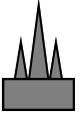




The Inland
Waterways
Association

Issue 6



Lichfield Branch

www.waterways.org.uk/lichfield

Winter 2014

Lichfield Lines

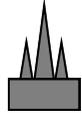


Never mind it will soon be summer! (A very soggy New Year's Day Walk—see page 5)

The newsletter of IWA Lichfield Branch

The IWA may not agree with opinions expressed in this magazine but encourages publication as a matter of interest. Nothing printed may be construed as policy, or as an official pronouncement, unless specifically identified as such.

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Branch Chairman's report – February 2014

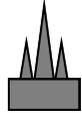
Another year has arrived and the branch AGM will soon be upon us. Now is your chance to put your name forward to join the committee and do your bit for the waterways. Branches are always on the lookout for new committee members, who can bring new ideas and a fresh approach to enhance our core role of monitoring the state of the navigation and responding to planning applications. The remit of the IWA is to campaign for the conservation, use, maintenance, restoration and development of our precious waterways. New committee members can learn more about the waterways and the behind the scenes activities that take place. It also enables you to widen your circle of friends so if you fancy joining us, please don't hesitate any longer! If you would be interested in coming along to a committee meeting to see what we do before committing yourself, let me know.

One committee member who is moving on after a three year stint on the committee is our secretary, Kaye Harrison, who has moved out of the branch area. She has been a huge asset to the branch and we will miss her presence and wise council at committee meetings. I am extremely grateful to Kaye for agreeing to take on the role in the first place and for making such a splendid job of it! From experience, I know that nobody is irreplaceable and I am sure that somewhere out there, there is someone who will be as valuable to the committee as Kaye has been. I shall be looking for a volunteer to take the minutes at our committee meetings from April onwards. This is not too big a job as most of our branch officers provide written reports for the committee meetings. If you feel you could help out, in either a temporary or a permanent capacity, please feel free to contact me.

I am very grateful to those of you who have taken the trouble to give us suggestions for future speakers at our meetings. There have been some terrific ideas and Peter Chandler, who arranges such things, will be following these up. Because many people seem to be away over the summer months, we do not book speakers for June, July and August. However, we do continue to arrange work parties and walks. We also hope to arrange an outing somewhere. I rather fancy booking a trip solely for branch members on the un-connected part of the Chesterfield canal possibly in August. Does anyone have any other suggestions?

Remember to keep an eye on future events on our ever changing website

www.waterways.org.uk/lichfield so that you don't miss out. I apologise to anyone who does not have access to the web and know how irritating it is when we harp on about it. We do try to print everything in Lichfield Lines but just occasionally something is arranged at the last minute. For anyone who does not have access to a computer who would like to be informed of such events, text "IWA Information required" to 07766 687102. We will text details to you. Alternatively, if you send me a note letting me know what your particular interest is i.e. meetings, walks, helping out on the sales stand, work-parties, social activities or outings along with your name, address including post-code and land-line telephone number, we will try to



keep you informed of any activities which are arranged at the last minute. My address is on page 18 of this issue of Lichfield Lines.

Late winter is the time to think about what plants you are going to grow in your garden. Please consider plants that will give succour to bees and butterflies. The various varieties of lavenders are lovely and resistant to drought! Now before you all think that I have gone completely mad, I am asking you to do this so that when I propose that we all join in "Himalayan Balsam Bashes" later in the year, I cannot be accused of depriving the bees of a food source! Please see the article on this on page 9.

Finally and by no means least, IWA is still working very hard to try to mitigate the effects that the High Speed Rail link (HS2) will have on our waterways. Seven canals or restoration projects will be affected within our branch area and other waterways further afield will also be seriously affected. Please, do not bury your heads in the sand! Bad things happen when people fail to take note of threats until it is too late. I and the branch feel very strongly about this and don't want the attitude of "It will never happen" or "By the time it happens, I will no longer be boating" to prevail. It is our duty to future generations to know about the terrible effect this railway will have on our beloved waterways and to do our best to ensure that the waterways, as we know them, can be enjoyed in years to come. What state would our waterways be in now if our predecessors had just shrugged their shoulders when canals became unnavigable? I hope that, as requested, you responded to the Phase 2 consultation which finished on 31st January. You will have the opportunity to ask questions about HS2 at our AGM in March.

