

# BROADSHEET

Magazine of the Staffordshire & Worcestershire Canal Society



December 2023

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# Staffordshire & Worcestershire Canal Society 2022-2023

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**Cover photograph Shutt Hill Lock, kindly provided by Steve Teratsia**

## Editorial

Welcome to the Winter Broadsheet, this edition has been furnished with a number of contributions which I am very grateful for. I would as ever ask for them to keep coming along with any photographs and submissions for the cover image. I don't think they necessarily need to be contemporary.

### SAVE THE DATE!

It has been decided to hold the Gathering 2024 again at Bratch on 31<sup>st</sup> August -1<sup>st</sup> September

This is due to building on what has been a successful weekend and there now appearing to be action with regard to the Pumping Station see pages 14-15.

Last edition we printed details of the reproduction of "The Staffordshire & Worcestershire Canal" by Alfred E Jenks that has been produced by Julian Souter and Tony Gregory I believe copies are still available contact Julian ([julianat103@aol.co.uk](mailto:julianat103@aol.co.uk)) for details.

Max



## Chairwomans Remarks

Whilst it seems to have been quiet on the domestic front, it seems to have been busy on the boat front. We've had some interesting talks at Bradmore, and I'm looking forward to more in the New Year. Our Christmas meeting with a shared dinner and a quiz should be entertaining – not that I'm competitive at all!

The Stourbridge Navigation Trust's Autumn Rally was well attended, with lots to do as usual. It was lovely to attend the unveiling of the Honours Board for the Trust, unveiled by Richard Parry of CaRT and the Local MP.

CaRT seems to have featured heavily in our schedules. The Midlands User Forum in Wolverhampton had a reasonable turnout and was in itself interesting – if anyone would like further information I can share the link to the presentations. Just drop me an e-mail.

As a Society we were invited for an up close and personal visit to see the progress on Wolverley Lock and CaRT were very good at communicating with us about the progress and the work undertaken. There are pictures featured in the magazine.

The new CaRT Boat Licensing Fees are out and I would be interested in feedback from members as to their opinion on them. I'm sure the editor would be interested in any articles or letters you would care to submit.

Lastly but not least, are the IWA's campaigns on #FundBritainsWaterways. The SWCS are now official members of the campaign, and I urge anyone who hasn't done so to sign the petition. Further information about their latest campaign rally are featured in this magazine. Please so support the IWA in any way that you can.

Hopefully I will see more of you in the New Year at the Bradmore meetings – Phil Clayton has lined up some superb speakers all the way through to the summer break.

All that's left is for me to you wish you all a wonderful Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Rhian



# VOLUNTEERS WANTED

## LENGTHSMEN

Is there a stretch of the canal you can keep an eye on and report any issues?

## NAVIGATION ISSUES

Spotted any issues that you think need raising with CRT?

## REPRESENTATIVES

Would you be willing to attend waterways events and represent the society even if only for a couple of hours?

## COMMITTEE

Served on a committee before?  
Share your wisdom!

Never served on a committee before?  
Try something new!

Contact - Ann  
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# Stourbridge Navigation Trust Honours Board

It is an undisputed fact that it is largely thanks to volunteer effort over the past six decades (Or more) that we are still able to enjoy the extent of our Waterways System that exists today. Reopened Navigations; Heritage Buildings; Towpaths that are a delight to walk. Much of this would have been lost, if it were not for the volunteer,

and indeed today volunteers are becoming ever more a necessary part of our waterways survival. However, the years pass by, and sadly we continue to lose those who have contributed so much in so many ways; and with their passing the memory of them slowly fades.



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With this in mind, Stourbridge Navigations Trust's Vice President and past Chairman David Caunt proposed that the Trust should do something to acknowledge and remember all those volunteers who have contributed to its success over the years. The criteria obviously was to go way-back to before the Trust was in being. The early pioneering work on the Stourbridge Canal Arm, and the Canal Street buildings, goes back to the 1970's, and it was due to the hard work of the Stourbridge Sub-group volunteers of the Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal Society that in time, Navigation was restored, the Tow Path was made passable and Historic Buildings were saved. From these beginnings the Stourbridge Navigation Trust was established.

