

Caldon Canal



Sunday 28
September
2014

Cheddleton

Supplement to Knobsticks, Cherry Eye and Paddle Post



Narrow Boat "Beatrice" emerges from Top Lock (no. 13) at Cheddleton on Sunday 28th September 2014 (40 years to the day after the Caldon Canal was re-opened to navigation).

Inset: "Caldon Coleter" was the first boat through Cheddleton Top Lock at the re-opening ceremony on 28th September 1974.



Celebrating 40 Years of the Restored Caldon Canal



Ken Marek (far right), one of the 2014 event organising team from Stoke on Trent Boat Club, lends a hand to narrow boat Lleuwen skippered by John Eaves who was “harbour master” for the reopening event in 1974. Passing narrow boat Helen is skippered by John Dodwell who was also at the event in 1974, and today is a volunteer Trustee of the Canal & River Trust.

Roger Savage (Founder member of the Caldon Canal Society, and Vice President of IWA North Staffs & South Cheshire Branch) was MC for the day, and reports ...

On Sunday September 28th, we held a waterway community day at Cheddleton to celebrate the reopening of the Caldon Canal there 40 years ago. We were not trying to exactly repeat the ceremony of 1974 but had invited representatives of organisations involved then, together with original guests and the family of those who are no longer with us but made a significant contribution to the campaign to reopen the Caldon Canal. The day was well supported with a variety of stands beside the Flint Mill which was also open; and others such as the vans

from Peak Pedal were in front of Castro's Restaurant to publicise their project.

When I moved to Cheddleton in 1967, the locks here were derelict and much of the canal was choked with reeds so that the channel, which was navigable – just – through Endon to Hazlehurst Junction was only 4 feet wide in places.

One of the first guests to arrive was Ian Dudson CBE, HM Lord Lieutenant for Staffordshire and his wife, Jane. They took the opportunity to visit the stalls before embarking on nb *Beatrice* for the ceremony. Ian is no stranger to the towpath, having walked it when he was High Sheriff as part of his 150 plus mile charity walk when he

Celebrating 40 Years of the Restored Caldon Canal



Ian visiting the RSPB Coombes & Churnet Valley stall run by Lucy Hodson.

raised money for the Staffordshire Community Fund. He is also Patron of the Burslem Port Trust and of the Trent & Mersey Canal Society.

The Official Party were divided in two: the first to board *Beatrice* and the second to form up on the lock-side, ready for the ceremony. The locks were operated by members of Stoke Boat Club. At 11.30, they filled the top lock, opened the gates and let *Beatrice* into the lock mouth, where she remained whilst the ceremony took place.

Ian Dudson who, as Lord Lieutenant, represents the whole of Staffordshire including the City of Stoke-on-Trent, opened the official proceedings. He recalled living in Cheddleton as a teenager and paid tribute to the early volunteers. The City and County were the main funders of the restoration, but the work was carried out by British Waterways.

That organization is no more, having been replaced nearly two years ago by the Canal & River Trust (CRT) whose Chief Executive, Richard Parry, also paid tribute to the work of the original volunteers for their vision and tenacity in getting what he described as “this stunning canal” opened forty years ago.

Also on board were Julie Arnold (Chair, Caldon & Uttoxeter Canal Trust (CUCT)) which is actively involved with the Churnet Valley Living Landscape Project (CVLLP); Cllr Gill Heath (Staffordshire CC Rural Affairs & Waterways Group); Cllr Barbara Hine and Cllr Christine Meyrick (both from Cheddleton Parish Council); Charlotte Atkins (Chair, CRT Central Shires Partnership); Graham Churton (Commodore, Stoke Boat Club); and Les Etheridge (Chair, Inland Waterways Association (IWA)) and Mrs Etheridge. Cllr Ruth Rosenau (Cabinet member for Regeneration, City of Stoke-on-Trent Council) was unable to attend due to illness.

Julie Arnold rounded the first batch of speeches off by reading a message from Tony Hales, (Chairman, CRT) who was unable to attend but said “We are in Naples for a wedding. The Caldon Canal is a beautiful canal and owes its existence today to the determination and hard work and at times bloody-mindedness of some great volunteers. We need that continuing spirit in the Canal and River Trust today to ensure we continue to have living waterways that enrich people lives. Congratulations on the celebration, thank you to all the organisation team and have a great weekend. I am sure Sir Frank would echo those sentiments from his home in Spain”. It was good to learn that Sir Frank Price, then Chairman of British Waterways Board and whose name appears on the commemorative panel beside the lock, is enjoying his retirement in Spain.

