

BROADSHEET

Magazine of the Staffordshire & Worcestershire Canal Society



December 2025

Volume 67 Number 699

www.swcanalsociety.co.uk



Staffordshire & Worcestershire Canal Society 2024 -2025

President: Tony Gregory (gregory.lowerpenn@gmail.com)

Vice Presidents: Steven Gray, Ann Pollard, Peter Freakley, Derek Overton, Geoffrey Whittaker JP, Robert Cox, Carol Aldridge & Chris Dyche.

Chairwoman

Rhian Dobbs - 07909 974034
dobbsrhian@gmail.com

Vice Chair & Broadsheet Editor

Maxwell Dobbs - 07990 890116
maxdobbs5@gmail.com

Treasurer

Angela Clark - 07305 699432
ab.clark@virginmedia.com

Secretary

Ann Pollard - 01384 376585
sunbeam2@btinternet.com

Advertising, Marketing & PR

Pauline Farnell
pauline.farnell@veolia.com

Committee Member

Dave Clark
ab.clark@virginmedia.com

Conservator

Vacant

Non-Committee Posts

Society Sales

Vacant

Raffles

Rosemary & Glyn Phillips

Length Scheme

Vacant

Cruising Awards

Ann Pollard - 01384 376585
sunbeam2@btinternet.com

Membership Secretary

Judith Gray
wharfinger@blueyonder.co.uk

Committee Meetings

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

Cover Photograph

Hinksford - Pauline Farnell

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.

Registered Charity Number 243702

www.swcanalsociety.co.uk

Contents

Editorial	1
Chairwoman’s Remarks	2
Chairwoman’s Address	4
Anderton Boat Lift gate repairs prioritised to get navigation back open	8
Campbell Robb joins as Canal & River Trust Chief Executive	10
An Investment Opportunity or a Historical Treasure?	12
Boat Licensing Review Published — CRT Responds, Concerns Raised, and What Happens Next	15
Saturn Back on the Stour Cut	19
Sapperton Tunnel - 1966	20

Editorial

Welcome to the December Broadsheet, rounding off a year that has tested — and proven — the resilience of our waterways community. From low water levels to unexpected stoppages, 2025 has reminded us how much care and cooperation our canals require.

This issue looks at the big talking point of the moment: the Independent Commission’s review of boat licensing. We’ve summarised the key recommendations and highlighted how boaters have reacted, with CRT confirming that no immediate changes will take place while consultation continues.

We also bring news of Campbell Robb’s arrival as CRT’s new Chief Executive, progress at the Anderton Boat Lift, and the welcome return of Saturn to the Stour Cut. And from our own archives, we reprint Peter Freakley and Andrew Dasham’s remarkable 1966 exploration of Sapperton Tunnel — a timeless reminder of the magic and mystery of our canal heritage.

Thank you for your support throughout the year, and warm wishes for the season ahead.

Max



Chairwoman's Remarks

Once again, Christmas is on the horizon and who knows it may even be a white one. It's been a busy few months I'm looking forward to hunkering down over the holidays, just us and an obscene amount of chocolate. Not that I need an excuse for chocolate.

We went to the open weekend at Stourbridge in October but sadly the weather on the Sunday was disappointing. The journey back to our home mooring was reasonably uneventful, although as usual we weren't as early as we would have liked to have been in heading off (as we wanted a coffee to fortify us for the journey) and inevitably ended up in a queue going up the 16 and the Delph.

The weather that weekend seems to have been somewhat of a harbinger. Prior to the Bratch Rally, Maxwell signed me up for the stoppage alerts for what seems like every canal in the Midlands region. I have been getting practically daily updates from CRT and with severe weather and unforeseen damage, the Staffs and Worcester seems to have had quite a few stoppages. I'd be interested to know for those of you out and about on the cut if this is your impression as well – or is this “normal” and I'm only aware because of all the alerts I'm receiving. Despite having no plans to cruise for the next few months I do like to stay abreast of the state of “our” canal and will continue to keep an eye on the various alerts.

I have briefly read the report released by the independent commission on reviewing the legal framework around Boat Licensing. CRT seem to broadly approve of the suggestions. I would welcome your thoughts on the proposals, especially from those who live aboard. The document is available to read on the CRT website.

Last year I did ask that if every member could persuade/cajole/strong arm at least one new member each that the membership would be in a healthy position. Maybe a membership would be an ideal Christmas present for someone. The use of online payment has made membership more accessible and a number of new members have signed up online which is heartening.

The AGM was well attended and for those of you unable to attend I have included my Chairwoman's address for you to see what we've been up to as a Society and Committee over the last 16 months.

The awards at this years AGM – one awarded by the committee and one by the membership - went to two very deserving people. Phil Clayton received the Tony Guy Plate for all of his hard work in organising our speakers. Not an easy role juggling dates and availability, and always interesting and insightful talks that engages every member that attends – not an easy feat and it is greatly appreciated. Long may it continue.