David therefore undertook the project to compile and erect an 'Honours Board' in order to record, and thank, all the many volunteers who have sadly now passed away. In the best traditions of volunteering, this new magnificent Honours Board started life as a redundant table top! It was cut to size, sanded down, stained, varnished and framed by several willing volunteers, in readiness for sign writing. All the sign writing has been

done professionally by Meg Gregory, which is indeed superb.

The Honours Board is now installed in the Coffee Lounge of the Bonded Warehouse, and it was officially unveiled at the Trust's recent Open Weekend in October jointly by Canal & River Trust CEO Richard Parry and the Mayor of Dudley Andrea Goddard.

However, the project doesn't finish there. The 'Board' will be accompanied by a booklet containing a few words noting who the named people were, and their contribution to the Trust. An excellent idea, as over time names become just that, with no idea of who or why. A great deal of 'investigation' has gone into this aspect of the project, in order to ensure that all dates and information is correct.

Reading the names you will see that our Society is well represented, including no less than five past Chairmen, and it is interesting to appreciate just how diverse the voluntary input has been over the years. Reading these names will not only bring back memories, but also some amusing incidents!

We read the names and say THANK YOU.

Chris Dyche.

# Stourport Heritage Port Day



## Angela Clark

As mentioned in previous Broadsheets, there was an event on 9<sup>th</sup> September in the grounds of Stourport Yacht Club to commemorate the historic Stourport Basins being granted Heritage Port status by the Maritime Heritage Trust and National Historic Ships (together with Historic England).

Not only was this an event to fly the flag for the basins, but also an opportunity to see inside the Yacht Club, usually only open to members!

Stourport Civic Society had put on a fascinating display of old photos inside, many of which had been donated by a former resident of The Tontine, who spent her childhood in one of the houses which make up part of the Tontine building.

The Yacht Club is located in the Clock Tower warehouse, which is itself an historic building, once used as a timber yard, but now very smart as befits a Yacht Club!

There were a few stalls beside the Yacht Club, IWA was represented and



there was a stall running a tombola to raise funds for Ukraine. Staffs & Worcs Canal Society also had a stall, where we gave out information leaflets with a membership form on the back. CRT had a stall on land adjacent to the broad locks.

We were blessed with beautiful sunny weather, but were relieved to be in the shade for most of the day,

There was a barbecue which sent irresistible cooking smells in the direction of the stalls. And the bar was open in the Yacht club.

S&WCS had planned to be represented by the old working boats

Aquarius and Lacerta, also by Jemima who was built in Stourport. But it was not to be – “the best laid plans o’ mice an’ men gang aft agley” as Rabbie Burns put it. Due to the failure of the weir at Wolverley Court Lock, it was impossible to get the boats there.

There was a surprise visit by a Fens fuel boat called Shellfen. It had been converted to provide roomy accommodation for its owners and had been painted a very eye-catching yellow and red

There were also events outside the grounds of The Yacht Club, Stourport Forward organised walks around the basins and surrounding areas, and

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their historic buildings – The Tontine Stables and the Old Ticket Office – were opened to the public. The Fetch Theatre Company ran family scrunch puppet-making workshops in the grounds of The Tontine throughout the day.

Bramble was on display, and open to the public at her usual mooring in the lower basin and was joined by The Mikron Theatre’s nbTysley, which was built at Northwich in 1936 by W.J.Yarwood & Sons Ltd for the Grand Union Canal Carrying Company.

Starline Narrowboats adjacent to the Clock Warehouse had an open day, visitors were able to see inside a modern hire boat and contrast the accommodation with that on Bramble!

The River King, a historic boat in its’ own right, built in 1933, ran trips down the River Severn.



A temporary plaque was unveiled by Mike Freeman, Mayor of Stourport. The intention is to move this sign to one of the gateways to the town, and more signs to be placed at the remaining gateways as funding allows.

It is hoped that this event is just the beginning of a campaign to raise the profile of Stourport and its’ basins.



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# Is Refurbishing An Existing Boat The Way To Go?

## Sammy Rose - Boat Broker

Is Refurbishing An Existing Boat The Way To Go?

Historically it used to be that if a narrow boat owner wanted to upgrade, then they would sell their current boat and buy a newer model or even commission a newbuild.

However with recent significant increases in costs, especially steel, a new trend has emerged: Have the existing boat refurbished.

Perrydale Narrowboats at Ashwood Marina, originally builders of brand

new boats, have seen the division between new builds and refurbishments grow from 80:20 in 2016 to 50:50 today.

