

THE LEGGER



THE JOURNAL OF THE DUDLEY CANAL TRUST

Autumn 2009

No. 214

DUDLEY CANAL TRUST

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Editorial

The committee wish to express their thanks and appreciation to Bob Mullen for his long and excellent tenure as editor of the Legger.

What now passes for a summer is fast entering its dogdays and it is with some trepidation I have been persuaded to pick up the baton and take custody of the Legger to continue the journey into the future that this journal will take. The heritage and history of the Dudley Canal Trust is a great responsibility and I hope that I will be able to do some justice to the position of editor of this journal.

For my first issue I have been blessed with a mass of content, for which I thank the contributors.

Having been personally involved, I would particularly like to comment on the saga of Bittell's long tour around several canal events. What is not clear from the article is the number of people involved in moving the boat (14 and Zak the dog), local members providing the majority of the crew but members from farther afield were involved, if only for one day. In order to encourage support for these trips, we are organising a members day on Sunday 8th November at Tipton, to which we are inviting members to come and have a go on our historic boats. We all had to start somewhere and we all got it wrong (and still do), so come on down and play boats, it's fun! See page 14 for details.

In a break with recent tradition I have decided to feature work by local artists or local canal scenes on the Legger's front cover, if you are an artist or know anyone who would like to exhibit their work on the cover of our journal please get in touch.

I hope you enjoy my first effort.

Gavin Lawson
Editor

Comments, Complaints, Letters, Articles and Pictures are welcome.

legger@live.co.uk

Deadline for the next edition Tuesday 10th November.

Chairman's Notes



Pontcysyllte Aqueduct

It was announced in July that, after due deliberation by The UNESCO World Heritage Committee, that Pontcysyllte Aqueduct was to be given World Heritage Site Status. A Status symbol worth having! Such an accolade is not easily won and congratulations are due to the authorities in Wrexham for pursuing their case through to a successful conclusion. It is gratifying to know that at least part of our canal system is worthy of such recognition.

I wonder if amongst all the speeches that were doubtless made on receiving the news anyone bothered to mention that this magnificent piece of engineering was on a canal legally abandoned by Act of Parliament, much as our own canal is. Perhaps to be successful one has to be abandoned by our own Government and is almost certainly a prerequisite to being recognised by UNESCO.

I feel that I should not need to describe the aqueduct to the readers of a canal society magazine, but I have to show some deference to those who have not been fortunate enough to see it, walk across it or have the undeniable breathtaking privilege of taking a boat over it.

It is a 1007 ft long wrought iron trough spanning the valley of the River Dee some 8 miles below Llangollen. As it crosses the River Dee the water level in the canal is 126 ft above the river. The trough is in the form of 19 arches supported on 18 piers. The whole thing was opened in 1805 the same year as the Wrens Nest Tunnel and the Battle of Trafalgar, which we won!

There is a car park, visitor centre & toilets at National Grid reference SJ 271422 that will get you to within 100 metres. All Ordnance Survey maps carry a note on how to use grid references. Never leave home without one!

At the same meeting, The UNESCO World Heritage Committee decided to strip an 18 Km length of the Elbe valley in Germany, just upstream of Dresden, of its World Heritage Site Status because of the unacceptable impact that a new bridge across the river would have on the area.

I find this a little ironic. The last bridge to be built across the valley was the world's first cantilever bridge. It may not be beautiful but it is spectacular and paved the way for our own Forth Railway Bridge and many others of the style. From the artist's impression, or these days, computer generated image that I have seen of the proposed bridge, it appears to be an elegant solution using state of the art engineering. In other words it is showing off what the civil engineering profession can do to be sensitive in a sensitive area.

