BROADSHEET

Magazine of the Staffordshire & Worcestershire Canal Society



Gailey Round House

Photo by Ian Cowdale



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Staffordshire & Worcestershire Canal Society 2019-20

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BROADSHEET

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Editorial

Our Autumn Cruise went ahead despite the 'inclement' conditions and a short report can be found in this issue together with list of hardy souls, or at least, their boats that attended.

It is now not long until the Stourbridge Navigation Trust Open Weekend (19-20 October) and reports are that bookings of visiting boats, traders and exhibitors are encouragingly healthy. The street now benefits from more space and light now that the rolling-mill building has gone and is now just a memory. Do try to and come along and support it. It is always a memorable weekend with plenty to see and do. A poster with the main details can be found inside this issue.

Through the I Dig Canals project, Alarum Productions want to capture memories of the period when there was a question mark over the survival of canals in this country, and share them using live productions, so that people interested in the canals today know about the huge effort that went on to save them. In particular, they want to gather stories from womens' perspective. More details and a list of local productions can be found in this issue.

You may recall that we made a contribution to the restoration of the Falling Sands Viaduct that was found to be in a parlous state, and learned later that the match funding figure was achieved. Chris Dyche reported that it will be a two year project on the seven arches and that the contributors will be remembered on a plaque which is in place already. Chris' full report can be found inside.

The Canal and River Trust Annual Report of which a heavily summarised version can be found inside, list new boat registrations up 0.5% on their waterways. Of course this is good news for the CRT's income but something else appears to be changing too. From my own observation and confirmed with others indicates that over the last three or four years, the number of boats actually moving on the canals appears to have diminished and the numbers moored up, appears to have increased. Of course this could indicate a lack of leisure time of boat owners, or could it indicate a steady move of boat use away from a leisure pastime to residential. We know this is happening in the South East, and perhaps it's becoming more general throughout the country. I would value your views on this.

Finally, my usual October reminder. Broadsheet needs a regular stream of member-generated and preferably local material to maintain its relevant identity which, more often or not depends on you. So please put pen to paper or fingers to the keyboard and send me something; an observation, an article, an opinion, a letter, a picture.....etc. ps thanks to everyone who has contributed over the last year.

Ian Cowdale

In September your committee discussed

- AP and CD went to the CRT Public Meeting and AP asked about channels of communications and ways to contact the CRT. AS agreed to contact AP after the meeting.
- Concern also that when problems are reported the CRT call centre requests the post code, which may not be known.

Meetings

- Progress on Bradmore meetings so far:
 - o Nov Possibly Adnam Saif
 - Dec Christmas meeting
 - o Jan David and Angela Clarke
 - o Feb Edwin
 - o March Rosemary and Glyn Phillips
 - O April Andrew Lound
- The above may change depending on confirmed availability of speakers

Treasurer

- Income for 2019 so far (Sept 2019) is ahead of expenditure.
- £909 so far received in subscriptions this year.
- £380 for advertising (see below)
- Gift Aid has been claimed for the last year (reported at AGM)
- Social events income (including Bradmore raffles and refreshments) still is an important income stream although slightly fewer members appear to be attending Bradmore.

Membership

2019 Renewals on par last year. 2018/19 – 229 members 2019/20 – 217 members so far.

Advertising

- All Broadsheet advertising income has now been received (£380). This is the same amount as last year. Thanks to Colin Cartwright.

Cruising Organiser

- Autumn Cruise to Boundary stone for its 20th year.
- Spring Cruise & Summer Gathering discussed but yet to be confirmed.

Conservator

- Midland Chandlers, Parkgate Lock 'Facilities building' application. (Read crinkley tin shed.) Agree in principle, question materials.
- Penkridge Application-Public open space changed to a private garden. FC to examine further.
- Calf Heath several variations on the project. FC to monitor
- Ounsdale residential development. Many variations applied for:
 - o Bin store closer to the canal object
 - o Surface water run-off into the canal question



- Greater tree protection required ensure
- Brockmoor Foundry 8 new buildings. Potentially not a problem but FC to investigate.

