



*The Magazine of the Lichfield &
Hatherton Canals Restoration Trust*

Issue 41 AUTUMN 2004



The VIP party at the unveiling of the Ogley Junction fingerpost at Huddlesford
(Photo by Sue Williams)

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CHAIRMAN'S COLUMN

I will start with the most recent event which I know many of you attended. On Saturday 2nd October there was a very happy and successful event at Huddlesford Junction. It sprang from the "Celebr18th" festival organised in Lichfield. The focus of the day was the unveiling of a new arm on the fingerpost on the junction. Thanks to the enthusiasm and drive of Jan Horton, strongly supported by Sue Williams, the Marketing Group and many others, this mushroomed into a major canal event. It proved to be a remarkable exercise in co-operation between many organisations, working in harmony and "partnership".

The fingerpost belongs to Coventry Canal Society which was very happy to arrange for a new arm, pointing to Ogley Junction, and we were very pleased to involve them in publicising our restoration project. Lichfield Cruising Club, with their moorings currently on the line of the Lichfield Canal, were enthusiastic supporters of the event and provided the field and all the facilities of their club house. The Birmingham Canal Navigations Society, which owns the matching fingerpost at Ogley also assisted. British Waterways supplied their Waterscape.com boat to act as the VIP Boat and hospitality centre and tidied up the area in advance.

On the day, despite the occasional heavy rain, there was strong support from the public and boaters. In addition to the private boats there were twenty historic working boats including President and Kildare. The scene around the junction was one of bustling activity and many of those who came are asking when we will be "doing it all again". The unveiling ceremony was carried out by Lichfield MP, and Trust member, Michael Fabricant. He was introduced by our President, Eric Wood. Plenty of the public came out to support us, dodging the showers, and enjoying the wide variety of entertainment's and displays.

Clearly this was a happy and successful occasion and a remarkable exercise in co-operation and I must record the gratitude of the Trust to all who worked so hard. Such occasions have many purposes but key among these must be publicity. Those of us who attend so many meetings, beaver away on the work sites and are involved in so many detailed negotiations can easily lose sight of how the members, and indeed the general public, perceive what we are doing. After the excitements of the building of the aqueduct and the installation of the culverts at Churchbridge things may appear to have gone quiet. We raised expectations to very high levels and many have seen the full restoration as imminent or, at least, likely to happen in a comparatively short time. Would that this were so! There is still so much to be done.

(continued over)



CHAIRMAN'S COLUMN (continued)

I could list all that we are currently doing and how hard our small Trust Council is working. Yet it is perception which is all. We have to keep what we are doing fully in the public view and we need events like that at Huddlesford to help us do this. We must continue to sell the restoration hard to keep and to enhance general support.

Recently, so much of what we have done appears to have concentrated on the Lichfield Canal yet we know that we are a two canals but one restoration scheme Trust. The Hatherton and Lichfield Canals are equal in merit in all respects. I have been told that we rarely mention the Hatherton yet we are working hard there. Much of what we are doing is "behind the scenes" with all kinds of negotiations and developments which have not reached a point at which it would be helpful or sensible to bring them fully into the public domain. In due course we will have exciting news on both our canals.

As part of the "selling" process we are well into a programme of strengthening our ties with our local authorities. We have had briefing meetings with the Chief Executives of Lichfield District Council and more recently that of South Staffs D.C. We have also spoken to a meeting of senior officials and elected members of Cannock Chase D.C. We were well received, gained considerable knowledge and were able to bring everyone up to date on our work. We need the help and co-operation of all these bodies and many others. Yet, even in these well-informed circles, there is still much to do to ensure that everyone knows what we are doing and where we are going. Everyone has heard of the aqueduct and some know about the culverts but beyond that the mists begin to descend.

There is much to shout about. Anyone who passes our work site at Tamworth Road in Lichfield must be impressed by the progress made by our volunteers and by the many visiting work parties. Our Vice-Chairman, Phil Sharpe, has progressed his scheme of work with great vigour and efficiency. The area between Locks 24 and 25 now begins to take shape as a recognisable canal bed. We can now see the tail of Lock 24 and envisage how this section will look when restored. We are very grateful to local residents and to the Darwin Walk Trust for their understanding as these considerable works go forward.

As we approach another new year we must go forward with continuing and growing confidence. Let us continue to recruit new members to swell our numbers, increase our income and provide a new generation of dedicated supporters and toilers.

Brian Kingshott

Press date for Cut Both Ways 42 is 5th January 2006

VICE-CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

CAPPERS BRIDGE

Our long-delayed planning application for Cappers Lane Canal Bridge (see CBW 39) was finally approved by Lichfield District Council in July. I addressed the planning committee to help counter some misconceptions by a local objector, and it was noticeable how many councillors had to declare an interest as members of the Trust! Our friends at Staffordshire Highways are now finalising the detailed tender documents with the intention of letting the contract for a start on site next February and completion in July. We will not know the final bill until the contract is let but will then have to find the balance, so any donations towards the estimated shortfall of up to £50,000 would be most welcome.

LICHFIELD LOCAL PLAN

Support from Lichfield DC continues to improve and we have recently had discussions on the Local Development Framework, successor to the Local Plan. A draft of an extended policy supporting the full restoration of the Lichfield Canal also offers a safeguarded route, partnership initiatives, and funding from developments. This has to go through several stages of consultation yet, but we are hopeful that it will be approved as a site-specific policy.