It is diametrically opposed to the brutal engineering solutions employed in threading the various motorways and link roads through the Black Country and the total disregard for the canals they either followed or crossed. At every opportunity, if a motorway support could stand in the canal rather than on the land at either side, it went in the canal. The engineering solution to carrying a new link road adjacent to Telford's Galton Bridge, over the canal, was not to say "here is an example of the finest bridge building of its age. Lets show the world what we can do with

our engineering magic 150 years later." The solution was to put the canal through a pipe and call it a tunnel. The pipe in question was furnished with one towing path. When Telford constructed the New main line from Birmingham to Tipton he gave it two towing paths. Therefore for several miles around Smethwick, because one of the towing paths is not continuous much of it is now overgrown, unusable and certainly not maintained.

So what chances of World Heritage Site Status for the BCN? If UNESCO are going to pull a long face at a fairly elegant bridge over the Elbe, I think that we have already allowed too much damage to be done to the BCN for it to get anywhere near serious consideration. I hope I am wrong.

As a footnote, BW have still not been paid by the Dept of Transport for the land used in the construction of the midland motorway network, and it has been open for 40 years.

To domestic things,

After months of negotiating with British Waterways, Dudley Canal Trust agreed to take over the full length motor narrow boat "Sagitta" from the British Waterways historic boat fleet. The boat is in basically sound condition, although Steve Bingham has already identified and remedied some faults on the engine & transmission.

It was agreed that the boat will be moored at the BCLM on our own moorings. The main purpose for having the boat would be for educational reasons for general public and school children alike.

Steve has written at length about our aspirations for this boat elsewhere in this edition of the Legger and I shall not steal his thunder here. Our intention is that we shall be able to take "Sagitta" to canal events in greater comfort and with much more substantial promotional display than with "Bittell". For this we will need crew, and that means you!

Vic Smallshire.
Chairman.



Above is a classic example of the sort of brutal engineering solution, much loved by the engineers of the 60s & 70s when we were all too busy looking at the girls in mini skirts to pay attention to what was being built around us. This is the sort of thing, and there are many other examples, that could cost the BCN its World Heritage Site Status.

In the last issue Vic wrote about the plague of bizzare wooden posts that in their infinite wisdom British Waterways are planting on the offside of all locks, perhaps thinking that they will grow into trees!

It was at Atherstone Locks (notoriously slow to fill), when I was helping to move Bittell from Middlewich to Braunston, that I had a flash of insight... they are placed there to sit on while locks fill and drain, surely it can't be that simple?

Any other ideas? - *Ed.*

History of Sagitta

"Sagitta" is a Grand Union Star Class boat, built in 1935 by Yarwoods of Northwich on the River Weaver at 71' 6" long, 7' beam, 3' draught. Its original butty "Serpens" was built at the same time.

The original engine was a Russell Newbury DM 2 (it now has a twin cylinder HR Lister 29.5 hp @ 2200 rpm with a Blackstone Gearbox).

The boat was delivered to the Grand Union Canal Carrying Company Limited, on the 20th June 1935. Its fleet number was 80. A mister Fredrick Webster was put in charge as master of the boat. "Sagitta" was registered at Brentford on the 3rd September 1935 with a registration number 526.

On the 14th September 1944 "Sagitta" was not listed as being active in the G.U.C.C.Co Ltd Fleet !

In February 1944 she had been reported on being moored for some time at Stockley Dock, upon close investigation the boat was found to be in poor state and partly SUNK ! with NO engine !

1st January 1948, the whole fleet of boats registered with the G.U.C.C.Co Ltd were Nationalised ! This is where British Waterways (South Eastern Division) took over "Sagitta" and possiblity fitted the twin cylinder Lister engine. The livery was also changed into the blue & yellow of British Waterways. During the 1960's Bill Littler and his wife lived and worked on "Sagitta" delivering coal and other cargos.

Then in 1974 "Sagitta" went into the British Waterways Maintenance Fleet where she would be used for delivering cargos of pilings up and down the Shropshire Union Canal.

The boat could be seen moored at Norbury Junction.

In 1982 "Sagitta" was laid up again ! In the Wides at Nantwich where it was put up FOR SALE.

Peter Harrison told me he had put a bid in for the boat, but it was turned down by Sir Frank Price.

Opposite: Top, Jessica Black of BW hands Sagitta over to Vic Smallshire (centre) and Steve Bingham (right). Bottom, Sagitta breaking ice.

