

THE LEGGER



THE JOURNAL OF THE DUDLEY CANAL TRUST

Spring 2010

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DUDLEY CANAL TRUST

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Front Cover: Black Country Living Museum
by Graham Colbourne

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Editorial

I have been thinking a lot about where the money to maintain the inland waterways will come from in the future, someone (us) will have to pay. Perhaps we will see pay as you go locks, the return of Toll Offices or even sponsorship, one day will we be running trips into the "Tesco Tunnel"? (God forbid). Time will tell. For the first time we have a colour supplement! More pictures of the Parkhead 'Dig & Cruise 1970' are available on the Legger page of the DCT website www.dudleytunnel.co.uk

Gavin Lawson
Editor

Comments, Complaints, Letters, Articles and Pictures are welcome.
legger@live.co.uk
Deadline for the next edition Tuesday 11th May.

Stop Press: **Parkhead Canal Festival Cancelled**

It is with great regret that the organisers (DCT & WBCS) will have to cancel the Parkhead Canal Festival. Following a meeting on 12th February with British Waterways concerning the Chasewater Reservoir which requires 3 million pounds to repair the dam to stop flooding in the future. The water will be drained out by the end of March. This means the only way of topping up the Wolverhampton level is by pumping water from the mines at Bradley, but pumping will be limited. BW are saying they think they can cope with normal traffic on the BCN, but could not cope with a sudden draw of water on the system if a large boating event should happen, like the Parkhead Canal Festival which usually attracts up to 100 boats. As next year will be the turn of the BCLM Working Boat Gathering on the same weekend, we would have to arrange the next Parkhead Canal Festival in September 2012 when hopefully there will be enough water to float the event!

Steve Bingham
Chairman of the organising committee

Chairman's Notes

Following the non appearance of any chairman's notes in the last edition and the brevity of these notes some sort of explanation is due.

Having been diagnosed with myeloma (cancerous bone rot, for the non medical) I am currently half way through a course of chemotherapy. The outcome is that the drugs which are hopefully killing the cancer are half killing me. The result is that for most of the time I have been feeling more dead than alive. I have found it difficult to concentrate on anything for any length of time and tire very quickly.

I have had to miss a few committee meetings. I would have found it difficult to play any useful role, even if I could stay awake. I am indeed fortunate in having such a strong committee that things have carried on very well indeed without me. Steve Bingham & Alan Hazeldine have worked particularly hard at keeping me in touch with things, and I am confident that the Trust is in safe hands. As I improve, or perhaps just get used to the drugs, I intend to start attending meetings and play a more useful role as my health permits.

I was gratified to see such a large audience at the January social meeting for Keith Hodgkins' presentation of the Black Country from the Air. It was an excellent evening. Please support the rest of the meetings through to May. We have some excellent speakers lined up.

Swiping at British Waterways has almost become a national sport, and it has to be said that there are occasions when it is well deserved. There are times when I think that those who run our canal system have lost the plot to the extent that after 40 years of playing with canals I am sometimes moved to go and play trains. This, however, is not one of those occasions. BW find themselves with two dilemmas, neither of their own making and both needing the co operation and support of us, the users. Locally, Chasewater, the reservoir that feeds the Wolverhampton Level of the BCN, is having to be drained because the dam that impounds the water has been found to be unsafe. Whilst BW own the water, Lichfield District Council own the dam. The history of this untidy state of affairs goes back to the dark days of the British Transport Commission when

somebody thought it was clever to sell the dam and surrounding land to put a few quid in the bank. Long term this has cost BW control over the security of its water supply. The outcome is that many if not all boating events on the BCN will have to be cancelled this year. BW are confident that they will be able to cope with the normal traffic but not peak demands generated by boat gatherings. At the time of writing we have yet to hear if our Parkhead boat gathering in September can go ahead. Watch the DCT Website for news.

The other dilemma facing BW is a national one. At a time when BW is promoting the idea of finding a future in what is now being called "The Third Sector" after the style of The National Trust, the means of generating the finance to support itself is threatened by the Government who wish to sell off what it called BW Property Portfolio, to help fill a hole in the treasury after the banks had been bailed out. This short term expedient to bail out the government will cost BW a significant contribution towards financial self sufficiency into eternity.