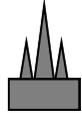
Thank goodness summer will soon be here. We will all enjoy our outdoor projects and activities more when it gets warmer!!

Helen Whitehouse 27/01/2014

Forthcoming Events

Friday 14th February 2014

Work Party at St Augustine's Field, Rugeley. Please come along and help us with scrub bashing and improvements to the decking. Meet at the Rugby Clubhouse on St Augustine's Field (entrance next to the church), Station Road, Rugeley, Staffs. WS15 2HE. From 9.30am to 3.00pm. Come for the morning or the afternoon, or stay all day with lunch provided. Hot drinks and all equipment provided, no experience needed, but wear stout boots and old clothes. Weather permitting ! Further information from Margaret Beardsmore on 07581 794111 or email margaret.beardsmore@waterways.org.uk



Wednesday 19th February 2014

Illustrated talk on 'Wrecks and Ruins' (A photographic essay of the old and decaying; boats, buildings and even trees that add character to our waterways) by Mike Beech, Foxton Canal Museum Keeper. 7.30 for 7.45 pm at Martin Heath Hall, Christchurch Lane (off Walsall Road), Lichfield, WS13 8AY

Saturday 22nd February 2014

Work Party at Leathermill Lane, Rugeley. Please come along and help us with painting and re-badging the Canal & River Trust signs along the towpath plus general clearance, maintenance and litter picking. Meet at Leathermill Lane, Rugeley, Staffs. WS15 2HN by the canal noticeboards on the towpath. 9.30am to 1.00pm. Come along and make new friends. Hot drinks, cake and all equipment provided, no experience needed, but wear stout boots and old clothes. Weather permitting! Further information from Margaret Beardsmore on 07581 794111 or email margaret.beardsmore@waterways.org.uk

Tuesday 4th March 2014

"A Touch of Gold Leaf"; a walk around Alvecote, Pooley Country Park and the Coventry Canal. An easy 3 mile walk with no stiles and dog friendly, plus an optional extra ½ mile climb to the 20 metre summit of the landscaped Alvecote spoil heap for a view of 4 counties and to see "a touch of gold leaf". About 2 hours, with optional refreshments afterwards at the Samuel Barlow. Meet in the car park of The Samuel Barlow, Alvecote Marina, Robey's Lane, Alvecote, Nr Tamworth, Warwickshire, B78 1AS at 10.15 am for a 10.30 start. Led by Clive Walker; further information from Clive on 01827 282298 or email lichfield@waterways.org.uk

Saturday 15th March 2014

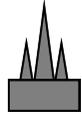
Jumble Sale at Peace Memorial Hall, Pinfold Lane, Penkridge. For further details see article on Page 8.

Wednesday 19th March 2014

Annual General Meeting. Followed by an illustrated talk on 'Progress on the Ashby Canal' by Geoff Pursglove, Ashby Canal Restoration Partnership Project Officer. 7.30 for 7.45 pm at Martin Heath Hall, Christchurch Lane (off Walsall Road), Lichfield, WS13 8AY

Wednesday 16th April 2014

Illustrated talk on Irish Waterways by Brian J Goggin. 7.30 for 7.45 pm at Martin Heath Hall, Christchurch Lane (off Walsall Road), Lichfield, WS13 8AY



Sunday 8th June 2014

Ashby Canal Walk. A circular walk along the restored section of the Ashby Canal from Donisthorpe past Moira Furnace to Bath Yard Basin at the National Forest Centre (“Conkers”), returning by footpaths through Donisthorpe Woodlands Park. About 4 miles, mostly level. Children and dogs on leads welcome. Meet at Donisthorpe Woodlands Centre, Church Street, Donisthorpe, DE12 7PY at 10.15am for a 10.30 start. The walk is about 2 hours or so with an optional lunch afterwards at a local pub/restaurant. Led by Geoff Pursglove, Ashby Canal Project Officer. Further information from Geoff on 01530 273956 (work) or email lichfield@waterways.org.uk

Adjacent Branches

The **Birmingham, Black Country and Worcestershire Branch** hold their meetings at Coombeswood Canal Trust, Hawne Basin, Herewood Rise, Halesowen B62 8AW.

Their early 2014 programme has the following events.