The Centenary Medallion was awarded to Pauline Farnell. Pauline works tirelessly on both the Main Committee and the Rally Committee, no job too big or small – all done with a sense of humour and a can do attitude, quietly getting on with the work and actively avoiding the limelight at all times. Thank you to both.

There is plenty of time to start considering nominations for next year and if members have any suggestions to put to the committee for the Tony Guy plate or to Liz Osborne for the Centenary please do so.

At the end of the year, my thanks as well to all of those that contribute to the society in one way or another, whether it be the members who attend the meetings or those that make the meetings happen – the refreshments and the raffle, those that administer our Facebook pages and of course our committee members – all of whom seem to serve on many other committees and organisations. We appreciate everyone's time and effort.

I wish you all a happy Christmas and a healthy 2026 and look forward to seeing you all next 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?**

**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?
Try something new!**

**Contact - Rhian
dobbshrhan@gmail.com**

Chairwoman's Address

Membership currently stands at 95. We picked up a few memberships at Bratch this year, simplified by the fact that we started online payments. This was originally with PayPal, but as they've decided for various reasons to be obstreperous, we've moved to Stripe for online payments. There is a slight charge for taking payments but as evidenced at Bratch, the easier we make it for people to part with their money, the easier it is to get new members onboard.

Broadsheet has been doing well this year. The print quality is high and consistent and they're getting out on time. The only one that didn't was the September copy because when the Vice Chairman, the Rally Chairman and the Editor are one and the same person there is only so much that can be achieved with such a quick turnaround between the rally and finalising The Broadsheet. I'd like to say thank you to all those who have contributed to articles over the last year – Tony Gregory, Julian Souter, Peter Freakley and Phil Clayton. And also to Max as it can be challenging to find interesting articles to fill the pages. Please do get in touch with letters for him that you may want to highlight something, share something, or even submit an article for publication.

Moving onto the Rally, it was a success, despite the variable weather.

This year has been the biggest financial return and I'd like to thank the Rally Committee for all of the hardwork they've done – both in the run up, and on the weekend and tying up all of the loose ends when all the fun was over.

During the preparations for Bratch, my job other than inviting and then schmoozing VIPs – a tough job – I know, is to meet Laura from Severn Trent in order to set up access for us during the rally weekend. When I saw her last month I had an enlightening chat about Bratch and what's going on which I'll share with you – and forgive me if some of you are already aware of this. The Pumphouse has a Grade 2* listed status which means that "These are particularly important buildings of more than special interest, representing around 5.8% of all listed buildings. They may have outstanding interiors or other extra merit". I have discovered that this means with regards to Bratch that it is not only the exteriors but also the interiors have listed status. I wasn't aware that whilst Laura will go out every few months, that there have pretty much been workmen on site for many months, a Severn trent Rep goes in every day. Severn Trent have finished all of the work that they needed to do, the boreholes on site have been capped off and they are actively seeking ways to move forward with their plans for the Pump House.

Some avenues that have been explored have included a conference venue for Severn Trent or following the model that they have with other properties and looking to work with charities in order to share the industrial heritage. I was advised that they were looking to produce some video of the inside of the Pumphouse as there appears to be misinformation that the inside has been damaged or neglected – which is not the case, especially considering its listed status. To this end Tony Gregory kindly shared a company that specialises in this which I have shared with Laura (If you're interested it's I.A. Recordings Ltd and they have a short video on their site of Bratch in action).

Also, she mentioned that there might be some taster tours to see how things could possibly work and I enthusiastically volunteered trust members to be guinea pigs if such an opportunity were to arise. I shall keep you posted as wheels seem to turn slowly at Severn Trent but they are in touch with local history groups, CRT and Mike Wood, and this is the most positive news I've had from them with regards to the Pumphouse since I first met them a few years ago.

CRT. I think with the departure of Richard Parry, and his replacement only having just started, along with Hen (Adnam's successor) and Kamen as Tom's replacement being newly in position, as well as a tough year for them with regards to maintenance

and water shortages, they have been pretty quiet. I have attended, via Teams, all the Users Forums over the past year. After the latest one, the issues with contractors cutting back the vegetation have been addressed – new contracts and more oversight (sending them back to do a better job).

I know that Ann who was physically at the meeting raised the issue of Dimmingsdale Bridge with them and if they would enter into discussions with the Highways Agency with regards to putting further limits on the bridge with regards to traffic in order to prevent further bridge strikes. My understanding is that this was a under discussion.

I think the Boater Satisfaction Survey was disappointing for CRT but not for boaters, and there are many issues that they're trying to address, alongside the new waste regulations that have come into force. As some of you may be aware some sites have closed but others have opened. There is a webpage available to assist with that. There is also a drive to improve facilities with stand alone Elsan points, as well as replacing obsolete pump out points, and standardising about 600 water points.

There is now a Paddles Dashboard on the Better Boating Plan webpage to see which paddles have been repaired or awaiting repairs and a new Boater App is in the pipeline for delivery in 2026 – I'm just not sure

when in 2026!

Licence consultation has taken place and now it rests with CRT.

