over from the earlier yellow flag irises and hemlock water dropwort. Hogweed seems to be flowering all the time somewhere but especially in summer.

Vegetation management along the canal is a bit chaotic this year, with some stretches over-mown in the growing season so only producing dried up grass, meanwhile alder suckers are allowed to grow into huge trees on the waterside, which can't be good for the structures. I went to look where we found the pyramidal orchid a couple of years ago, but that stretch had been comprehensively mown.

All these waterside plants are great sources of pollen and nectar for insects and later of seeds for birds. This year the insect population has improved after a bad year in 2024. There are lots of butterflies along the aquatic fringe, with dragonflies and countless other flies, bees and wasps. The bird population seems to have done well this year, especially woodland-edge birds



like blackcaps and chiffchaffs.

Many canalside plants were used to benefit us in past years. Woundwort as its name suggests is a styptic and antibiotic for cuts and scratches. Meadowsweet leaves contain salicylic acid (aspirin) and were used for colds & fever, aches & pains. Its flowers were used to flavour mead and beer. Angelica was a flavouring herb too. Others are poisonous to us, like hemlock water dropwort and irises.

One which rouses strong reactions is ragwort. This striking yellow flower is common especially where vegetation is re-establishing itself after cultivation. It is unpopular because it can be poisonous to horses and cattle, though they normally avoid it. However, it is the only host plant for the beautiful red and black cinnabar moth and feeds other insects with nectar.

Many insects have special host plants, and I look out in August for the strange grey elephant hawk moth caterpillars on willow-herb, and yellow brimstone butterflies feeding on purple loosestrife before they hang up in ivy for the winter.

I was delighted to see a pair of swans locally with six beautiful well-grown-up cygnets. They were near a canalside house where the owner knows them well and feeds them. I haven't seen so many goslings as usual though, but perhaps they are just elsewhere, as Canada geese move about a lot.

The fruit on trees alongside the canal looks amazing this year. I've never seen sloes so thick on blackthorn. Hawthorns and elder are packed with berries, I was already eating blackberries in July, and the wilding apple trees near here have a good crop. Cherry-plums fruited well, and the new ones planted by CRT near the Dead Arm a few years ago have started to fruit. It looks like being a good autumn and winter for the birds. I wish the invasive American pennywort didn't like the warm summer so much though!



1. ANGELICA

2. AQUATIC FRINGE PLANTS

3. RAGWORT

4. DOG ROSE

5. PURPLE LOOSESTRIFE

Droitwich Historical Society Display

We have been invited by the Droitwich Historical Society to attend the following event. They are holding a display of their Millenium exhibition at Droitwich Town Library from 5th-30th of September. This involves a wall mounted display around the walls of the community room on the first floor.

Organizer, Chris Bowers is reserving space for other groups to contribute and has invited our society to have a Table top display for Sat 6th of September. Library opens at 09.00 for set up and runs 10.00-14.00 for general public.

This will be an opportunity for promoting the Society with usual leaflets and joining details.

We will need some help to set up and take down with members staffing the table to give further information. Shift times dependent on numbers who want to join in.

If you would like to volunteer then please contact Alan Gibbs on 07398 709048.

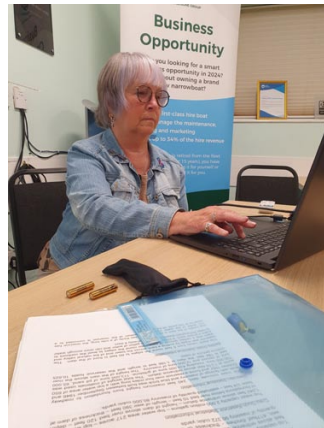
Information for display boards, around the Worcester & Birmingham canal and history with a focus on the Droitwich canal restoration project, are being prepared by Ed and Tony.



Monthly Meeting/Walk/Trip

June Meeting

Back to our usual first Tuesday of the month following St. Richard's Canal Festival, the speaker was Lynne Weaver whose illustrated talk was about 'Water to Birmingham'.



Towards the end of the 19th Century, Birmingham was in great need of fresh water owing to the needs of a growing population, particularly as much of the existing supply was both inadequate and encouraged diseases such as cholera. Lynne shared the background to the search for a suitable water supply, which proved to be controversial. This was particularly so with local Welsh people when the Elan Valley was eventually selected due to its high rainfall and natural attributes, such as impermeable bedrock.