- February 17th The Grand Canal of China—Liam D’Arcy-Brown Author
- March 17th Branch AGM followed by West Midlands Regions AGM and Members Slides
- April 21st Taking IWA Forward—Les Etheridge, IWA National Chairman
- May 19th Taking a Narrowboat to France—Chris Clegg

The **Warwickshire Branch** hold their meetings at the Sports Connexion Leisure Club, Leamington Road, Ryton-on-Dunsmore, Coventry, CV8 3FL.

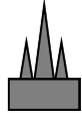
Their early 2014 programme has the following events.

- February 12th Trailboat Exploration of England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales
Jeanne & Derek Smith
- March 12th The Inside Story of the Diamond Jubilee Pageant—Helen Henderson
- April 9th Boating on Less Tranquil Waters—Roger Clay
- May 14th Historic Narrowboats, A Boat Spotting Guide—Alison Smedley MBE

The **North Staffs and South Cheshire Branch** hold their meetings at Stoke on Trent Boat Club, Endon Wharf, Post Lane, Endon, Stoke on Trent ST9 9DT.

Their early 2014 programme has the following events.

- February 28th Branch AGM
- March 14th Branch Annual Dinner 7:00 for 8:00 venue Hotel Rudyard, Rudyard, Near Leek, Staffs ST13 8RN
- April 14th Chris Leah will give an illustrated talk on the Restoration of the Historic



Wooden Narrowboat "Hazel" Project, the restoration of a 1913 built Narrowboat to work as a well-being boat, providing time on the waterways for people suffering stress, depression etc.

May 9th

A talk from Steve Wood - The canals of North Staffordshire and South Cheshire.

Recent Walks

New Year's Day Walk around Lichfield - Wednesday 1st January 2014

Led by Carole and Denis Cooper, our traditional New Year's Day Walk was this time a very wet walk round the Passages and Pools in Lichfield.

13 people braved the awful weather to "wash" away the New Year's Eve celebrations. Denis made the walk very interesting with regular stops to explain historic sites around the old town wall, and walking round the pool was quite a feat in the strong wind.



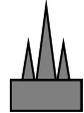
We all enjoyed the warmth and food at Weatherspoons (The Gateway one) afterwards, even sitting in very wet clothes ! Thanks are due to Carole and Denis for leading.

(Report by Pat Barton, Photo by Clive Walker)

Kingsbury Walk - Tuesday 5th November 2013

Horrible weather in the morning limited this walk to 9 brave souls, although it relented to light drizzle as we set off up Curdworth Locks on the Birmingham & Fazeley Canal. Pausing near Lock 7 to see where the threatened HS2 High Speed Railway will cut across the attractive countryside, we crossed over the already noisy M42 and past the newly revealed site of a massive railway construction depot on farmland close to Marston village. The route then followed the old Kingsbury Road between several large lakes to the River Tame and along the riverside into Kingsbury Water Park.

The sun came out briefly so we paused for a group photo at the footbridge with the old manor house and church at Kingsbury village in the background. A slightly muddy route across the meadows took us back to the M42 where the Leeds line of HS2 will run through the Water Park alongside the motorway. An underpass takes the footpath through to the northern part of



the Water Park and, after a slight diversion where flood protection banks are being constructed, we arrived back at the canal, just in time for a real drenching on the last half mile back to the pub ! Fortunately the Dog & Doublet was warm and welcoming and we all gradually dried out over a good pub lunch. Thanks to Derek Beardsmore for planning and leading this walk. (Report & photo by Phil Sharpe)

Recent Meetings

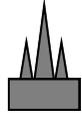
Wednesday 15th January 2014

Our first meeting of the New Year was an Illustrated talk on 'The Natural History of the West Midlands Canals' given by Paul Wilkinson of the Canal & River Trust who is the Ecologist for the West Midlands Area. The talk gave a fascinating insight into the work of a Canal Ecologist as well as the balancing act that the Canal and River Trust have to perform to take account of the sometimes conflicting requirements of navigation and flora and fauna. I think we now appreciate much more why some areas of bank are left wild at the water's edge to benefit water voles and other small animals that have become endangered. Paul also outlined the problems that can be caused by invasive non-native species which can spread very rapidly and completely block a navigation. These can be very difficult and expensive to remove and the Trust go to great lengths to avoid spreading the problem when moving work boats between areas.