HATHERTON FEASIBILITY STUDY

Another much delayed initiative is now progressing well with the appointment of ARUP under BW's Professional Services Contract to undertake the full suite of Feasibility Studies for the Hatherton Canal funded by our ERDF grant obtained nearly a year ago. Drawing up a detailed Consultants Brief took longer than expected but the result was a very comprehensive document that defined and will guide the studies, with a target date for completion by next March.

ANOTHER M6 TOLL?

One of the matters that ARUP will now need to investigate is the effect of the proposal for a new M6 Expressway. As if one toll motorway crossing our canals was not bad enough, we are now faced with the threat of another. For about the past 15 years the Department of Transport have been drawing up various plans to widen the existing M6 between the midlands and northwest, firstly by adding lanes on each side, then by parallel widening, and more recently by a mixture of the two. Numerous consultants have been employed, plans produced and consultations launched but the actual construction seemed as far away as ever. Yet even whilst a public consultation on alternative Route Management Strategies was underway, the Transport Secretary Alistair Darling suddenly produced, like a rabbit out of a hat and with no prior consultation with anyone, a scheme to build a parallel private toll motorway instead.

(continued over)

VICE-CHAIRMAN'S NOTES (continued)

His argument seems to be that the M6 Toll has been so successful that we must have another and longer one. Others may think that the M6 Toll has singularly failed in its primary aim to take HGVs off the existing M6, and that its long term economic success is far from certain, whilst its environmental effects are devastating to the Green Belt. Mr Darling, however, gives little weight to the increased land take, more destruction of countryside, greater spread of noise or other environmental damage that a second motorway would cause compared with widening, so we would not expect him to have even considered the effect on the Hatherton Canal.

Whereas a widened M6, depending to some extent on which side it was widened, offered the expectation that a navigable culvert would be included under the new Government policy that our battle with the BNRR helped bring about, a completely separate motorway, whilst providing its own bridge, would do nothing to resolve the present M6 crossing. However, after many conflicting press reports, the new consultation document contains no plans or routes or construction details other than vague diagrammatic sketches, and the proximity to the new junction 11A, which was built with no provision for separated carriageways, means that the effect of the scheme on our canal is very difficult to assess. Opposition to the idea is strong and growing, particularly among communities likely to be badly impacted such as Penkridge and Stafford, and the Trust will be adding its concerns to the responses. We are promised (threatened with?) a decision early next year, although experience suggests that there is time for several more u-turns in transport policy, changes of Minister and even Government before the bulldozers move in.

IWA VISITORS

Away from the concerns of politics, I recently had the pleasure of conducting a coach-load of visitors from IWA's Chiltern Branch around some of our sites. Bob Williams had been down to give them a talk only the week before, so they were already well briefed and a large contingent from the Wendover and the Buckingham restoration groups asked some pertinent questions before going on to see other parts of the BCN. Generous donations from the Branch and from organisers Kingdom Tours were gratefully received, not to mention a splendid lunch at The Boat Inn; well this job has to have some perks!

Phil Sharpe

Our Vision Statement

To restore the Lichfield Canal and the Hatherton Canal to re-open waterway links between Staffordshire and the West Midlands, for the benefit of the environment, amenity and prosperity of the people of the Region and to enhance the nation's inland waterway system.

BREACH AT DARNFORD

When we excavated the line of the new canal channel down to Darnford Lane some years ago, it was never intended that it would be left for so long before completing the bank protection and channel lining. However, funding limitations and the need to finance the more urgent M6 Toll crossings delayed matters and the work remains incomplete. At the lane end the bed of the channel is below the level of the Darnford Brook and is cut through soft sand, and over the years the banks have been further weakened by rabbit burrows. You will not need reminding how wet it was this August, and in particular of the monsoon-like downpours we suffered. One such localised deluge on 10th August caused the normally placid brook to flood the golf course car park and overtop the bank on our side into the canal channel. It filled the canal down to the temporary dam, overflowed the dam to refill the section down to the lift bridge, and spilled over the stop planks where it soaked away back into the brook. However, in flowing over the bank into the channel the water had eroded gulleys in the sand which cut back and caused a whole section of bank about 5 metres across to fail and wash away. There was little that could be done until the flood subsided, although the situation soon stabilised with the canal channel nearly full of water and spilling over the bank half way down back into the stream. For a while we could see how attractive the completed canal will look when fully watered, so we rowed a dinghy up and down a few times whilst we contemplated what to do.

The answer was 60 tonnes of clay; 3 lorry loads, which was ordered from Brown-hills. Unfortunately they could not deliver that week but Peter found us some transport, we took our JCB3 and dumper down and hired in a CAT 315 excavator from Ruttle Plant Hire, conveniently located just up the road by Whittington Barracks. With Keith and Bob loading and transporting, and Jen from the WRG Canal Camp driving the excavator, the hole was soon filled. Jen enjoyed herself puddling the clay so much that she stayed on until the breach was fully plugged. The water drained away within a few days when the supply was cut off, clearly demonstrating the need for lining the channel before we can permanently re-water it. Since then Keith has used 'Blue' to refill the rest of the hole and to scour out the brook, removing excessive vegetation and silt and widening it on our side to improve the flow. The repair has survived several more storms and, hopefully, that was at least the 10 year flood, if not the 100 year flood, although statistically it could happen again any time and the site will not be secure from a recurrence until we can install the bank protection. Thanks to everyone that helped at short notice to sort out this emergency repair.

