

The Magazine of the Lichfield & Hatherton Canals Restoration Trust

Issue 47 Spring 2006



A busy scene at the NEC with Hilary Smith doing the all important job of putting cash into the till, while Bobbie Battisson talks to a customer. In the background Steve Mills is busy talking to more interested visitors to the stand.

(Photo by Dave Moore)

**Cappers Bridge
see colour centre pages**

CHAIRMAN'S COLUMN

We have delayed this issue of Cut Both Ways so that we can bring you the final pictures of the rebuilding of Capper's Bridge and the ceremony on 21st April. This is another great landmark in the history of the Trust and represents the culmination of three years of work. The actual work, carried out very proficiently by McPhillips (Wellington) Ltd, took less than six months but the discussions and protracted negotiations took years. We are very grateful to Mike Smith who handled most of the tricky discussions with landowners, British Waterways, Lichfield Cruising Club and Staffordshire County Council. David Piggott was our main link with the contractors and brought all his professional expertise to bear to ensure that all the terms of the contract were fully delivered. The end result is a most pleasing structure which now desperately needs water under it to make the picture complete. In all events, the bridge is another demonstration of our determination to take the canal from Huddlesford Junction to Lichfield and ultimately to the BCN at Ogley. We are grateful to the people of Whittington and everyone else who has been inconvenienced by the closure of an important through route for their forbearance. We also appreciate the helpful attitude of Lichfield Cruising Club whose access route to their moorings has been disrupted through the winter.

Most of our efforts through the winter months have been concentrated on the problems posed by the Lichfield Southern Bypass, especially at the intersection with the Birmingham Road. After our setbacks in the autumn we decided that we must now work to find practical solutions to the problems, whatever our previous misgivings. We have been very grateful for the good offices of Tony Harvey, Central Shires Manager for British Waterways. With the support of BW at the highest level he has opened up channels of communication with both Staffordshire County Council and the developers, Persimmon. When the ground had been prepared the Trust was invited to join the discussions and to explore the engineering options. The all important question was then how much this would cost and would the Trust be able to meet any obligations placed upon it. Hopefully, by the time CBW 48 reaches you in the Summer we will know exactly what has to be built and how much it will cost.

Engineers at British Waterways worked with their counterparts at Staffordshire Highways to find a way in which the canal could be contained within the 40 metre environmental strip allowed for the road and then cross under the Birmingham Road. We are grateful to Roy Sutton, the honorary consultant engineer to IWA, who is advising us and who has met the other engineers involved. Time is of course, of the essence and, as we go to press, matters remain unresolved but with a strong hope that the canal structures can be built and paid for. It was essential that we should launch a public appeal for funding as we anticipate that the final bill for this work will be in the region of £½m. Finance Director, Bob Williams, has worked very hard to explore all the funding options and to launch The David Suchet (Mark 2) Appeal.

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CHAIRMAN'S COLUMN (continued)

It is very trying and testing that we are once again compelled to finance a major road crossing at short notice. It is vital that we succeed and we hope that the waterways movement will be as generous and understanding this time as it was when we built the aqueduct. At a later time, all the political implications will have to be explored in the hope that no other restoration project will ever again find itself in such a tight corner. The other important message which comes from this experience is the need to sell, and to continue to sell, the whole restoration scheme to local people. Over the nearly two decades of the Trust's existence support has grown and we have many good friends in the local communities. However we will only make the real breakthrough when everyone sees the Lichfield and the Hatherton as "their" canals and not as "ours". In that dreadful but telling modern expression we need local people to "take ownership" of the canals.

At our Annual General Meeting I made my annual appeal for people to come forward to take an active role in our work. There is so much still to do. Phil Sharpe has recently stood down as Vice-Chairman and did not seek re-election as a Director at the AGM. The Trust will always be greatly in his debt for the tremendous hard work and dedicated service he has given for so long.

We now face the great challenges of the next few months. The greatest of these, will be the financial ones. We are committing the trust to heavy expenditure and this burden will last for several years. We will endeavour to keep all our work going but the priority will have to be dealing with the costs caused by the building of the projected culvert under the Birmingham Road in Lichfield. There are so many other things on which we could be spending such a large sum of money from practical restoration to land purchase. In many ways this big project which has been laid upon us is a kind of tax on restoration but we have no choice but to meet it. I can only ask for your generosity and fullest support.

Great Barr School

The Trust has been developing contacts with Great Barr School both as part of building community partnerships as required by the application criteria for our Big Lottery Living Landmarks application and also in an attempt to build links with the wider community. We are currently exploring ways in which the pupils could become involved in projects on the Lichfield Canal. Bob Williams and Mike Battison have recently visited the School to meet the students and to be photographed with them.