Before we let *Beatrice* enter the lock John Dodwell spoke [*Speech on Page 10 - Ed*], representing the fourth partner, the volunteers of the Inland Waterways Association (IWA) nationally and the

Celebrating 40 Years of the Restored Caldon Canal

Caldon Canal Society (CCS), as it was then called. John was General Secretary of IWA at the time and is now still active as one of the ten Trustees of the Canal & River Trust. *Beatrice* completed her descent and made way for John Dodwell's boat *Helen*, a riveted iron-hulled tug built by Harris Bros of Bumblehole, Netherton during the war in 1942. It was owned by Joseph Holloway & Son (Oldbury) and pulled their coal delivery fleet. This continued after the war with Leonard Leigh Ltd, taking coal from the Cannock coalfield to power stations and elsewhere in the Black Country. It has a 3-cylinder Bolinder engine and a 20" propeller. It passed into Bill Young's ownership (he who operated *Birdswood* as a horse-drawn trip boat at Froghall) in 1964. The present superstructure was added at Roger Fuller's yard in 1991.

On board was Steve Wood (Chairman of the CUCT Uttoxeter Restoration Committee) who described what the red shirted volunteers of WRG were doing the previous day down on the Uttoxeter canal, where they had completed work on laying a footpath beside the canal at Crumpwood. They then came to Cheddleton where they assisted in setting up the stalls for the Community Waterway day.

The next two boats to go down were crewed by people who, in the words coined for the day by Harry Arnold had been "there before in '74". Firstly, John Eaves in *Lleuwen* with his wife Jean who had typed the original guest list which I had used as the basis of the invitations 40 years later. John Eaves was harbour master at the time and was stationed in the cottage that existed before Castro's restaurant was built in its place. The welcome then was a little more alcoholic than it has been in 2014. John

recalled that each guest was greeted with a glass of sherry. As John was packing up ready to join the procession, a late arrival from the County Council arrived afraid he had missed the boat. Since he was carrying a bottle of whisky, what else could John do but invite him aboard. *Lleuwen* wasn't built at the time, but in itself is interesting as it was built by John himself and won him an award.

Sharing the lock with John and Jean were Chris and Mair Potter on *Fleur d'Eau*. This was one of the earliest purpose-built pleasure boats. The majority of boats at that time were either conversions of ships lifeboats, or cut down boats created from old working boats, or small fibre-glass boats. *Fleur d'Eau* was built by Dobsons of Shardlow for the 1969 Earls Court Boat Show and has been owned by the Potters since 1972. It is one of three boats present in 2014 with the same crew as in 1974. It is still powered by the original Stuart Turner 12HP petrol engine. It has cruised most of the British inland waterways and is no stranger to tidal rivers such as the Trent, Thames, Ouse and Ribble.

Next boat locking up was *Shamus* with Graham Parker and family and Glennis



Roger Savage hands the mic to Glennis Fradley on Shamus.

Celebrating 40 Years of the Restored Caldon Canal

Fradley. In 1974, Glennis was on board the leading Official Boat *Caldon Coleter* with Sir Frank Price and Mrs Oxford, who cut the vital ribbon and declared the Caldon Canal open. Ben Fradley steered the boat with the Official Party then. He was one of the prime movers of the campaign, a key person in setting up the Caldon Canal Society and in harnessing the support of the IWA.

Graham was one of the regular working party – and there was a well-known photo of him on display in the marquee, covered in mud in the depths of Stockton Brook lock. Graham recalled that *Shamus* was the second of the 10 boats in the original procession. They took the guests down to Consall Forge, where they were served lunch in a marquee beside the lime kilns. There were three generations of Parkers on board, with grandson Robert at the helm. The boat was one of two built at Market Drayton and, unusually for the time, had a transverse engine with hydraulic drive.

Sharing the lock with *Shamus* was Dave and Gwen Salt's *Caldon Witch*, the third boat with the same crew surviving from those early days. It is a fibre glass boat built by Loftus Bennett: a pioneer in the use of that material. They erred on the side of caution

and the fibre glass is much thicker than on modern boats of this type. Dave and Gwen went on to cruise the 2000 miles of the canal system for many years and eventually notched up an impressive number of cruising miles equalling the circumference of the earth!

Next came the second instalment of the Official Party on board day boat *Joshua* steered by Rupert Smedley. One notable absentee was John van der Laarshott, Chief Executive of Stoke City Council. Unfortunately, he was recovering from a minor op and not sufficiently mobile to join us. He is a boat owner and was very much looking forward to taking part in the day and sent his best wishes.