Overleaf: Top, Bill Littler and his wife. Bottom, Sagitta at Deepfields July 2009.





In 1991 "Sagitta" was taken over by Staffordshire County Council who spent a lot of money converting the hold of the boat into a floating class room. The engine was also moved back to allow enough room to build a working boatmans cabin. The boat was also repainted. "Sagitta" was then paired up with the Butty "Carina". Both boats went to events around the Staffordshire Canals where school children were educated on water safety and the history of the canal system.

Around 2003 British Waterways took over the boat, where some more steelwork was carried out and another paint job put the boat back into the Blue & Yellow BW Livery. It went into their Heritage Fleet where the "Friends of the Working boats" moved "Sagitta" around to events on the BCN .

On 25th June 2009 Dudley Canal Trust took control of the boat with the intention to take "Sagitta" to canal rallies around England promoting the History of DCT and its boat trips into Dudley Tunnel and the Limestone Caverns.

"Sagitta" will be moored at the Black Country Living Museum for school parties to visit.

We now have permission from B.W. to re-paint the boat back into its original G.U.C.Co colours and livery, to how it would look back in 1935.

During 2009 DCT will be working on the boat in readiness for the 2010 season.

The plan is to form a Sub-Committee of Volunteers to steer the boat to events next year.

Anybody interested should contact the Office number 01384 236275 or myself 01384 214868.

or email ste.bingham@talktalk.net.

Sagitta, is Latin for "ARROW" (Sagittarius, is the BOW !)

Steve Bingham

Membership Matters

Despite the recession, I am pleased to say that your membership renewals are still coming in, albeit a little slower than is usual.

Thank you all for that.

On behalf of the "Trust", I would like to extend a warm welcome to the following new members:

| | |
|--------------------|-------------------|
| Ms S Day | Ashton under Lyne |
| Mr. J Hollingshead | Wolverhampton |
| Mr. A Wythes | Winchester |
| Mr. M Perry | Great Barr |
| Mrs. A Preedy | West Bromwich |
| Mr/Mrs Cooper | Walsall |
| Mr. P Bruton | Coventry |
| Mrs. G Moore | Brierley Hill |
| Mr. C Hurley | Wednesbury |
| Mrs. G Rollick | Wednesbury |
| Mr. R Meadows | Wigan |

I hope you all can attend one or other of our social evenings or events and get to know us better. However, even armchair support is still very welcome, you can keep up to date via the Ledger or the website.

This will be my final contribution to the Ledger as your membership secretary. From this point on, Heidi Yardley has kindly offered to take on the post, leaving me to concentrate on the treasurer's and other jobs that need my attention. I feel sure you will all give Heidi the same level of cooperation that you extended to me over the last decade or so and thus enable her to settle into the role with a minimum of effort.

Thank you Heidi.

We have a wide and varied programme of events for the year ahead of us, details of which appear elsewhere in this edition of your Legger.

Should it not appear anywhere else in this issue, a very warm welcome to Gavin Lawson who has taken over as editor of the Legger and many thanks to Bob Mullen for his stirring work over the past few years in the post.

Enjoy the rest Bob.

Alan Hazeldine

When I was handing out leaflets and talking to the public at Middlewich I was surprised by the amount of people who had never heard of us and of our trips into the mines under Dudley, so I would ask members if and when they are in contact with the Trust to pick up some of our leaflets and distribute them to their local libraries, pubs, schools and community centres etc. The Trust will have a presence at Windmill End (Black Country Boating Festival, Netherton, Sept 12/13th.) and Stourbridge Canal Festival (Bonded Warehouse, Oct 17/18th.) or you can call in at the Pumphouse. - *Ed.*

Social Events

During the winter we have a series of talks and lectures that are held at Blowers Green Pumphouse on the third Tuesday of each month, the first being 20th October.

