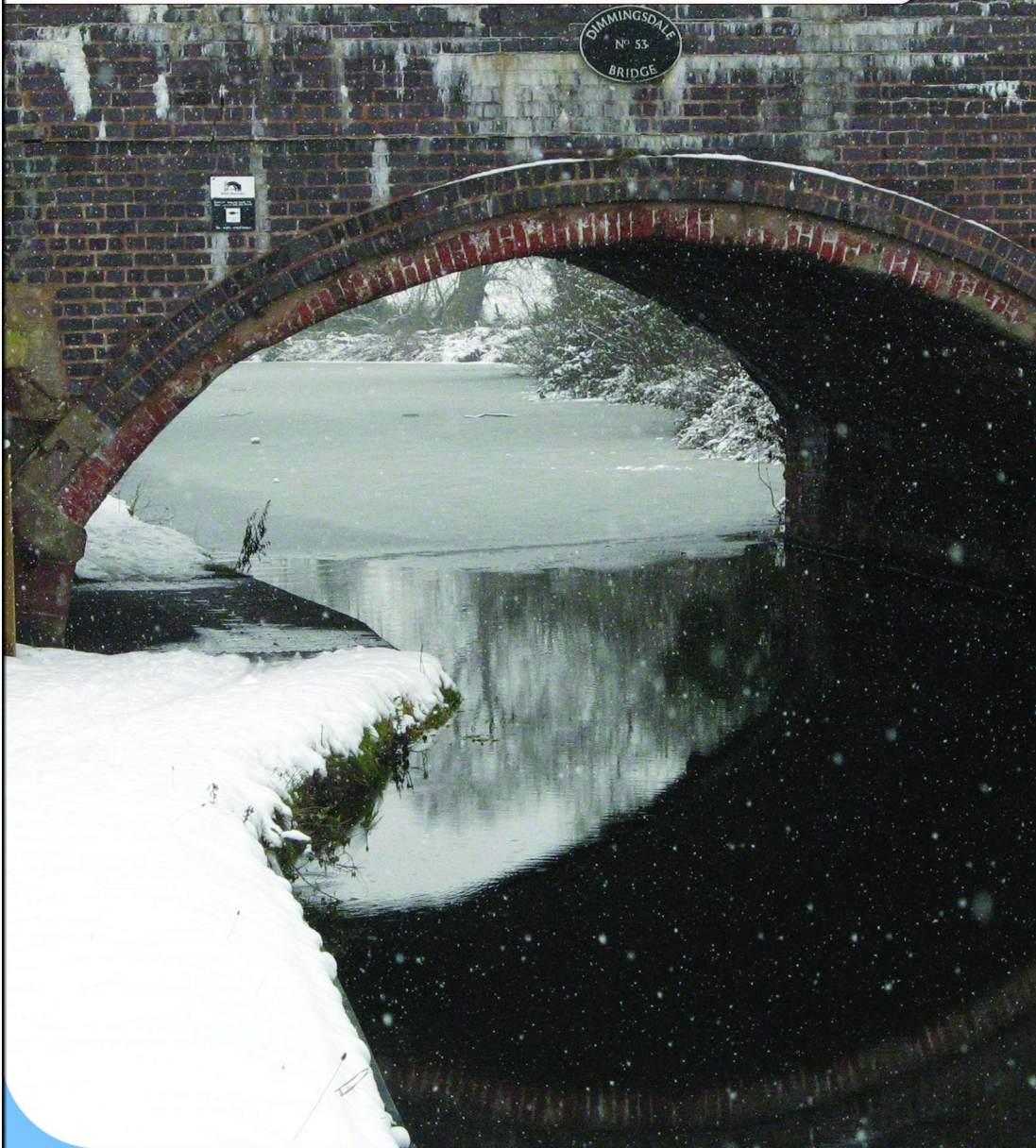


BROADSHEET

Magazine of the Staffordshire & Worcestershire Canal Society



February 2024

Volume 65 Number 692

www.swcanalsociety.co.uk



Staffordshire & Worcestershire Canal Society 2022-2023

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The contents of this magazine are printed as a matter of information for members of the SWCS but may not necessarily be the official policy, or opinions of the Committee. No item may be used without the prior consent of the editor, except for comment by other Society magazines.