The top reason for customers looking to have narrowboats refurbished is usually that they have owned it for some time, or it has been in the family for some time and so it is a key part of their lives and therefore is very special to them.

The second reason for refurbishment is economics: in that the owner wanted a newbuild but could not afford it. Consequently for the price of a bare shell they have purchased a used



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narrowboat that is circa 20 years old; the shell comes from a quality builder and the engine is a renowned make. This then gives them an excellent backdrop for a makeover, tailoring the interior to their specific requirements and having the exterior re-painted as part of the refurbishment package.

As a broker of used boats, I always stress to these parties that post completion of the refurbishment, as the boat is already of a certain age, should they look for a prompt sale then they will not recover their investment. However, if they are looking to keep the boat for some time, then refurbishment can offer a value for money solution.

So what does a refurbishment comprise? This depends entirely on how far the customer wants to go with the makeover and how good the fabric of their existing boat is. For example how well is it insulated and are the windows and doors displaying any signs of leaking? If the answer is that these are still good, then as many boats circa 20 years old have veneered wooden panels that can make them rather dark inside, a makeover here typically comprises: Re-painting the internal panels, installing a new floor and perhaps replacing the galley and bathroom. <https://perrydalenarrowboats.co.uk/narrowboat-builders/hummingbird/>, shows before and after pictures for just

such a makeover.

**Before:**



**After:**



Sometimes a makeover is not as straight forward as it should be, which regrettably can add significant cost to the original budget. Take <https://perrydalenarrowboats.co.uk/narrowboat-builders/bluebella/> for example. This customer was only



looking for a simple re-decorate of his interior plus an upgrade to the galley and bathroom. The boat was only 7 years old yet he was conscious of a damp smell, especially in the front cabin. He assumed that there was therefore a leak in the water tank. When Perrydale went to explore they found that water had been getting into the bilge through a leaky sliding hatch. The original boat fitter had used MDF instead of marine ply for the floor base and this had been soaking up the bilge water like blotting paper. Consequently the whole floor and lower panels had to be removed, the base of the boat dried out and re-treated and then a new floor and lower sides fitted, the latter including an upgrade in insulation. The ceiling and



upper panels were retained and repainted and the galley, bathroom and bedroom were completely re-placed.

When having a boat refurbished it is vital to ensure that its hull is in good condition as the last thing that is wanted is that re-plating is needed only a few years down the line!

The state of the electrics is also another important consideration, especially as most customers want to upgrade equipment on board. Consequently, as part of this they are likely to need a bigger inverter, which in turn usually leads to the addition of more batteries and then supporting these with a better management system to keep them charged.

A particular challenge can be when a customer wants to change the interior layout, say from a conventional layout to a reverse. Sometimes the requirement has to be compromised because of the placement of the existing windows and the location of the utilities; for example the plumbing may only be down the one side of the boat meaning that all sinks, the shower and any appliances requiring water have to be on the same side.

On a recent refurbishment a client wanted to change the layout of the bathroom which included ripping out the pump out toilet and holding tank. Conventionally pump out toilets have 2 holding tank systems: Either the toilet partially sits on the tank, which then extends into a cupboard or under a neighbouring bed; or the tank is located separately to the toilet and is linked via pipework. The former is always difficult to remove, the latter far simpler as in many cases the tank is partly under a bed or within a cupboard. Consequently rather than

having the upheaval of removal, customers will opt for the tank to be isolated and left in situ.

Back to the recent refurbishment and in this case the client wanted the tank, which appeared to be located under an adjacent bed, removed to create more storage. When the bed was removed and the tank fully exposed, it was found to be welded to the base of the boat and as such needed plasma cutting to remove it. This added time and therefore cost to the project.

In conclusion are customers right to refurb? The answer is rather political in that there is no straight one. Each case needs individual assessment and as already touched on within this article, factors include: The reason for the refurbishment; the condition of the boat; the budget available versus what the customer wants from their boat; the carbon footprint. Although Perrydale have not looked into formally measuring this, it is assumed that as the existing boat is essentially being recycled then a refurbishment has a much better carbon footprint impact than a new build. Although it is appreciated that the boat will retain old, less environmentally friendly features than its new build counterparts such as a diesel engine for starters.

That I think is a topic for another day.....

# Good News & Progress at Bratch



Bratch Pumping Station is set for a new future, and owners Severn Trent are working with local leaders to look at how the building can be brought back to life.