Phil Sharpe

Membership rates are:

Adult £10; Family £15; Junior (under 18), Student, Retired or Unemployed £6;
Group (Clubs & Societies) £25; Corporate £200; Life Membership £200

New Members to 05th October 2004

Mr R. Eaton	Corsham, Wilts
Mr T. Deakin	Wednesbury
Mr D. G. Madin	Beverley, Yorks.
Mr S. Burt	Shirley, Solihull
Mr P.W. Lawrence	Shenstone, Lichfield
Mr W. Tallis	Leamington Spa
Mr P.A. Christopher	Brocton, Stafford
Mrs C. M. Downes	Sutton Coldfield
Dr E. Hiscock	Birmingham
Mr T. B. Dower	Walsall
Mme F. Daum	Amanlis, France
Mr A.J. Tams	Aberystwyth
Ms C.M. Illidge	Stonnall, Lichfield
Ms J. Bagshaw	Willenhall
Mr R. Solomons	Kidderminster
Mrs R. Solomons	Kidderminster
Mr K. Styche	Lichfield
Mr S. Marrocco	Cheslyn Hay, Walsall
Mr J.M. Alexander	Lichfield
Mr D. Townsend	Sheldon, Birmingham
Mr E. Holborn	Rugeley
Ms V. Wilson	Milford, Derbyshire
Mr A.O.Dick	Ranton, Stafford
Mr T.J. Smith	Burntwood, Staffs.
Mr P. Bryan	Pelsall
Mr D. J. Walton	Kings Bromley
Mr S. Bannister	Rolleston, Burton on Trent
Mr R. Boot	Nottingham
Mr A.J. Tidey	Melksham
Mr A. P. Todd	Knowle, Solihull
Mr N. Povey	Fradley, Nr Lichfield.

A recent celebration was a significant senior birthday for Trevor Morris who is our Director in charge of membership matters. Trevor has managed our membership files for very many years and turns out regularly for work parties and is always to be found on the Trust stand at the major shows around the Midlands. We were very happy to present Trevor with a framed print of a canal and railway scene at our Trust Council meeting in September.

New members taken at HUDDLESFORD on 2ND October

Mr A G Page,	Barrow-on-Trent
Mr I Parrott,	Shardlow
Mr J Allen,	Sutton Coldfield
Mr C A Duckett,	Sutton Coldfield
Mr A J Fairey,	Aldridge
Mr & Mrs J Fellows,	Lichfield
Ms S Cawson,	Pershore
Mr & Mrs B Bateman,	Sutton Coldfield
Mr R C Page became a Life Member	

BOTTOM BLACKING and ENGINE SERVICE

These generous prizes donated again by Streethay Wharf were drawn on 30th August by Hugh Potter, Editor of Waterways World as major sponsor of the National Waterways Festival at Burton-on-Trent. The lucky winners were:

1st prize James Stafferton, Winslow, Bucks

2nd prize Alan Veness, Sutton Coldfield, West Midlands.

The Trust is very grateful to Ray Bown at Streethay Wharf for his fund-raising support and to all those who entered the draw.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

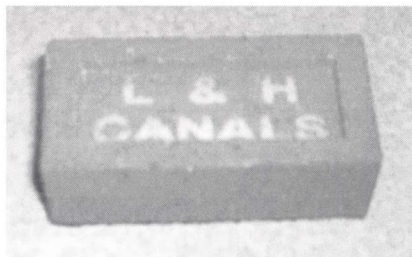
We regret to record the passing of the following members:-

Mr P Daffin, Kirkby-in-Ashfield died 8th April 2004

"Megan", the original Pet Club Member died February 2004

THE BRICK APPEAL DONATIONS

Mr E Rimmer, Evesham	£20
Mr R G Larkin, Lichfield	£20
Lt Cdr G Glover, Burntwood	£50
Ms Diana Arthur, Lichfield	£20
Mr C J Martin, Llanymynech	£20
Mr J A Hawkins, Croxley Green	£20
Mr N J Potter, Derby	£20
Mr A Gilbert, Sutton Coldfield	£20



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DONATIONS TO THE TRUST

Amounts over £20 from 1st July to 2nd October 2004.