Brian Kingshott

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.

Other Items

CAPPERS BRIDGE CEREMONY

For us, 'Queen Elizabeth Bridge' might have been an appropriate name for the newly-built Cappers Bridge, formally opened on her 80th birthday on 21st April 2006! Years of planning and fund-raising, months of construction work, weeks of organising all came together when some 100 invited guests, Trust members and public met to celebrate this notable achievement in opening the way for the Lichfield Canal to pass under Cappers Lane between Lichfield and Whittington. During a ceremony on the bridge, the "Cappers Bridge" name-plate rescued from the original bridge was unveiled by dignitaries to rousing cheers.

The Village Hall in Whittington provided a focal point for the event where visitors enjoyed a variety of displays by several local interest groups and light refreshment were served all afternoon. Brian Kingshott, Trust Chairman paid tribute to all those who had worked on the project, particularly Staffordshire County Council and the builders McPhillips (Wellington) Ltd for a most excellent result. Michael Fabricant MP highlighted how Parliament had been short-sighted in closing canals in the 1950s which are now found so desirable for leisure and environmental benefits, commending the Trust on bringing back a valuable local amenity. Speaking for British Waterways, Tony Harvey, General Manager Central Shires endorsed compliments given to Trust volunteers for their vision in reopening links with the Birmingham Canal Navigations, sentiments that were echoed by Clive Henderson, Chairman IWA West Midlands Region. Cllr Mrs Doris English, Chairman of Lichfield District Council recalled the canal in earlier years, remarking how it will again become an attractive feature of the City.

The proceedings were graced by the presence of Mrs Margaret Dale, a descendant of the Capper family who had lived and worked as wheelwrights at Huddlesford Junction in the past. Mr Bartlett, Chairman of Whittington Parish Council thanked her for personifying the historic link which she said was a great privilege and hoped the new bridge would carry the Capper name into the future. Commemorative mugs and coasters depicting the bridge sold quickly and will be available on the Trust stand at shows, or through the website.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Following the above event, some 50 members and others attended the 16th AGM at Whittington Village Hall. The Chairman delivered a stirring report on the Trust's activities through some difficult times in 2005, yet coming through to face fresh challenges under political and financial pressures. With the usual business regarding accounts and elections concluded, Trust President Eric Wood expressed sincere thanks to the Chairman and Directors for their untiring voluntary work in pushing forward to achieve the aims of the Trust to restore the canals to full navigation.

DAVID SIMKINS 1946-2006

The tragic loss of Dave Simkins in January has been keenly felt by his work party colleagues and we are missing the energy, skill and good humour he brought to the work.

David Simkins, Dave to his friends, joined our work parties in March 2003 following contacts made on a hedgelaying course he attended in Rugeley. Dave put his training into practice on a section of overgrown towpath hedge and quickly established himself as a skilled hedgelayer. Over the 3 years he was with us he laid over a mile of hedges from the A38 up to Lock 24 at Tamworth Road Site, at Fossey Lane Site and on the Hatherton Canal. Much of this was so high and overgrown, more like a line of trees in places, that the contractors used by BW would not tackle it, but nothing daunted Dave and through sheer hard graft he brought 50 years of neglect under control. The only practical way to do this was by using a chain saw and Dave joined with other volunteers to get the necessary training, which he was then also able to use removing several trees that were blocking the canal. Dave was a natural countryman and wanted to replace what had to be removed, so he planted new trees extensively along the hedgerows, made and installed bird boxes to compensate for the temporary loss of nesting sites, planted bulbs, and just this winter he organised the replanting of lengths of missing hedge at Lock 25 and at Fossey Lane. The rejuvenated hedgerows on all our sites will be a lasting legacy to Dave's skills.

These were however just some of Dave's many talents, and he quickly became a regular member of the work party teams at both Lichfield and Hatherton, working every weekend whatever the weather, invariably first on site and turning his hand to anything. In his working life Dave was a skilled pattern maker and well used to machinery of all types, producing formers for arches, shuttering, installing rebar, welding and the like were no problem and jobs like bricklaying were there to be learned. The longer we knew Dave the more we found he was capable of, and came to rely on him to find a practical way to do any job.