The massive project eventually commenced in 1893 with the reservoirs being built and whole families living in communities, known as the 'Elan Village', that moved along as things progressed. Lynne explained how the 73 mile long aqueduct was constructed in stages using brick lined trenches and tunnels which formed a gravity - fed system. After several years hard toil the dams were opened by King Edward 7th in 1904 with aqueduct project being completed in 1909.

The aqueduct still supplies Birmingham today and several members informed the meeting of an access point in Selly Oak Park very close to the Lapal Canal Restoration. It was also felt that the 3 very large pipes across the W&B just north of West Hills Tunnel, were also part of the Elan Aqueduct.

Lynne is a regular visitor to the Elan Valley and along with several thousand annual visitors to the dams, she recommended anyone to visit. Lynne's superb presentation was thanked in the usual way by all those present.

July Walk

July's walk involved members and friends meeting in Droitwich and then following in convoy to the relevant bridge on the Droitwich Barge Canal. The destination was the privately owned Mildenham Mill which the society had visited quite a number of years previously.

The group was met by the owner, Chris, who showed us the way round the site explaining things as we went



along in what was a beautiful summer's evening. Following this very interesting information the walkers were free to explore the old mill and



surrounding area. It was absolutely fascinating as the pictures indicate. Following the visit to the mill, the group walked along the Droitwich Barge Canal to the well-designed Linacre Bridge.



This was initially built as a field accommodation bridge which survived the abandonment of 1939 owing to it being needed then, as now, by the people working the land either side of the canal.



Many thanks to Denis for organising everything and to Chris for allowing the walkers to visit the mill.

Drakelow Tunnels Visit

My thoughts on our visit to Drakelow Tunnels 16/08/2025

They say that if you re-read a book or watch a film for the second time around you can pick up on tit-bits of information that you missed on the first time around. This was my second visit and I had hoped to become a little more educated this time around.

Thankfully there were no major travel glitches and all members made it to the site in plenty of time. What we really needed on our arrival was loudspeakers booming out the Jams "Going Underground" as we were waiting to enter. No tune would have been more appropriate to whet our appetite prior to entry into Adit 2.

Our host was to be Mike, a "human filing cabinet" on all things Drakelow. We were informed though that the tunnels had become rather wet inside due to failure of the air ventilation system. Photographs were not to be taken, and that access was restricted to much of the tunnel system.

The actual landowner/ premises owner had agreed to leasing the tunnels out to a wine storage facility. 2 million cases of wine were being stored through all the major tunnels and galleries of the former Shadow Factory. I am not a fan of wine. I like it even less now. This would seriously inhibit some enjoyment of our visit. The museum area would now be restricted to some 10 percent of the underground area and I believe was squeezed into tighter area than on my previous visit. We wouldn't be viewing the Adit 1 where the huge

generators, fan housing and diesel storage tanks are was off-limits.

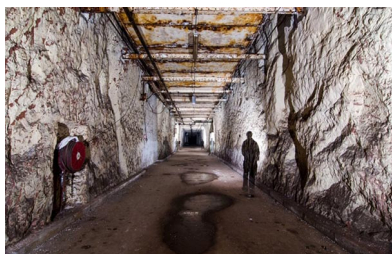
I did take away positives though: the massive original air ducts in the ceilings of the tunnels - I possibly had forgotten these. The installation of a duct of approximately 2 metres square must have been a huge undertaking in itself. There were many artefacts that had been added to like the thread roller machines and lathes to represent typical wartime machinery. The dedication of volunteers giving their time for preservation and education for persons like us was amazing. The chat that I had with fellow member Andrew(?) who had volunteered during the Cold War to collate information phoned in by fellow volunteers of the Royal Observer Corps. There is a strong possibility that during heightened

international tensions he would have had to report for duty at Drakelow or somewhere similar. So I did pick up on "new" information after all.

The one thing that was lost though now is the sheer vast scale of the "bunker". Some 3.5 miles in total length or 26,500 square metres of tunnels and galleries. That is something to behold when looking at the end of a distant tunnel some 100 yards away – and that is just one of four main tunnels! So I have cribbed a couple of pictures from the web to show members what we missed.

I hope the wine turns to vinegar!

Denis Pike



Coombeswood Canal Trust: Open Weekend

Some of our members attended the annual Coombeswood Canal Trust open weekend back in June. Here are a selection of photographs from the event.