Those actually on board were Darren Green (Manager, CRT Central Shires); Cllr Chris Furness who comes from Derbyshire and is much involved with the Peak Pedal scheme; Alison Smedley MBE who has been Secretary and Chair of IWA Stoke-on-Trent Branch, now renamed North Staffs and South Cheshire Branch (NSSC). She is currently Support Officer for IWA Branches throughout the country and has mainly been involved locally organising Balsam Bashes, especially in the Churnet Valley, to try to eliminate the invasive Himalayan Balsam.

Also on board was Malcolm Braine, the well-known boatbuilder. His boat *Cactus* was based on the Caldon for a few months in 1974. I wrote to all the local schools and we had over a thousand children on board in that time. This was important, showing the local authority what an important educational asset the canal is. *Cactus* was based in Endon basin, before the Boat Club moved there. The water then was crystal clear – you could see the bottom clearly – and



Caldon Witch with David and Gwen Salt, Stoke Boat Club and Caldon Canal volunteers.



Saturday: The restoration continues near Bridge 70 / Sunday





Day : Celebrating 40th Anniversary of re-opening at Cheddleton



Celebrating 40 Years of the Restored Caldon Canal

through Hanley by the pot banks, you could see the shards on the bottom.

Also on board *Joshua* was Carla Thompson (widow of Mike Thompson, Caldon Canal Society's working party organiser) and her guest Jane Cotterill. She said, "Unfortunately, neither my son nor daughter can make it today and they would have loved to be here. They spent many weekends during their first few years playing by the Caldon while we worked. My daughter remembers the fabulous sandwiches and cake provided by the landlady at Consall Forge. My good friend Jane Cotterill and I have walked along the Caldon Canal many times. She has heard my stories about the restoration and all the hard work, and fun as well, before it was reopened."

Beside her was Bob Keaveney who, as a young man, steered *Felix* on which his father Ted was host. It was erstwhile chair of IWA Ken Goodwin's boat but Ken was on the Official Boat. It is now owned by branch member Father Brian Williams. Next were Karen & Peter Wyatt from the Canal Cruising Co. They run the oldest established canal boat hire firm, based in Stone, and have always supported the local IWA branch. Peter's father was present in 1974. Lastly, we welcomed Simon Pappriill, Enterprise Manager for CRT Central Shires, who sits on the Staffordshire Waterways Group and has worked in support of the Churnet Valley Living Landscape Project.

The last boat up was *Almira* with Anne & Alan Chetwyn and Judith Turner. Alan has been Treasurer of the local IWA branch for many years. He will be paying the bills for this event. He has also run national raffles to raise funds, very successfully. Anne is a dab

hand at folding raffle tickets by the thousand. We drew the raffle later that afternoon. Alan's father Arthur owned a converted 35ft Joey boat named *Cynara*. *Almira* was Alan's uncle Harry Turner's boat and was one of the first purpose-built private narrow boat style cruisers. Judith (Harry's daughter) recalled the occasion when Harry, in his underpants, entered the water to clear obstructions behind lock gates at Stockton Brook. Harry was Commodore of Stoke Boat Club at the time and was a founder member of the local IWA Committee, one of the prime campaigners for the restoration of the Caldon.

Just as *Almira* was leaving the lock, the unmistakable clatter of a single Bolinder could be heard coming under the road bridge. It was Malcolm Braine's *Cactus*, the full-length Fellows Morton & Clayton working boat that had played a major role in transporting so many school parties along the summit pound in the 1970s. It was steered by his son, Ian, whose firm now carries out maintenance work on local canals, especially the Caldon, which needs spot dredging every year. Recently, the winding holes above and below the Cheddleton locks have been cleared so that *Beatrice* could operate without problems. *Cactus* has had a distinguished career. In the same year as our canal was reopened, *Cactus* was present when the Queen Mother opened the Upper Avon Navigation, having previously taken her on board when she opened the restored Stratford Canal. Before restoration, locks at Stockton Brook and Cheddleton were timber lined. As we were bringing *Cactus* onto the Caldon, one balk of timber about 30ft by 6" by 3" became detached and fell onto the gunwale. It was fitting that *Cactus* brought the ceremony to a conclusion and normal traffic resumed.

Celebrating 40 Years of the Restored Caldon Canal

During the ceremony, it was good to see so many people whom I had not met for forty years, bringing to mind all those pioneers who had played a part in the restoration campaign. Harold Bode was Secretary of CCS and indefatigable campaigner for many years: his widow Jean came to the IWA AGM on Saturday and his son Andrew was one of the bell ringers whose peal announced the open air service which took place in the early afternoon.