But Dave was so much more than the sum of all his skills, hard work, and enthusiasm. He was good company, a source of endlessly entertaining stories, an inspiration, and a friend who is sorely missed by us all. For him to go so quickly, at only 59, was a great shock because he always seemed so fit and well. In his time with us he contributed so much to the canal restoration with dedication, good humour and sheer hard work that any tribute seems inadequate, but those that knew him will always remember Dave with gratitude and affection. More bird boxes he had made have been put in the trees around the site and the bench he was building from felled timber has been completed and installed at Lock 25. A tree has also been planted in the 'triangle' and a plaque ordered as a permanent appreciation.

FUNDING NEWS

COUNCILS

We thank Lichfield City Council for granting another £500 and also Lichfield District Council for granting £1,000 towards the ongoing restoration work on the Tamworth Road section in Lichfield.

ERDF

Government Office for the West Midlands considered our application for an additional £25,000 European Regional Development Fund grant for work on the Hatherton Canal, but regrettably this was declined.

BIG LOTTERY FUND, LIVING LANDMARKS

The Big Lottery wrote to us in February to confirm that our **I-CON Scheme, Hatherton Canal Project** bid for £15million described in the last issue had satisfied their eligibility criteria for Stage 1. However, just before going to press, they advised us that there were too many bids chasing too little money so we would not be among the 75 projects being considered for Stage 2. Readers of the waterway press may have seen reports of fierce competition for Living Landmarks funding just from canal projects, let alone bids from other sectors. We shall have to wait until the next funding opportunity arises and press our case even harder through an alliance of match funding partners.

DAVID SUCHET APPEAL

David Suchet OBE, our Vice-President has kindly agreed to spearhead a new funding appeal in his name, targeting to raise £250,000 towards the Birmingham Road culvert. Thirty thousand appeal leaflets have been widely distributed through the waterway press. The future of this northern link to the Birmingham Canal Navigations depends on having a canal channel built now under yet another piece of new road. The campaign message is **PLEASE HELP US!** Can YOU please help us?

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Press Date for Cut Both Ways 48 is 5th July

FUNDING NEWS (continued)

GRAND PRIZE DRAW

Our annual “raffle” launched at the “NEC Show” in February has started well with valuable prizes to be won, especially the first prize of a week’s cruise for six kindly donated by Tillerman Boats. We ask if members can make a special effort to sell just ten tickets before the draw is made in November. Total sales last year made over £4,000 so how about doubling that this year?

BIRMINGHAM ROAD CULVERT LOANS

This subject is covered in more detail elsewhere in this issue, but construction depends on whether the Trust can amass all the funds NOW. The best cost estimate we have from Staffordshire County Council is at least £460,000 which we are trying urgently to assemble to make stage payments over 6 months through a combination of the following:-

- Available cash resources of £90,000,
- 25-year secured loan offer of £255,000 from The Charity Bank Ltd (linked to Charities Aid Foundation),
- 3-year unsecured loan offer of £70,000 offer by Venturesome Ltd (also linked to Charities Aid Foundation and co-operating with The Charity Bank) to pre-finance income from the new David Suchet Appeal (see below),
- David Suchet Appeal income bringing another £45,000 by the end of 2006.

Bob Williams



Brian Kingshott Trust Chairman, Peter Borgers Charity Bank,
Sarah Thomas Venturesome, Mike Smith Trust Director,
visiting the site of Birmingham Road culvert, 16th March 2006.
(Photo by Bob Williams)

CORPORATE MEMBERS

This category of Trust membership grew from an incentive to contribute £1,000 to the first David Suchet Appeal in 2001. Compared with the normal subscription of £200 a year, complimentary membership was granted to those donors for five years.

Names registered as Corporate Members

Alvecote Marina (Tamworth)
Barry Hawkins Narrowboats Limited (Atherstone)
Braunston Marina Ltd
Cannock Chase District Council
Chase Academy (Cannock)
Chasetown Civil Engineering Ltd (Burntwood)
Dains Accountants (Lichfield)
Damar Properties (Southend on Sea)
Dudley Canal Trust
Frouds Bridge Marina (Aldermaston)
Harral Brokerage Services Ltd (Northwich)
IWA, Chester & District Branch
IWA, Kent & East Sussex Branch
IWA, Lichfield Branch
IWA, Stoke-on-Trent Branch
Lichfield District Council
Macclesfield Canal Society
Michael Stimpson Associates (Rickmansworth)
Mindex Limited (Horley)
Old Union Canals Society (Market Harborough)
OwnerShips Limited (London)
Pritchard Group of Companies (Cannock)
Stafford Boat Club
Staffordshire & Worcestershire Canal Society
The Historic Narrowboat Owners Club (Newark)
The Stratford-upon-Avon Canal Society
Trent & Mersey Canal Society Ltd

A similar incentive has been included in the new David Suchet Appeal now launched for the Birmingham Road culvert for the Lichfield Canal. We have been most grateful for such a high level of support in the past and would like to keep all the businesses and groups on our register ... and add many others.