At the previous Forum some boaters raised concerns about un-powered craft on the navigation – paddle boarders and canoes – with regards to accidents and liability. There is a genuine concern about these smaller crafts and how they interact with larger powered vessels and where liability would lie. It was acknowledged by CRT and if anyone has any comments they would like to pass on please do let me know.

The Forums happen often but are quite short – normally about 90 minutes. Questions normally need to be submitted prior to the forum as there doesn't seem to be much time for questions arising during the schedule. Again, please let me know if you have any burning issues or any comments you would like to see passed on generally to CRT or at one of the User Forums.

As a Society, alongside Tony Gregory and many other interested parties, we were vocal in opposing the BESS at Dimmingsdale and Lower Penn. A BESS is a Battery Energy Storage System.

There were worries about the safety of lithium-ion batteries and the risk of fire or explosions, especially with regards to run off from any fire

suppressant used, environmental impact in regards to detrimental changes to the community and local environment, noise pollution and the visual impact of the large-scale installation alongside the area's existing congestion, including narrow country lanes, especially during the construction phase.

However, despite all of our formal written objections, and Tony Gregory and other interested parties attending local meetings and written objections, sadly planning permission was still granted. I think watch this space and keep our fingers crossed.

Last year we spoke of a Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal Companion Guide. This is still something that we believe would add value and promote the navigation and society to all users – boaters and land lubbers alike. This has not happened and leads me onto my final point. We haven't had the time or resources to be able to accomplish this. Looking at the committee members we have a core of about 6 people – myself, the vice chair, the secretary, the treasurer and 2 other committee members. Other than myself and the secretary all the main committee members including the president, sit on the Rally Committee. Some of us have jobs, and even those that are retired will also have other commitments to other societies, not just our own. We are really stretched for members who can assist in any way. I know that we have

quite a few vacant posts on the committee but if anyone is willing to join the committee – without portfolio – so to speak we would be grateful. Technically I should only be doing 3 years as Chairwoman but without volunteers I can't see me handing over the post any time soon! Some extra hands would really be appreciated in order to keep the society going and to offer something to entice new members in.

In the meantime I would like to thank everybody that supports the Society – the members, the committee members (thank you all), The Facebook admins, Steven and Judith for managing memberships, and all the others that make the social meetings happen every month, Phil for

organising the Speakers, Glyn and Rosemary for the raffle, Carol, Liz and Bob for the refreshments – and Ozzy for his amazing switching the lights on and off, even with his damaged hand! We couldn't do it without you. And if I have omitted anyone – my apologies.

One final thing I would like to mention before the Treasurer's Report and which I'm happy to throw open to the floor is the Jean Warner Legacy. We are conscious with the rise in inflation that the actual purchase power of the legacy is decreasing and we would like to use the funds for a worthwhile endeavour. If any of you have a worthwhile endeavour in mind we'd be happy to take note and discuss further at committee.

Martin Brookes

FOR ALL YOUR MARINE WORK

On the Stourbridge Canal, between Stourton and Wordsley Junctions

*Coach Painting - Boat Building - Fitting Out - Compliance Work
New Installation - Engine Servicing - Repairs - Welding
Hull Blacking - Breakdown Call Out Service*

***Diesel Tank cleaning and fuel filtering with minimum need for drilling
or cutting or emptying tank Mobile or at Wharf Service***

Bookings for Wharf Cranage NOW available

**All Work Personally Undertaken
Waterways Craft Guild Accredited
Free no obligation quotation
07802 444370 or mb.tramp@btinternet.com**



Anderton Boat Lift gate repairs prioritised to get navigation back open

Canal & River Trust have announced that it will be prioritising the programme of works at Anderton Boat Lift during the year ahead that will see the ‘Cathedral of the Canals’ back open and operational for boaters.

The investment will enable the lift to transfer boats between the Trent & Mersey Canal and the River Weaver once again in 2027. This will remedy the fault with the structure’s caisson gates, discovered during routine maintenance earlier this year, and also provide an overdue update to the lift’s operating system required to make the lift’s passage of boats more resilient.

A much larger project

A much larger project at the Anderton site, that would require additional and unaffordable capital expenditure from CRT alongside the submission of a successful bid to The National Lottery

Heritage Fund, is being paused. This means prioritising the investment needed for navigation but deferring the painting of the lift’s three-storey high iron superstructure together with investment in the attraction’s Visitor Centre.

Jon Horsfall, CRT regional director, comments: “The priority for our charity is getting the lift open and operational for navigation. It is a remarkable structure and a defining landmark of Britain’s waterways that continues to hold national significance for the canal network.

“The team remains committed to the long-term future of the Anderton Boat Lift. We are focusing on the works required to reopen navigation, whilst pausing the additional spend elsewhere at the lift which is currently unaffordable. In doing so, we are making sure that the limited money

our charity has stretches as far as possible so that there is adequate investment in other key areas for navigation including locks, bridges, aqueducts and the network as a whole.