Volunteer News

HERITAGE OPEN DAYS

After the excitement of the St.Richard's Canal Festival and Picnic in the Park at Alvechurch, we got down to the business of entertaining groups of visitors on 'Cecilia' and working on 'The Wanderer'. We also seem to have got a bit excited about Tom Rolt in that myself and Al seem to have covered the same ground in our articles! Never mind, bear with us and get involved with the canals and their history as much as you can.

CECILIA

Thanks to Ken Robinson, 'Cecilia' was looking spick and span for the start of the season. Her roof was painted and the gunwhales were looking clean and tidy. New lights shone brightly and the interior was ready to greet our guests. The trips are detailed elsewhere by Wendy but highlights included the Alvechurch and Bordesley Nursery coming on board and also Bream House and Chandler Court, both from Bromsgrove, had lovely days out singing and enjoying the sunshine. Again from Bromsgrove, we had the Oddfellows led by that very Odd Fellow Tony Brannon!

We have also taken out a number of younger groups, notably Malvern Cube, who have shown their appreciation by their happy comments on the feedback form. Volunteers who form the crew have included Maine Quinn, Trevor Albutt, Wendy Albutt, Ed Butcher, Chris Robinson, Ken Robinson, Al Gibbs, Chris Gibbs, Adrian Smith, Gerrard Nash, Ian Barley, Bill Lambert, John Talbut, Ian McGarr, Nick Hadley and myself.

ALVECHURCH

We have been checking on the health of the linear orchard at Alvechurch. The undergrowth had become the overgrowth with the weeds and bracken as high as our apple and pear trees. We have cut back the surrounding vegetation to give the trees some air and give walkers the chance to pick some fruit. Also C&RT have had their contractors down to cut the grass along the edge of the canal so the area is looking tidy.

We are looking at the possibility of holding a few "meet and greet" days from the 'Cecilia' mooring to introduce us to the footpath walkers and explain to them what a gem they have amongst them and possibly never appreciated. If you think this is a good idea and would like to help with handing out information and talking to locals then please let me know.



*The Linear Orchard alongside the canal in Alvechurch very close to Cecilia's mooring.
We've actually had some fruits this year!*

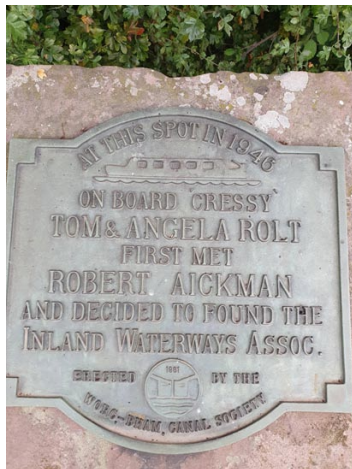
Volunteer News cont.

WANDERER

We have continued to provide crews on the 'Wanderer' working from Hanbury Wharf right up to lock 58. On the first section up to the Queens Head we were mainly cutting back overgrowth on the offside and cleaning locks and their entrances. However, as we got up the flight this changed to include clearing penny wort which, due to the lack of boat movements, has taken over the canal surface. Also due to the lack of movement, arrow head has popped up on the towpath side of the canal and needed removing. All this work has mainly been coordinated by Ed Butcher for WB&DCS and Dafydd Jones, Andy Keast, Nick Trow and Sam from C&RT. Members of our crew usually include Phill Hanks, Phil Goff, Adrian Smith, Ian Barley, Ken Robinson, Bill Lambert, Gerard Nash, John Hemingway, Ian McGarr, Al Gibbs and me. If you would like to join us for a work party, usually on Mondays or Tuesdays, then please contact Ed or myself.

TOM ROLT

In the last issue our Editor introduced you to Tom Rolt and Robert Aickman who together established the IWA in 1946. They actually met at Tardebigge in 1945. Our Society built a monument to celebrate that meeting on the off side of the canal just north of Lock 58. Possibly, as not many people walk along the offside, the society members erected a bench opposite and constructed a small garden behind it in 1995. This also celebrated 50 years from the original meeting as stated on the plate. We now propose to tidy up the garden and clean the plate that commemorates the original meeting and celebrate the whole thing during September's Heritage Open Days.



Monument and signage close to Tardebigge top lock

Volunteer News cont.

HERITAGE OPEN DAYS

Also in this issue are details of the Heritage Open Days on 20th and 21st September. Our gazebos will be set up in the field adjacent to the canal at Tardebigge.

You are welcome to come along and help on any of the days or just go on the guided walk. We also need bottles for the bottle stall and help with trips on 'Cecilia', so if you can help in any way please let me know.