Our message is **PLEASE HELP US!** to move a step further to the time when full navigation is achieved for our canals.



11 bridge units obtained with ERDF grant stored for future use on Hatherton Canal
(Photo by Phil Sharpe)



The Trust receives grant assistance from the European Regional Development Fund

ANNOUNCEMENTS

We regret to record the death of the following member:-
Mr David F. Simkins, Hednesford, Staffs 24-Jan-06
for whom there is an obituary on page 6.
The memorial collection raised £490.45

For details about our Regular Giving Scheme
contact Bob Williams Tel 01543 671427
Norfolk House, 29 Hall Lane, Hammerwich, Burntwood, WS7 0JP

MARKETING REPORT

The 2006 marketing season began on the weekend of 4/5 February with the annual curtain raiser, the **Ownerships Show** at Braunston Marina. As usual the Trust's stand was manned by Bob & Sue Williams and a successful weekend's trading resulted in £184.91 being added to the funds. In addition they recruited 6 new members.

The end of the month saw the team at our biggest challenge, the **Boat, Caravan and Outdoor Show** at the National Exhibition Centre. Ten days of intensive talking and selling resulted in a net profit from the show of £1,442. Our theme for this year was the 'Key to the BCN'. Fortunately on the day we opened we got confirmation that we had passed the first hurdle for a grant from the Big Lottery Living Landmarks scheme; our I-CON project for restoration of the Hatherton Canal had met the criteria. I say fortunate because half our stand was devoted to promoting the scheme. If we had not been accepted then there would have had to be some very quick thinking! The display promoting the bid was the work of Beverley & Paul Marshall and Mike & Bobbie Battisson with, I understand, some help from a neighbour, and I am very grateful to them all for the excellent result.

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The stand at the National Exhibition Centre. (Photo by Dave Moore)

MARKETING REPORT (continued)

The organisers reported an attendance of 142,954, an 8% increase on last year and bucking the trend of reducing attendances which has been the experience of other similar shows. Although the word Boat comes first on the title it is clear that most of the visitors are interested in the caravan and camper vans and that was evident by the crush of people in that part of the event. There were more boats on show this year although quite a number of them were glass fibre cruisers rather than narrow boats.

Our message this year was the importance of the restoration of our two canals to the revival of the northern parts of the Birmingham Canals Navigations system. Our thanks must also go to Geoprojects who supplied us with a new map of the BCN with our two restoration schemes prominently shown. Further to our theme of the BCN, the Trust has commissioned ten more sets of the brass BCN map. It comes as 9 brass plates which together form the map. It can be seen on the stand in front of Sue as she unveils the stand for another busy day.

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Sue unveils the
Key to the BCN
(Photo by Dave Moore)





Trust President Eric Wood receives a cheque from Alison Smedley and Roger Savage (Photo by David Moore)

MARKETING REPORT (continued)

Although not officially launched, we did take the opportunity to mention the forthcoming David Suchet Appeal to anyone who enquired about the By-pass situation, and there were a surprising number of people who had heard of our little problem. A start was made to the appeal when we received a cheque for £200 from the IWA Stoke-on-Trent branch. This money will go towards the printing of the new appeal brochure which should accompany this magazine. In addition to the £1440 raised, the team also recruited 25 new members. Our attendance at the show is due to the continuing sponsorship of Lichfield Tourism, Cannock Chase Tourism, Dains, Staffordshire Tourism, Michael Stimpson Associates, Pritchard Group and Harral Brokerage Services to whom we are very grateful.

In all some twenty two members of the Marketing team worked on the stand during the ten day event.

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MARKETING REPORT (continued)

Saturday 4th March saw the team out at Penkridge for a **jumble sale**. This was a joint event with IWA Lichfield branch. The weather could have been more kind to us and I think the snow persuaded many of the usual customers to stay indoors. The total take was only £300 which will be split between the two groups. As is usual with these events it is difficult to tell which hat the members of the team were wearing, as many of them support both organisations. So, I can only say thank you to all who turned up to help.