“I’d like to thank our volunteers, donors, partners and the continued interest and vital support we received from The National Lottery Heritage Fund, both here at Anderton but also across the North West and wider canal network.”

Excited to welcome guests

We’ve already commissioned the detailed design of new gate lifting equipment to replace the wire rope system. The installation will happen

over the winter of 2026/27 with one caisson being opened in time for the summer season in 2027 and the other caisson also opening as soon as possible after that. Although this seems a long time off, the works are complicated and time consuming. They will see a new lifting mechanism installed on ten separate gates, replacing the current ropes, wires and pulleys. The new system will be robust, future proof, safe to operate and safer to maintain.

Anderton Boat Lift remains a popular visitor attraction, and the team is excited to welcome guests over the winter period. The Anderton Boat Lift Visitor Centre and coffee shop are open every weekend (10am-4pm) throughout the winter season.

Ashwood Marina

Not so much a mooring, more a way of life



The Team At Ashwood Marina Offers a Comprehensive Package of Facilities and Services to Complement Our Beautiful Moorings:

LOOKING TO SELL YOUR BOAT?
We offer a caring service and competitive brokerage fees, so if you want to sell, then call us to find out how we can help.

MOORINGS:
Towpath style moorings available in a linear setting.



STATIC HOLIDAY CARAVANS:
For Sale: Two holiday caravans with private garden - For details see:
[www. https://ashwoodmarina.co.uk/marina-services/static-caravans/](https://ashwoodmarina.co.uk/marina-services/static-caravans/)



CRANING & DOCKING:
A monthly service, giving ample time for engine and blacking works to be completed. Available for DIY blacking and fit out work. Alternatively, we can offer an extensive range of hull works, repairs and re-paint.

COVERED WORK AREA:
Available for hire:
Covered area on our dock with workshop. Ideal for fit out/major refurbishment

Follow us on:



Ashwood Marina is located on the Staffs & Worcester Canal between Rocky and Greensforge Locks

Proud Member of **BRITISH MARINE** LEADING THE INDUSTRY

Ashwood Marina, Kingswinford. DY6 0AQ. Tel: 01384 295535
info@ashwoodmarina.co.uk . www.ashwoodmarina.co.uk





Campbell Robb joins as Canal & River Trust Chief Executive

Canal & River Trust have welcomed Campbell Robb who joins the charity as chief executive, after six years leading the social justice charity Nacro.

Before joining Nacro, Campbell was chief executive of the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust, steering the organisation through a significant change programme. Prior to this he spent seven years as chief executive of Shelter, building its ability to support more people than ever before and leading the organisation's response to some of the biggest changes to housing and welfare policy in generations. Campbell also brings government experience: before joining Shelter, he was the first director general of the Office of the Third

Sector, an adviser to HM Treasury, and was previously director of public policy at the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO).

David Orr, chair at Canal & River Trust, comments: "The UK's navigable canals represent an extraordinary and enduring link to our industrial heritage. Today they play multiple roles, offering communities the chance to engage with nature and boost their mental and physical health, providing essential corridors for wildlife and biodiversity, and even helping to mitigate the effects of climate change. As age, reduced funding, and extreme weather take their toll, our charity's mission of caring for them has never been more important.

"I am delighted that Campbell joins us



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

The deadline for Issue 700 is
Friday 30th January 2026

as chief executive. He brings a wealth of experience from across the charity sector, including 15 years in similar roles where he has successfully strengthened organisations to respond to challenges and opportunities. I look forward to working with him to secure the longer-term future of our canals."

Campbell Robb comments: "The role of chief executive of the Canal & River Trust is one of the most exciting roles in the public and voluntary sectors and one I am delighted to take on. To act as

a steward for the history and protect the future of these amazing living monuments will be a challenge, but also an opportunity. I am also committed to the importance of community. In everything I do I wish to support, create and be part of communities. The canals and rivers are vital for those who live there, work there and volunteer there, as well as the wildlife they foster and support. To be part of that and to help them all thrive is a privilege."



APMARINE

Boat Safety Examinations

07938720817

ajparker1792@gmail.com



AN INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITY OR A HISTORICAL TREASURE?

Tony Gregory

Anyone who lived in Stourport or passed through York Street lock in the mid 1960s to mid 70s will have seen a lady busy painting canal art in the adjacent toll office. This was Miss Betty Abbott, sister of Holt Abbott, boat builder and owner of Canal Pleasure Craft Ltd., and aunt to our Hon. Treasurer Angela Clark.

Anyone who lived in Stourport or passed through York Street lock in the mid 1960s to mid 70s will have seen a lady busy painting canal art in the adjacent toll office. This was Miss Betty Abbott, sister of Holt Abbott, boat builder and owner of Canal Pleasure Craft Ltd., and aunt to our Hon. Treasurer Angela Clark.

I have long admired Betty's distinctive style, and was very pleased to be given a miniature painted water can by her





midday, and closed on 13th November with a winning bid of £18,000

Angela had arranged a viewing, and managed to take a few photos of what remains of Betty's work. It is to be hoped that the paintings will be preserved by the purchaser, or if not, be removed to an archive.