It was good too to see Jim Davenport's family, Kath and Mike Inman. Jim was the BW lengthsman who lived at Hazlehurst. His cows grazed the Leek Arm towpath and kept the vegetation down – even if you had to watch where you stepped! He was kept busy in times of heavy rainfall raising the sluices to let flood water from the Leek Arm into the Churnet. On one occasion, all the fish were washed out of the ponds below the Arm.

Beryl & Harry Arnold MBE had attended the original re-opening. Harry, a lifelong waterways photographer and journalist with an encyclopaedic knowledge of all things waterway, recalled that he had undertaken a survey of the canal on behalf of the Caldon Canal Society at the start of the restoration process.

Also present was April Lockett and other members of Cliff Evans' family. Cliff was a lifelong member of the Society, much involved in the distribution of the magazine *Cherry Eye* over the years. I can remember April as a toddler watching Rod Butterworth, another early stalwart, clearing silt from the depths of a Stockton Brook lock.

A surprise visitor was Roger Hill, who appeared by my side bearing the Staffs CC

brochure which he had written for use at the ceremony – his memories of working with Gordon Myatt, then Chairman of CCS, and Brian Haskins, then BW engineer and an example of a real enthusiast for the project, reminded me of the political aspect of the restoration. His memories will form part of a future article in *Knobsticks*.

We must also mention the stall holders and the Burger van which added to the atmosphere on the day; also the Flint Mill volunteers and local residents, members of the WRG working party, and Batemans for use of their car park, admirably supervised by the local Scouts. And of course Dave Ellerton at the Red Lion, for use of their ground for the marquee. His father Ken had provided the bar at similar Boat Club and CCS functions in the early years.

Finally, we must pay tribute to those who played a major role but who have now passed on – Gordon Myatt, Chairman of the Caldon Canal Society from its inception; Harold Bode, the secretary; Guy Barks, who did so much behind the scenes negotiating with the local authorities; Brian Haskins, BW engineer; Ben Fradley, Harry Turner, and Jim Ridgway and the Sea Scouts.

And to look forward to further work – when I stood at Froghall basin all those years ago, we never dreamt that the basin would be restored, let alone the Uttoxeter canal all the way past Alton Towers. The Caldon is an example of a successful restoration. In 1974, there were fewer than 30 boats on this canal, and I knew everyone. Last year, there were more than 3,000 boat movements. If we could get down to Uttoxeter, that number would certainly increase – that's our target now.

Roger Savage

John Dodwell's Speech

Perhaps you thought the speeches were over - but someone has to be last! 40 years ago I was here representing The Inland Waterways Association when the then chairman of British Waterways formally re-opened this lock. I was one of the volunteers described as “bloody-minded” by Tony Hales! Now I am back as one of the ten national Trustees of Canal & River Trust, the successor to British Waterways. I've been back before, but this time I have brought my 1942 built old Birmingham tug *Helen* – as you can see. My wife and I are going to be spending the better part of the next week on the Caldon, doing our bit for the local tourist economy.

When I first saw the Froghall Branch, it was derelict and part was piped. The section coming out from Stoke-on-Trent was only



Helen moored in Froghall basin a few days later
Photo: John Dodwell

just usable. So I want to add my thanks to others who have praised Stoke-on-Trent City Council, Staffordshire County Council and others for enabling the 1970s restoration. There were many voluntary heroes and heroines in those days – some are here (Hello, Harry!) – and I'm pleased to see Ben Fradley's wife Glennis here as Ben was a doughty warrior for the Canal, helped by the Stoke-on-Trent Boat Club, the Inland Waterways Association and others.

The involvement of the local authorities has continued. On my way here by boat, I saw the towpath improvement works being carried out as part of the Peak Pedal project. Canal & River Trust does basic maintenance of towpaths even though the public don't directly pay to use them so it seems rather appropriate to me that – on behalf of the public – the local authority has procured the funds for these improvements.

Let's now look forward. The Caldon and Uttoxeter Canal Trust wants to continue the restoration back towards the original terminus at Uttoxeter. As a member of that Trust, I personally support their aim but I bring no bags of gold from Canal & River Trust; our main responsibility has to be to the 2,000 miles of navigable canal and river we look after. However, our charitable objects include restoration and we support the concept – just look at our video “How Water Adds Value”.

The work of revitalising the Churnet valley and the area around it needs to continue and we have seen elsewhere the benefits restored waterways bring to rural economies. That's one reason why I am pleased to see here today Councillor Gill Heath from Staffordshire's Rural Affairs and

John Dodwell's Speech

Waterways Group; Charlotte Atkins, CRT's local waterways partnership chair who can help draw the strings together. It's a pity that both Councillor Ruth Rosenau, Stoke's Cabinet member for regeneration and Stoke's Chief Executive Officer have been prevented from attending due to illness. For I see that it is the local authorities, in response to public pressure to restore the Uttoxeter Canal for the benefit of local people, who will be at the forefront of finding the money – working through the LEP and by applying for Government grants – along with, I hope, the Heritage Lottery Fund.

