

# BROADSHEET

Magazine of the Staffordshire & Worcestershire Canal Society



December 2024

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## Staffordshire & Worcestershire Canal Society 2022-2023

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Committee meetings, starting at 7:30, are held at least 8 times a year, members may request to attend.

**Cover Photo** Credit Steven Gray - *"We bumped into Angela and Dave at Bilsborrow on the Lancaster, they are up here to visit the owners of Tavy Cleave one of the three remaining Holt Abbot boats. Seen here at Bilsborrow with them both on board enjoying a trip out from Garstang."*

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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Vacant

### **Non-Committee Posts**

#### **Society Sales**

Vacant

#### **Raffles**

Rosemary & Glyn Phillips

#### **Length Scheme**

Vacant

#### **Cruising Awards**

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# Contents

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Editorial  | 1  |
| Chairwomans Remarks  | 2  |
| The Fuss about the Bridge Street Car Park  | 3  |
| Lock Name Board  | 6  |
| Social Meeting Report : September :<br>“Let my quick fate a warning be....”<br>Fatal Transport Accidents in the West<br>Midland, 1820s – 1920s | 8  |
| WHERE ARE THEY NOW??   | 10 |
| The Staffordshire & Worcestershire<br>Canal and its Railways Part IV   | 11 |
| The Black Country Canals Strategy  | 14 |
| Walsall Chemical Spill   | 15 |
| Work in Progress at Bumblehole and<br>Botterham  | 16 |
| Did you hear about the electric<br>ferry?  | 18 |
| A Christmas Ghost Story  | 21 |

# Editorial

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

As promised Tony has put together an update on the Lock Name Boards. Not all have been physically visited but we do have a good idea of what is out there and would still like to validate sponsorship of the boards. What is apparent is some maintenance of these needed.

To put this edition together I had to run a trip to the Dudley Archives as I was missing the edition of Broadsheet with part 4 of Dr. Patrick Thorns series in it. - I did know I was missing it when I started but took a chance anyway..

I have to confession that there has been a bit of image manipulation gone into the cover . My apologies to Steven for messing with the picture I needed more of it so the top and bottom are AI additions - which looked better than expected.

The next edition is out in February so the deadline for submissions is the last Friday in January.

Max





# Chairwomans Remarks

It's me again! Trying to find something new and original to say. I've pretty much commented on the seasonal/unseasonal weather in every missive, so that well has run dry, and you're probably fed up of it too.

With Christmas nearly upon us and a New Year looming, I was wondering what traditions you have in your households and families, and why? In our small family we've never had any traditions that have passed down the generations so to speak, so I thought that I would begin something that would hopefully pass into tradition. Starting from scratch in building a new tradition enables us to do things that we like, that we have a reason for and has meaning to us. And if it doesn't work then we can try a new out a tradition.

Our son finds Christmas quite overwhelming so we try to keep it quiet. Then there's the post Christmas slump and the run up to New Year. As I get older, I find the expectation of New Year's Eve and that "you will enjoy yourself", an anathema. Just call me Victor Meldrew, Bah Humbug! But what to do that is family friendly, not too onerous, and gets us out the other side of the festive season? This is

about the 3rd year that we'll have done Panto on NYE – matinee of course, so as not to get involved in all that frivolous revelry. After 3 years, I'm thinking that this is shaping up to be a fine tradition. It is something to look forward to after all the Christmas Presents and the inevitable sense of anti climax. I'm hopeful that as our son gets older that it is a tradition that we will be able to maintain even when he is more independent and wanting something more exciting on NYE than his mum and dad, and an excuse to keep him close. If he ever tries to stop going to the Panto I can see my future self wailing, But it's Tradition!

I think what I'm trying to say is that whilst traditions can be important and lovely, do we necessarily have to continue them out of habit? Do we do it because we've always done it? Maybe a sense of nostalgia or duty? Whatever works for you, but maybe try a something new this year, and see how it goes. Maybe it will turn into a regular thing, that then morphs into tradition alongside other established traditions. They all had to start somewhere.

So speaking of traditions, here's some dichotomy for you.