Broadsheet

- Open Weekend and Stourbridge Santa Posters
- Update meetings
- Autumn Cruise report
- CRT Annual report summarise
- SVR Viaduct Plaque
- I Dig Canals (Alarum Productions) article
- ...etc

AOB

- Reports received from members that Wightwick Mill Lock is retaining a lot of water beyond the lock walls. Concern that it may lead to lock wall damage. CRT may already be aware but AP will pass the information on anyway.
- CD reported on the meeting with Severn Valley Railway re: the Falling Sands Viaduct restoration, now the funding is achieved. Early days but proposals are:
 - o 2020 small gathering at the viaduct involving the canal
 - 2021 a larger event as the project should be fully complete by then.
- CD also referred to the Engine Shed plaque recognising contributors to the restoration.
- Stourbridge Open Weekend Tidy-up planned TBA.

2019/20 Canal & River Trust S&W Canal Winter Moorings

Site name	length	price per meter, per	
	(m)	month	
S&W Penkridge Visitor Mooring	40	£6.90	
S&W Stewponey Visitor Mooring	60	£8.50	
S&W Wolverley Visitor Mooring	60	£850	

The Canal & River Trust annual report released

The Canal & River Trust has released its annual report showing boaters the importance of licence fees in keeping the inland waterways flowing smoothly.

According to the report, a fifth of the charity's funding comes from licences and moorings, enabling works such as dredging, culvert and towpath repair, replacing lock gates and providing pump out facilities and emptying the canalside bins.

The trust's income last year was £210m with licences and mooring fees making up £40.2m. The main sources of funding come from investment and property income of £53.4m and the Defra grant (£51.3m). The total expenditure in 2018/19 was £201m with day-to-day operations and waterway assets costing the most at £37.8m and £26.4m respectively.

Projects and repairs

A further £23.8m was spent on major infrastructure works such as repairing bridges, grouting lock chambers or repairing culverts. The trust took on 130 major projects during this period and conducted 800 planned repairs. Through its planned stoppage projects 1,000 defects were fixed and 137 lock gates repaired. These projects are against a daily backdrop of responding to incidents, providing assistance and keeping water supplies at the right levels as well as looking after vegetation.

The trust also responded to 117,500 calls from customers as well as rescuing one million fish and emptying 86,000 bins (*unusual statistics!* – *Ed*)

The Trust cares for the 2,000 miles of inland waterways across England and Wales, ensuring the 35,000 boaters and millions of visitors per year can continue to enjoy the water. It looks after 1,589 locks with around four million lockages per year. It also cares for 72 reservoirs, most of which are around 200 years old.

Elections being held for new members of governing Council

Canal & River Trust - News and Views - 3 October 2019

The council is currently made up of 50 elected and independently nominated members together with six regional advisory board chairs. Together they reflect the wide appeal of the waterways – from boating and angling through to walking and conservation. The council is responsible for the appointment of Trustees, helps to shape policies and provides guidance and perspective to Trustees.

The elections are for representatives from the private boating, business boating, fisheries and angling, volunteers, Friends of the Trust, and Trust employees.

To be eligible to stand for election, sponsor an election candidate, and vote in the election, interested parties please visit our webpage for the eligibility criteria.

Allan Leighton, chair, said: "We are excited to be holding these elections to our council and I would encourage people to stand as candidates. The council plays a vital role in our governance framework and this is a fantastic opportunity to get involved with our work, find out more about the opportunities and challenges we face, and channel the views of these constituency groups."

The election process will be run independently of the Trust by Electoral Reform Services (ERS) and it will be an online process. Anyone keen to stand for election, or anyone who may have a query about eligibility or the election process, can find out more on our webpage.

We'll be sending out emails to all those eligible on 21 October 2019.

Climate Change Concerns Raised with Waterway Minister

IWA Bulletin - Aug 2019

Following the damage to the dam at Toddbrook Reservoir as a result of torrential rain on 1st August, the subsequent evacuation of Whaley Bridge and the operation to reduce the water level in the reservoir to a safe level, we have written to the Dr Thérèse Coffey MP, Minister of State in the Department for Food & Rural Affairs with responsibility for the inland waterways.

The letter highlights the importance of government funding in ensuring that historic structures such as reservoirs and embankments are maintained in optimum condition, in order to avoid greater costs (as well as the threat to life and property) when failures occur, particularly in the light of the ongoing extremes in weather patterns that the UK has been experiencing in recent years as a result of global warming.