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Cover photograph Dimmingsdale Bridge, kindly provided by Tony Gregory

Editorial

Welcome to the the first Broadsheet of 2024. As usual thank you to all who have contributed to this edition and keep them coming.

Bratch 2024!

As mentioned in the last edition planning has started for the rally again at Bratch this year. Included in this edition is the entry form .

While researching what information the society held regarding Lock Name Boards (see page 10), I happened upon a series of articles regarding the canal and the associated railways, which given the interest I found in them I have elected to reprint them.

The booklet to accompany the SNT Honours Board is now available see page 9 for details.

I should also thank my new assistant editor, Bertie, a 5 year old Cocker Spaniel we have re-homed he has spent some late evenings sat in the chair next to me helping.

Max



Chairwomans Remarks

Despite it being February, a belated Happy New Year to you all. I hope you had a peaceful festive season and are ready to face the coming year. I saw online the other day, and I liked it, was the concept that February is a free trial for the rest of the year. January hasn't been too bad (for January), so famous last words, I hope the year will shape up well.

On a personal note, so far so good. But for CaRT things haven't worked out quite so well. Dimmingsdale Bridge has been hit – again, Deptmore Lock has had issues, and that's just on the Staffs and Worcs. There have been countless other breaches, issues or flooding across all of the network, thanks in combination to an ageing system and the unprecedented number of storms in the early part of the year. We can only hope (and campaign) for more funding for CaRT, as forget being up the proverbial creek without a paddle, there won't even be a creek. Anything that you can do to support CaRT and IWA in lobbying for funds would be a great help.

The new Licencing for Boats will be implemented soon, and I would be interested to hear your feedback on the new pricing structure and how it affects everyone.

There is another CaRT Users Forum in March (details on Eventbrite), which we will be attending on behalf of the Society. Due to time constraints CaRT normally ask that questions be

submitted prior to the event (it's the first time that it will be held online). If you have any pressing questions that you would like to put to CaRT you can do so yourself, or we can submit on your behalf through the Society.

For those of you that have been out and about on the navigation if there is anything that you've spotted that needs work or any other issues, we can also raise these with CaRT.

Hopefully with Spring around the corner, the evenings getting lighter and maybe even some better weather, even more will be able to make it to Bradmore for the Socials. Phil has had some great speakers, and the turnout has been fantastic. The upcoming talks are not just about boating but local history as well and I'm really looking forward to them.

And whilst the summer may seem but a distant dream, we've got our AGM in June – so if there is anything you want included on the agenda, please get in touch.

On that note, looking forward to brighter days and longer evenings, I shall sign off until the next issue.

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?

Contact - Ann
sunbeam2@btinternet.com

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?
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Contact - Rhian
dobbsrhian@gmail.com

New Members

A welcome to new members -

Dave and Tracy Doughty of
Wolverhampton

Membership Renewal

Once again, it's that time of year
when I remind you that the
society membership is due for
renewal on 1st April.

You will find a renewal form
enclosed with this copy of
Broadsheet.

I will be at the Bradmore meeting
in March, or will be happy to
receive your renewal in the post.

Thank you.

Judith Gray.

Membership Secretary.

**Renew by
1st April 2024**

UNLUCKY BRIDGE!



Tony Gregory`

As reported in the last issue of *Broadsheet*, the southern parapet of Dimmingsdale Bridge was duly repaired and opened to navigation by 18th May.

In the early hours of Saturday 23rd December, it happened yet again. The canal was closed to navigation due to sunken debris, and scaffolding was erected by the same team as last time. The canal remained closed until 11th January when contractors could bring along a machine to site.

The brickwork is almost complete as I write at the beginning of February.

For the past five years there has been ongoing discussions involving CRT, Staffordshire County Highways and Lower Penn Parish Council regarding the provision of a crash barrier. The





previous barrier, damaged some 6 years ago, was never replaced, nor was the remaining undamaged section. CRT engineers maintain that their parapet is strong enough for the job, and the County Council engineers

declare that it not their responsibility to protect others' assets. A stalemate situation has prevailed, but as yet, we know not if this second strike so soon will change their minds. Watch this space!