The SWCS Annual Rally will once again take place at Bratch on the first weekend after the August Bank Holiday. Is this turning into tradition now? I think that holding it in the same place and the same time each year, gives it a stability and recognition within the busy annual calendar of Boating Festivals and allows us as a Society to build on relationships that we've made within the community and CaRT, Severn Trent and the Local Authorities. For the time being, this tradition is working, but who knows maybe one day this date and place will be something that we change. But not next year!

Membership was discussed at the AGM (I think that questions regarding membership is becoming traditional) and we carried this forward at our committee meetings. It's a standing agenda item and the lack of new members is a concern. The possibility of raising the membership fee was declined as it was felt that another rise was unsustainable. Although, for those that are able to attend the Social Meetings at Bradmore are aware, the donation for teas, coffees and biscuits has risen to a heady £1 per person.

In light of trying to reach potential new members the committee have decided to publish a short guide to the Staffs and Worcs, obviously with a membership form included as well.

The aim is that this will be distributed to Hire Boat companies on the Staffs and Worcs which would not only be a useful resource to hire boaters, but also generally to anyone visiting the navigation between Stourport and Great Heywood. The aim of the guide will be to cover everything from moorings, pubs, shops and tourist attractions. If you have any suggestions as to anything you think should be included then do let me know as we hope to be producing it early next year. The plan is that it will be updated every year. Asking for a friend – does this constitute a tradition? Maybe it will pass into tradition, until one day a new Chairman/Chairwoman or Committee will ask why do we publish this? If the answer is because it is Tradition, I would hope that it be looked at carefully and questioned. Tradition is not a good reason to continue to do something, unless it holds meaning.

One last thing, I don't do New Year's Resolutions. The deep dark depths of January and February, after the festivities of Christmas, seem to me like a ridiculous time to try and form new habits. Much easier to be motivated when the days are longer and the weather more clement. Look at gym memberships, statistics show that all those eager beavers have normally quit after a couple of

months. I work on the basis if you're going to make a change, do it now – why wait? And tackle one at a time, not a whole raft of changes in one go. Talk about setting yourself up to fail.

However, I would ask that maybe you could all make one resolution for 2025? If every member could encourage/persuade/coerce one family member or friend to join the SWCS, our membership would be so much healthier. Maybe bring someone along to Bradmore in January to stave off the Winter Blues. Or if you're a member and never attended a social meetings, why not give it a go? Not to steal a strap line

from a supermarket but Every Little Helps.

I look forward to updating you all next year.

In the meantime, I wish you Merry Christmas and a Happy and Healthy 2025!

Rhian



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# The Fuss about the Bridge Street Car Park

Wyre Forest District Council (WFDC) are trying to sneak through a sale of the Bridge Street gravel car park which was always ear-marked for development to enhance Stourport Heritage Basins. If it goes ahead all control over what it is used for will be lost and it could end up as something like a McDonalds drivethrough etc instead of the promised improvement.

Stourport Civic Society explains:  
*“WFDC pushed out Lloyds Garage and bought this site to gain a foothold on Bridge Street for its redevelopment.*

*That redevelopment would create walkable links between the town centre and the restored basins.*

*The far side of the basins were redeveloped about 20 years ago. Lichfield basin was reopened and dwellings built around it. The old properties around that, including the Tontine, were renovated and the gardens landscaped, turning it into a very popular, well used area.*

*It was intended that the Bridge Street scheme would finish the basins’ redevelopment, creating accessible walkways from the town centre into and around the waterways and introducing cafes, bars and restaurants overlooking the basins and dwellings*



*too. There could even be a visitor centre and public toilets!*

*If WFDC sells the car park for a quick buck, it becomes almost impossible to complete that redevelopment. Whatever is built on the car park is likely to be there for at least 50 years. The chance to improve Bridge Street will be lost. And can you imagine the traffic problems from an inappropriate development like a drive-through?*

*The basins redevelopment remains part of Wyre Forest’s Local Plan (only adopted in 2022).”*

The Society expressed its concerns to WFDC and we can see that this issue appears to be attracting attention in the local press.