Wednesday 20th November 2013

Our November meeting was an illustrated talk on Restoration Progress on the Grantham Canal by Mike Stone, Chairman of the Grantham Canal Society. Unfortunately, technical problems delayed the start of the talk as we tried four laptops before we eventually found one that would communicate with our digital projector! Meanwhile we were entertained by some impromptu unaccompanied singing of canal songs by two talented members of the audience, and the usual event notices, raffle drawing and a refreshment break filled the time for our very patient members and friends.

Although the shortened talk missed out the historical introduction, Mike was still able to give us the full story of recent progress with restoring the canal, and impressive progress it is too. Some 7 miles of the original 33 miles are now navigable, although in 3 separate sections,



and 5 of the 18 locks have been fully restored.

Considering that the canal was abandoned in 1936 it has survived remarkably intact, with 28 of its 33 miles still in water although about 40 bridges had been lowered in the 1950's before



restoration began. Past successes have included removing a redundant railway embankment blocking the canal, replacing 4 lowered bridges, restoring a section through Cotgrave Country Park and building a slipway for trail boats. But the pace of restoration has picked up since 2006 with an active Grantham Canal Partnership between GCS, six local authorities, CRT, IWA, Natural England and others.

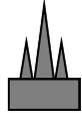
The IWA National Trailboat

Festival in 2007 provided a boost to the project and the incentive to provide landing stages at Lock 18, Harlaxton Wharf and near the AI at Grantham, and some 2 miles of dredging on that section. A 12 seat society trip boat now operates on the summit pound on charter hire and occasional public trips. The society has also acquired a workboat from BW which was restored at a local prison, and more recently a redundant dredger which has been fully refurbished.

The 3 locks at Woolthorpe leading to the summit pound towards Grantham were restored

some years ago but keeping the top lock 18 navigable has been a challenge of late. One wall was collapsing and cost £400k to rebuild by contractors, half of which came from an IWA legacy. Since then new top gates have been fitted by the society and funding is still being raised for the new bottom gates. Meanwhile, a first stage grant from the Heritage Lottery funding has been agreed to develop a bid for heritage skills training and restoration of locks





12 to 15, although another collapsed wall on lock 14 may cost up to £1m alone.

The recent widening of the A46 near Cotgrave to dual carriageway provided a new bridge but, despite a Public Inquiry and a favourable Inspector's recommendation, did nothing to remove the adjacent blockage on a link road at Mann's Bridge. However, traffic lights installed to allow towpath users to cross the road have set a precedent for interrupting traffic so a lifting bridge should be possible in the future.

Longer term, the key to full restoration is a new route to the River Trent around Nottingham, where new roads have obstructed the original line, and a route using the line of the Polser Brook between the A52 and Holme Pierpoint water sports centre has been identified.

The Society recently changed its name to drop the word 'restoration' to appeal to all current and potential users of the canal and has good support from anglers, walkers and cyclists, but the full restoration of the canal to navigation remains its primary aim. Its increasing activity and professional approach to project planning and fundraising leaves no doubt that it will eventually be achieved.

To help support the continuing restoration, Lichfield Branch were pleased to be able to make a donation of £100 to the Grantham Canal Society.

(Report by Phil Sharpe, photos from GCS)

IWA Bulletin

This is produced twice monthly by staff at IWA Head Office. It is a valuable source of information for anybody who wants to keep up to date with IWA's day to day work and the waterway news. Members who want to know what IWA is doing about this or that can register to receive this electronically by visiting: www.waterways.org.uk and following the link at the bottom of the page.

Branch Jumble Sale

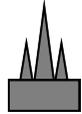
Our annual Branch Jumble Sale held in association with the Lichfield and Hatherton Canals Restoration Trust will be held in the Peace Memorial Hall, Pinfold Lane, Penkridge on Saturday 15th March from 10am - noon.

This is one of our most significant fund raising events of the year so please support us with donations and help on the day.

Set-up will be from 8.30am on the day and jumble donations may be made then or brought to Branch Meetings. It may be possible to arrange prior collection—contact the Chairman (see Committee Page 18). Clothes, household goods, books, CDs, games, toys, small furniture, crockery, glassware, etc are all welcome.

Admission is only 30p and refreshments will be available.