Name (in order of receipt)	Trust & Marketing	Land Fund	Restoration Fund
H J Y Pringle (with sub.)	105.00		
Dr T Hollingworth	35.00		
D E Cooper, returned expenses	30.83		
N Blears (with sub.)	25.00		
R A Francis (with sub.)	25.00		
G Thompson (with sub.)	50.00		
D Shipman (with sub.)	35.00		
Bob Houghton; Lichfield Running Club	50.00		
B Kingshott; Brownhills event fee	300.00		
D E Cooper; Brownhills maintenance	150.00		
Alvecote Marina (mooring donation)	1300.00		
Ian Burnage, Streethay Wharf	126.04		
IWA National Waterways Festival, Burton-on-Trent; toilet cleaning gratuity	500.00		
P R Newman (with sub.)	35.00		
Eric Wood (proceeds of sale)	75.00		
Lichfield Running Club, race assistance	100.00		
IWA Chiltern Branch (talk)	100.00		
Chase Academy, Cannock			
Birmingham Canal Navigations Society contribution towards "Ogley Jnc." sign	100.00		
Allan & Lynda Gilbert	25.00		
David R Edwards Ltd (H'ford sponsor)	40.00		
Lichfield Plastics Ltd (H'ford sponsor)	150.00		
Brian Kingshott (returned expenses)	393.56		
Aggregated donations up to £20 each	650.00		
Pat Barton (Huddlesford sponsor)	180.00	820.00	
G Branner (incl. Netherclift & Armson)		207.79	
J P Baker (Charitycard Internet Payment)			500.00
Philip Austin			100.00
Terry Brown			22.00
Executors of the late John Page for Tamworth Road locks paddle gear			1,647.00
Anon. (Charitycard Internet Payment)			25.00
Dick & Chris Mantle			50.00
Dr J L Bonsall (additional pledge)			250.00
Kingdom Tours			80.00
H.S.B.C. Bank; Grant for Tamworth Rd.			500.00

FUNDING NEWS

Value Added Tax

HM Customs & Excise are still deliberating on the status of our VAT Registration. Despite the consistent, stalwart efforts of our expert adviser in London, the delayed decision is holding back tens of thousands of pounds of potential tax re-claims which would greatly assist our cash flow. We hope the outcome will be worth the long wait.

Tamworth Road development

We are most grateful to the Family of the late Alan John Page for a legacy which will enable the Trust to purchase the fittings to complete the installation of paddle gear on Locks 25 and 26 on the Tamworth Road section of the Lichfield Canal. Phil Sharpe has reported elsewhere in this issue how the restoration work has moved ahead this summer, but it will be some time yet before the section is watered and the locks come into operation.

Our Director, Mike Battisson has been researching new opportunities for funding ancillary items to complement the canal in this area which has brought a grant of £500 from HSBC. This will go towards accumulating match funding to support larger grant applications, especially for access to enjoy the canal environment now ahead of boating which will come later.

European Regional Development Fund [ERDF] grant

The formal report from the Government Inspectors (CBW 40, p12) highlighted a few points already known to us which needed clarification. A follow-up visit is expected to assist further with revision of some of the "outputs" resulting from the grant expenditure. We hope this will bring forward the timing for release of the statutory retention of 10% of the grant when those parts of the project are considered complete.

Alvecote Marina

The Trust has received £1,300 from Alvecote Marina for letting another mooring for which we are very grateful. Malcolm Burge has offered the Trust the benefit of two full-length moorings for the next three years so we would be pleased to hear from anyone needing a secure, serviced jetty mooring near Tamworth, convenient for easy cruising in all directions in the Midlands.

Grand Prize Draw

The Draw will take place at about the time you are reading this magazine, so winners will be announced in the next issue. However, there has been an excellent response which has brought in £3,330, with a month still to go. It is pleasing to see that many members have been selling the tickets to others which not only informs others but also attracts non-members funds.

Bob Williams



The "friendliest stand in the show" (see page 14)



The 'Chain Gang' also at the National Festival at Burton.
(Photos by Sue Williams)

MARKETING REPORT

Another busy season has just about drawn to a close, with only the Barn Dance and the Brownhills Christmas Fair to come.

Past Events:

Lichfield Medieval Market Sat 10th July was very successful and as an added bonus the Trust won an award for the most superlative stall, earning us a certificate and a bottle of wine. It is always a long day and our thanks go to Bobbie Battisson, Hillary Smith, Sue & Bob Williams, Terry Brown & Jean Handley for all their hard work. Total raised was £580.

Walsall Charity Stall Sat 24th July was our next outing. You name it we sold it. This requires hard work and patience and all our helpers stood the pace on a very exacting day. Our thanks to Dave & Julie Piggott, Terry Brown, Jean Handley and Barry Kenn for all their hard work. Total raised was £144.

The Forest of Mercia Open Day, Sunday 1st August is one of our less stressful events that we attend. It is held in very pleasant surroundings at Chasewater Park. Our hard working volunteers for the day were Bob & Sue Williams and Michael & Bobbie Battisson. Total raised £80.05

The National Waterways Festival Saturday 28th – Mon. 30th August, this year was virtually on our doorstep at Shobnall fields, Burton-on-Trent. Our Marketing team and a great many volunteers pulled out all the stops to make it a Festival to remember. Sue Williams and her chain gang of 'Hygiene Operatives' did an heroic job Friday to Monday keeping the Site and Camp loos clean. A task that earned the Trust over £500. Bob organised a visual display and hospitality area which was very successful, with many visitors also enjoying our hospitality area where we served umpteen cups of tea and coffee. Terry Brown and Jean Handley's donation of cakes went down a treat and were much appreciated. To put the cream on the cake, the Trust won an award from Canal Boat & inland Waterways magazine for being the friendliest and most welcoming stand in the show.

16 new members were signed on and the total raised was net. £1,151.07.

Sandfields Open Day Saturday 18th September went very well. Many thanks to Bob Williams for volunteering to take our display boards and merchandise to this event.
(continued over)

The views expressed in Cut Both Ways do not necessarily represent those of the Trust or the Editor. They are however published as being of interest to our readership

MARKETING REPORT (continued)

Lichfield Celebr18th. Thursday 30th September – Sunday 3rd October.