There is provision on the 10 Downing St website for anyone to promote a petition to influence the government of the day, or even the next one. A petition was started protesting at the selling off of BW property when the news first broke. The number of names on the petition currently stands in excess of 21,000. The encouraging response to this petition has proved enough to cause the government to back away from the proposals for the time being, but it still only represents a tiny fraction of the canal users and enthusiasts in the country. Now more than ever, politicians will be listening to what we the electorate have to say. This is not an excuse for complacency. It is a very good time to remind our political masters that we not only care, but those of us who are not insane or lords have a vote that we are going to be invited to use very soon. Please add your name and encourage others to do so by going to <http://petitions.number10.gov.uk/protectourcanals>
This is the only way that the threat that has been temporarily removed can be kept off the agenda of whatever government we get next.

Vic Smallshire

Social Events

Dudley Canal Trust. Social meeting dates 2010.

All meetings are held at Blowers Green Pumphouse, Peartree Lane, Dudley DY2 0XP and start at 7:30 p.m.

We would like to thank Keith Hogdkins for his excellent talk and slide show of the Black Country from the Air. A record number of members turned out on a very cold January night to see this very fascinating show

23rd March

John Selway - Traction Engines

14th April

Dudley Canal Trust **Annual General Meeting**

Vic Smallshire - Building the Elan Valley Dams

18th May

Mike Duley - Update on DCT Trips, Todds End Proposals

Members Day

We will be holding a Members Day on Sunday 9th May with more training on our boats Bittell and Sagitta. To give members a longer opportunity to practice steering, the plan is to run the boats from our Tipton base to Deepfields Junction and back. There will be a morning session at 10am and afternoon at 1pm sharp! Places will be limited to two steerers per boat per session (passengers welcome) so early expressions of interest are required, stating any preference as to which session. More training events will be held again later in the year for those that didn't make the cut on this one.

Gavin Lawson

legger@live.co.uk

Membership Matters

Another year gone by oh so very quickly and so we have got to that time of year when we send out renewal forms for next years membership. It was so good to see the membership at yet another all time high last year and I hope we can get more new members again this year so invite your friends to join I'm sure they would enjoy the benefits.

Welcome to the new members.

Mr & Mrs Hemming	Halesowen
Mr & Mrs Hickman	Dudley
Mr K Hodgins	Tipton
Mr I Turner	Dudley

If anyone would like to contact me for any membership enquiries, suggestions etc please e-mail me.

heidi_yardley_422@hotmail.com

Heidi Yardley
Membership Secretary

Work Party News

Work Parties for 2010 will commence on Sunday 21st March. There will be one work party every third Sunday of each month onwards, finishing on Sunday 19th September which will be the weekend before our Parkhead Festival. All work parties start at 10am, refreshments will be provided.

All enquiries to John 'Gravedigger' Rudge on 01384 257164

Details also available on the DCT website: www.dudleytunnel.co.uk

Tunnel Records

What was the official record of time taken to leg through the Tunnel? The short facts are these:- We used a wooden 'joey' boat and started at the entrance to the main Tunnel, just past the "Well", and the time stopped as the middle of the boat reached the portal at Parkhead. Several groups from clubs, factories, schools etc. had a go between 1964 to 1967, but upon their second attempt the record was made by the Boulton Paul Apprentices Association of Wolverhampton - which will be very difficult to beat as a wooden joey boat would be needed to attempt another record of the same circumstances. The time then was 29 minutes and 22 seconds. Another interesting fact has come to light - Bob Mullen (ex. Legger Editor) pointed out that all record attempts had been tried by outside organisations - never by Members of the Trust!

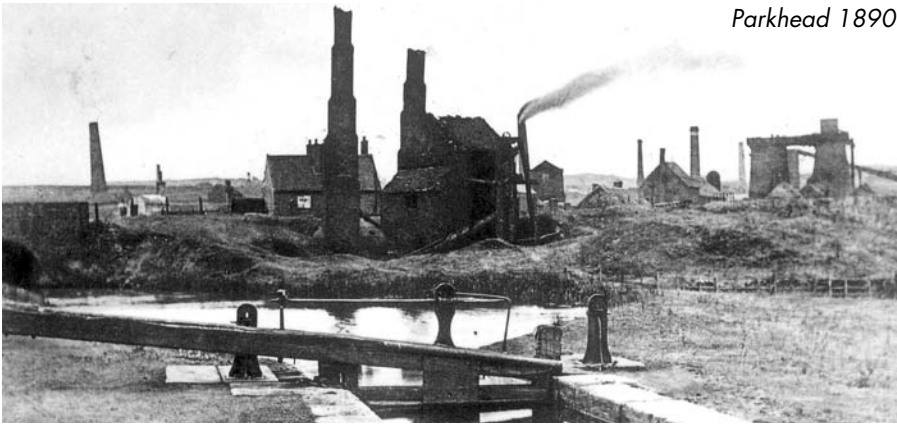
Now there's a challenge!