The Grade II listed building in Wombourne has stood vacant since the early 2000s when the previous lease ended – leaving its future uncertain.

However, after four years of investment in its infrastructure and the wider Bratch site, the building is finally ready for a new purpose. Severn Trent recently met with Sir

Gavin Williamson, MP for South Staffordshire, and local councillor Dan Kinsey to look at different options that will benefit the local community.

Laura Ward, Severn Trent Project Development Officer, said: “This is an incredible building with so much character and it’s a shame that it’s stood empty for so long. But we have been working hard in the background to get it to a stage where it’s ready for a new future and now we are excited to look at options as to what that future looks like.”

One possibility would be to work with



volunteers from the local community to establish a Museum Trust to lease the site and for the building to be used as a visitor attraction.

Willing volunteers would be responsible for managing the site and carrying out the administration, such as applying for charity grants. Severn Trent has three other historic pumping stations that are leased to Museum Trusts and that successfully operate under this model.

Sir Gavin Williamson said: "The Bratch Pumping Station is a fantastic building, and we are very keen to find a new purpose for it in the local community. It was great to meet with Severn Trent,

take a look around the site and discuss the next steps in bringing the building back to life."

Going forward, Severn Trent will be working with the local leaders to look at a potential structure for a Trust before then seeking volunteers to support it.

## **Martin Brookes**

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# New Members at Bratch



*New member Phil Ross got in touch after his visit to Bratch. Taking a break from his busy job unplugging completely with just his camera it was a refreshing look at the rally from an alternative viewpoint.*

For a townie like me from the South London suburbs, canals and canalboats actually seemed very far away from my every day experience. And yet, just behind the house where I grew up, the local boating lake had once been part of the water supply to a canal. Further investigation revealed that the stations on the South London suburban line that had been electrified since the 1930's had once been named Jolly Sailor Junction and Dartmouth Arms, rather than Norwood junction and Forest Hill. With the nearest navigable waters being the Thames some ten miles

away, it came as a bit of a shock to find that the railway line had in fact replaced a canal, and even today, when travelling that line, you can still see traces of it's origins in the brickwork that surrounds the modern track bed.

Now residing in St Albans, we are within a few miles of the Grand Union, but it took a holiday near Bridgnorth to give me the chance to visit my first canal society boat rally, a great chance to improve my knowledge of how the industrial revolution changed and shaped our country. When I first heard about the industrial revolution, my immediate mental picture was of dirt and grime and soot, and impossibly hard, and sometimes downright dangerous working and living conditions. So much of that is true, but the more I look into industrial



heritage, be it factories, steam railways, traction engines or canals, I am struck not only by the inventiveness and tenacity that powered these moments of radical change, but also the pride that was taken in the execution of those changes. Machinery and engines beautifully painted and lined, with gleaming brass and contrasted lining to make these functional machines elegant and a joy to behold. Pumping houses and lock cottages built with glorious contrasting brickwork, making these elegant additions to an increasingly man made landscape.

Having arrived early at Bratch, it wasn't very long before my sister Lucy and I were talking to various boat owners, learning about the history of the Staffs & Worcs Canal and its designer, the engineer James Brindley. Members of the Canal & River Trust talked us through the process as we first watched one boat descend through the three locks, and then observed another boat making the

ascent. We were told, and saw with our own eyes, how the side ponds, apparently a distinctive feature of Bratch, helped to recycle the water and improve the transfer speed through the locks. After all, these were originally commercial waterways, and time was money.

Later we wandered along the towpath, admiring the many different kinds of boats on display, and admiring the fine paintwork and beautiful lettering. We were given so many helpful hints and tips on where to find out further information about the history of the canal, and it's surrounding industries, that in truth, it was difficult to take it all in. But at least we have names, leaflets and weblinks to look up to improve our beginners knowledge. Certainly we found everyone to be friendly, enthusiastic and informative.

Kind regards,

Phil Ross & Lucy Smith

# Fund Britain's Waterways message delivered to Westminster



A flotilla of boats today delivered a visual and vocal message to the Palace of Westminster that funding cuts for our canals and rivers are unacceptable and damaging<sup>1</sup>. The boats, a mixture of leisure and commercial, drew parliamentarians' attention to their presence and the banners they were displaying by sounding their horns and holding station outside the Palace of Westminster. They were cheered on by a group of supporters on Westminster Bridge.