# LOCK NAME BOARDS

Some editions ago we asked for support in trying to build a list of the Lock Names the plaques associated with them and who sponsored them. The committee would like to thank everyone who has helped in assembling this information. It is heartening to find that all the boards are present although their condition varies.

**York Street Lock No 3** No Plaque

**Falling Sands Lock No 4** -

No Plaque – Not Inspected

**Caldwell Lock No 5** -

No plaque – Not Inspected

**Kidderminster Lock No 6** -

Geoffrey & Gill Whittaker sponsored  
Not Inspected

**Wolverley Court Lock No 7** - No Plaque – Not Inspected

**Wolverley Lock No 8** - No Plaque

**Debdale Lock No 9** - Appears there may be a plaque – Not Inspected

**Whittington Lock No 10** - No Plaque – Not Inspected

**Kinver Lock No 11** - No Plaque – Not Inspected

**Hyde Lock No 12** - Not Inspected

**Stewponely Lock No 13** - No Plaques Appears there may also be a Staffs and Worcs Board alongside it

David Caunt Believes that the top and bottom locks at Stourton have name boards and also a Stourbridge Canal board by the top lock. Not sure whether they were sponsored or not but suspects they may have been sponsored by Stourbridge Navigation Trust. And certainly remembers painting at least one of them but no idea which.

**Gothersley Lock No 14** - No Plaque – Not Inspected

**Rocky Lock No 15** - No Plaque – Not Inspected

**Greensforge Lock No 16** - Was on posts, replacement now on wall.

Plaque “ Frederick Thomas Wood” in safe keeping with Cliff Sherwood

**Hinksford Lock No 17** - No Plaque

**Swindon Lock No 18** - No Plaque

**Marsh Lock No 19** - Plaque “Name Boards For 33 Locks on this canal carved by P.G.Cox 1983-88”

**Botterham Top Lock Nos 20** - No Plaque - There is also a spare although warped board.





**Botterham Bottom Lock 21** - No Plaque

Patrick Thorn may have sponsored one or both at Botterham

**Bumblehole Lock No 22** - Plaque Reads Donated By Pringle Family Tettenhall 1988

**Bratch Bottom Lock No 23** - No Plaque

**Bratch Middle Lock No 24** - No board

**Bratch Top Lock No 25** - No Plaque

**Awbridge Lock No 26** - No Plaque

**Ebstree Lock No 27** - No Plaque

**Dimmingsdale Lock No 28** - Gordon Bennett - Replacement Name Board No Plaques

**Wightwick Lock No 29** - West Midlands County Council No Plaque In Good Condition

**Wightwick Mill Lock No 30** - West Midlands County Council - No Plaque in Good Condition

**Compton Lock No 31** - West Midlands County Council - No Plaque in Good Condition on godfather posts

**Gailey Top Lock No 32** - No Plaque in Good Condition

**Brick Kiln Lock No 33** - No Plaque and support posts are rotten

**Boggs Lock No 34** - No Plaque needs repaint

**Rodbaston Lock No 35** - No Plaque needs repaint Fixed to brick wall

**Otherton Lock No 36** - No Plaque needs repaint on godfather posts

**Filance Lock No 37** - No Plaque in good order on godfather posts

**Penkridge Lock No 38** - No Plaque E in good order on godfather posts

**Longford Lock No 39** - No Plaque – needs repaint

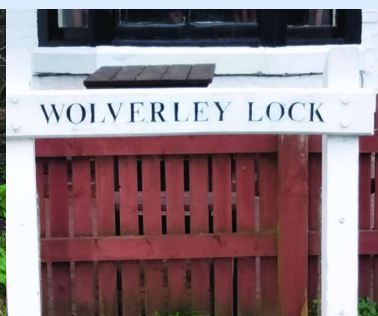
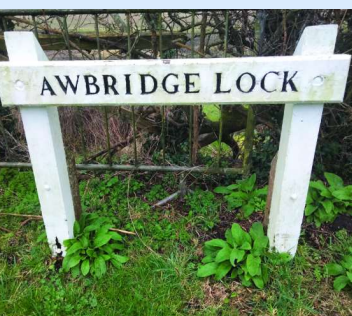
**Park Gate Lock No 40** - No Plaque – needs repaint