In fact, work has already started – with the lock into Froghall Basin being restored a decade ago. More recently, I'm told by Steve Wood, Chair of the Restoration Committee

(who for some strange reason was put on my boat!) that Bridge 70 at Crumpwood – an original canal bridge – is nearly restored, partly through a week's holiday by members of the IWA's Waterways Recovery Group. Can you believe that people use their holidays to restore canals? Indeed, Steve tells me that this very weekend volunteers have given up their time and are working on the towpath down there. They prefer practical work to listening to people like me!

So, I say, all power to the volunteers. To adapt a phrase "let's give them the money for the equipment they need and they'll finish the job" So I conclude by saying "Onward to Uttoxeter!"

John Dodwell (CRT Trustee)

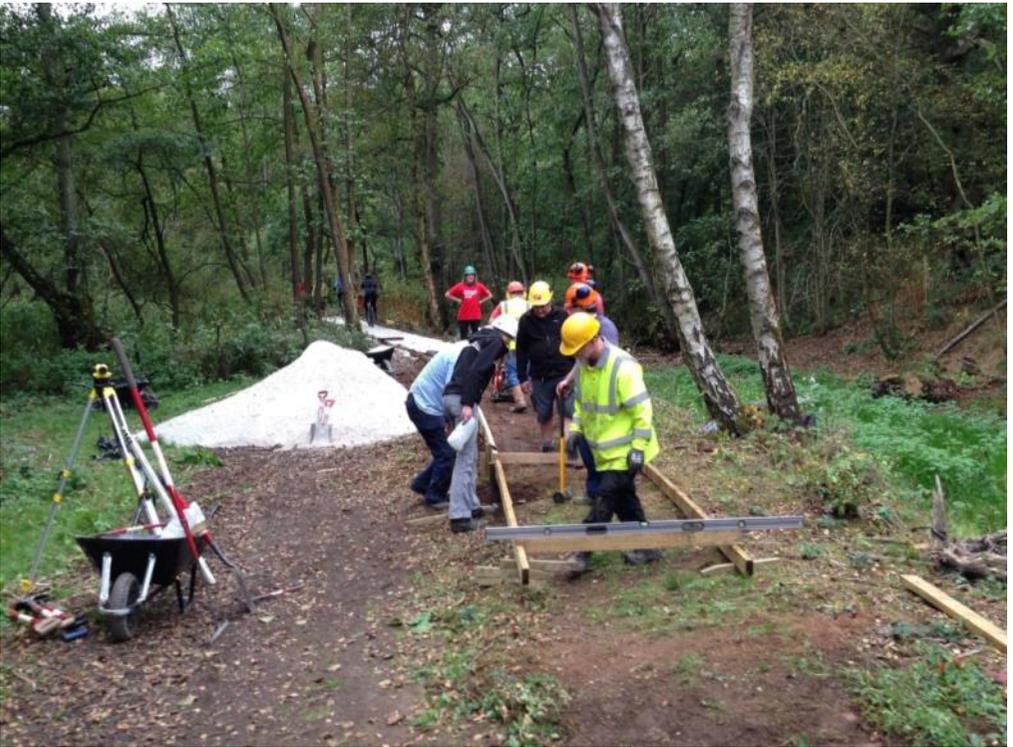


Dan Boys of the Churnet Valley Speaks: Community Audio Project - part of the Churnet Valley Living Landscape Partnership - interviews Ivor Lucas, skipper of Beatrice, which led the ceremony.

28 September 2014

Page 11

Restoration continues



wrg path-laying on the Saturday approaching Bridge 70. The finished path is shown below. Next year we will do more work on the bridge, re-grade the slope, then link the path up.



The “Caldon 40” event was staged by the Caldon & Uttoxeter Canals Trust, The Beatrice Charity, Stoke-on-Trent Boat Club and The Inland Waterways Association – North Staffordshire & South Cheshire branch, working in partnership with Canal & River Trust, the community of Cheddleton, and many others including the Churnet Valley Living Landscape Partnership. This Caldon 40 supplement was created in November 2014 by Roger Evans on behalf of IWA NSSC, CUCT and SoTBC.

Photographs of restoration in progress (this page and top of centre pages) © Steve Wood. All other photographs are © Waterway Images, who volunteered at the event to record the historic occasion for the Caldon & Uttoxeter Canals Trust.