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ORIGINS OF THE STAFFORD RIVERWAY LINK

David Jones

The Stafford Riverway Link is the present name of the former Sow Navigation otherwise known as the Stafford Branch of the Staffordshire & Worcestershire Canal.

In the 1990s there was very little information available about the Stafford Branch. In those days, even waterways guide books for boaters and walkers either made no mention of the Branch or just made a passing reference, usually a sentence or two to the effect that Stafford was “formerly connected with the main line of the Staffordshire & Worcestershire Canal by a mile-long branch entered via Baswich Lock” and that the “branch consisted of a canalised section of the River Sow and became derelict during the early 1920s.” Most passing boaters on the main line would fail to notice the unobtrusive overflow weir at Baswich where the Junction had been and those that did notice would know no more than the brief comment in the guide books. Some may have wondered about two very small sections of wall along the towpath (the remains of an abutment wall of a bridge), and the more adventurous may have noticed traces of brickwork (of the basin wall) as they used the public footpath by a hawthorn hedge, while carefully avoiding the cows and cow pats in the field. As for the route of the waterway into Stafford, it was a

pleasant, picturesque, forty-minute walk alongside the River Sow, with no obvious tell-tale signs of its former use; there were some bridges to go under and in Stafford the Canal Wharf and channel had long gone. Local people seemed oblivious of Stafford's waterways heritage.

But some people remembered. Experienced boaters would have been aware of three publications which had more information – Hadfield's *Canals of the West Midlands*, Langford's *Towpath Guide to the Staffordshire & Worcestershire Canal* and Bradshaw's *1904 Canals and Navigable Rivers of England and Wales*.

In the early 1990s the Stafford Branch was sometimes mentioned in the Lounge at Wolverhampton Boat Club by members reminiscing about cruising the Staffordshire & Worcestershire Canal in the 1960s and 1970s, and there was regret that photographs had not been taken.

This talk of a lost navigation inspired a group of enthusiasts to take action and, in conjunction with Stafford Boat Club, a meeting of interested people was held there on 14 February 1997. They concluded that restoration ought to be viable – and compared with other restoration schemes, the route of the Stafford Branch was quite short, only a mile and a half.

Five people attended that inaugural meeting and a committee was formed: the late Keith Boardman from Stafford Boat Club (he offered secretarial help and publicity through his Company) and four from Wolverhampton Boat Club – Bob Bowden (Minutes Secretary), Norman Cooper (Vice Chairperson), David Jones (Chairperson and Research & History) and the late Geoff Walker. The group was originally called the *Stafford Branch Navigation Heritage Trust* and the name, *Stafford Riverway Link*, was adopted in 2003. The first few meetings were at Stafford Boat Club and then at Wolverhampton Boat Club until around 2009 when they reverted to Stafford Boat Club when the group became a Community Interest Company. The acorn had been planted and the rest, as they say, is history.

Further information about the SRL is on the website: www.stafford-riverway-link.co.uk



Do you have an article you would like to submit for inclusion in **Broadsheet**?

The deadline for Issue 693 is Friday 26th April

Presented by: JOHN TURNER



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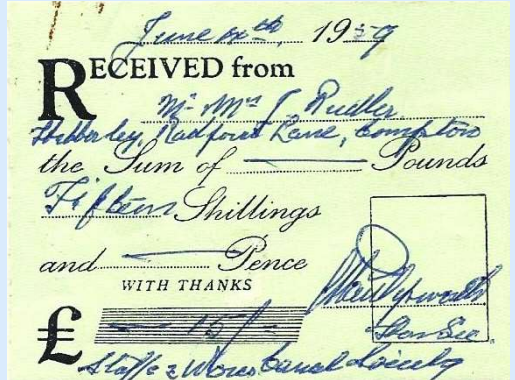
Tony Gregory

When my friend cleared out her late parents' house, she came across some early Staffs & Worcs Canal Society memorabilia.