It remains to be seen what the future holds for it.

Tony Gregory

niece some years ago. Other Society members have pieces painted by Betty, and they are much prized.

Betty's office has lain abandoned for many years, and in late October it was advertised to be sold by an on-line auction by Paul Fosh Auctions. The details appeared in the press and on social media, and I was alerted by a fellow moorer that there might be some of Betty's work still insitu. Should it be recorded? – could it be saved?

The property was listed as Lot 39: Grade II listed. Comprising Hallway and one room, with vacant possession. In typical estate agent speak, it was described as "quaint & bijou", with a guide price of £14,000

Bidding for the unconditional Online Auction opened on 11th November at





Boat Licensing Review Published — CRT Responds, Concerns Raised, and What Happens Next

The independent Commission on Boat Licensing has published its long-awaited review, setting out 36 recommendations for improving how the Canal & River Trust manages boat licensing across its 2,000 miles of waterways. The CRT Board has welcomed the report's "clear analysis and constructive challenge" and confirmed that no immediate changes will be made while the recommendations are studied in detail. Existing licensing arrangements remain unchanged for now.

The review itself is substantial — 80 pages covering movement requirements, enforcement powers, licensing conditions, and the increasingly difficult question of liveaboard use in congested areas such as London and Bath. Across its pages, the Commission is frank: the current system "is operating sub-optimally", struggles to deal with unsafe or abandoned boats, and suffers from decades of piecemeal legislation.

What the Commission says

PHIL JONES



HATHERTON MARINA, HATHERTON JUNCTION,
STAFFS & WORCS

DRY DOCK, CRANEAGE, GRIT BLASTING, PRESSURE WASHING

HULL BLACKING, STERNGEAR, ANODES, ETC.

STEELWORK ALTERATIONS, LENGTHENING, OVERPLATING

NARROWBOAT BROKERAGE & SALES

BOAT SAFETY EXAMINATIONS & REMEDIAL WORK

VINTAGE AND MODERN ENGINE SALES, REPAIR AND INSTALLATION

TEL/FAX: (01785) 715988 Mobile: 07831 153028



SIGNS & SYMBOLS

TRADITIONAL SIGNWRITING & VINYL GRAPHICS - PICTORAL & HERALDIC ARTWORK
145 Birmingham Street, Stourbridge. DY9 7PP - signsandsymbols@hotmail.co.uk

Several key recommendations will interest regular boaters:

- The 14-day rule stays, but the report argues it should be interpreted more clearly — 14 days inclusive, not sliding dates.
- CRT should replace the old concept of “bona fide navigation” with a clearer, simpler movement requirement focused on fair access and operational needs.
- CRT should stop using the term “continuous cruiser”, describing it as unhelpful and misleading.
- CRT’s enforcement powers are “too limited”, particularly when dealing with unlicensed, uninsured, unsafe or sunken boats that require urgent removal.
- Better communication, data, and a reset in relationships with boaters are essential.

The report’s authors also acknowledge something many boaters already know: a significant portion of the pressure on the system comes not from boating culture itself, but from wider housing pressures, especially in London. The Trust is clear that it is not a housing authority, but it must still work humanely and sensibly with those who live afloat.

Enforcement concerns — and the other side of the coin

Some of the strongest social-media reactions focused on the idea that CRT might use more “aggressive” tools, such as civil fines and — in extreme cases — towing a boat after 21 days of non-payment. The idea of a boat being removed triggers understandable anxiety.

However, a look at the Commission’s text shows a more nuanced picture. The report states plainly that CRT currently operates with “one hand tied behind its back”. In practice, this means boats that are unlicensed, uninsured, unsafe, or already sunk can sit for months because the Trust must navigate long statutory processes before acting. The Commission argues that this situation is unfair to compliant boaters, costly to the charity, and ultimately unsafe.

In short: the feared “over-reach” is, from CRT’s perspective, more about enabling them to deal with boats that pose risks or costs to everyone else.

“CRT refuses to sell licences” — why that happens

A recurring claim online is that CRT counts certain boats as “non-compliant” even when it refuses to sell the owner a licence.

The report explains an important detail: many of these cases involve boats that cannot be licensed because they lack insurance, a Boat Safety Certificate, or are not fit to navigate. In such cases CRT is not “refusing” out of preference; it cannot lawfully issue a licence until the basics are in place. The Commission suggests improving the process — including better communication and possibly introducing a publicly-available ownership register — but does not question the underlying principle.

Movement requirements — and the realities on the cut

Another heated topic is the suggestion that future movement expectations might resemble the “FLOC A to FLOC D” framework some boaters have discussed — effectively requiring a meaningful move every two weeks and a wider annual range.

While nothing is decided, the Commission is clear about one problem: a minority of boats currently move only short distances — in some cases mere hundreds of yards — for months on end. This creates intense local congestion and feeds perceptions of unfairness among both cruising boaters and those with home moorings.