Back in 1967 a Mr. David Gale contacted B.W.B. for permission to swim through Dudley Tunnel but received several knockbacks from them until eventually he was given permission - on condition that the Trust was fully involved to oversee safety. So on Sunday 13th August clothed in a home-made rubber immersion suit (knee length) and with rubber gloves, cap, goggles and snorkel, he gingerly entered the portal at Parkhead and started his historic swim. 1 hour and 12 minutes later he entered Castle Mill Basin and called it a day - he was welcomed by a small party of Trust members but had in fact been 'shadowed' by four members from Hurst's Cavern. They were Karenza Coley, John Mullen, John Nicholls and Marion Mills, who were all wearing suitable swimming gear themselves and had been looking out for Mr. Gale's torch.

Mr. Gale was a Manager of a West Bromwich printing firm and lived in Netherton. He told the Express & Star reporter present that he had done skin diving all over the world and was a former R.A.F Flight-Lieutenant. His successful attempt under Dudley made the next publication in the World Records Book for an underground swim.

Richard Jones

The Parkhead Community



Parkhead 1890

My wife and I have lived in the lock keepers cottage at Parkhead since 1992 and over the last 18 years I have collected information and stories regarding the history around Parkhead.

81 years ago in 1929 Parkhead Locks was a thriving community with nine families living in nine cottages around the canalside. But well before 1929, Parkhead was famous in the area of Dudley for being one of the largest collieries under the control of Lord Dudley. At its height it was producing 70,000 tons of coal per year. By the end of the 19th century the coal seam had been exhausted and the pit was closed down.

The Pumhouse was built in 1890 with the lock keepers cottage built a year later in 1891 and both still stand today. Sadly over the years, all the other cottages surrounding the canal were demolished, mainly due to mining subsidence.

What started my interest off was back in 1993 when I had a visit from a man and his daughter. They approached me as I was having a cup of tea, sat on the lock gate outside the cottage. He said "do you know who lives here now?" I explained that we had recently taken over the cottage and were in the middle of re-building and restoring it. He told me his name was Mr King and he then said "I used to live here with my mother and father", (pointing up) and said "that was my bedroom, and in the

lounge I had the biggest clockwork train set ever!" He was 9 when he left the cottage after an unfortunate and fatal accident involving his younger sister and the lock outside. After giving him a tour of the cottage, I got to thinking about the history of the place and exactly how many families had lived here before myself.

When the cottage was new back in 1891 the Beasley family moved in. Mr Beasley was married and had a son called Eric. Mr Beasley worked for the B.C.N. as a toll officer and he worked next door in the toll office between the hours of 6am & 5pm six days a week. The Beasleys can be seen on the 1929 map as living in the lock keepers cottage at the time, but what I'm not sure about is the date they left.

The next family to move in were the Kings, but from all accounts they did not stay many years, due to the loss of their daughter who drowned in the lock outside. After the tragedy, the cottage was boarded up and remained empty for many years.

1939 saw Ted Booth and his mother living in the end cottage by the viaduct. They were woken up late one night by the Luftwaffe who decided to try and drop a bomb onto the viaduct. They missed and hit the ground instead, but the explosion damaged the gable end of the Booths cottage. It would take some years to repair the damage, so Ted and his mother moved into the still vacant lock keepers cottage.

Some years later Ted's mother died and he lived on his own in the lock keepers cottage for the rest of his life, devoting most of his time to working on his allotment behind the cottage, and keeping chickens,



Parkhead 1955

goats, dogs & cats. On Mondays you would often see Ted going to the supermarket with his wheelbarrow to get the weekly shopping. Ted died after suffering a heart attack in bed in July 1992 and once again the cottage was boarded up.

In October 1992 Gill and myself took over the tenancy of the cottage, which was in a terrible state. The whole cottage had to be gutted, new floors, walls and ceilings plus modern electricity and damp proofing was just the start. It took around six years to restore and modernise it into the 20th century with such luxuries as a working sewer and toilets, a working bathroom, central heating etc. People would often comment on the size of Ted's onions, I know the answer now!