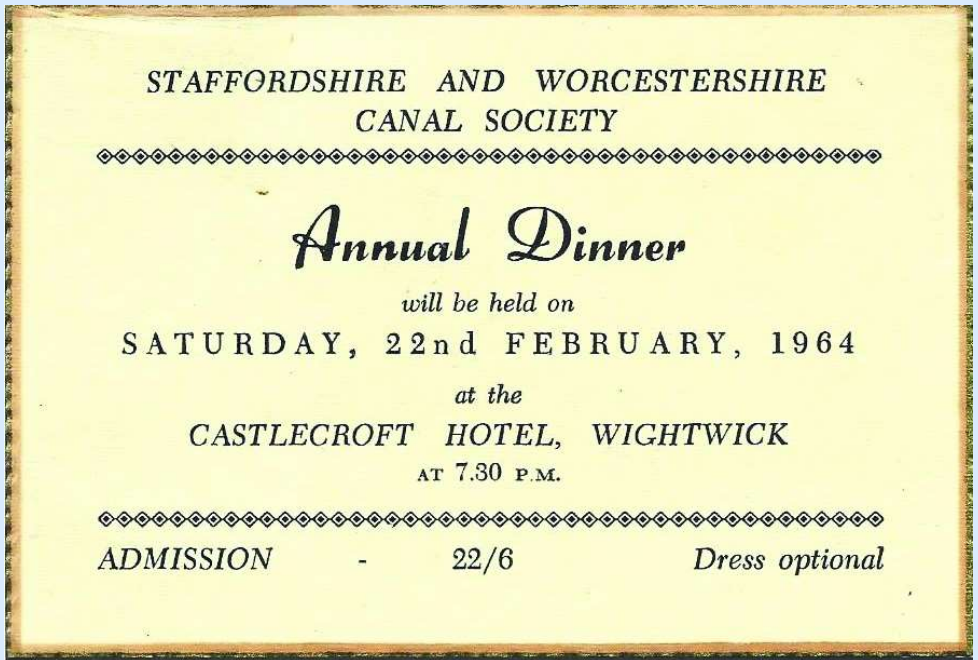
Recently, I in turn decided on a de-clutter and found them in my loft some four years after having received them.

John and June Rudler joined the Society at the inaugural meeting at Merridale flats, and here is the receipt for their subs, duly signed by our first Hon. Secretary Alan Pepworth.

Also found was a ticket to the Society Annual Dinner of 60 years ago exactly.



The Castlecroft Hotel was a popular venue, but was sadly demolished some years ago and replaced with a modern block of apartments. What a pity we can't get a three course meal for 22/6d today!



Stourbridge Navigation Trust, Honours Board

Chris Dyche

Stourbridge Navigation Trust, Honours Board.

In the last Broadsheet I wrote an article regarding the Trust's Honours Board, and mentioned that an accompanying booklet would be issued containing a few words about each person named and their contribution to the Trust.

This Booklet is now complete, and is indeed an excellent companion to the project. If anyone would like a copy, they are available from the Trust Manager, Heide (01384395216) at a cost of just £2, if collected. We can also post if required at the normal 2nd Class postage rate.

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Lock Name Boards

The topic of lock name boards has come up at committee of late partly as a result of being asked to confirm the presence of the plaque at Deptmore Lock. We have therefore become aware that we lack a list of who sponsored which name boards and whether or not the plaques are still in place. I have been able to find details of a few locks in Broadsheets from the mid 80s but not a definitive list.

With this in mind Tony Gregory and I have put together a list of the locks with the few details we have. **I would ask members as they pass by the locks if they could send me (the editor) an update as to whether a plaque is present on the name board and who the sponsor was.**

And if you have knowledge of who the sponsors were please let me know.

- Stourport Locks (uncertain if name boards were ever installed)
- York Street Lock No 3
- Falling Sands Lock No 4
- Caldwell Lock No 5
- Kidderminster Lock No 6
- Wolverley Court Lock No 7
- Wolverley Lock No 8
- Debdale Lock No 9
- Whittington Lock No 10
- Kinver Lock No 11
- Hyde Lock No 12
- Stewponey Lock No 13
- Gothersley Lock No 14
- Rocky Lock No 15
- Greensforge Lock No 16
- Hinksford Lock No 17
- Swindon Lock No 18
- Marsh Lock No 19
- Botterham Top Lock Nos 20 – Dr Patrick Thorn?
No Plaque
- Botterham Bottom Lock 21 – Dr Patrick Thorn?
No Plaque
- Bumblehole Lock No 22
- Bratch Bottom Lock No 23–
No Plaque
- Bratch Middle Lock No 24
- Bratch Top Lock No 25 –
No Plaque
- Awbridge Lock No 26
- Ebstree Lock No 27
- Dimmingsdale Lock No 28
**Gordon Bennett
Replaced Board - No Plaque**
- Wightwick Lock No 29 -
West Midlands County Council
- Wightwick Mill Lock No 30 -
West Midlands County Council
- Compton Lock No 31 -
West Midlands County Council