**Shutt Hill Lock No 41** - No Plaque needs a repaint

**Deptmore Lock No 42** - Plaque Reads David Roy Warnere 15 April 1960 - 14 September 1986 - needs repaint

**Tixall Lock No 43** - Plaque reads “Donated by Ash Tree Boat Club 1984” - needs repaint

It is very possible that sponsorship of a number of boards is yet to be revealed. While the society handed these over to British Waterways as it was at the time. The society might want consider taking active steps to maintain and repair these especially given the demands on Canal and River Trust Resources. (Ed)



# Social Meeting Report : September : “Let my quick fate a warning be....” Fatal Transport Accidents in the West Midland, 1820s – 1920s

Phil Clayton

Local Historian Quintin Watt admitted to being a former history teacher, commenting that you had to make the subject interesting in order to maintain the curiosity of teenagers. He certainly did that with a slightly older audience at Bradmore! Taking us through a century of transport development, from stage coaches, illustrated with a picture of one in what's now Queen Square, Wolverhampton, through canals, railways, trams and into the era of motor vehicles, Quintin picked out accidents which had made the news locally. From an overturned stage coach at Monmore Green on the Bilston Road to a pair of remarkably coincidental tram crashes in Dudley, using newspaper accounts and coroner's reports, our speaker led us through a series of mishaps in an interesting and often humorous way. The tram accidents both happened, a year apart, on Tipton Road, when the conductor released the brake without realising that the driver wasn't in his cab. The vehicles careered down the hill, coming to grief when they met the points, close to where the Black Country Living Museum now stands.

Making a link between the well-known canal disaster involving the *Tilbury* at Macclesfield (blow-up) Bridge on the

Regent's Canal in London and the fact that a crew member was from Dudley, was just one example of the great amount of research Quintin has done on his subject. He noted the role that local pubs and inns had played in being the places where inquests were held and told us about deodands, inanimate objects that could be 'blamed' for causing accidents, mentioning the stage coach at Monmore Green that was subsequently fined! Early railways provided many opportunities for 'accidents', from exploding boilers to runaway trains and, noting that deodands were abolished by Parliament in 1846, our speaker speculated whether this had anything to do with the fact that many MPs were railway shareholders!

Taking the 1820s as an example, we saw the number of canal fatalities each year in Tipton, many of them involving children or drink, a sad tale repeated across the district. The talk concluded by a look at the number of road traffic fatalities through the twentieth century, noting that the first automatic traffic lights had been installed in Princes Square, Wolverhampton, in 1927. This was a great start to our season of Social Evenings, and I for one will never drive along the Bilston Road or Tipton Road without recalling Quintin's talk.

# J&H

Presented by: CLIFF TURNER

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# WHERE ARE THEY NOW??

Since the Society was formed in 1959, there has been a long list of trophies and awards which were donated, mainly for presentation at our annual rallies. By the mid 1980s, attendance at rallies was declining, and small gatherings became the norm.

The competitions of old were discontinued, and the awards went unrepresented. So – Where are they now?

If you know the whereabouts of a cup, trophy or award hiding in a cupboard or wardrobe, please let me know at [gregory.lowerpenn@gmail.com](mailto:gregory.lowerpenn@gmail.com) and I will arrange collection.

Thank you,

Tony Gregory - President

## RALLY TROPHIES AND AWARDS

### **The David Tomlinson Trophy**

For outstanding contributions to the aims and success of the rally

### **The Canal Society Cup**

For the best designed boat

### **The Mitchells & Butler Cup**

For the most safety conscious boat

### **The Players Cup**

For the best amateur built boat

### **The Ivernia Cup**

For the best amateur built boat excluding hull

### **The Jim Robbins Cup**

For the best professionally built boat

### **Best narrow boat conversion cup**

### **M E Braine Cup**

For the best inboard engine installation

### **The Bradburn Cup**

For the owner travelling the longest distance to the rally

### **The Mercia Trophy**

For the owner travelling the longest distance on the Staffs & Worcs canal in the past year