As we go to press the names of the guests are being withheld for reasons of national security, but I can reveal that Michael Jackson has had to cancel his talk entitled "Moonwalking boats through Dudley Tunnel". All are welcome to come and meet your fellow members, you get a free cuppa and biscuit! Please watch the website for further announcements.
www.dudleytunnel.co.uk

MEMBERS DAY

Sunday 8th November 10am - 5pm

At our Tunnel Trips site in Tipton

DUDLEY CANAL TRUST INVITES ITS MEMBERS TO MEET US
AND GIVE THEM AN OPPORTUNITY TO LOOK AROUND
AND STEER OUR BOATS

Bittell a 40' Black Country Tug

Sagitta a 71'6" Historic Narrow Boat

No Experience Necessary!

We are planning to run short trips to Factory Locks, Tipton and back, don't worry you'll be accompanied by experienced crew (due to insurance issues steerers must be over 16 years of age)

Bring your membership card, wear sensible footwear, waterproof clothing is recommended and a bite to eat.

Interested? please email: legger@live.co.uk

COME AND PLAY BOATS

Website Update

Over the past few months I've been changing the Trust's website to make it a bit simpler to use and update, and to give it a more permanent home. This has been a bit of a wake up call for me as I always thought I had a reasonable grasp of things technical but I've discovered that on a time-line I'm still there with the caveman when it comes to constructing websites and stuff. Over the past ten years I've relied on friends and relatives to put my ideas on the ether, so to actually do the 'work' myself is a first. My learning curve is vertical though.

I've tried to make the whole thing a bit more manageable and easier to navigate. Not that it wasn't before though. One thing I have done is to try to collate all the media in one area. Here there are links to interactive maps, old power points, links to DCT matter on Youtube, audio clips and photo galleries. It is hoped that this will be added to again and again.

One question that I do keep being asked is when the webcams are going to be back on-line? I can't give a time frame unfortunately although I have had offers of help from members. I will be calling their offers in, as the webcams were pretty good. If anyone else out in DCT land have the expertise to make this happen, I would be more than happy to hear from them.

So just to close this small article, the main sites can be accessed by using either of the addresses below. If you do visit the site, please say hello in the guestbook section.

www.dudleycanaltrust.co.uk

www.dudleytunnel.co.uk

Alex Parker

Salvaging President

On Wednesday 27th May I and a crew of DCT members were taking Bittell from Penkridge to Weston, en route to the Etruria Canal Festival, held over the weekend of 30, 31st May.

At Tixall Lock we happened across President & Kildare. President was rather poorly with injector trouble having sucked in rather too much mud from the Staffordshire & Worcestershire Canal. The evidence of the trouble lay in an impressive display of plumbing carefully laid out on the tow path.

To keep them moving while sorting out the problem (they had an appointment with the mayor of Stone the next morning) we offered them a tow.

The photo of the rear cover of this edition of the Ledger shows Bittell (75 years old) towing President (100 years old) and Kildare across Tixall Wide.

President recovered her usual good health before Hoo Mill Lock on the Trent & Mersey canal and proceeded to Stone that night under her own steam. We on the other hand were pleased to call it a day at Malcolm Brains wharf at Weston. We caught up with President & Kildare the next day at Stone where they had just finished entertaining the Civic Party.

Vic Smallshire.

Parkhead Canal Festival 2010

A year has passed since our much acclaimed Canal Festival in 2008 and it's now time to start planning and preparing for 2010, perhaps we are a bit slow, but it really does take us a whole year to put on an event we can be proud of.

The first meeting will be held at Blowers Green Pumphouse on 23rd September at 8:00pm. All members are welcome to attend and perhaps even get involved.

Gardners At Parkhead

On the weekend of 20th/21st June 2009 Parkhead Locks hosted the Gardner Engine Rally with around 17 narrowboats on show, moored up on the top pound along with Commercial lorries, Stationary Gardner Engines including a very large horizontal Gardner engine that was bolted down on a very large lorry and was running well all weekend. A few unusual vehicles made it to the show, one was a Land Rover with a 4-Cylinder Gardner fitted and another 4-Cylinder Gardner engine fitted into a Rolls Royce Silver Shadow.