The boaters and supporters acted on behalf of a new campaign group Fund Britain's Waterways which represents

over 100 organisations with varying interests in the waterways. The group is campaigning to ensure that there is sufficient funding to retain the huge environmental, economic and social benefits that Britain's inland waterways are widely acknowledged to provide<sup>2</sup>. It will continue working to ensure that future governments continue to invest the relatively small amount of funding that is required to maintain all these benefits. The Westminster cruise built on the success of well supported campaign cruises earlier in the year in Birmingham and Gloucester. More

events are being planned in the run up to the next General Election. Support for the campaign can be shown by signing the petition available at [www.fundbritainswaterways.org.uk](http://www.fundbritainswaterways.org.uk).

Sir David Suchet CBE FRSA, a long-term supporter of the waterways and a Vice President of the Inland Waterways Association, said “Our waterways are valued and used by millions of people. Over the years volunteers have not only worked to protect and restore them but also ensured that governments appreciate their value. I am pleased to see this proud tradition continue.”

Christine Kemp, a long-standing waterway volunteer and liveaboard boater who participated today as well as in an earlier campaign in 2007, said “Who would have thought after the 2007 campaign cruise against DEFRA cuts that we would need to be here again in 2023, asking the government to look after our heritage and infrastructure. My boat is my home, and I spend time volunteering to help keep the canals in as good a condition as we can, but cuts to waterways funding will have a devastating effect on the canals and my way of life. Our waterways are one of the things that make this country special – serious cuts to their funding risk losing them for everyone.”



# Canal Opened - with pair of rusty scissors!



*The last edition of Broadsheet recorded the passing of Lord Morris of Aberavon who formally reopened the Stourbridge Canal in May 1967 a week or two before setting the last Broadsheet I had happened up a newspaper cutting from that re-opening and used a picture from it in the last Broadsheet. In the hope that others find the article of interest I reprint edited excerpts from it here.*

USING a blunt rusty pair of scissors that had been dredged with tons of debris from the Stourbridge Canal, Mr. John Morris, M.P., Joint Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Transport, on Saturday afternoon cut a white ribbon stretched across No. 11 lock at Wordsley, to open the Stourbridge Canal after nearly three years' restoration work. The flight of the 16 locks at Wordsley were got into working order only hours before the

opening ceremony, but on Saturday evening the No.2 lock at Buckpool had to receive urgent attention as a paddle broke.

British Waterways workmen, who had been going all out for weeks to get the flight ready for the opening, had to do a rush job at the week-end to get the damaged lock into working order so that craft could make their way home up the canal from the Rally of Boats at Stourton.

The rain on Saturday afternoon did not deter several hundred boating enthusiasts from turning up for the canal opening. Mr. Morris, stood in the bow of the gaily painted narrow boat Beatty to cut the ribbon. Just before Mr. J. A. Robbins (chair. of the Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal Society), Mr. David Tomlinson (vice-chair., who had been in charge of the locks restoration work by the volunteers), Mr. Ken

Dunham (vice-chair. of the Rally of Boats committee), Mr. B. Manion (rally harbour-master) and Mr. Garth Allan (a former chair. of the society). Mrs. Robbins and Mrs. Dunham were introduced to Mr. Morris. Six representatives of those who have been so strenuously engaged in restoring the canal were also presented. They were: E W. Adams of Cookley, a bricklayer who has been with the canals 32 years, Mr. Leonard Oakley, of Wharf Cottage, Walstead Road, Walsall, a carpenter, who has been with the canals 20 years, and Mr. Ralph Tuck, of Wilden, a carpenter, who has been working on the canals 29 years; and representing the volunteers who have been repairing brickwork and cleaning out the locks— Mr. Malcolm MacFadyen, Mr. Chris Burton and Mr. John Dodwell.

The restoration work had proceeded smoothly with excellent co-operation between the Board and the volunteer workers from canal societies. Mr Morris said that was a happy occasion because they were restoring apiece of water-way to full use. Waterway cruising was no longer a minority pleasure. The Stourbridge canal restoration was a development of precisely the kind they wanted to encourage.

It was very heartening to see the Waterways board and volunteer enthusiasts co-operating in that way. Relations had not always been that good.