Climate change is likely to bring greater pressure on historic and fragile infrastructure such as reservoirs and embankments. We have asked Dr Coffey, whose ministerial responsibilities also include flooding and climate change, to ensure that adequate funding is allocated so that these assets are maintained to the necessary standard in order to minimise the dangers from failure in the future.

Anger at 'ludicrous' censoring of Whaley Bridge dam collapse reports

Manchester Evening News - 1 October 2019

The trust which owns a dam which nearly collapsed sparking a major evacuation has been criticised after releasing heavily censored inspection reports. More than 1,500 people were evacuated from Whaley Bridge when the dam wall at Toddbrook reservoir began crumbling during heavy rain in August.

It led to a huge emergency operation involving the RAF and hundreds of firefighters and police officers which saw the dam wall shored up with hundreds of tonnes of aggregate and the reservoir drained. Residents in the town have previously raised concerns about the maintenance and condition of the dam.

Following a number of FOI requests the Canal and River Trust, which own the reservoir, released several inspection reports. But all have large sections blacked out, with the Trust citing 'national security' for its refusal to reveal all the details of the inspections.

Some of the released reports are available to view on the 'What Do They Know' website. But all have a large black square obscuring about 50 per cent of each document. Comparing the documents to blank inspection reports available online it appears details under headings including 'seepage or leakage', 'settlement or movement', 'scour or erosion' and 'serviceability of valves' have been censored.

Information which has been revealed includes the date of the inspection, water levels and a check on the presence of blue green algae. Other reports of inspections carried by the trust and an independent engineer in November 2018 have been released to the BBC . But they also include large redacted sections, covering measures that were taken 'in the interests of safety' and 'matters specified to be watched by the supervising engineer'.

The independent report includes a description of the reservoir and the geology of the area, but even parts of these sections have been redacted. In its response to the FOIs the trust said the documents had been heavily redacted because 'disclosure would adversely affect national security and public safety'.

It added: "If the Trust were to release copies of these reports, which were not redacted, it would be releasing key details of the infrastructure and potential vulnerabilities of the Toddbrook Reservoir. "This would prejudice the protection and safety of the public through potential damage or disruption to the national infrastructure by acts of sabotage."

In a statement the Canal and River Trust said: "Following the lead of the Environment Agency we have now made available last November's inspection report into Toddbrook Dam.

"For national security reasons laid down by the Agency, the regulator in England and Wales, the report has had to be heavily redacted. We understand the frustration but are obliged to follow national guidelines on this which are exactly the same for any other of the nation's 2,000 plus reservoirs.

"However we want to reassure people the report did not identify the need for any immediate repairs to the spillway. We remain committed to being open and have just organised a series of public open days for local residents to visit the dam and find out more.

"Both the Government and the Canal and River Trust are currently carrying out independent inquiries into what happened and we expect both reports to be available in the coming months."

Society Autumn Cruise

Although the weather forecast for the weekend was not great, the promised daytime rain held off, enabling 12 society members to enjoy the freshly cooked hot pork sandwiches, and trimmings provided by our lead caterers Derek and Mary Overton. Salad and puddings being provided by other members. Four boats made the journey to the Boundary Post to celebrate 20 years since we marked the point on the canal between the counties of Staffordshire and Worcestershire, as the Society's celebration of the Millenium. It was lovely to meet up awith everyone and have a catch up chat off everyone's activities over the summer.

Boats attending:

Compromise Pensax
Sunbeam II Putnal Field

Judith Gray



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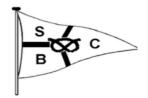




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Falling Sands Viaduct

You will remember that last year our Society made a donation to the Severn Valley Railway Charitable Trust's Falling Sands Viaduct Appeal. At that time it was promised that a 'Donations Wall' would be created at the railways 'Engine House Museum' at Highley to record, and thank, all those who had donated to their appeal.

This has now been completed, and our Society's name is there for all to see. The 21 metre donations wall is designed in the form of seven arches (Depicting Falling Sands viaduct) and is situated on the outside of the building at ground level, facing the railway. I hope that all who see it will be pleased with the finished product. Do go and have a look at it and the thousands names of those who have contributed towards the vital bridge repair fund.