So we are the fourth family to live in this cottage over a period of 101 years! People often say it must be wonderful to live in the conservation area of Parkhead Locks just far enough from the rat race, but believe me, it's had its good and bad moments over the last 18 years.

One good memorable moment was back in the winter of 2002, when again I was sat on the lock beam outside the cottage having a tea break. Two men approached me asking about Parkhead in general. It turned out that the person I was talking to had lived in one of the cottages many years ago. His name was Tom Elwell, then aged 83, and his son. Very slowly he showed me where his mother and father's cottage was alongside the viaduct on the offside of the canal by the middle lock. He explained they had no running water or toilet facilities, nor electricity or gas! "It was like living on a island" Tom said, "the only way to get to the cottage was to walk across the lock gates. I can't remember how we got the furniture over the lock, but I do remember having to get two jugs full of water at the beginning of each day. I would normally walk up to the Phillips' cottage to work the hand pump situated around the back, I was around 10 years old at the time but remember it well as having to carry the heavy full water jugs back home. Sometimes just for a change I would walk down to Beasley's at the lock keepers cottage where there was a bibtap on the front, this was a bit closer. We only lived in this cottage for around 10 years, my father was employed as a boat legger and also reputed to hold the speed record for legging a fully laden boat

of coal through Dudley Tunnel. My father liked his drink and would often come back from the Railway Public house, drunk. One winter's night he didn't come back at all. The next morning my mother discovered him face down in the middle lock. Soon after this tragedy we moved, and the cottage was boarded up". The Elwell's cottage was demolished in 1937 due to excessive vandalism.

This is the first time Tom had returned to Parkhead since he had left many years ago. The only evidence we could see of the cottage was a small brick corner of a wall that was the remains of the privvie as he called it! The privvie had just a plank fixed inside the outbuilding with choice of three holes, small, medium, large. "That was our toilet, everything went into the weir below!" said Tom.

Tom was a retired architect who worked for Scott and Clark of Wednesbury. He offered to draw me a plan of Parkhead as he remembered it in 1929. This took him some months to complete and was followed by a detailed plan of his cottage. All of which appeared as a two page article in the Black Country Bugle paper on 10th July 2003. In 2007 Tom died at the age of 87 but his magnificent plan has been kept upstairs in the Pumhouse for some years. If you look closely, you will notice the Grazebrook canal that used to terminate at a basin on the other side of Peartree Lane. You will also notice where Mr Moseley worked as a boat builder. On the other side you will see the Pensnett canal that is still in water, that used to terminate at the Wallows in Brierley Hill, where another coal mine was worked. Alongside the Pensnett canal you will see the cottage of Mr Luther Mullet who owned a transport business, but when things were tight, sometimes he would leg boats through Dudley Tunnel to earn some more money. Luther had only one leg but was still able to work as he had a false leg strapped on and he would employ Jack Wheeler to help him. As fate would have it one of our skippers is related to the Mullets. Kevin Gerrish is Luther's Grandson! Kevin is still carrying on the tradition of taking boats through the 2 mile tunnel, but things are easier today with our electric powered trip boats. The Pensnett canal was privately owned and you will notice a stop lock at the end of the canal where Jack Chambers worked as a Toll Clerk. His

job was to take the tolls as the fully laden boats of coal came onto the Dudley Canals.