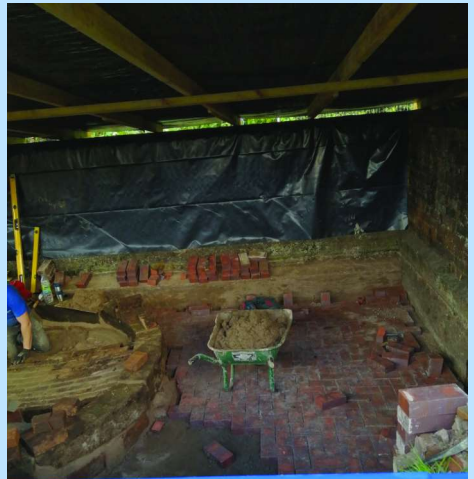
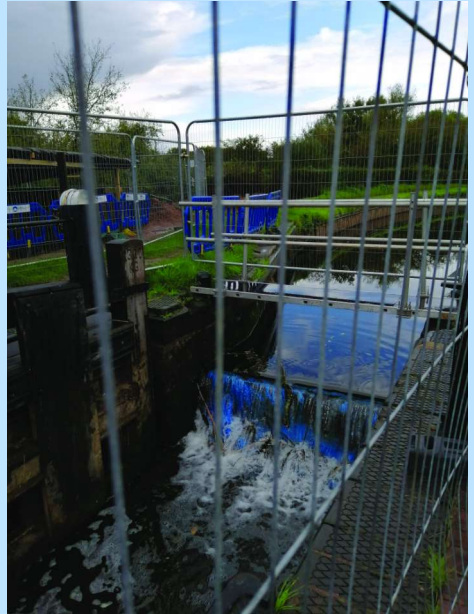
When Mr. Morris complained that there was no edge on the scissors with which he was at-tempting to cut the ribbon across the lock, Mr. Robbins explained that they had been found at the bottom of the canal.

More than 100 boats from as far afield as Manchester and Weybridge in Surrey took part in the rally, with 95 registered entrants for the various events. Mr. K. Dunham, the committee's press secretary, said that he turn-out by the public had been quite encouraging considering that the weather had been very uncertain. An estimated 10,000 people attended over the three days. Two local contestants won prizes in the events: Colin Law, , was the winner of the Players No. 6 Gold Cup for the best fancy-dressed boat with "Barbara Ann." In the handling competition for cruisers Mr. R. C. Dobbs, , was third.

One of the entrants for fancy dress Mr. Lyn Wright,, slipped and fell into the canal from his boat which was rigged out as Queen Elizabeth. He soon clambered back aboard, but did not finish among the winners. Although the weather kept the attendance down, the rally was a big success, and the towpath stayed fairly dry and free of mud. The field took a beating, however, and on Tuesday tractors were pulling the remaining vehicles out of the mud.

# Wolverley Court Lock Repairs

Wolverley Court Lock re-opened in October, the work proved more extensive than expected, the sandstone upon which the bywash had been constructed had eroded. While the works were being undertaken members of the committee were invited to visit the site. Angela Clark has provided the following photos from that visit.

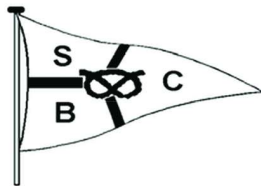


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# Staffordshire & Worcestershire Canal Society

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## **Diary Dates**

### **Bradmore 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 7:30pm*

#### **December 11th**

Bring and share supper and a Lighthearted Quiz

#### **January 8th**

Keith Hodgkins: Wartime Women Boaters

#### **February 12th**

Paul Wilkinson: Canal Ecology Update

#### **March 11th**

John Wilson: Oh no, not the Titanic!

#### **April 8th**

Simon Briercliffe: Caribee Island, Wolverhampton

#### **May 13th**

Phil Clayton: On the Level, Summer in the Fens

#### **June 10th**

AGM, Kev Maslin: A-Z, Ashby to Zouch, a waterways alphabet.  
(A fascinating look at what makes the canals so inspirational and worth traveling miles to see, as viewed through the lens of waterway photographer Kev Maslin.)

### **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 chose to receive Broadsheet electronically.*

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

*Please contact Steve Gray by email to [wharfinger@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:wharfinger@blueyonder.co.uk) with your name and email address if you wish to "opt-in."*

*Note:- email addresses will only be used for the communication of society information and will not be passed to any third party.*



## Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal

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To Great Haywood Junction