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Franche Village Sports and Social Club
Great Western Association
Hampton Loade Station Fund
LNER (SVR) Coach Fund
Midland Group of Motoring Writers
Severn Valley Venturer
St Paul's Trinity Choir Salem Oregon
Staffordshire & Worcestershire Canal Society

The SVR's Charitable Trust were successful in meeting their target of £397,000. This then released £853,000 granted from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, which means that the whole restoration project of repairing and enhancing the 142 year old structure can proceed.

The work will start early in the new year with a target of finishing the first phase, water proofing the structure and replacing the track by Easter 2020. After a 'drying out' period, work will begin on repairing, repointing, and foliage removal of the whole viaduct. This work will be done by abseiling from the top, allowing trains to run and not affecting navigation of the Staffordshire & Worcestershire Canal.

Looking much further ahead, the SVR's Charitable Trust are planning to hold a Public Event adjacent to the viaduct in order to commemorate and publicise the completion of this large restoration project. The event would be based on the Canal towpath just downstream of the viaduct, with a suggested date of Spring Bank Holiday 2021, and they would obviously like to see the canal environment

included as a part of the event with some boats there.

Ann and I have met with a Trust representative, and we subsequently walked the area below the viaduct. Quite feasible from a waterway perspective, but will be 'challenging' for public access!!

Chris Dyche



I Dig Canals – memories of women's involvement in canal restoration



As part of the research into the I Dig Canals project, I have been delving into the log book of the narrow boat my family bought in 1964. A few days before my twelfth birthday, on Sunday 15th October 1967, Mom, Dad, my two brothers and I arrived at Stewponey on the Staffs & Worcs, on nb Laurel. It was midnight. This was not unusual. Weekends on the boat

were wonderful but... long!

The entry for 29th October 1967 reads: 'Collected fantastic amount of rubbish on prop, including a whole pram, a coconut mat, several yards of wire & of course – ye olde plastic bag.'

No matter how difficult the day had been, Mom had the job of writing the log. Here's 5th November 1967: 'Disastrous trip from Bumble Hole to Two Lock Line. Weather terrible. On return journey, trouble with strong gusts of wind. Picked up part of a mattress – great difficulty in removing. Picked up another whole spring interior on the prop, thus causing the three crew members to 'spring exterior' along towpath bow hauling boat almost to the Primrose Wharf bridge hole. Crew exhausted. Skipper & wife heaved boat the last few yards into Primrose Wharf & surveyed the offending object.' The following weekend she wrote: 'Frogman engaged to remove mattress from prop.'

Skipping forward to 28th April 1968, the day of the Spring Cruise, 'Bumble Hole

to British Waterways Workshops, Bradley via Brades' her wry comment is: 'Plenty of phosphorous in water, only one infant in bilge water.'

On 25th May 1968, heading for the Staffs & Worcs Rally at Wolverley, she wrote 'Bumble Hole to Kinver in pouring rain. Good trip down '16'. Not much trouble, only used shaft once on underwater refuse dump.' The fact that there wasn't 'much trouble' was something to be noted in those days, because there were usually plenty of difficulties!

16th May 1970: 'Grounded for an hour above '16' - winched off. Good trip down locks, wedged in one lock for a time. Plenty of trouble from then on. Removed 3 drums and a motor bike from aqueduct. Dreadful time from '16' to Stourton 4. Five hours of winching, rocking, pulling & sweating owing to no depth of water. Reached Hyde lock worn out.'

Through the I Dig Canals project, we (Alarum Productions) want to capture memories of this period, preserve them for the future and share them so that people cruising the canals today know about the huge effort that went on to save them (and is still going on in some places). In particular, we want to gather stories from the women's perspective, whether they were looking after the children – '7th June 1970: Lost one Tee Shirt in canal (no boy inside)' – or 'rocking, pulling & sweating' to get the boat along a silted up stretch of canal to prove it could be done and the cut was worth saving.

4th Aug 1970: 'Skipper set off at 9.0 am, wife in bed. 9.03 am, wife out of bed in bare feet & pyjamas shafting off bows.' I admire my mother's ability to write humorously about such situations, especially knowing what it was like for her at the time! And I'm so glad she took the trouble to do the job when she had so much else to think about. Reading through it now is very rewarding for me.