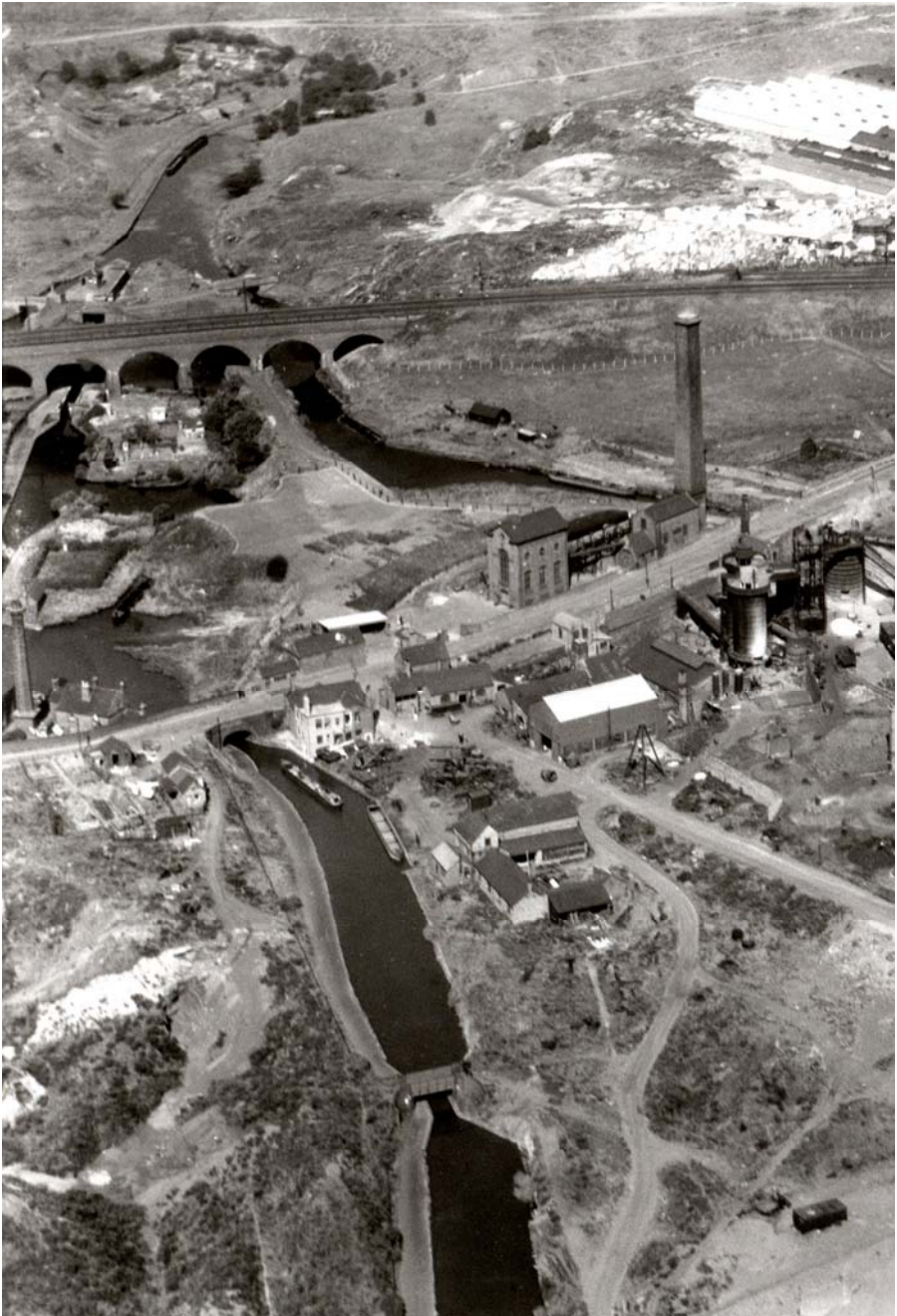
Just one last thing, you will also notice a vertical engine house alongside Peartree Lane. This housed a vertical steam beam engine that was used as a blowing engine to blow air into the two massive blast furnaces that were owned by Grazebrooks. This is where they made munitions during the war. The beam engine was dismantled in 1964 and soon after the building was demolished. Birmingham City Council bought the engine and put it on a traffic island at Aston as a feature almost 50 years ago and is still there today!

I want everybody to keep an eye on this engine, as one day, Birmingham Council might want to dispose of it. If that day ever comes it would be nice to think that it could be put back at Parkhead, sometime, somehow, where it belongs, because it is very important for this area as the name Blowing Engine was used to describe many things around here like Blowers Green Road, Blowers Green Lock, Blowers Green Bridge, Blowers Green School, not forgetting Blowers Green Pumphouse!