### **The Players Cup**

For the best galley

### **The Dawncraft Trophy**

For the winner of the cruiser handling competition

### **Cup for the winner of the narrow boat handling competition**

### **Children's fancy dress competition**

### **The Stourport Plate**

For the best article submitted to Broadsheet during the year



# The Staffordshire & Worcestershire Canal and its Railways Part IV

*The following first appeared in Broadsheet in October 1987 and the second part of a series of articles written by Dr Patrick Thorn.*

## Wolverhampton & Bridgnorth Railway

It is my impression that the railway from Tettenhall to Wombourn was the least useful of any of the 9 railways in this study it had little effect on S & W traffic: but for the boater wanting a walk, or for the canal walker, it is the best of the lot. Here we have a good middle distance walk for the boater wanting a change, or a railway track/tow path circuit for the walker. You can interchange at Tettenhall Old Bridge, Meccano Bridge or Compton and then change back at the Bratch.

If you want to extend the walk independent of our canal continue on the track south of Wombourn: cross the A449 on the railway bridge near Himley and follow the GWR track for a mile or so till it reaches an absent bridge. Here fork left, lose height and follow the fence round to the left. Within 5 minutes you will be on the Baggeridge to Round Oak branch of the Pensnett Railway. After about a mile climb up Barrow Hill Incline: while you do so imagine an engine struggling up with half a dozen loaded coal trucks

10 tons in each(9). At the top continue along the track till you find yourself between two of the Fen Pools: in a few more minutes you arrive at the Wallows and one end of the Round Oak site. The landscape surrounding this extension of the walk, especially Barrow Hill Incline, was an eye opener for me. The incline was operated by cable and stationary steam engines till 1920 when locomotives were introduced. At the end of the walk canal features return; this was my introduction to the huge Fen Pools, which supply water to the Stourbridge Canal, and to the Pensnett, or Lord Ward's Canal; to see this cross the Dudley Road at the end of the walk and lean over a bridge parapet to see the bed of a canal. I had to consult Hadfield and Bradshaw to find out what it was; that it was built in 1839-40 and closed in the 40's; that it left the BCN at the south end of Dudley Tunnel and went almost to Round Oak station.

I have digressed from the section of the track between Tettenhall and Wombourn. The problem of what to call this part has been with Ned Williams since 1969 when he published the first of 3 editions of "By Rail to Wombourn". These have been followed by his latest excellent book

entitled "The Railway to Wombourn". In this latest book he has changed the emphasis to the southern part of the line, some of which we have just explored.

This started life in 1858 as the Kingswinford Branch of the OWWR - later GWR. But the part of the line which is close to our canal was originally to be the Wolverhampton & Bridgnorth Railway.

The GWR Act for this section was passed in 1905 for a line from Oxley 1965. (Wolverhampton) to Bridgnorth. Two years later a further Act changed the route to the present one. Work on this line began in 1913 but was interrupted by the war and the line did not open till 1925: it closed in 1965. The right turn to Bridgnorth which was to have been just after Wombourn station was 'postponed' in 1913. Had it been built that would have meant 4 crossings of our canal by the W & B. The other three are all on the summit - 'Meccano' Bridge, the bridge to Courtauld's siding at Hordern Road and the southern of the two viaducts between Aldersley and Atherley junctions.

9 W.K.V. Gale, A History of the Pensnett Railway (1975)

12 Ned Williams The Railway to Wombourn (1986)

## **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**

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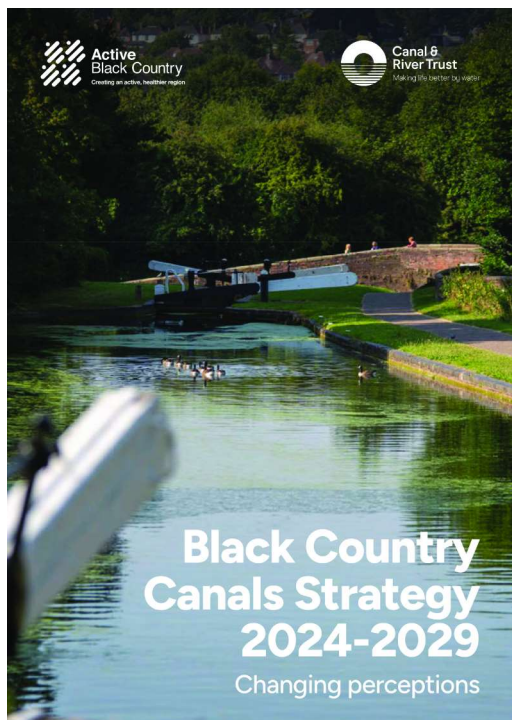


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# The Black Country Canals Strategy



CaRT and Active Black Country have unveiled the Black Country Canals Strategy 2024-2029 setting out ambitions to maximise the potential of the region's iconic and world-famous navigable canal network.