- Gailey Top Lock No 32 –
Stafford Boat Club
- Brick Kiln Lock No 33
- Boggs Lock No 34
- Rodbaston Lock No 35
- Otherton Lock No 36
- Filance Lock No 37
- Penkrudge Lock No 38
- Longford Lock No 39
- Park Gate Lock No 40
- Shutt Hill Lock No 41 –
ActonTrussell Amenity Society
- Deptmore Lock No 42 -
David Roy Warner
- Tixall Lock No 43

As well as the sponsors we would also like to remember those involved in the making and installing the name boards including John Bailey and Ron Williams (who also engraved the plaques).

In the near future we would like to look at Bridge name plates, So while you are out and about keep an eye out and see if the bridge name plates are there or missing.



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The Staffordshire & Worcestershire Canal and its Railways Part I

The following first appeared in Broadsheet in April 1987 written by Dr Patrick Thorn.

The S. & W. Canal Company is singled out as having resisted the advances of railway companies more than any other canal company in the 19th century. (1) Although it decided not to have overpowering railway relations, the Company has had 9 railways closely related to it: six of these crossed the canal and 9 bridges or viaducts are there now to prove it.

These relatives are so varied that they could be used as the basis for a dissertation on railway history. I am neither qualified nor able to give that.

When studying anything in the S. & W. it is usual to find that it has all been described before by our fellow member Ian Langford(2): my excuses for proceeding are two - first that I shall deal here with canal - railway related matters, and second that people to whom I have talked and library searches have unearthed things that are new to me. Some of these may interest members. I suggest that you regard this as a 1987 appendix to Langford 1974. I have tried not to repeat what he already tells us.

To give you an overall picture, I will start with a list of the railways, using their original titles. Some will get a page or two but others Only that number of lines.

Original Title of Railway and no. of crossings

• Severn Valley	2
• Kinver Light	0
• Shutt End	0
• Wolver. & Bridgnorth	3
• Shrewsbury & Birm.	1
• Grand Junction	1
• Littleton Colliery	1
• Stafford	0
• Trent Valley	1

Severn Valley Railway.

Leaving Stourport, just past the Bird in Hand, you come to the bridge on which the S.V.R. main crossed the canal. This ran from Hartlebury (joining the Oxford, Worcester and Wolverhampton Railway) to Shrewsbury: it was opened in 1862, came under the G.W.R. banner in 1863 and closed just over a hundred years later.

The S.V.R. joined two important railway centres, Worcester and Shrewsbury: it served Stourport which was on the decline as a port but going

up as an industrial town. It brought modern transport back to Bewdley which had declined ever since the S. & W. went to Stourport: it gave access to the East Shropshire coalfields round Ironbridge and to an isolated coalfield at Highley(3).

Traffic statistics from 1903 - 1938(3) show that the total revenue from Stourport was higher than that of any other station on the S.V.R. Bewdley sold tickets to three times as many passengers as Stourport but took very little more money from them: Bewdley passengers must have travelled shorter distances - probably to Stourport. Highley originated more freight tonnage than port. Stourport but took less money for its transport.

The Baldwin family was closely linked with the history of Stourport and with both S. & W. and S.V.R. The first generation came to set up an iron foundry in 1788: presumably Thomas came from Shropshire because of the canal.(4) The site of the foundry is now occupied by the County Buildings and the pillared building on the S-bend of the canal was its warehouse. Under the second generation the foundry thrived and under the third it blossomed. This was due to Alfred Baldwin (1841 - 1908) who was an outstandingly successful ironmaster

Alfred took over Wilden Iron Works from other members of the family in 1870 (4): from then on it also blossomed and acquired an



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international reputation. (5) The main function of the G.W.R. basin alongside the S.V.R. at Upper Mitton was to service Wilden Iron Works. Alfred was appointed to the Board of the G.W.R. in 1903 and became its Chairman in 1905. (6) He would have been in a good position to get the interchange basin built - this fits in well with Langford's estimate of nearly this century".