The season of rallies and outdoor events is fast approaching and again the Trust will be represented at many local shows. With our need for another successful David Suchet appeal it is particularly important that we make a good showing, so if any member fancies having a go please contact me or any one of the Marketing team. It really is good fun and very rewarding. No previous experience is needed, although if you have done it before it will be doubly appreciated, and there is a good team spirit. The main events where we will need assistance are Moira Festival (13 & 14 May), Crick Boat Show (27-29 May), Lichfield Bower (29 May), the IWA National Festival (26-28 August) and the Huddlesford Boat Gathering (23 September). There are about 10 other events to cover so any offer of help will be appreciated. Two dates for the future to put into your diaries now are the Autumn Fair at Boley Park Community Hall on Saturday 21 October and the winter social evening at Whittington Village Hall on Saturday 11 November when the entertainment will be provided by a traditional jazz band.

David Moore



Bob & Sue clearing away and packing it all up ready for the next show
(Photo by Dave Moore)

New Members upto 12th April 2006

Mr J.Abbott, Hednesford
Mr E.Higgins, Cannock
Mr M.A.Rushton, Bletchley
Mrs Rushton, Bletchley
Mr M.Vann, Ratby, Leics.
Mr M.Smith, Solihull
Mr A.J.Becket, Braunston, Northants.
Mr G.A.Arthur, Lichfield
Mr M.I.Ross, Great Wyrley
Mr R.Winnall, Walsall
Mrs P.Burgess, Shelfield, Walsall
Mr and Mrs P.Hill, Fillongley, Coventry
Mr P.Gay, Kings Norton, Birmingham
Mr A.J.Johnson, Lichfield
Mr R.T.Ellard, Burntwood, Staffs.
Mr A.Ashton, Great Wyrley
Mr T.Ellis, Norton Canes, Mrs J.Ellis, Norton Canes
Mrs L.D.Stokes, Lichfield
Mr N. Brevitt, Lichfield
Ms Y.Hollinshead, Stafford
Mrs Allen, Great Wyrley
Mr and Mrs R.Hewitt, Burntwood, Staffs
Mr P.Sheldon, Aldridge
Mr M.Wachlin, Cannock
Mr J.V.Ellis, Pelsall
Mr J.Horton, Sutton Coldfield
Mr D.Evans, Cannock
Mr P.W.Trinder, Lichfield
Mrs J.Crowther, Sheepy Parva, Leics, Mr A.Crowther, Sheepy Parva, Leics.
Ms C.Ensell, Castle Bromwich, Birmingham
Mr S.Holland, Bournville, Birmingham
Mr M.Savage, Ratcliffe on Soar
Mr M. Roberts, Great Wyrley
Mr B.Cope, Armitage
Mr S.Moody, Bakewell
Mr and Mrs M.J.Synan, Whitchurch, Cardiff
Miss B.Lloyd, Lichfield
Mr A.Perkins, Great Haywood
Mr G.Thorne, Cannock
Mrs S.Dyott, Lichfield
Mr P.Taylor, Fisherwick, Lichfield
Mr S.J.Foster, Whittington, Staffs.
Mr P.Chew, Essington

DONATIONS TO THE TRUST

We gratefully acknowledge the following donations for
amounts over £20 from 1st January to 15th April 2006.

| Name (in order of receipt) | Trust & Marketing | Suchet Appeal | Restoration & Land fund |
|--|----------------------|------------------|----------------------------|
| Miss A C Salter (with sub.) | 25.00 | | |
| Mr O F G Butler (with sub.) | 40.00 | | |
| The late Kevin Scragg collection | 35.88 | | |
| Mr C L Pattison (coin collection) | 47.80 | | |
| Mr T C Rigden | | | 200.00 |
| Mrs T B Dudley (talk fees) | 40.00 | | |
| Rotary Club of Rugeley (talk) | 25.00 | | |
| Mr M Cripps (with sub.) | 35.00 | | |
| Mr W Tallis | | | 250.00 |
| Mr J M Smith | 30.00 | | |
| Anonymous | | 200.00 | |
| Mr & Mrs C Riggs | | 1,000.00 | |
| Mr & Mrs J E Wood | | 100.00 | |
| Mr B W Davis (with sub.) | 50.00 | | |
| Sutton Park Tangent Ladies Club (talk) | 60.00 | | |
| Mr R G Read, Fareham | | 50.00 | |
| Mr K G Robinson, Rochdale | | 40.00 | |
| Mr & Mrs R J Best | | 25.00 | |
| Mr M Dobson (with sub.) | 30.00 | | |
| Mrs B M Nichols (with sub.) | | | |
| In memory of Son Roger – nb. FLASH) | 25.00 | | |
| Mr M Valiant, Marlow | | 50.00 | |
| Mr D Tarrant, Derby | | 50.00 | |
| Mr L T Flower, Dover | | 50.00 | |
| Mr S J Bell | | 25.00 | |
| Mr J B Atkins | | 100.00 | |
| Mr P Turville | | 100.00 | |
| Mr S T Boddington | | 100.00 | |
| Mr C G Watmore | | 1,000.00 | |
| Mr J H King | | 100.00 | |
| Mr T P Bass | | 100.00 | |
| Mr A J Bertram | | 100.00 | |
| Mr M W Wright | | 100.00 | |
| Mr G Main | | 100.00 | |
| Mr D H Junkison | | 150.00 | |
| Mr J T V Green | | 25.00 | |