Developed in collaboration with local authorities, canal stakeholders and with community input, the 64-page strategy was launched to an audience of around 100 guests at our Annual Stakeholder Reception held at the Black Country Living Museum.

## Increasing quality green spaces

Central to the strategy are the opportunities for Black Country's 250-year-old canal network to help improve the health and wellbeing of local communities by ensuring increased access to quality green space by water, with the canals a vital hub for walking, cycling, leisure, and cultural activities.

Environmental sustainability is a key priority in the strategy, with proposals which would ensure the region's canals are rich wildlife corridors. And, with climate change having an ever-greater impact, the role of Black Country canals in helping to alleviate flooding and in generating sustainable energy is included.

## Amazing legacies

Henriette Breukelaar, regional director, said: "80% of people in the Black Country live within a mile of a canal, with these amazing legacies from our industrial past able to serve us in so many ways today.

"Usage of the canal towpaths in the Black Country first rocketed back in the pandemic when more people than ever before discovered these amazing green spaces on their doorstep. And just recently, the community showed their love of canals when they came together to raise much needed funds for our charity to help respond to the recent wildlife-damaging canal pollution event



in Walsall.

“With the right investment to upgrade towpaths, improve accessibility and to support wildlife, we can improve the lives of millions of local people, create new business and leisure opportunities and help mitigate against the effects of climate change.

“Canals are old, however. They are an amazing connection with our past but need investment to ensure they remain alive for this and future generations to benefit from. So with the support of our volunteers, funders and partners, the strategy reflects a shared vision to enhance the 110 miles of waterways that weave through the Black Country.”

### Improving the canal

Active Black Country CEO Ian Carey said: “Improving canal infrastructure and accessibility can attract new businesses, enhance the visitor experience and support community regeneration and

economic growth.

“We are committed to making these navigable canals accessible to all and maximising opportunities for local people to find it easier to be physically active.

“By creating spaces where people can connect with nature and engage in cultural, social and sporting activities on the canal network, we can encourage more Black Country residents to enjoy healthier lifestyles and a better quality of life.”

To rejuvenate the canal network and ensure the plan remains adaptable and aligned with local and national priorities, the strategy’s implementation will be overseen by a steering group including representatives from us, Active Black Country, each local authority, Black Country Transport, Integrated Care Board, West Midlands Combined Authority, Transport for West Midlands, and Sustrans.

## Walsall Chemical Spill

The Environment Agency said pollution was now at an “acceptable” level and the towpath through Pleck would reopen, although the canal will remain shut to boaters.

Walsall Council said the priority “continues to be the safety” of canal users and some restrictions around the canal remain in place. Despite pollution levels falling, members of the public have still been warned to continue to

avoid any contact with the water.

The council said: “Pets should be kept out of the water and all fishing activity, including magnet fishing, should not take place as this may disturb sediment in the canal which is likely to still be contaminated.

“Navigation along the canal will, for the foreseeable future, remain closed. Again, this is to avoid disturbing silt on the bed of the canal.”

# Work in Progress at Bumblehole and Botterham

With the work going on at Bumblehole and Botterham Ian Huselbee has been able to post a number of photographs of the on going work.

New top gate at  
Bumblehole



Bottom gates in  
position and balance  
beams nearly ready  
for assembly.





Top gate fitted and final assembly required.

Botterham locks,  
it appears that  
C&RT have a team  
working on  
rebuilding the  
parapet on the  
bridge that was  
damaged some  
months ago, over  
the entrance to  
the top lock.