As part of these Celebrations, the Trust joined forces with the Lichfield Cruising Club and the Coventry Canal Society to hold a one day Canal Festival, which took place on a field next to the Lichfield Cruising Club on Saturday 2nd October. Michael Fabricant MP was invited to unveil a new finger on the Coventry Canal Society signpost at Huddlesford pointing to Ogley Junction. Visitors were welcomed free of charge. The BW Waterscape.com Boat did duty as a VIP hospitality boat. The Day Star Theatre Company put on a show at 3pm. Among the attractions were 20 traditional working boats, including the steamers President and Monarch, and various craft stalls. A cake stall did a roaring trade and as usual sold out, while Margaret Beardsmore with her Posh Coffee provided hot drinks as a welcome respite from the cold wind and one particularly bad rainstorm. The Cruising Club did a sterling job with refreshments available all day. Our thanks go to all our volunteers from the Lichfield Cruising Club, the Coventry Canal Society and last but not least our Trust members for their tremendous joint effort to make it such a success. 7 new members and £904 raised, with additional donations taking this to over £2000.

Future Events:

That leaves us with the Christmas Fair to be held at the Brownhills Community Centre on Saturday November 28th as our last event of 2004.

2005 sees us preparing for the National Boat, Caravan and Outdoor Leisure Show to be held at the NEC, Saturday 19th – Sunday 27th February.

All in all it has been a very busy and successful year and we look forward hopefully to further success in 2005.

Michael Brown Marketing Chairman

NATIONAL BOAT CARAVAN and OUTDOOR SHOW 2005

Where? NATIONAL EXHIBITION CENTRE, BIRMINGHAM

When? Saturday 19th February to Sunday 27th February 2005

What time? 10am until 6pm daily

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Please contact:

David Moore, 88 Spring Lane, Whittington WS14 9NA

or telephone 01543 432718

and let me know when you are available.

Celebr18th “Huddlesford Gathering” 2nd October 2004

In all its 200 year history Huddlesford Junction has probably never seen an event such as this! The Gathering was organised as part of the Celebr18th Festival in Lichfield, to celebrate a time when canals were the new mode of transportation and Lichfield in Staffordshire was at the centre of everything new - the 18th century.

The Lichfield Cruising Club gave warm hospitality to boaters and visitors from Friday evening through to Sunday. Coventry Canal Engineer “James Brindley” (alias Rob Davies of the Trust) attended to see that all was in order in the true spirit of the 18th Century.

Twenty historic ex-working boats moored up, many “double breasted” in traditional fashion. The spectacular steam boats President and Monarch built in circa 1908 were in steam all day. A total 33 boats had booked in to the event, and many more just turned up so the final count was about 50.

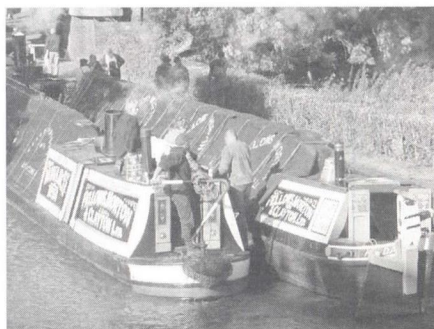
Other attractions on the water were a trip boat courtesy of Streethay Wharf and a holiday hire boat on display from Valley Cruises. On the field were more than 30 trade stalls, displays and entertainment including steam vehicles, vintage cars, the Lichfield Morris Men, and in the marquee a performance by Day-Star Theatre of their latest play “Taking a Chance”.

The highlight of the day was the unveiling of a new arm on the fingerpost at Huddlesford Junction, organised by the Coventry Canal Society, pointing to Ogley Junction at Brownhills, and the canals of Walsall and Birmingham.

(continued over)



Peter Magee escorts ladies from the National Trust at Huddlesford.



Steam Boat Monarch and Butty Kildare
(All photos by Jan Horton)

Celebr18th “Huddlesford Gathering” 2nd Oct. 2004 (continued)

Visitors gathered to watch the VIP party, led by Michael Fabricant MP, Gwyneth Boyle (Mayor of Lichfield) and Tony Hill (Chairman of the Lichfield District Council), arrive in style along the Coventry Canal on board British Waterways hospitality narrowboat “Waterscape.com”, to the music of “Old English” bag pipes being played on the bow! At the Junction Michael Fabricant and Brian Kingshott, unveiled the new “Ogley Jnc” arm as horns blasted and the bells of the Lichfield Diocesan Mobile Belfry pealed triumphantly. Michael Fabricant said “This fingerpost points to Fradley and to Coventry. But the most important direction is to Ogley Junction: 6 miles, 7 furlongs and 30 locks away. At present the post has another sign bolted on it: ‘No Access’. But I hope it will not be too long before I am asked to unscrew that sign when the Lichfield and Hatherton canals are finally reopened”.

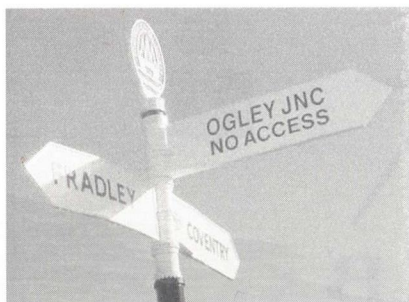
Thanks are due to British Waterways and especially to Louise and Trevor North for bringing the Waterscape boat to the event and providing VIP hospitality all day.