That's it from me Neil Franklin, with a little help from Al Gibbs, or am I helping him? Who knows? The main thing is that we all work together and get along as best we can.

See you on the cut.

Neil Franklin
Volunteer Coordinator

Wanderer Work Boat Update

Our volunteers have regularly been working on the Worcester & Birmingham Canal, owing to the lack of boat traffic, particularly using the workboat 'Wanderer' around the lock areas. Below is a report of some of their most recent activities.

Wanderer Report

We have continued with the Monday work parties, all having been well supported.

Once we got to 'The Queens Head' we were originally told to pull out the Pennywort and Arrow Head vegetation depositing the spoils on the edge of the towpath so it could dry and any wildlife could find its way back into the canal. Along with trimming back overhanging vegetation this was hard work and very slow.

Then C&RT had a change of plan, we were to concentrate on overhanging vegetation and scraping the locks where it was "bad". Samantha Parker was organising other groups to drag the weed out using a pontoon.

With this change and the Thursday group doing a couple of days on 'Wanderer', we have managed to come up above the old Engine House building and this last week, prior to reopening lock 58, saw us cutting some vegetation back until we got to where the weed was impassable. A contractor's dredger and hopper/workboat are waiting at Tardebigge Wharf to drop down lock 58 and clear the weed once the top lock re-opens to traffic.

Adrian Smith



Tardebigge Top Lock Update

As many of you know Tardebigge top lock 58 had been closed for quite some time for repair work. The work has now been completed and the lock has been reopened. Here are a few more photos of the work that was carried out.



Heritage Weekend

Dear WB&DCS members, It's that time of year again!

We will once again be taking part in the Heritage Open Days (HoDs).

This year's event dates are the weekend of Sept 20th and 21st 2025

For those of you new to this event it takes place around the Tardebigge Wharf area and consists of our members showing visitors around the top lock and wharf area giving a guided view of how the area would have looked when in full industrial swing.

The event days themselves are part of a national fortnight of heritage events coordinated by the National Trust and in our case supported by C&RT. Our event submission has been accepted and is on the Heritage Open Day website, just type in Tardebigge in the events search box.

As usual we are inviting you to take part as guides or helpers on the day. We need people to help set up and staff our publicity/information gazebo and provide refreshments for guests and guides.

If you would like to be a guide we will support you in visiting the area and walking around the site, providing you with some local history information and anecdotes, that can be used for you to take a small group on a short walk and show them the highlights of the area. Please respond if you are available to attend this year, indicating which days you are available and if you have any preference for what you wish to be involved with.

If you require more information, please call or drop me an email.

alanguibbs456@btinternet.com (07398709048).

Tom Rolt.

2025 also coincides with the 80th anniversary of the meeting by the top lock between Tom and Angela Rolt with Robert Aickman and the subsequent founding of the Inland Waterways Association. We want to highlight this event in this years HODS event.

A commemorative plaque (*pictured on page 17*) was erected in 1982 by the then Worcester and Birmingham Canal Society. A video was produced of the event.

The plaque notes a meeting date of 1946. This was corrected in a 2005 ceremony to read 1945 as shown by the lower plaque when Tom and Angela Rolt were visited by Robert Aickman and his wife Ray. It was here on the Narrow boat 'Cressy' that the idea for a national Inland Waterways Association was first proposed.

The 1946 date is considered to be the first official meeting of the Inland Waterways Association in London in February of that year. This date for February 2026 seems to be the one the IWA will commemorate. There seems to be reference to Bryan Brock and a friend who videod the 2005 event producing a DVD.

Do any members have any recollections of these Society events? Our records also recall a 1995 50th anniversary event which included readings and music in Tardebigge Church and a Society led walk from Bromsgrove Station to Top lock in the footsteps of the Aickman's walk to 'Cressy'.

The 1995 celebration also seems to indicate that the Society was involved in placing a commemorative bench (complete with plaque) above the Top Lock keepers cottage with the making of the memorial garden behind it.

The bench and garden may have been worked on by Mick Handsford?

If anyone has any information or memories of these events please drop us a line at 58 or the heritage@wbdc.org.uk email address.

Heritage Weekend cont.