Presented by: CLIFF TURNER

J. & H. Trimmings

jandhtrimmings@hotmail.co.uk

BOAT & FORKLIFT TRUCK CANOPIES - BOAT, CAR & CARAVAN TRIMMING
HOUSEHOLD UPHOLSTERY - MOTORCYCLE SEATS

Ashwood Marina, Greensforge, Kingswinford, West Midlands DY6 0AQ
Telephone: (01384) 279527

The report does not dictate a mileage, but it does argue that a new model should meet two basic tests:

1. It must be simple to understand.
2. It must ensure fair access to limited mooring space.

For boaters who already cruise widely, very little is likely to change. For those who move only marginally, a more predictable and clearly defined requirement may be on the horizon.

Were the changes pre-decided?

A few voices online raised suspicions that the review simply legitimises plans CRT already had. The Commission anticipated this concern. In Section 1, it states directly that if they believed the review was intended to rubber-stamp predetermined outcomes, none of the Commissioners would have accepted the role. They report encountering no attempt by CRT to steer their conclusions, and emphasise that many recommendations may require further consultation or new legislation before anything can change.

And, as one online commenter wryly

put it: “so what?” — what matters now is the quality of the proposals and how they are implemented.

What happens next

CRT has said it will now:

- study the recommendations in detail;
- conduct impact assessments;
- consult widely with boaters;
- and bring forward proposals next year.

As both David Orr (CRT Chair) and Campbell Robb (CEO) emphasised, this review is being seen as an opportunity to reset relationships, improve clarity, and make licensing work better for everyone — from leisure cruisers to long-term liveaboards.

There is, as ever, work ahead. But for now, nothing changes on the water. The next stage will be the Trust’s formal consultation — and a chance for all boaters to help shape what comes next.

SATURN BACK ON THE STOUR CUT

A conversation on the towpath at the 2024 Gnosall C-Fest reminded us that Saturn had not returned to the Staffs & Worcs Canal for ages. We joked that she might have a temporary livery of L.M.S. and recreate a trip from Stourport to Wolverhampton loaded with barrels of vinegar destined for London. Would it ever be possible?

When Saturn's 2025 movement schedule was decided, there was a chance to visit the Staffordshire & Worcestershire Canal Society's fourth annual rally below Bratch Locks. Plans were laid, and following the 2025 Gnosall event, Saturn stayed at Norbury Junction until 2nd August when ex FMC Emu towed her to Dimmingsdale Wharf. Here she lay until the 30th August.

Ray family duly arrived at Dimmingsdale with Flower 0900hrs, along with crew and line-lifters. By 1020hrs they were under way. By 1115hrs they were through Awbridge Lock.

Now we had a problem! The Canal Society's Facebook page had advertised the arrival of Saturn at Bratch top lock as 1200hrs. At the rate they were travelling the amassing crowd would miss the spectacle. Flower was given an impromptu rest out of sight, and duly arrived on schedule.

Looking back, I see that the Facebook post reached 95,000 people, and received 1,618 reactions or likes. A truly powerful advertising tool! How else might we use it for the benefit of the Society I wonder?

Saturn was returned to Dimmingsdale Wharf on Sunday 31st August where she stayed until Glyn & Rosemary Phillips towed her most of the way home to Ellesmere, starting out on 16th September.

Our thanks have been sent to Saturn and her crew for attending our event.

Tony Gregory
President



Sapperton Tunnel - 1966

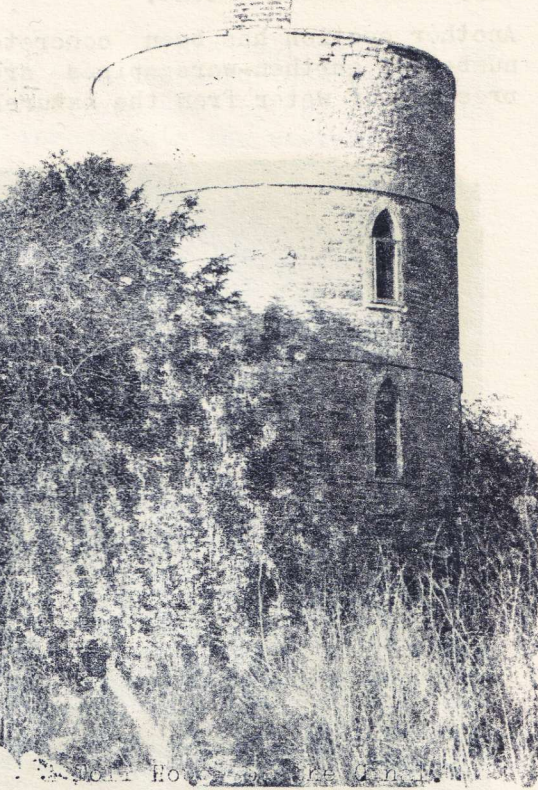
This remarkable account originally appeared in *The Broadsheet* of February 1966 (Issue 84), written by Peter Freakley and Andrew Dasham. Their vivid and good-humoured description of venturing deep into the abandoned Sapperton Tunnel — equipped with a dinghy, waders, a powerful search-light and a level of enthusiasm that only canal explorers possess — remains one of the most atmospheric articles ever published in the magazine. Nearly sixty years later, we are delighted to reprint their exploration, and we extend our thanks to both authors for preserving a moment in time when the tunnel lay silent, largely forgotten, and yet profoundly compelling to those drawn to the hidden corners of our waterway heritage.