Advance warning of Himalayan Balsam Bash

We have noticed that this beautiful but prolific weed has started to take hold on some of the canals within our branch area. It spreads by seeds which are released explosively and can travel as much as 7 metres. It quickly colonises the banks of canals and watercourses displacing our native plants.

There are large areas around the river navigation at Wychnor and smaller clumps besides the canal through Hopwas Woods. IWA is committed to helping CRT prevent its spread along the waterways.

The best time to tackle this weed is when it first comes into flower and is easily recognisable and before it sets seed. This is usually in early to mid July. We therefore propose to have several work parties probably at weekly intervals in July to try to contain this plant which is easily uprooted and destroyed. If you would be interested in taking part, or even just bringing a boat along to provide tea and coffee for our volunteers (we provide the ingredients), please contact us at Lichfield@waterways.org.uk or mention it to Helen Whitehouse at one of our meetings.

You can download a leaflet about Himalayan Balsam from the IWA website:

https://www.waterways.org.uk/news_campaigns/campaigns/himalayan_balsam/himalayan_balsam_leaflet



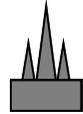
Rugeley Project Update

Although we have been quiet on a practical level, behind the scenes we have been planning our work parties for 2014. We have needed to put things on a 'go slow' for the last couple of months due to major changes of personnel within CRT – we have lost a Volunteering Team Leader, Waterways Engineer, Heritage Engineer, and Maintenance Manager, all of whom were key personnel to us. They have all been promoted within CRT but unfortunately out of the area!

New people are now in place so we will be introducing ourselves over the next few weeks, and hopefully 'picking up the reins' again.

We have three major areas of work to progress with in Rugeley, but in what order is largely down to CRT's input.

Our top priority is the Leathermill Lane area of the town, now that Tesco have finished their development and there is S106 money available. Unfortunately the S106 money is nowhere near enough to improve the access, resurface the towpath, dredge and pile the bank, and put in new mooring rings. We are hoping that CRT can find money within their budget to bridge the



funding gap – watch this space!

In the meantime, one of our February work parties will concentrate on cosmetic work in the area, and also re-badging/painting the CRT signs in the town, as CRT would like the whole re-badging process to be finished by the end of March. **We are looking for volunteers in any other area of our patch to help CRT with the general re-badging work – please contact me if you can help.**

We also have another work party planned to improve the decking at the canal side on Saint Augustine's Field, where we hope to have visitor services and be able to use the decking for the occasional use of small charity trip boats. Work on this site will continue throughout the year.

Our work at the Aqueduct and Brindley Bank area, where we are re-building the canal wall and also plan to put in a new towpath, needs to wait for better weather, so this is 'on hold' for a month or two. However, we seem to have more than enough to keep us going in the meantime!

I am looking for some specialist help on a 'one off basis – we have been given a 10% discount from Pictorial Meadows who supplied the wildflower seeds for the Olympic Park, so it would be really nice to have a wildflower patch somewhere along the canal in Rugeley. However, the ground would need preparing, and the correct seeds purchasing and planting. Those of you who know me will also

know that I don't have a clue about gardening! What we need is someone to talk to the company and find out what seeds are best, and plan what work needs doing – we can then get on with it! **So if you feel that you could do a bit of planning and liaising then please give me a ring!**

Hope to see some of you in February, and don't forget you are more than welcome to come along just to have a look at what we are doing – bringing cake would make us even happier to see you!

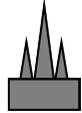
Margaret Beardsmore

Work Party Coordinator

Email Margaret.beardsmore@waterways.org.uk

Mob 07581 794111





The BCN Canal Clean-up

This annual event was started about 20 years ago by the Birmingham and Lichfield Branches of the IWA in conjunction with the Birmingham Canal Navigations Society (BCNS), the Waterway Recovery Group (WRG, wergies for short) and some of the other local canal societies and boat clubs. In those days, significant stretches of the BCN were virtually un-navigable as a result of the amount of rubbish which had accumulated in the canals. The idea for a big BCN clean-up occurred when one of the BCN Icicle Cruises (see below) was disrupted because the Walsall Canal was passable by only 3 of the 12 boats attempting the cruise. Over 200 volunteers from all over the country took part in that clean-up and mountains of rubbish (amounting to many thousands of tons) were removed from the canal. By dint of our efforts, it became possible for anyone to navigate the Walsall Canal. We had prevented it from being abandoned. It proved to British Waterways and the local councils that people cared about this waterway.