When he was a lad, Councillor Stan James of Stourport lived alongside the G.W.R. basin. This was in the 1930's and he gives a vivid description of the hectic activity. Loaded trucks came down the incline from Stourport station by gravity: they were controlled by a man on the brake. Runaway trucks were uncommon - but dramatic!

The 6" map shows two lines on the north side and one on the south. The lines on the north side were used most of the time and the termination was protected by heavy duty buffers. The commonest freight was iron or steel bars (10 ft) from South Wales. Each of these would be thrown into one of merchants 'barges' making a noise. When full, each barge would set off for 'rates Wharf Lock, the Stour and Wilder Iron Works. At the Works the bars were unloaded with a magnet. Coal from Highley covered the same route.

Just beyond the buffers was a platform made of Staffordshire blue bricks: it is

still there though displaced. On to this came trucks of sand from a quarry where there are now houses. These trucks came on a short railway line and the sand was tipped from a considerable height into 'cut boats' on the main line. The quarry and short railway line belonged to Thomas Vale & Son who still trade under that name though now a P.L.C.

A walk towards Hartlebury along the track of the S.V.R. is rewarding. The branch to Stourport power station leaves almost immediately. Carrying coal to the power station was a tonic to S. & W. trade from 1926 till this branch of the S.V.R. took it over 23 years later. (2) The embankment from here to the Stour is impressive and the viaduct carrying the S.V.R. over the Stour is a delight - especially in the evening light. There is a further two miles which would make a good evening walk after a day's boating.

The lofty viaduct carrying the Kidderminster loop line towers over Falling Sands bridge (no.11). This branch of the S.V.R. was opened 16 years after the main line (3): the sight of steam crossing the viaduct now is one of the more nostalgic views of our canal.

References:

- (1) Charles Hadfield, British Canals
- (2) J. Ian Langford, Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal

(3) Sir Gerald Nabarro, Severn Valley Steam (1971)

(4) H. Montgomery Hyde, Baldwin (1973)

(5) H.W. Gwilliam Gordon Tucker ,Watermills & Waterpowered Works on the River Stour in Watermills" 4.1983

(6) E.T. NacDermott, History of the G.W.R (1938)

The staff at Kidderminster Public Library have been a great help.

(To be continued)

FOOTNOTES

1. Alfred Baldwin's son, Stanley, worked at Wilden for nearly 20 years. Politics gradually took over and he was Prime Minister for three terms in the 1920's and 1930's. (4)

2. George Wood tells me that the canal company were paid by the G.W.R. to dredge the basin - he has done it often. George also says that almost as many boats left the basin for Baldwin's Stourvale Iron Works as for Wilden. Bars going to Stourvale tended to be larger and George recalls that it needed four men to throw those into the boats - with a proportionate noise.

Martin Brookes

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GREAT HAYWOOD CANAL JUNCTION SAVED FROM DEVELOPMENT

The historic junction at Great Haywood has been saved from a housing development. A planning application for 27 houses directly opposite the junction, on land that has been a meadow since the canals were built 250 years ago, has been refused by Stafford Borough Council. At this iconic junction where the two canals join, the historic Junction Bridge is not only a listed building but a scheduled ancient monument. The council ruled that the development would have irreparably damaged the views and the setting of this unique part of the canals' Conservation Areas. The IWA

Lichfield Branch had strongly objected to the plans on heritage grounds. The many reasons include "substantial and irreversible change to the setting of the historic canal junction Haywood Junction which incorporates three conservation areas, two listed buildings, and a scheduled ancient monument" with "serious harm to the numerous heritage assets in this extremely sensitive and heritage-dense location". IWA welcomes the decision for its comprehensive refusal which hopefully gives no grounds for an appeal.