Dudley Canal Trust would like to encourage any boat club that want to use Parkhead Locks for their rally, if nothing else it would get the locks used more.



Bittell's Sortie

May 15th - was the afternoon when we started to move Bittell to its many shows to come.

Hawne Basin was the first destination with Bittell towing Electra & the Flying Scott which took 2hrs to complete. As Saturday morning dawned the forecasters were predicting a wet weekend in Halesowen and they were not wrong! Hence, sad to say, not many people arrived to the Open Weekend at Hawne Basin.

Bittell and its crew managed to keep themselves occupied by towing the Joey in and out of the basin doing regular runs up to the old Stewarts & Lloyds factory site and back.

On Saturday Bittell was used as a floating platform for a video camera for the T.V. as Jordanne Whiley, a local Paralympian, officially opened the show by cutting the red ribbon stretched across Burton Bridge.

By 4pm on Sunday Electra was doing its last trip into Gosty Hill Tunnel and back. Bittell then hitched up Electra & Flying Scott and started heading back to Parkhead. By 7pm we had tied everything up safely at Blowers Green Pumphouse.

May 21st - Bittell started heading down the 25 locks to Stourbridge and was tied up for the night at the Bonded Warehouse.

Luckly B.W. had just got the water back into the Stourbridge Canal after modifying the bottom of the Breached Area at Stourton the previous day!

May 22nd Friday - Bittell starts moving at 10am and heads for the Bratch Pumping Station at Wombourne.

May 23rd/24th - Whitsun Bank Holiday was the date selected to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Staffs & Worcs Canal Society.

Around 40 Boats turned up at Bratch Locks to witness the steaming up of the 400 ton three cylinder engine that is housed in the Bratch Pumping Station. Around the historic building there were lots of different exhibits comprising of full size traction engines and miniature traction engines

which were running around all weekend in the glorious sunshine. There were also Steam cars, Classic cars and Vintage cars along with Commercials on show. Saturday night proved popular in the Marquee with Tommy Mundon topping the Bill.

On Sunday the official plaque was unveiled up the locks and plenty of champagne drunk.

May 25th - Bank Holiday Monday, Bittell started heading north east to its next Canal Event at Etruria.

By 4pm the tug was tied up just below Gailey Lock.

May 27th - on Wednesday Bittell sets off up the Staffs & Worcs towards Gt. Haywood junction. As the tug got to Penkridge they came across a broken down President, the Black Country Museum's flagship. They had got a blocked up injector in the steam engine, so it was time to offer them a tow (again!) but this time it was Bittell towing President and its butty Kildare with a combined total length of 180ft !

After several miles the injector had been stripped down, cleaned out, reassembled and the engine burst into life and was able to continue under its own steam.

May 28th - after dropping a car off at Etruria Bone Mill, Bittell and the crew set off northwards up the Trent & Mersey Canal. By 6pm the tug was moored up the arm of the Museum at Etruria, near Stoke-on-Trent, in readiness for the weekend.

May 29th/30th - Etruria Canal Festival.

As I drove onto the site for the first time, looking for our boat, I was a bit confused with the layout of the show, because most of the working boats were moored at the top of Stoke locks on the Caldon Canal with all the rest of the exhibits on the field next to them. Bittell was two locks down on the Trent & Mersey Canal alongside Swift (BW Heritage boat) up the arm of the Mill. I had the DCT Display stand with me and was wondering if I had made the right decision to have chosen a mooring for Bittell so



far away from the main part of the Show Ground. As I was opening Bittell up, some doors were flung open to reveal the boiler room and the 1835 Beam Engine. So I started putting up the display stand on the tow-path between Bittell and the boiler room. By 11 am people were coming down in large numbers to see the firing up of the steam beam engine, hence to say the area outside the boiler room was very busy all day, with lots of local people who found our boat trips into the Limestone Mines very interesting and they picked up leaflets with a view to visiting us at sometime in the future.

Over the weekend we saw glorious weather topping 24 degrees Celsius, I was told by the organisers that around 9,000 people had come through the gate over the two days.