This felt like a very empowering moment! It was the 1990's and there had been the danger that the Walsall Canal (a "Remainder Waterway") could have been lost to navigation. By law "Remainder Waterways" only have to be treated in "the most economical manner possible consistent with safety". There was/is no legal requirement to keep them open for navigation. These days, Lichfield Branch IWA is no longer involved with the organisation of the BCN Clean-up. Nonetheless, it is still an important event to support and several of us from this branch hope to go along to take part. There are relatively easy/clean jobs such as litter picking or really fun dirty jobs which involve throwing grappling hooks into the canal and pulling out an intriguing mixture of rubbish. Please consider taking part in this year's BCN Clean-up—details on following page.

If anyone has a grappling hook which they no longer use, please consider donating it to the Lichfield Branch where we can put it to good use. Contact me or bring it along to one of the branch meetings.

Description of an Icicle Cruise.

Icicle Cruises were run by Birmingham Branch of the IWA usually in February or March to encourage boats to cruise the BCN in the winter months. They were great fun especially for those of us who enjoyed a challenge although they were reputed to be the cause of a lot of marital strife! Boats would gather on a Saturday evening at a pre-arranged pub where social activities would continue until throwing out time. On the Sunday morning, as soon as it was light, boats would set off to the lunch-time meeting place where the BBQ team would set up. After a convivial lunch, the boats would disperse hoping to reach a "place of safety" or their home moorings that evening. Most boats had to travel in the dark to do this. Those of us who took part in the Icicle Cruises really enjoyed them and it promoted a great sense of camaraderie. Anyone fancy reviving them?



Join Us on a Canal Clean Up



BCN Clean-Up - Saturday 5th and Sunday 6th April 2014

The big annual Canal Clean up organised by the BCN Society, Coombeswood Canal Trust, Dudley Canal Trust, IWA Birmingham Black Country & Worcestershire Branch and Waterway Recovery Group, working in partnership with the Canal & River Trust, will this year take place around Ashted Locks, Warwick Bar, Garrison Locks and Camp Hill.

The meeting point for those wishing to turn up for either day will be at Camp Hill (CRT Yard), Sampson Road North, Birmingham B11 1BG. Work will be carried out from 9.30am to 4pm each day. All tools and equipment will be provided. Volunteers are advised to wear stout footwear and old clothes and to bring waterproofs. Accommodation and catering is available for those wishing to make a weekend of it (book at www.wrg.org.uk). Tea and coffee will be provided but volunteers are advised to bring a packed lunch if not booked in with WRG.

For further information see www.waterways.org.uk or www.wrg.org.uk



waterway
recovery
group



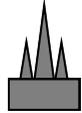
The Inland
Waterways
Association

Coombeswood Canal Trust



Canal &
River Trust





The Year of the Bear—Ian West

2014 is an important year for lovers of Warwickshire Waterways. There is every reason to make these diverse waters your destination of choice once you start getting out and about this summer.

We call it the Year of the Bear, and it has already started.

Last October saw the celebration of the 200th anniversary of the opening of the of Wootton Wawen Aquaduct on the South Stratford Canal. 2014 goes on to celebrate

- 50 years since the re-opening of the Stratford Canal marked at the time by the IWA National Rally, opened by the Queen Mother. You may have been there.
- 40 years since the reopening of the Upper Avon from Stratford to Evesham
- 40 years since WRG's first big dig on the Ashton Canal
- 80 years since the widening of the GU locks to Tyseley.
- 100th anniversary of Robert Aickman's birth

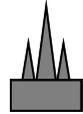
Add in to all those the 50th Anniversary of the formation of Association of Waterways Cruising Clubs (AWCC) who are holding their birthday party at the Black Buoy Cruising Club, tied with the annual Sea Otter Gathering also being held in the Saltisford Arm, Warwick, and tie in the 450th anniversary of William Shakespeare's birth, where is there better to spend time next year but on Warwickshire waterways, centreing around the magnificent Stratford River Festival at the beginning of July.



There is lots to see and do to celebrate the waterways environment, whether you own a boat or not.