(Continued Over)

DONATIONS TO THE TRUST (CONTINUED)

We gratefully acknowledge the following donations for amounts over £20 from 1st January to 15th April 2006.

| Name (in order of receipt) | Trust & Marketing | Suchet Appeal | Restoration & Land fund |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------|------------------------------------|
| Mr J C S Ford | | 50.00 | |
| Mr A Greenwood | | 50.00 | |
| Mr D E Lewis | | 50.00 | |
| Mr & Mrs T Wheeldon | | 50.00 | |
| Dr A W Read | | 100.00 | |
| Mr Brian Kingshott (donated expenses) | 484.38 | | |
| Dr T Hollingworth | 85.00 | | |
| Mr David Stanistreet | | | 90.00 |
| Regular donors to appeals | | 130.00 | 398.00 |
| Aggregated donations below £20 each | 880.89 | 30.00 | |

We are grateful to McPhillips (Wellington) Ltd, the Cappers Bridge contractors for a contribution of £250.00 towards the cost of celebrating the official opening of the new bridge for the Lichfield Canal near Huddlesford Junction.

Land Notes

Each month I produce a set of 'Land Notes' to keep my colleagues on the Board up to date with our progress in land acquisition. I have just reviewed the notes I wrote in the last year or so to see what we have to show for our efforts. The first item reported in 2005 was the purchase for the Hatherton Canal of nearly 4½ acres of land near Great Wyrley from our long standing supporters (and first ever corporate member) the Holford Farm Group. The transaction included a 'lease back' arrangement which will ensure the land can continue in agricultural use while the Title Deed is safely tucked away in our 'land bank' ready for the time we can start construction work. This purchase forms part of land required for the 2¾ mile length of new canal channel that we need to construct between the David Suchet tunnel under the A5/A34 roundabout to the East of Cannock and our connection with the Cannock Extension Canal. We do not own any of the rest of the section yet, but we are in negotiation with all the current landowners involved. The County Council is being most cooperative and has agreed in principle to convey a length of approximately ¾ mile to us for £1.00. We are also currently negotiating a route through the Little Wyrley Estate that will cover approximately another 1½ miles of the route.

Cappers Bridge

The major activity in 2005 was to acquire the land needed for the construction of Cappers Bridge. It is only a small bridge and it lies on the alignment of the former hump backed bridge so it seemed at first that this would be a straightforward task. However, as hump backed bridges are no longer acceptable in modern highways schemes, long embankments were required and as these spread beyond the width of the land owned by the Council Highways department we had to buy long narrow triangles of land in the four fields adjacent to the crossing. The landowner was willing to sell and the land was duly purchased and registered with the Land Registry. The next step – to hand over the newly acquired land to the County Council – was not so simple.

A detailed engineering survey of the site using modern laser techniques had been carried out as the basis for the construction works. Unfortunately this plan showed the field and hedge boundaries in slightly different places to the Ordnance Survey plans on which we, and the Land Registry, had based our land purchase. Minute examination of the differences showed a number of small 'black holes' which we did not own and the County insisted that we prove title to the 'missing' land before they would agree to build the bridge. We were certain that the bits of land apparently missing were in fact part of the County Council's own grass verges. However this could not be proved as it is County policy not to register their own land.

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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

Land Notes (continued)

I do not recall how many times we went in circles round this problem but, in the end, the Land Registry accepted our position and the matter was resolved - but not until we had lost 6 months, so the bridge had to be built during the winter months and not in the summer as planned. Another complicating issue was the need for the County to acquire title to a tiny area (62 sq m) of British Waterways land under one of the bridge abutments. BW kindly agreed to transfer the land directly to the County rather than via the Trust. There was absolutely no doubt that BW had occupied and operated the land for 200 years but, as there was no Land Registry when the canal was built, proving it became another matter! The process took nearly as long to resolve (and the legal bill was nearly as much) as for the rest of the land negotiations.