Anyone unfamiliar with boating life would wonder what on earth it meant when she put: bow hauling, bilge water, rally, '16', Stourton 4, shaft, shafting off... So one of the challenges for us is retelling these stories in a way that everyone can understand, as we aim to do with the show we have been touring since 2016, 'Idle Women of the Wartime Waterways'.

We want other women to delve into their log books, hunt out photographs, rally programmes, newsletters... anything which will help us share the wealth of stories currently sitting dormant in women's memories. Do come and see us at one of our reminiscence events:

Tuesday 15th October 10am-12.30pm Tipton Library, Unity Walk, Owen Street, Tipton, DY4 8QL; Saturday 26th October 2-5pm Titford Pumphouse, Engine Street, Oldbury, B69 4NL

with BCNS. Come and find us on Saturday & Sunday 19th-20th Oct at the Bonded Warehouse Open Weekend, Stourbridge DY8 4LU or contact us: IDigCanals@alarumtheatre.co.uk / 01865 364095.

We're also doing four performances at the beginning of November:

Idle Women of the Wartime Waterways:

Friday 1st November, 7.30 Wildside Activity Centre, Hordern Road, Whitmore Reans, Wolverhampton WV6 0HA

Acts of Abandon

(new double bill about the restoration of the Droitwich Canal and a brothel on a boat!)

Saturday 2nd November, 7.30 Wolverhampton Boat Club, Barnhurst Lane, Bilbrook, Wolverhampton, WV8 1RS; Sunday 3rd November, 6.00 Bonded Warehouse, Stourbridge DY8 4LU; Mon 4th November, 7.30 The Lamp Tavern, 116 High St, Dudley DY1 1QT

Further details are on our website www.alarumtheatre.co.uk

Heather Wastie (née Smith) September 2019

Lichfield & Hatherton Canals Restoration Trust News

Huddlesford Gathering 2019

Thousands of visitors came to Huddlesford Junction over the weekend of 21st/22nd. Sept for the biennial Huddlesford Heritage Gathering. The fine weather on the Saturday drew a massive crowd to enjoy the wide variety of things on offer.

Over 50 historic narrowboats, floating traders and private boats, and more than 100 classic cars and motorbikes were joined by a diverse range of other attractions and activities including Weird and Wonderful Wildlife, belly dancing, Search & Rescue Dogs, trike motorcycles, children's art and craft activities. A veritable mini-music festival on the stage featuring a dozen bands was augmented by a number of acoustic buskers.

Sunday was a bit of a damp squib but nonetheless a large crowd was entertained indoors by a variety of music and dancing, while the rain wasn't quite the spoiler predicted.

The Gathering was officially opened by Lichfield City Mayor Councillor Mrs Deborah Baker, who arrived on the Narrowboat Swift.

The Huddlesford Heritage Gathering is organised jointly with the Lichfield Cruising Club. The organisers wish to say a big thank you to all those who worked so hard to make the event such a success.

Giant toxic plant spotted in Kidderminster

Halesowen News July 2019

The Environment Agency has warned people to steer clear of the giant hogweed, which is believed to be growing on the banks of the River Stour in Weavers Wharf, as it can cause burn-like blistering for those who come into close contact with it.

The dangerous plant has been reported in a number of locations across the UK already this summer, and has now been spotted on the banks of the River Stour, opposite Wall2Wall, prompting a complaint to Wyre Forest Council.

Resident Phil Glover said: "It looks worryingly like the dreaded giant hogweed. If it is not destroyed soon it will spread seeds far and wide along the river. "The council has been notified. If it's in sunlight and someone brushes it they will suffer from blistering and other side effects. It's not a plant to be ignored."

Giant hogweed, or Heracleum mantegazzianum, is a weed which has dangerous side effects, particularly in children. The toxic weed can grow to over four metres high and is widespread along riverbanks, footpaths and canal towpaths. Its sap contains toxic chemicals which react with sunlight when they come into contact with the human skin, causing severe blistering within 48 hours - even when lightly touched.

The plant doesn't look dangerous, and produces white flower clusters in an umbrella-shaped head. The blistering it causes is consistent with a chemical burn and can form deep-coloured scars that can last for years. Hogweed has been billed 'the most dangerous plant in Britain' by the River Trust.