For Boaters there are the AWCC and Sea Otter events mentioned above, but also the Stratford River Festival with its excellent boat gathering, followed by further Festivals at Evesham, Pershore and the Medieval Fayre at Tewkesbury. Meet old friends and follow the river down to its confluence with the Severn, and help bring some life back to these areas after the winter floods.

All attendance and support will help the IWA and Stratford and Warwick Waterways Trust (SWWT) campaign for the opening of the higher Avon all the way to Warwick.



For canoeists there are two events planned to tie in with the Stratford River Festival. If you are interested in helping to organise these events, or in taking part, then contact the organising group :

Stratford-on-Avon Canal Society (SonACS) are organising a celebration of the original canoe trip that saved the Stratford Canal when Michael Fox , his daughter Geraldine and John Pinder (joined by others at times) canoed from Hockley Heath to Stratford thus proving navigation and saving the canal from closure
Warwickshire Branch of the IWA are organising a canoe trip hopefully from above Leamington all the way down through Warwick and past the Castle, through Charlecote and finally to Stratford

Other opportunities to wet your feet in rarely travelled waterways come with :

The Annual Doggy Paddle organised by Leamington Boat Club and the BCU from Leamington to Stratford, in support of the Guide Dogs for the Blind
The Annual Wasperton to Stratford Raft Race organised by Wellesbourne Lions in support of their chosen charities

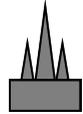
For walkers there are two opportunities to try out two long distance footpaths only opened and recognised in the last 5 years:

Walk the Shakespeare Way (145 miles) from the Globe Theatre in London to Stratford, following the most likely route that Shakespeare himself may have used when he made the trip. Initially following the Thames to Brentford, and then the Grand Union Canal to Iver, cutting north through Burnham Beeches to the Thames at Marlow. Then follow the river to Oxford before cutting North again through Blenheim Palace to Stratford. Maps for the route are sold in aid of The Stratford Hospice

Walking Shakespeare's Avon Way (88 miles) will take you through fields of history, following the River Avon as closely as possible from the site of the Battle of Naseby, within a skip and a jump of Kenilworth Castle, before heading on to Warwick (and its famous Castle) and Stratford. For the adventurous, beyond Stratford, the route continues to the sites of the Battle of Evesham and the Battle of Tewkesbury.

Those wanting a shorter walk need to keep an eye on the WRG publication Navvies for details of a potential walk from the Tom o the Wood in Rowington via various historically important (and occasionally licenced) sites to Stratford in time for the fireworks at the Stratford River Festival.

Runners may be interested in details of the Grand Union Canal Race that takes place every Whitsun Bank Holiday, from Gas St Basin in Birmingham to Little Venice – a total distance of



145 miles, but at least the first marathon and a half stays within Warwickshire. For those wishing to participate, entries are believed to be limited to 90, so early application is recommended.

Cyclists are being encouraged to give support to the completion of Sustrans Route 41. This currently follows the Blue Lias ridge that borders the River Avon to the South, and runs from Rugby to Tewkesbury, although there are a few miles missing in the middle of Warwick, and a lot missing once you get between Stratford and Evesham. There however it picks up again. Once complete Route 41 will take you all the way to Tewkesbury and then follow the River Severn to Bristol.

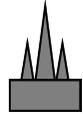
Planning Matters—Phil Sharpe, Planning Officer

This report covers the three months from late October to late January during which over 50 planning applications, local plan consultations and other planning matters have been dealt with. These are all summarised in the monthly notes on the Planning page of our Branch website and some of the more significant ones are described below.

Stafford Borough includes parts of the Staffs & Worcs, Trent & Mersey and Shropshire Union canals and I attended the examination hearing into The Plan for Stafford Borough to reinforce our case against a general ban on the provision of residential moorings in new marinas.

On the Staffordshire & Worcestershire Canal in Stafford an Outline application for up to 80 houses south of Radford Bank is contrary to the local plan and would harm the environment of the canal's Conservation Area. It would extend from existing housing down the valley side across fields to the offside of the canal, although retention of trees and a canalside area of public open space is promised to limit the impact.