To bring it all to a triumphant close, on Saturday night the Cruising Club provided free entertainment with the Irish Folk Group “Skilligalee” performing to a packed marquee (and the ladies in the kitchen were bringing out still more food!).

Sue Williams



A special brass plaque was produced to commemorate the event and due to high demand we plan to cast some more. They can be ordered at a cost of £7.00 Plus postage from Sue Williams on 01543 671427 or email info@lhcr.org.uk. Souvenir Programmes are also still available at a cost of £2 (or free with a plaque).



Close-up of the finger post. Erection of the marquee before the events
(Photos by Jan Horton)

Royal National Institute of the Blind

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Every day another 100 people will start to lose their sight. The Royal National Institute of the Blind (RNIB) helps to rebuild those lives devastated by sight loss.

As an organisation we receive no Government or statutory funding and rely on the generous donations from the general public. Much of our funding comes through our famous 'Sooty' collecting boxes, which will be a familiar sight to many of you.

We need volunteers to help empty Sooty, count and bank its contents so that the RNIB can continue to provide our many great services.

We will provide full training & support so if you feel you can offer a few hours a week to undertake this rewarding work please contact me 0121 428 4384 for an informal chat or send an email to alicia.wingfield@rnib.org.uk.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Alicia Wingfield
*Community Fundraising Manager
(West Midlands)*



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RNIB



ECOLOGY MATTERS

“Don’t go down the pit Dad, there’s plenty o’ coal in t’ cut”

One of the pleasures to be enjoyed when accompanying the Marketing team to the various venues, spreading the word and encouraging support for the restoration, is the wide variety of interesting people you meet with poignant stories of a life gone forever.

In my opinion locations near Cannock are best, where I have lost count of the number of elderly gentlemen who claim to have swam in the bottom lock of the Rumer Hill flight or fished at this and that location. All of which brings me to the quotation above.

Apparently this gentleman, when a boy lived close to a Waterway’s gauging hut. As the boats approached the boatman at the stern would look along the waterline at the draught and if he thought the charge would be too excessive he and his mate (“the hos handler”) would throw coal over the side until they were happy with the estimated freight charge.

My narrator then explained that he and his peers would dive for the coal and sell it for tuppence or threepence, dependent on size. Apparently people would come from afar with bikes and prams to buy the coal that he insisted had been the motive for his learning to swim!

Quite a lucrative occupation for a young lad at the time, but to be honest I’m not so sure that this would be my preferred choice from the two ways to earn a living from coal. Like the frying pan and the fire - a marginal decision, I think!

If other members have tales like this about the old ‘Curly Wyrley’ please pass them on to Mike Battisson

Mike Battisson



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Filling the breach with clay using the dumper and CAT excavator (see page 7)
(Photo by Phil Sharpe)



The offside pound wall takes shape during the Canal camp in August
(Photo by Phil Sharpe)

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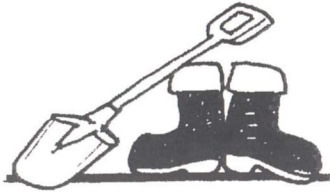
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HATHERTON CANAL

WORKING PARTY NEWS

Himalayan Balsam has an attractive flower, which is presumably why Victorian gardeners propagated it; if only they had known what a monster they were letting loose! It particularly likes damp ground as found alongside rivers and many canals, and is becoming a serious menace in many areas of the country. As it takes over it crowds out native species so when it dies back in the winter it leaves barren ground, unsightly and subject to erosion. However, the Environment Agency and English Nature, whilst writing many reports, do very little of a practical nature to control this or other invasive species, but expect landowners to foot the bill whilst having one hand tied behind their backs by excessive regulations. Over the last few years Himalayan Balsam has taken over along the Hatherton Canal behind the Roman Way, spreading ever further downstream. It spreads by explosive seed pods in the summer and autumn, being distributed by the water flow. Without intervention it will destroy the native habitat, and could soon reach the Staffs & Worcs Canal main line and the Gailey reservoirs.

Therefore, we decided that something had to be done and, taking advice from BW's ecologist, set about trying to cut it down before it seeds, intended to be the first of 3 years such effort to try to bring it under control. What a job ! Our dedicated volunteers have spent many man-days from May to August strimming, slashing and hacking it down, but the stuff just keeps growing ! We cleared the whole bed and banks from the canal end above Roman Way to below Meadow Lock, except for inaccessible areas on the offside and in adjacent fields, but as soon as our back was turned it flowered again. How effective all this effort has been we will not know until next year, but I will be meeting BW's new supervisor shortly to arrange for them to chemically spray it next Spring, which is the other recommended method of treatment, so perhaps between spraying and cutting we might see some return for our efforts next season.

We shall be glad to get back to our more usual activities of hedge trimming, tree control and towpath work over the winter, with the promise of a few bonfires to cheer us up and the traditional mince pies and sherry on the last Sunday before Christmas. Join us if you can.

Our regular date is the third Sunday of each month, from 10 am, with some occasional extra days as required. Contact Denis Cooper on 01543 374370 (work) or Phil Sharpe on 01889 583330 for more details.