Ogley Cottage No 272

While the bridge was being constructed at the bottom end of the Lichfield Canal, the occupants of the former lock keepers cottage (BCN Cottage No 272) at Ogley Junction at the top of the canal informed us they were putting the property on the market. As the garden contains half of No 1 Lock we were very keen to buy it and, thanks to the generosity of the Manifold Trust, we were able to do so. It is our intention to let the cottage until we are able to acquire the other half of the lock which lies in the garden of the adjacent property.

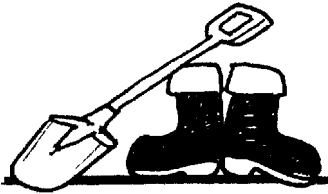
Tamworth Road

For at least 10 years we have been trying to obtain long term tenure of the land beside the Tamworth Road in Lichfield where we are restoring Locks 24, 25 and 26 and the adjacent pounds. We have been working under the terms of a 7 year licence provided by the Lichfield City Council who own the land. We need to prove that we have longer term tenure – usually at least 25 years - to qualify for many of the grants we need. At last the negotiations have come to fruition and on 6th March the City Councillors formally voted to approve a 50 year lease “..for the purposes of restoring the former canal on land South of Tamworth Road between Cricket Lane and the A38 ...”. The rent will be £1.00 per annum (if demanded) - plus VAT!

Overview

Though we have only achieved (as the footballers say) ‘a result’ in these four cases recently, my land notes show that in the last year we have been in negotiation with some 30 landowners or organisations with the intention of acquiring the land needed for the two canals. It is of necessity a long slow business – though if they all said ‘yes’ tomorrow it would take a very long time to raise the funds and do the deals. Nevertheless, I hope Trust members will see we are making steady progress on their behalf and that, bit by bit, the land needed for both canal is being secured.

Mike Smith Land Officer



HATHERTON CANAL

WORKING PARTY NEWS

Our 3 work parties in January, February and March all had good attendances of 10 to 12 volunteers who completed the major task of widening and levelling the towpath between Saredon Mill Bridge and Oak Lane. This section which was very difficult to walk is now one of the best. Overhanging willow trees on the offside of the canal near Oak Lane have been cut back and the branches burned, with the agreement of the householder, and the picnic table and benches have been given their annual coat of preservative. Barriers have also been installed to prevent horse riders accessing the towpath between Saredon Mill and Cross Bridge where they were cutting up the surface, which has been reinstated.

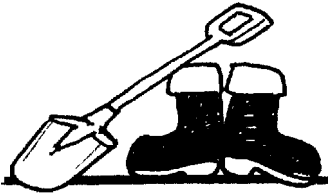
Over the summer we will as usual be concentrating on maintaining the towpath and hedges, along with various jobs to improve access and control invasive trees and vegetation.

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 details of meeting places.

Work Party Dates: Sundays; 21 May, 18 June, 16 July, 20 August, 17 September.



Denis and crew widening and levelling the Hatherton Canal towpath near Oak Lane
(Photo by Phil Sharpe)



LICHFIELD CANAL

WORKING PARTY NEWS

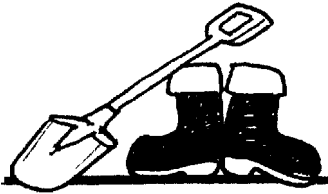
After a break for the festive season, work resumed with a joint visit from Northwest WRG and Essex WRG in early January to Fossey Lane for hedge planting and scrub clearance. Some 1100 trees, 80% hawthorn plus a mixture of blackthorn, field maple, hazel and dogwood were planted to fill 250 yards of gaps in the towpath hedge all the way from Lock 18 to the towpath encroachment, with associated clearance of brambles and other invasive scrub. We also started cleaning out accumulated silt and rubbish from the chamber of Lock 18 which was completed the following week, as well as trimming the towpath hedge from the road down to below the lock.

Our other work parties have all been at Tamworth Road where good progress has been made on rebuilding the walls in the garden. The back of the towpath wall was extensively shuttered and 6 temporary earth ramps built in front to allow readymix concrete to be tipped in by dumper, which was done with the help of London WRG in early February, topping it up with further hand mixed concrete. LWRG also continued bricklaying on the top wing walls of Lock 26, cleaning off the walls in Lock 24, and trimming back the face of the towpath hedge up to Cricket Lane.

(continued over)



Brian and London WRG raising the offside top wing wall at Lock 26 Tamworth Road
(Photo by Phil Sharpe)



LICHFIELD CANAL

WORKING PARTY NEWS (CONTINUED)

On subsequent weekends the shuttering and ramps were removed and the towpath backfilled with spoil, with the final course of capping bricks now being added. Brick-laying and concreting the wing walls continued and had assistance from Newbury WPG in March, who also did extensive re-pointing in the chamber of Lock 26. Underpinning of the weir stone was started and two short sections of old towpath wall removed in preparation for filling the gap. Large numbers of old bricks have again been cleaned to keep the bricklayers busy and moved to and from storage.