On the Trent & Mersey Canal at Tatenhill Lane, Branston, near Burton the previously consented plans for 28 houses between the Bridge Inn and Branston Water Park have been replaced by 55 houses of an angular modern design which we consider inappropriate alongside the canal Conservation Area. We have also objected to East Staffordshire Borough Council's Pre-Submission Local Plan being based on unjustified population growth forecasts and an excessive housing requirement leading to allocation of several large greenfield sites of which Lawns Farm ("Branston Locks") is the largest and could significantly harm the canal environment. At Alrewas the previously refused Essington Farm site has resurfaced as a plan for 151 houses north of Dark Lane, including several close to the canal above Alrewas Lock in the Conservation Area. As well as objecting to these, we have expressed doubts about the practicality of the proposed moorings on the river between the lock and weir, where intermittent flooding makes this an unsuitable site for long term moorings and visitor moorings would need extensive engineering.



Alongside the Coventry Canal just south of Nuneaton a large greenfield housing site in open countryside at Gypsy Lane has been proposed in the Preferred Options Borough Plan and an application for up to 575 houses is already being considered, even though the plan is not yet approved and is contrary to National Planning Policy on protection of the Green Belt. We have objected but asked that if it proceeds a much wider corridor of landscaped open space should be required along the canal frontage.



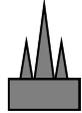
Part of the proposed Gypsy Lane housing site at Nuneaton seen from Griff Arm Turnover Bridge 18/

On the Ashby Canal a replacement underground sewage treatment plant at Sutton Cheney Wharf was supported and has now been approved.

On the Wyrley & Essington Canal at Brownhills the land at Catshill Junction, once dominated by a now demolished block of flats, is to be redeveloped with houses and apartments. Although there will be canalside open space and landscaping we thought that the design of the 3 and 4 storey apartment blocks was rather plain and uninspiring. At Goscote the large scale housing regeneration area, which previously included building on canalside open space at The Lea, has been resubmitted with the Green Belt sites preserved and acceptable plans for new houses on the cleared area of derelict land off Shakespeare Crescent, with the houses facing the canal with canalside landscaping and open spaces.

The HS2 High Speed Rail scheme remains a major concern with simultaneous consultations on Phase 1 and Phase 2 both needing responses before the end of January. After attending several exhibitions our submitted Phase 2 response covers the noise impact of the Manchester Line north of Fradley Junction and the major damage to Great Haywood Marina that will be caused without changes to the alignment and design. At Polesworth the Leeds line would effectively destroy Pooley Country Park and seriously impact the moorings, and at Measham it could prevent further restoration of the Ashby Canal unless new rail and motorway bridges are included.

The Government response to representations on the Draft Environmental Statement, as advised by HS2 Ltd., was to reject virtually all suggested improvements including ours for realignment avoiding the canal crossings above and below Woodend Lock. However, they have restricted the extent of the temporary material stockpile area between Streethay and Huddlesford to the west side of the Coventry Canal, avoiding Kings Orchard Marina, and a haul road crossing the



Lichfield Canal west of Cappers Lane has also been removed.

The High Speed Rail Bill has now been published and the full Environmental Statement for Phase 1 (London to Handsacre) is a massive set of reports and plans, yet the consultation period allowed was less than 2 months, including Christmas. IWA will respond nationally to this and our local input has been mainly in support of the consultancy report from Hyder, commissioned jointly with CRT. This has

confirmed that a viable alternative alignment exists which avoids the double crossing of the canal by the Streethay-Handsacre link and has also revealed engineering flaws in HS2's alignment that further strengthen our case.

The IWA/CRT alternative would be cheaper to build, create less disruption during construction, preserve the canal heritage and environment, reduce the height of the line and its visual and noise impacts, and destroy a smaller area of ancient woodlands. This will now hopefully be considered by a Parliamentary select committee but if necessary CRT will have the option of petitioning against the Bill.



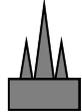
Before and after views just south of the Trent & Mersey Canal above Shadehouse Lock at Fradley Junction. Showing the effects of HS2

Audlem Mill Canal Art Exhibition

From 6th April to 4th May 2014 Audlem Mill are holding their Canal Art Exhibition with entries from most of the leading waterways artists. This will include photographs as well as paintings. It is a bit outside our area but well worth a visit!

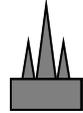
Audlem Mill can be found beside the Shropshire Union Canal near bridge 78 at Audlem.





Your Committee

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