Work Party Dates: Sunday 21 November, 19 December, 16 January 2005, 20 February, 20 March.

PRESS & PUBLICITY

Thanks mainly to our Publicity Officer Jan Horton, the Trust has again achieved good media coverage of our activities in the period July to September 2004.

First, however, a late entry for June was a picture of the Trust's marketing display at the Moira Canal Festival the previous month, as seen in the locally distributed *Towpath Talk* newssheet. The donation of the well-travelled boat-load of bricks by Mike & Cath Turpin continued to attract attention with *The Lichfield Mercury* reporting in July that "Bricks help rebuild canal", whilst the August *Canal Boat & Inland Waterways* magazine pictured "Bricks by boat" and the September *Canal & Riverboat* had "Heritage boats deliver bricks", all illustrated with a picture of the unloading at Streethay Wharf. In August *Canal & Riverboat* had illustrated our Easter event as "President's Garden Party raises £1300" and the donation of Huddersfield Canal Society's trailer as "Society donate their stand to the L&H", whilst the September edition also reported on our display at the Lichfield Heritage Centre in "Lichfield & Hatherton Exhibition". The exhibition was also covered by a brief item in the August *Canal Boat*.

(continued over)



Bobby Battison and Hilary Smith at the Medieval Market (Photo by Jan Horton)

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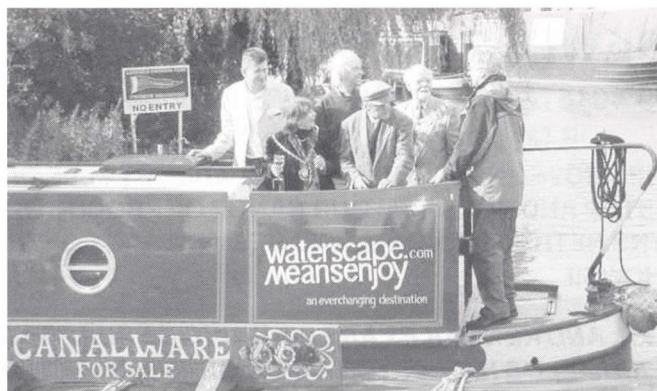
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PRESS & PUBLICITY (continued)

"Canal bridge gets go-ahead" was the welcome news about planning permission for Cappers Bridge in the *Express & Star* in July, although in August a report claimed that the application for 'village green' status for land at Wordsworth Close in Lichfield could prevent development not only of housing and the bypass, but also of a community hall and the canal. Obviously someone at the *Express & Star* reads our magazine as a short piece "Volunteers in work on canal" reminded readers of our August work party at Hatherton. September's *Canal Boat* also publicised forthcoming work parties at Lichfield; illustrated by work on the ladder recess at Lock 25, whilst brief news items covered the planned Huddlesford gathering, our prize at the Lichfield Bower, and clarified details of their earlier report on the bricks. The Bower prize was featured in *Canal & Riverboat News* as "L&H float wins prize", picturing Peter and Pat Magee's 1960's Mercedes Unimog cleverly disguised as canal boat 'Cut Both Ways'!

Lichfield MP, Michael Fabricant's support for the Trust was mentioned in reports in both *The Post* and the *Express & Star* about his award for canal photography and being filmed for a new series of ITV1's 'Waterworld' programmes. The same papers in September gave advance publicity for the Huddlesford Gathering with "Party to mark opening on canal" in *The Post* and "Free bus laid on to canal fun" in the *Express & Star*. A further mention in *The Post* of "Shuttle to canal event" was part of 3 adjoining reports on our activities; "Award for stand" pictured the presentation of a plaque for the most welcoming stand at the IWA National Festival at Burton, and "Working on waterways" pictured Sally and Marcus from London WRG to represent the Canal Camp and several weekend work parties held in August and September. Further news about the many activities and attractions arranged for the Huddlesford Gathering was given by the *Express & Star* at the end of September, but you will have to wait until the next CBW to find out how the event was reported by the press.

Phil Sharpe



Michael Fabricant and Mayor Gwyneth Boyle at Huddlesford
(Photo by Jan Horton)

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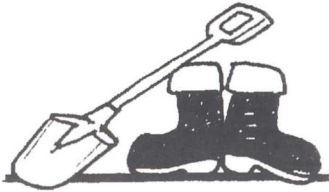
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LICHFIELD CANAL

WORKING PARTY NEWS

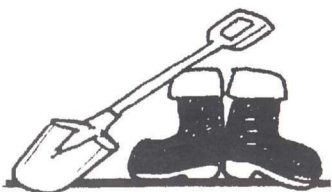
So much has happened over the summer that it is difficult to know where to start; but here goes. Our own regular work parties twice a month at Tamworth Road have been supplemented by extra days, by a Waterway Recovery Group Canal Camp in August, and by well attended weekend visits in September from London WRG and WRG BITM (Bit In The Middle – don't ask!). Several major jobs have been completed and numerous others progressed.