Sapperton Tunnel was completed in 1789 as the summit-level crossing of the Thames & Severn Canal, the ambitious cross-Cotswold route designed to connect the River Thames at Lechlade with the River Severn at Stroud. At 3,817 yards (just over 2.1 miles), it was the longest tunnel in Britain on completion — a title it held until 1811 — and one of the most daring engineering undertakings of the late 18th century. Constructed from 26 shafts and driven through challenging geology, including layers of limestone, clay and the notoriously unstable

Fuller's Earth, the tunnel was impressive in scale but troublesome in practice.

Structural movement, leaks and falls plagued the tunnel throughout its working life. Maintenance became increasingly uneconomic, and with commercial traffic dwindling in the early 20th century, Sapperton's fate was sealed. Navigation ceased in 1911; by the time Freakley and Dasham undertook their 1966 expedition, major collapses had already rendered the tunnel impassable from both ends. Their account — muddy, atmospheric, and full of the excitement of discovery — captures the tunnel in the early decades of its abandonment, before restoration of the Cotswold canals had even begun.

Today, both portals survive as listed heritage structures, and the wider Thames & Severn Canal is the focus of long-term restoration by the Cotswold Canals Trust. The tunnel itself remains blocked by several substantial roof-falls, and its full reopening would require immense engineering work. Yet Sapperton remains one of the great monuments of canal history — a symbol of the ambition of the Georgian waterway era, and a reminder of what determined volunteers may one day help bring back to life.



At this time of the year, when the trees shed their autumn leaves, they uncover a wealth of history such as disused canal tunnels. On the last fine Saturday in November, we set off for the Cotswolds, with an upturned dinghy, and a 'Mini' tied underneath, to explore the disused Sapperton Tunnel on the Thames & Severn Canal. The tunnel, situated on the Summit level (approximately 360' above sea level), lies between Cirencester and Stroud, near the headwaters of the River Thames.

The Sapperton end, at the head of the Golden. Valley was first for exploration. It is rather difficult to find, but when the tunnel keeper's house was spotted the mouth of the tunnel soon became apparent in the very heavy undergrowth.