With permission of the Museum we left Bittell up the arm for the next 3 weeks. The Museum staff kindly kept an eye on the boat for us and were delighted to have a temporary extra exhibit.

June 17th - on Wednesday Bittell left Etruria Museum with a request from the staff to bring it back sometime in the future. The tug then went on a heading due north via Harecastle Tunnel and then down the 26 locks of the Cheshire flight, known as "heartbreak hill", arriving by 8pm for its next event at the Middlewich Folk and Canal Festival.



June 20th/21st - upon arriving in Middlewich by car we found Bittell by the town bridge breasted up to a Shropshire Fly Boat "Saturn". We needed to get the tug alongside the towpath somehow, so after jiggling the rest of the working boats around (after all we only need 40ft to squeeze it in!) we got there in the end. By the towpath we set up the DCT Stand with a table full of leaflets to give away.

The weather was dry but with a cool wind over the two days, but it did not deter the public. As it was a free event they came round in their thousands, in fact the whole of Middlewich town was involved in the festival, with live folk groups playing in all the pubs. It was a real carnival atmosphere. Late on Sunday Bittell started heading due south to its next event at Braunston.

26th June - Bittell arrived at Braunston at 4pm on Friday having travelled from Middlewich via the Trent & Mersey, the Coventry, the upper Oxford and the Grand Union Canals to get there in 5 days.

June 27th/28th - the Braunston Working Boat Gathering. A total of 84 Historic boats made it to this event, reportedly the biggest gathering "ever" at Brauston.



Bittell was moored on a section of the canal which is becoming established as a position especially for Tugs, right on the corner of the Marina Junction where all the action is! The tugs were stacked out six deep with a seven foot gap left on the offside to get passing boats through. We had four out of the five Stewarts & Lloyds tugs lined up in the sequence of numbers 2,3,4 & 5 with only number 1 missing to make up the full set!

With glorious hot weather, boats paraded around all weekend for the mass of the general public who lined the towpath and bridges armed with cameras to capture the moment. We set up the Dudley Canal Trust stand in the main marquee, giving out leaflets for our Tunnel Trips. During the weekend we had a nice surprise when Tim Coughlan and Sonya Rolt came to our stand to present to us a very large cheque, with a donation of £200 to DCT.

After being moored up for a while at Braunston, the tug started heading back to the Black Country over a period of three days, where it was eventually moored at the BCLM alongside its sistership Pacific. This has completed its first half of the show season. (for now)

Steve Bingham



Towpath News

The Ghost Tours run from 28th to 31st October this year and involve an hour's tour through the Tunnels and Caverns with a storyteller narrating some of the grisly happenings in the Tunnels from times gone by. Lighting is reduced and these tours are not recommended for under 12's. In addition this year we have introduced childrens' Halloween Trips. These take place at 10 and 10.30am on the 28th, 29th and 30th October with the Groovy UV Entertainment Company glow in the dark characters. Places are limited and bookings can be made on 01384 236275. In addition to these events we have our last murder mystery event of the Season on Sunday 23rd August which is "Arabian Nights". The tickets are £22 per person and includes a hot supper.

Welcome To Old And New Managers

Some of you may have met and worked with our Senior Skipper Colin Johns over the last two years. Colin retired at the end of July and we would like to take this opportunity of wishing Colin Johns a happy retirement and thanking him for his time with the Trust. I am sure that Colin will maintain his links with the Trust for many years to come.

We would also like to welcome Melvyn Wright, Towpath Operations Manager who has joined the Towpath Team this month. If you are down on the Towpath say hello and introduce yourself as he is still trying to remember everyones name.

Ghost And Santa

If you are interested in coming along as a volunteer for either Ghost or Santa could you contact 01384 236275.