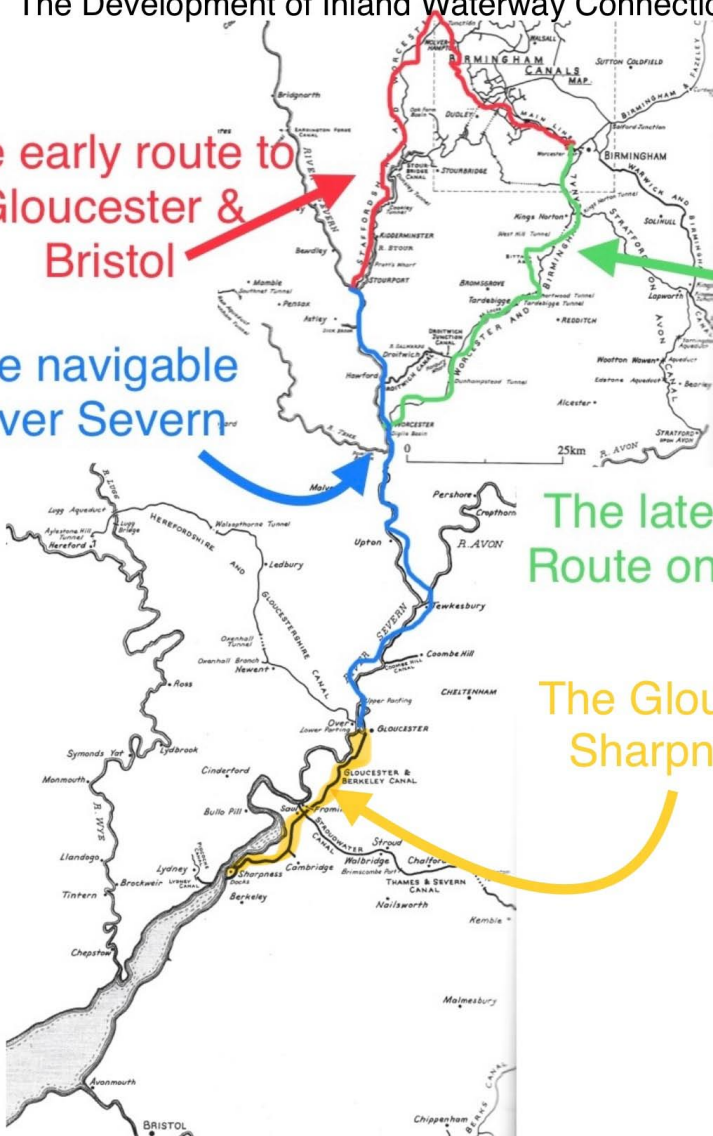
The Development of Inland Waterway Connections 1776 > 1815

The early route to Gloucester & Bristol

The navigable River Severn

The later, shorter Route on the W&B

The Gloucester and Sharpness canal



The above map shows how the W & B became the shorter route to Gloucester and beyond.



Cecilia News

Society volunteers continue to make a difference to so many people's lives.

'Cecilia' continues to have a very successful season with a number of groups returning for regular trips.

We've also attracted a number of new groups and organisations this year, with passengers of all ages - all of whom have had a wonderful time on board.

Towards the end of each trips we ask each group for feedback and we hear how happy and calm they feel when on board, how relaxing the trip is and how amazing it is to see the wildlife and nature along the canal.

We have been very fortunate that all our groups have been flexible regarding the route taken whilst water levels have been concerning and with the major work taking place at Tardebigge top lock - although we've luckily had very little disruption.

Our season continues into the autumn with the continued support of our volunteer helms and crew.

Wendy Albutt



The following article appeared in a recent edition of The Bromsgrove Advertiser. We have received permission to reprint the article here.



Byron takes the helm aboard Cecilia, fulfilling his long held wish to steer a canal boat

Pensioner's boat dream a reality

A RESIDENT at a care home in Bromsgrove was all smiles when his long-held dream to take the helm of a canal boat became reality.

Byron Cruttenden, 91 years old and lifelong admirer of the waterways, spent years watching colourful narrowboats glide past and recently found himself captivated by a TV programme exploring Britain's canal history.

Inspired by the stories and scenery, Byron shared one simple wish with team members at Care UK's Chandler Court, on Recreation Road: to experience the canals first-hand and, if possible, to steer a boat himself.

Byron's dream came true when he set off on a scenic journey aboard Cecilia, a community boat operated by volunteers from the Worcestershire-Birmingham

Matty Airey

.....
miranda.airey@newsquest.co.uk
@matty_gaz

& Droitwich Canals Society.

Accompanied by fellow residents, he travelled from Alvechurch to Tardebigge and back, basking in the sunshine, spotting wildlife and navigating through historic tunnels.