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. Look out for the yellow sign. We work almost every Sunday, except for the third Sunday of the month (which is on the Hatherton) when the advertised date is on the Saturday, and we are often there on the other Saturdays as well. Our own work parties are supplemented by WRG and 'Dig Deep' weekend visits. We generally work from about 9 am to 4 pm and more help is always welcome, even if only for a few hours. Check for additional dates or the latest plans with Phil Sharpe on 01889 583330 or Peter Matthews on 01543 318933, or visit our web site where any changes will be shown.

Work Party Dates:

May: Newbury WPG Sat/Sun 6/7, Sunday 14, Saturday 20, Sunday 28
June: London WRG Sat/Sun 3/4, Sunday 11, WRG BITM Sat/Sun 17/18, Sunday 25
July: Sunday 2, Sunday 9, Saturday 15, Sunday 23, Sunday 30
August: Sunday 6, Sunday 13, Saturday 19, Sunday 27
September: Sunday 3, Sunday 10, Saturday 16, Sunday 24

1998 DATA PROTECTION ACT

The Lichfield & Hatherton Canals Restoration Trust Ltd will hold your details for marketing purposes in accordance with the 1998 Data Protection Act. If you do not wish to receive updates from the Trust or any third party with whom we co-operate then please advise the Trust through Director Bob Williams on 01543 671427.

Membership rates are:

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

“Dave ‘Hedge man’ Simkins

On Thursday 9th February we met at Stafford crematorium with family, friends and colleagues to celebrate the life of our good friend Dave, who had unexpectedly and tragically passed away on 24th January.

I first met Dave on a cold winter’s day in the wilds of the Rugeley Power Station estate. We had gathered to attend a hedge-laying course under the auspices of the Staffordshire Wildlife Trust and the BTCV. Being the more mature members of the group we naturally gravitated together and formed a ‘team’.

Whilst we chipped and chopped in our novice’s manner it quickly became clear to me that Dave was a ‘natural’ woodsman. Of course, as we worked the conversation revolved around the canal and our restoration efforts. I feel sure that Dave had a gleam in his eye and licked his lips to hear that the restoration required the recovery of several kilometres of sadly neglected hedgerow.

And that was it; nothing would hold him back. So we started at Fosseyway where, after a season of hard work, a 200-metre section of original hedge was cut, laid and tidied. This was all recorded and formed a feature on the Trust’s stand at the following NEC’s Boat, Caravan and Outdoor Show and may also be seen on the Trust’s website.

Dave’s strength, enthusiasm and skill with the billhook, sledgehammer and chainsaw quickly marked him out as a key member of the team. We lesser skilled ‘helpers’ were relegated to recovering stakes and disposing of the brash. At times we were amazed (sometimes with a groan) at the rate at which he could progress with the hedge laying, generating mountains of waste for us to drag away and process.

Fosseyway completed, Dave next turned his attention to the long section at Tamworth Road. Starting at the A38 he worked his up past lock 26 and 25 to reach eventually the top of lock 24 – a truly Herculean task!

Not satisfied with this, Dave managed to ‘fill in’ any spare time by assisting the Hatherton work parties with their environmental restoration efforts by that canal at the back of the Roman Way hotel and alongside the A5 to the M6.

With the arrival of spring the results of Dave’s efforts are beginning to bear fruit, the recovery of the habitat and improved ambience becoming clear for all to see and appreciate.

It is now incumbent upon the Trust to ensure that these hedgerows are managed with care so that they become a fitting memorial to Dave and his unremitting help and support. In this way it is nice to think that our grandchildren’s grandchildren may see the ancient hedge last for a further 200 years built upon Dave’s labour.

Mike Battisson

LICHFIELD & HATHERTON CANALS
RESTORATION TRUST LIMITED.

Registered Office: 3 Norfolk Court, Norfolk Road, Rickmansworth WD3 1LT
The Lichfield & Hatherton Canals Restoration Trust Limited was established in 1988 as a non-profit distributing company limited by guarantee (No. 2456172) and is registered as a Charity (No. 702429).

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.

PRESIDENT Eric Wood **VICE-PRESIDENT** David Suchet OBE.

PATRONS Chris Coburn, Dr David Fletcher CBE, Sir John Smith CH CBE

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