# Did you hear about the electric ferry?



For this tale we must go to Schleswig-Holstein (Germany) – a northern land of bays, fjords, cliffs, islands, and stiff breezes, just south of the Danish border. Specifically, we must travel to Missunde, a small town on the Schwansen peninsula. Missunde is right next to another town called Brodersby, on the opposing Angeln peninsula. Between Brodersby and Missunde, is the Schlei, which might be mistaken for a river but which is actually an inlet of the Baltic Sea.

This story has been apparently widely reported and parodied in Germany. I have to admit some scepticism about what we think we can do with electric and its benefits. But also feel I must accept if progress is to happen new

developments must be tried and risk has to be accepted otherwise we would still be using oars not propellers.

To travel from Missunde to Brodersby, or the reverse, you need to take a car ferry. Since 2003, the Missunde II has been this ferry. She is described as a cheerful, diesel-driven craft. Every year, she brings around 120,000 automobiles and 50,000 bicycles safely and reliably across the waters of the inlet.

There was nothing wrong with the Missunde II, except that she ran on diesel, which isn't terribly popular at the moment and that her diesel engines made noise, as diesel engines



do. Thus the the State Office for Coastal Protection decided some years ago to replace the old and reliable Missunde II with a newer, silent and much more environmentally friendly solar-powered ferry, to be named Missunde III.

The carbon-neutral Missunde III cost 3.3 million Euro, and was delivered after various delays in January 2024. Unlike her predecessor, the Missunde III has a glorious roof, to carry her solar panels aloft.

The authorities rather quickly sold what they felt was the outmoded and embarrassing Missunde II for 17,000 Euro. The buyer left the poor Missunde II moored in Maasholm, near the head of the Schlei, where she began to decay in the elements.

However, all was not well at our ferry crossing. It turns out that the Missunde III's glorious solar roof acted like a great sail in the face of the strong northern winds. Her electric motors proved inadequate in overcoming the force, such that she took twice

as long to cross the Schlei against the wind as her predecessor. The Missunde III's greater weight also placed too much strain on her guidance cables, and she had trouble mooring at the dock. Cables can be changed out, but the mooring problems were far graver. The Missunde III being of greter mass would require additional dolphins to be driven into the bed of a fjord that also happens to be in the centre of a nature preserve is not aligned with the intentions of a solar powered ferry. Also such an act would require soil assessments, applications for permits that may not be granted and it all takes time.

Thus the sun-powered Missunde III



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## 100,000 euros for the repurchase of the old ferry

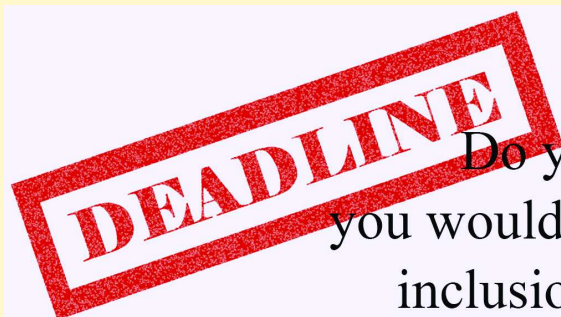
jill Grigoleit · 18.09.2024



languished in harbour while “discussuions” about how much environmental harm could be inflicted on the inlet to make her steerable. Meanwhile, the automobiles that are normally transported on the ferry across the Schlei had to take lengthy detours approaching 30 kilometres (approx 20 miles) to the nearest bridge.

In March, after months of no ferry and 30km detours, the mayor of Brodersby-Goltoft, had had enough. He demanded that authorities re-commission the Missunde II and resume ferry service. The Office for Coastal Protection objected that they had already sold the Missunde II, and also that making her seaworthy again would require renovations of 1.8 million Euros.

Now it is September, and Missunde III is no closer to ferrying automobiles across the Schlei than she was in March. Among other things, engineers have decided she’ll have to be outfitted with additional bow thrusters to deal with the stiff currents. Thus the Office for Coastal Protection finally went limping back to the buyer who purchased the Missunde II for 17,000 Euros, and struck a deal to buy it back from him for 100,000 Euros. The Missunde II has been given a new permit to sail until 2028, because nobody believes that the advanced super-silent Missunde III will be up to the simple task of ferrying automobiles across 100 metres of water anytime soon.