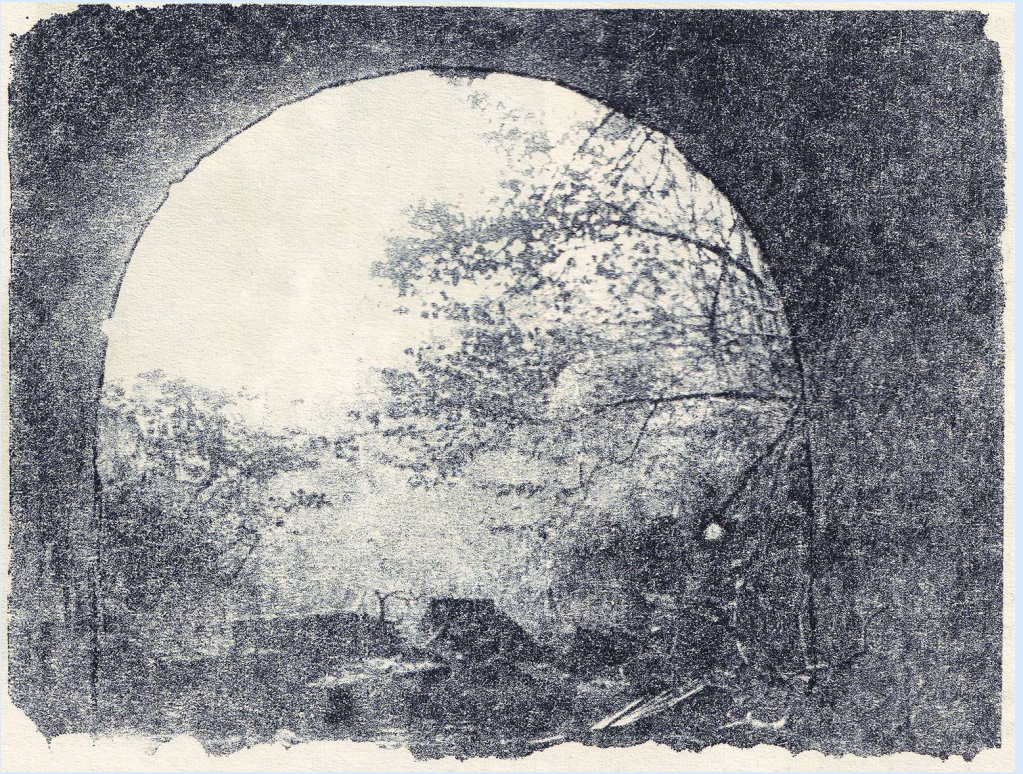
We motored to the eastern portal,

noticing the straight line of the tunnel by the tall trees growing from the many spoil heaps. The mellowed stone of the ornate tunnel mouth blended with the beautiful autumn tints in the deep wooded cutting. Sliding down the steep embankment with a boat on top of us, we soon launched (landed) it on a pile of bricks in the dry bed of the canal. Waders and wellingtons were used for access to the boat in the tunnel mouth. Elaborate lighting was rigged up, this being essential to full appreciate the detail of the interior. For much Of its length (3,817yds) the wide bore of the tunnel is blasted out of solid rock, the drill holes still being clearly visible.

Another section has been concreted on the sides into which. 4. number of earthen-ware pipes are laid to relieve any excess pressure of water from the natural springs.

Endless trouble had been taken to procure, and fit out a boat to ease our passage through the darkness, but foot-prints leading on and on made a mockery of our navigation in water fully 18" deep. We paddled slowly on wards, stopping occasion-ally to turn broadside on and inspect our progress with a powerful search-light. Suddenly we sensed an uncanny silence which from previous experience of tunnels, indicated a roof-fall or other blockage. A quick flash with the search-light revealed a very large fall a little way ahead, Other signs of subsidence were noticed in the bulging of the walls and the wooden bracings wedged across the bottom of the tunnel.

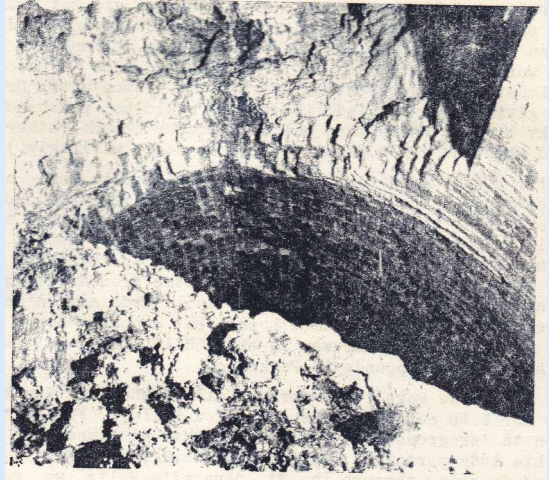
This roof fail was 'navigable' on foot, but only revealed a further succession of falls beyond. At this point, illustrated below, it



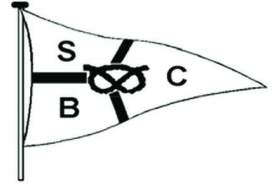
was unanimously decided to return and investigate the western end.

The ordnance survey map shows eight air-shafts, but in actual fact only one was noticed, this having been closed over on top. The Sapperton end is only navigable for about 2 mile before the first major roof-fall is encountered, this proving extremely wet. (The wettest we have ever known.) Beyond this it is possible to wade a further 100 yards, when the final fall eliminates all hopes of a through passage. All through traffic ceased in 1911 and the canal was finally closed in 1927.

Peter Freakley and Andrew Dasham



STAFFORD BOAT CLUB



**DO YOU NEED TO PAINT YOUR BOAT OUT OF
THE WATER OR IN A HEATED WET DOCK ?**

**WANT TO HIRE A ROOM FOR A SEMINAR
WITH MULTIMEDIA PROJECTOR OR TO
CELEBRATE THAT SPECIAL OCCASION ?**

**NEED COAL, DIESEL BUG TREATMENT, LOO
BLUE, SACRIFICIAL ANNODES, RED DIESEL,
PUMP OUT, PLASTIC CARD PRINTING,
GARMENT PRINTING, BANNER MAKING AND
MUCH MUCH MORE ?**

*Why not give us a ring or visit our
website for more information and prices.*

www.staffordboatclub.co.uk

Telephone 01785 660725

Fax 01785 662222

Stafford Boat Club, Maplewood, Wildwood, Stafford. ST17 4SG

Staffordshire & Worcestershire Canal Society

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL FORM



Please return to
Mrs Judith Gray
29 Verity Walk
Wordsley
Stourbridge
West Midlands
DY8 4XS

email:- wharfinger@blueyonder.co.uk

YEARLY SUBSCRIPTION (1st April-31st March)

Please tick appropriate option

- | | | |
|--------------------------|---|--------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Single Membership | £15.00 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Family at the same address Membership | £15.00 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Junior (up to 18 years of age) and those in full time education | £1.00 |

Full Name

Address

.....

.....

Post Code..... Telephone.....

Email

www.swcanalsociety.co.uk/privacy/

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*

December 8th

Christmas Quiz with Bring & Share Supper

January 12th

John Hemingway - Huddersfield Canal

February 9th

Andy & Helen Tidy - Women of the Waterways (plus jam!)

Local Events

Rally of Boats at Bratch

Saturday 5th – Sunday 6th September Bratch Lane WV5 8DH

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