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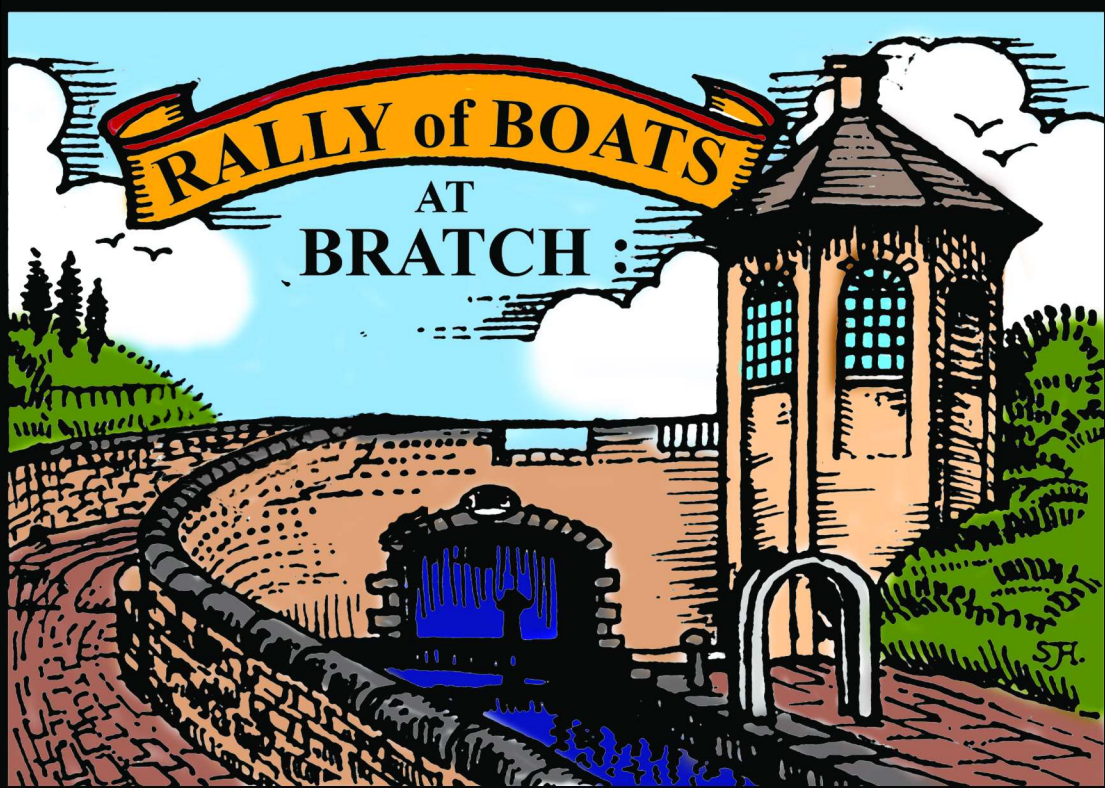
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Length	
Draught	

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I confirm that I have a current licence and insurance. Signed. _____ Date / / 2024

Please list any special needs

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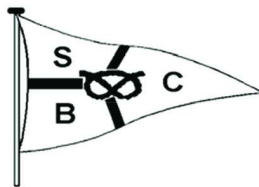
Non members of the society will be joined up automatically from the rally date until the normal renewal date (April) and will receive the society's magazine by email.

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To enable the society to collect Gift Aid, we need to update the records for all members who we are eligible to collect for. Even if you have previously done so, please complete and return this form to the membership secretary.

GIFT AID DECLARATION

- I am a UK tax payer. I would like the Society to treat all membership subscriptions and donations I make in the future and have made *in the last 4 years*⁽¹⁾ as Gift Aid donations until I notify you otherwise.

⁽¹⁾ If you have not been a member or tax payer for this period please delete.

Note: You must pay an amount of income tax or capital gains tax equal to the amount we reclaim on your subscriptions & donations. Remember to notify us if you no longer pay tax or wish to cancel this declaration.

Signature

Date

Bank details for electronic payments: Lloyds Bank. Sort Code: 30:99:83 Account no: 02673373

Payment made by EFT

Payment by Cheque/Cash

I wish to receive Broadsheet by post.

I wish to receive Broadsheet electronically.

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*

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 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

46 Miles and 43 Locks
From Stourport Basins
To Great Haywood Junction