June Hodgetts

General Manager,

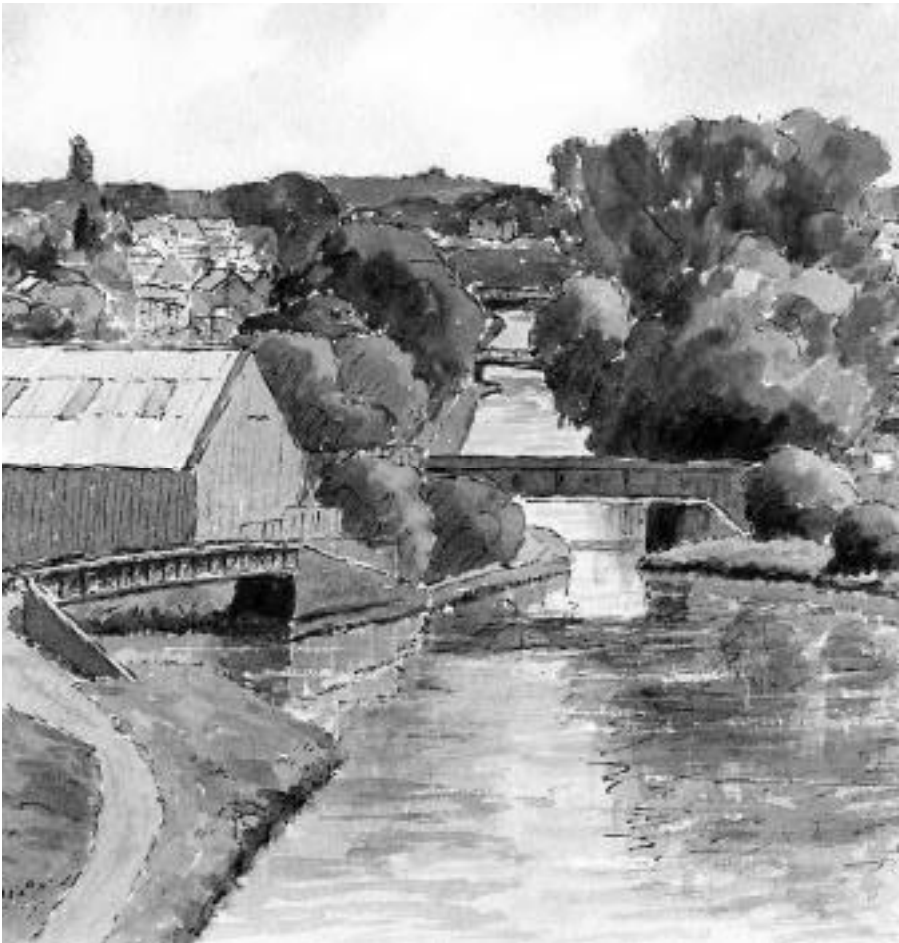
Dudley Canal Trust Trips Ltd.

From The Archives



*Top: Stewarts & Lloyds tug No.4 Pacific at Sneyd
Bottom: Bittell (No.5) and Pacific at Springvale
Courtesy of The Weaver Collection of the HNBOC*

Painting The Cut



Deepfields

Raymond Whitehouse is a self taught local artist who amongst other things has published two books of canal paintings and sketches, one on Coseley and Bradley (his local cut) and the other on the Staffs & Worcs canal. He has tutored many painting workshops and has appeared on the ITV series Water World. His work can be found in many collections in this country and abroad.

www.raymondwhitehouse.co.uk

DUDLEY CANAL TRUST

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FORM

I/We wish to become members of the Dudley Canal Trust and enclose the annual subscription of £.....

Name (Mr / Mrs / Ms)

Address

.....

.....

Postcode..... Date.....

Email.....

Please give the names of additional family members

(Mr / Mrs / Ms).....

(Mr / Mrs / Ms).....

(Mr / Mrs / Ms).....

(Mr / Mrs / Ms).....

Subscription Rates:

Individual.....£8:00 Family (2 Adults, 4 Children).....£10:00

Junior (Under 16).....£5:00 Student.....£5:00

Senior Citizen.....£5:00

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Tick here if you wish to be informed of working parties
details are also available on www.dudleytunnel.co.uk

Tixall Wide, President and Kildare taken under tow by Bittell