July saw us completing the brick capping on the section of towpath wall below Lock 26, backfilling and bracing the bridge abutment wall below Lock 25, starting the foundations for the towpath side bottom gate thrust-block wall on Lock 25, continuing excavations on the pound wall up to Lock 24, brick cleaning, mowing, weed killing and moving plant. August started with us concreting the bridge abutment wall and recovering and stacking bricks and the smaller stones. The generous loan from Chasetown Civil Engineering Co of a 13 tonne excavator and driver, enabled us to lift out the cache of large coping and quoin stones found against the wall below Lock 24 and stack them out of harms way near the head of Lock 25, as well as finally removing the troublesome sycamore roots. Two evenings were spent collecting about 800 bricks donated to us by Kevin Dickenson from Fradley, after which the bridge abutment wall bracing was dismantled and the coping bricks for it were moved to site and then laid by Barry during the Camp.

(continued over)



Wrg campers building the block wall for the Lock 25 thrust block in August
(Photo by Phil Sharpe)



LICHFIELD CANAL

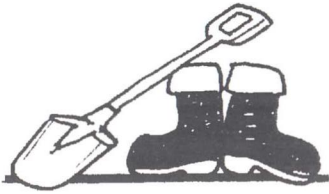
WORKING PARTY NEWS (CONTINUED)

The Canal Camp in mid August had a full attendance of 20 volunteers, many of whom were old hands with lots of experience and all of whom were very hard working. It is always amazing how much can be done in a full week and progress on the main job of rebuilding the pound wall was particularly impressive. The loose brickwork was removed, mostly the top 2 rows, and then replaced and the bricklaying continued upwards to bring the wall up to a common level, accompanied by mountains of brick cleaning and considerable areas of re-pointing on the lower courses and also on the entrance walls of Lock 24. Considering the variety of brick types and sizes to work with, the result was commendable, and we also made extensive use of lime mortar for the first time. However, heavy rain on the final afternoon prevented the top course being levelled and there was also a large gap in the middle where the Sycamore tree had been and its roots had penetrated the brickwork. Other jobs done by the Camp on and around Lock 25 included removing a tree stump, finishing the thrust-block excavation and building the block wall, and completing the breaking out of the ladder recess. The excavation in front of the retaining wall was also started and finished off by Keith the following week. Another major job carried out during the Camp was plugging the breach at Darnford Lane, which is covered in a separate report. WRG also found time to pose for the camera filming for a new series of 'Waterworld', so look out for that sometime next year.

The IWA National at Burton provided a brief change of scene, and resulted in a donation of 2 packs of engineering bricks, sand and cement surplus from the Festival, but restoration work resumed apace in September. The top course of the pound wall was completed and the root damaged courses were taken down lower, excavation of the footing for the Lock 25 quadrant wall was started, and more bricks cleaned and rubble cleared. On the welcome return visit of London WRG the gap in the pound wall was rebuilt and work was started on the lockside retaining wall. One end of this was unstable and Barry took it down and rebuilt it whilst the visitors concentrated on filling a hole in the wall, demolishing loose courses and cleaning the joints. Meanwhile the trench for the quadrant wall foundation was completed and blinding laid, and the crumbly old bridge abutment on the towpath side demolished, accompanied by much brick cleaning. (continued over)



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LICHFIELD CANAL

WORKING PARTY NEWS (CONTINUED)

The visit by BITM the next weekend gave an opportunity to continue work on the retaining wall by replacing the top courses, patching and pointing, and starting the blue copings, until we ran out of lime! They also finished off the quadrant wall foundations with rebar and concrete and started on the facing brickwork of the wall, using the bricks donated from the National. The back of the pound wall was dug out for future concreting, a brick mountain at Lock 26 was moved from the channel to the offside bank and a section of towpath levelled. For variety, a party also went up to Kings Bromley Wharf to unload about 3,500 bricks from narrow boat Lilly, kindly donated to us by Len Caldicott of Bromley Diesel Centre. The loose bricks were off-loaded and palletted and the other packs lifted out using straps. Peter Magee subsequently arranged for their transport to Lock 26, with thanks again to Chasetown CE.

Well, this marathon report has gone on long enough, but it should end with a heartfelt thanks to all our regular and occasional volunteers and the visiting WRG groups for helping us achieve so much over the last few months. We hope to keep up this momentum with some additional Sunday work parties and further WRG weekends have been booked in December, January and March. If you would like to be involved, more help is always needed on our local work parties, even if you can spare only a few hours at a time.

To find our usual work site at Lock 25 on Tamworth Road (Grid ref. SK 130 083) take the A51 out of Lichfield and the site is on the right about 300 metres after Cricket Lane.

Our regular monthly work parties on the first Sunday of each month are supplemented by the intermediate Saturday, all from 10 am. Check the latest dates with Phil Sharpe on 01889 583330, or visit our web site where any additional weekend dates will be shown.

Work Party Dates:

November: Sunday 7, Saturday 20.
December: London WRG & KESCRG Sat/Sun 4/5, Saturday 18.
January 2005: Sunday 2, WRG North West Sat/Sun 8/9, Saturday 15.
February: Sunday 6, Saturday 19.
March: Sunday 6, Newbury WPG Sat/Sun 12/13, Saturday 19.

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Principal Aims : To promote the restoration of the Wyrley and Essington Canal from Ogley Junction to Huddlesford Junction (the "Lichfield Canal"), and the Hatherton Branch of the Staffordshire & Worcestershire Canal, and also the construction of a navigable link between the Hatherton Branch and the Cannock Extension Canal.

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