The NHS advises people who come into contact with giant hogweed to cover the affected area and wash it with soap and water, or see a doctor if a reaction develops.

The Environment Agency said it would be down to the landowner to remove the hogweed off the River Stour, but has warned passersby not to get close to it. Weavers Wharf Shopping Centre has been approached for comment.

(It's rather late this year now but in case it seeds in the area next year, this is what it looks like – Ed)



Passengers glide through Kidderminster's history on Heritage Day

Kidderminster Shuttle 18 September 2019

Passengers took a leisurely excursion into Kidderminster's past on an 85-year-old narrowboat as part of a national celebration.

Saturday's trip into the past was the centrepiece of events organised by the town's Heritage Opportunities Group (HOGS) to mark Heritage Day 2019.

Bramble, a restored working boat built in 1934 and now operated by Stourport Forward, glided past some of Kidderminster's key historical sites on its way to Wolverley and back along the Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal.

En route Eliza Botham, of Stourport Forward, gave passengers a talk on the importance of the canal and its builder James Brindley to the local area.

The day also included walking tours of Kidderminster with HOGS historian



Dave Laverty and Civic Society chairman Nick Hughes exploring areas and landmarks that have featured in the town's rich past.

HOGS chairman Colin Hill said: "The canal trip and guided walks were very well received and many people remarked that they had not realised the town had such a rich history.

"We are grateful to Stourport Forward, Dave Laverty and Nick Hughes for providing such a unique and informative day for so many people."

Local history groups got involved in the day with exhibitions at the town hall where visitors were given guided tours of the building with its court room and council chamber, and also had the chance to meet the mayor in the Mayor's Parlour.

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Membership Renewal

Just a reminder about Membership Subscriptions:

Membership renewals have come in well this year so far, but there are still some outstanding. Renewals were due on 1st April 2019. Our membership subscription again remains unchanged, as follows:-

SINGLE MEMBERSHIP £13.00

COMBINED MEMBERSHIP £13.50

(e.g. Husband & Wife)

JUNIOR MEMBERSHIP £1.00

(up to 18yrs of age)

& those in full time education

Remittance in the post should be addressed to: 14 White Harte Park, Kinver, South Staffs, DY7 6HN. or passed to a Committee member at Bradmore

Thank you
Colin Beard
Membership Secretary



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Stourbridge Navigation Trust

Staffordshire & Worcestershire Canal Society MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FORM

Please return to Mr Colin Beard, Membership Secretary 14 White Harte Park Kinver Staffs DY7 6HN

Please tick appropriate option



YEARLY SUBSCRIPTION (1st April-31st March)

	Single Membership		£13.00		
	Combined (eg husband & Wife) Membership		£13.50		
	Junior (up to 18 years of age) and those in full	time education	£1.00		
•	 New members joining 1st April to 31st August pay the full rate New members joining between 1st September & 31st January pay half the above fees. New members joining between 1st February & 31st March pay the full rate for up to 14. months membership. 				
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Boat Name	e	☐ Voluntee	er Work		

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Diary DatesBradmore Meetings

A series of talks and presentations, usually waterways orientated but with occasional eclectic contributions on a variety of other subjects - open to the public free of charge.

Meetings held at the Bradmore Community Centre, Birches Barn Road, Wolverhampton starting at 7:45pm,

Monday 14th October

A Northerner on Northern Waterways Part 2
Phil Clayton

Monday 11th November 2019 TBA

Monday 9th December 2019
Christmas Celebration at Bradmore

Monday 13th January 2020
Dave and Angela Clark - The Holt Abbott canal boat Jemima

Monday 10th February 2020 Edwin Fasham - subject TBA

Events Stourbridge Open Weekend

The Bonded Warehouse 19th & 20th October 10am-5pm

Electronic Broadsheet

We are now making all future copies of Broadsheet and loose inserts available electronically. This would be by "opting-in" for those members who choose to receive Broadsheet electronically.

There is no intention of discontinuing the sending out of "hard copies" of Broadsheet to other members.

Please contact Steve Gray with your name and e-mail address if you wish to "opt-in" to receive Broadsheet electronically in future.

Email wharfinger@blueyonder.co.uk

Note:- Your email address will only be used by SWCS and will not be passed on to any third party.