The crew, comprising qualified helmsmen and volunteers, shared fascinating insights into the canal's history and landmarks along the route.

The highlight of the day was when Byron was invited to take the helm, fulfilling his long-held ambition.

Byron said: "I've always wanted to steer a boat when I watched

them go by. During this trip, I was delighted to be asked if I'd like to have a go at steering and somewhat overwhelmed."

The trip was part of Chandler Court's Wishing Tree initiative, which encourages residents to put forward their goals, reconnect with past hobbies, or try something new.

Lilly Dahms, home manager at Chandler Court, said: "We are so pleased to have fulfilled Byron's wish to take the helm of a canal boat.

"I'd like to say a huge thank you to the Worcestershire-Birmingham and Droitwich Canals Society for making the day so memorable."

Chandler Court offers full-time residential, dementia, and nursing care, as well as short-term respite care.

Lapal Canal Trust News

Our friends from the Lapal Canal Trust continue to work hard in securing funding for the reopening of the Dudley No.2 Canal, particularly in the Selly Oak area. One particular focus is on the reopening of the towpath and bridge underneath the ring road adjacent to the Battery Retail Park. This will make such a massive difference to towpath users who will then be able to access Selly Oak Park from the retail area, and vice versa, without having to cross the very busy road above.

The Trust intends to have a presence at Whitehouse Wharf in Selly Oak on September 13th for the canoeist event and the day afterwards at the Black Country Boating Festival. There will also be the 'Annual Walk the Line' from 12 noon on October 25th commencing from the scout hut in Gibbins Road. For those participants wishing to be sponsored, there is an official form available for this purpose - download from the LCT website: <https://www.lapalcanal.co.uk/sponsorship/>



Walk The Line

25th October 2025

Start: 12:00

Scout Hut
Selly Oak Park
Gibbins Rd
B29 6PG



SCAN TO JOIN

About Us

We are the Lapal Canal Trust a volunteer-led charity dedicated to restoring the historic Dudley No. 2 Canal and reconnecting Selly Oak to Halesowen. Our mission is to transform forgotten waterways into vibrant community space, creating green and blue corridors that celebrates heritage, improves wellbeing, and brings people together. Step by step, we're restoring the past to build a better future.

Contact Us

☎ 07549817139
✉ info@lapalcanal.co.uk
🌐 www.lapalcanal.co.uk

The walk takes between 4 and 5 hours including a break at California; bring a picnic to eat.

Why join us?

Support a Living Heritage ✓

You're directly contributing to bringing a historic waterway back to life

A Memorable & Scenic Walk ✓

We will be walking on footpaths through fields and over stiles, so sturdy footwear is essential

Make a Real Difference ✓

Your walk turns motivation into meaningful restoration of the waterway

Get Active for a Purpose ✓

Whether solo or with friends and colleagues, it's a great way to combine exercise, teamwork, and making a positive environmental impact

Boat trip for Sense

Jon who arranges the trip comments

“Today’s excursion was extra special as everything worked perfectly. The weather was great, everybody loved the whole experience, and we changed our usual format to include a visit to Birmingham Museum.

Today’s group was from the Holly Lane Day Service, Smethwick .

Shanice, Amy, Wilf & Jesse, were supported by Helen, Jane, Gladys & Adam.

Our trip to the museum was a great success, as we took in the Ozzy Osbourne Memorial Exhibition, and it was a delight to see Amy, Shanice and Jesse all responding to the music and dancing along. Adam was also thrilled to take control of the boat, and the whole day was a complete joy.”

Thanks to Jon for his comments, best photos, cups of tea , and sandwiches.





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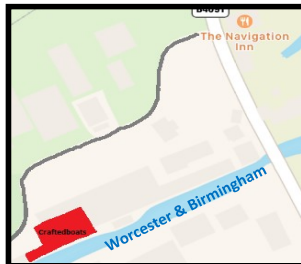
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If you are interested in canals, angling, boats, boat crewing, natural history, walking, cycling, photography, industrial archaeology, local history, canal work parties, preservation and enhancement of the environment as well as meeting up with like-minded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

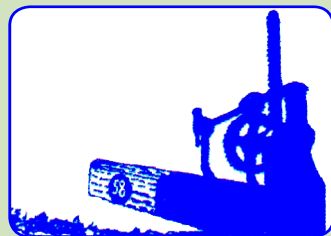
We hope to welcome as many new faces as possible from members of the community.

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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