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

**The deadline for Issue 696 is  
Friday 31st January**

# A Christmas Ghost Story

*While this is not Christmas related I understand tales of the supernatural a Christmas traditions for some.*

As the Shropshire Union Canal Society work to restore the Montgomery canal and close the Shropshire Gap, they are not only bringing the waterway back to life, but also uncovering long forgotten local stories. As a digger shaped the canal channel at Crickheath Tramway Wharf, ironwork from a narrowboat was uncovered. All the woodwork had long since rotted away but the iron skeleton remained bent but not broken.

It transpires that the sunken vessel was, almost certainly, the Usk, a 'Narrer-narrer', a boat no wider than 6'4", and she is said to be haunted by the boatman who skippered her and was killed in an accident nearly one hundred and fifty years ago.

The story starts at at Hadley Park Lock on the Trench Arm of the Shrewsbury and Newport canal in what is now, Telford. (The canal was abandoned many years ago.) The Trench arm built as a small coal canal with the lock being only 6' 7" wide, so could only take tub boats or 'narrer-narrers', no wider than 6'4" (1.93 metres).

The dreadful accident happened as dusk was falling on Monday 26th July 1887, as the last boat of the day, the Usk, was slipping gently into Hadley Park Lock. The locks on the Trench

arm, just south of Wappenshall Junction, were unusual as the bottom gates had a guillotine mechanism with the gates going up and down with a counterweight box, rather than swinging side to side. The top gates were a 'mitre' arrangement. .

George Benbow was skipper of the Usk with thirteen-year-old, William Evanson as his crew and it appears that as the boat passed under the lock gate, George did not duck and was hit and killed by the counterweight box.

William later said at the inquest into George's death,

"We were coming through Hadley Park Lock, and George shouted to me to drop the gate. I was by the horse at the time, but I ran to do as requested. As I lowered the gate George did not stoop at all and so caught his head



got onto the cabin and cried ‘murder, murder’. I asked him what was wrong, but he did not speak again, and it was then that I saw the blood coming from his ears and he dropped down on top of the cabin.”

The Lockkeeper, John Chilton looked after the locks south of Wappenshall also gave testimony,

“I was following the Usk as she was the last boat of the day, and I needed to see that the locks were left in the right position. I was close to the boat when the accident happened and saw that George was looking behind to see how the boat was coming on – he ought to have stooped but instead he stood straight up and as the gate was

lowered I heard a strange noise and the boy said, ‘He’s hurt, he’s bleeding’, and I asked George to lie down but he fell onto the deck and died within ten minutes – before assistance came.”

From that very day, the Usk was doomed, an unlucky, haunted boat that many boatmen refused to work aboard, so she was sold and traded on the smaller canals on the Shropshire Union system, but the luck did not improve so she was finally abandoned and sank on the Montgomery canal near Crickheath, probably in the early 1890s, and there she lies to this very day, a ghostly reminder of a tragedy long ago.



# APMARINE

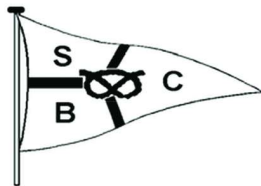
## Boat Safety Examinations

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# Staffordshire & Worcestershire Canal Society

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Please return to  
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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 9th**

Quiz with bring and share supper TBC

#### **January 13th**

Rosemary Philips - My Canal Journal : 1965 - 2022

#### **February 10th**

Mary Bodfish - Beer, Bets & Bull Baiting

#### **March 10th**

Neil Barnett - Manchester Ship Canal and River Mersey to Liverpool

#### **April 14th**

Phil Clayton - Thames Tales

#### **May 12th**

Anthony Poulton-Smith - Crime on Canals

## **Local Events**

### **The Night Sky over Tixall Wide & The Planets in 3D**

Friday, March 21, 2025 at 7:15 PM

Join the IWA Lichfield Branch for our March social evening at Darwin Hall on  
Friday 21st March from 7:15 pm.

## **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".*

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## Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal

46 Miles and 43 Locks  
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