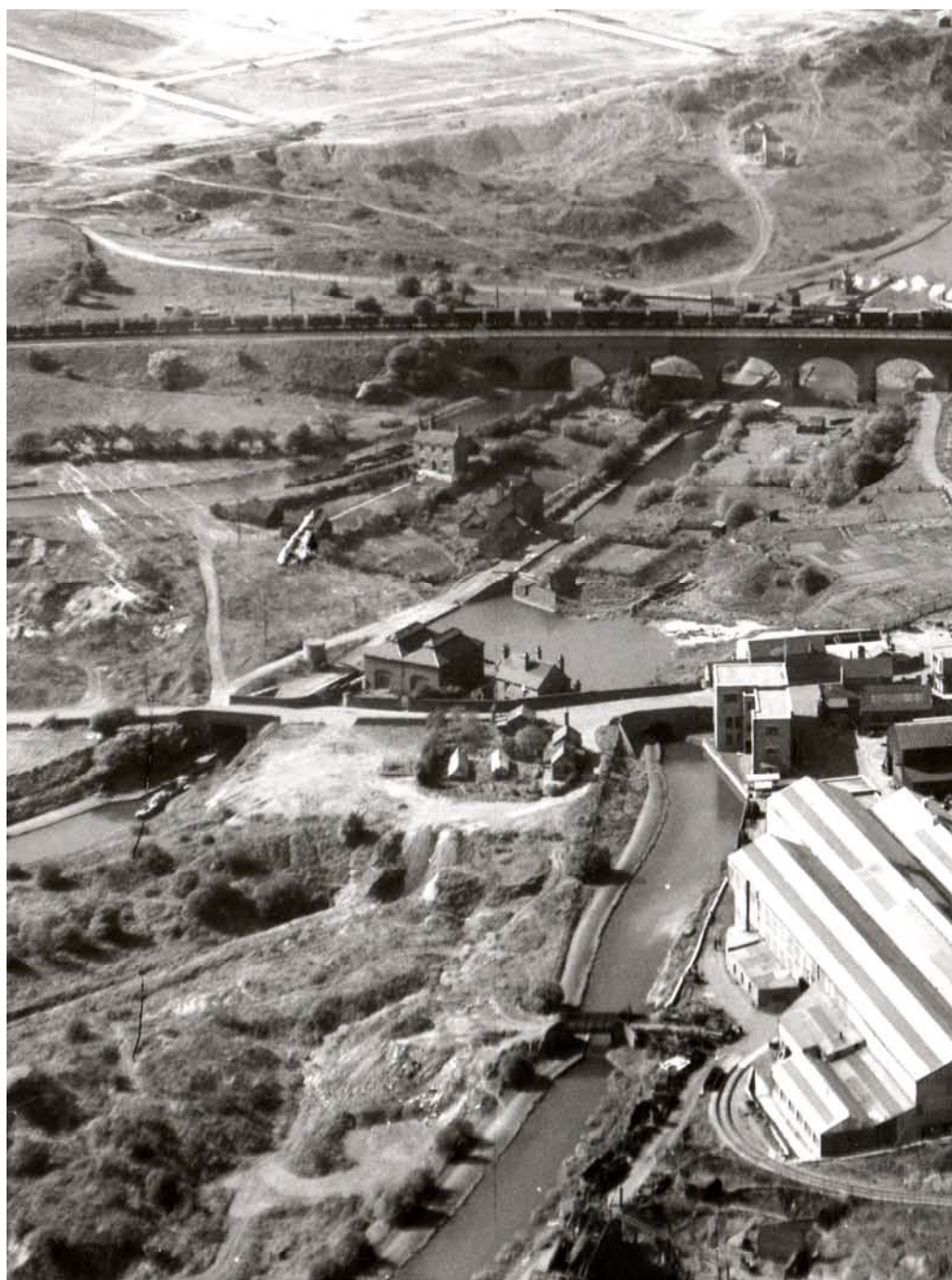
Steve Bingham



Photograph Steve Bingham



Above: Parkhead 1940s Overleaf: Parkhead 1950s





Parkhead Workparty 1970

During the 1960s Parkhead became truly derelict, the locks rendered unuseable and the basin outside the Tunnel impassable due to silt and weed. And then forty years ago things happened.

The one really large effort was under the banner of "European Conservation Year 1970" when we organised the "Dudley Dig & Cruise", in partnership with the B.C.N. Society, Staffs. & Worcs. Canal Society, Wolverhampton Boat Club and other voluntary organisations. The Dig part was from the Tunnel portal to the pound below the bottom lock (3) and the Cruise was from Hawne (Coombeswood) Basin (on the Sunday only) along the Dudley No. 2 to Parkhead.

However, all this was preceded by a work party that took place on 22nd/23rd November 1969 when we had the services of 114th Birmingham (St. Paul's) troop of scouts and an enthusiastic group of lads from the Hewell Grange. This escalated over a period of a month before the date to include lads from Manor School, Wednesbury, a group of enthusiasts from Birmingham University and numerous 'odd bods' who had seen the event publicised in the local press. The boat with most of the equipment arrived at Parkhead with 50 eager passengers who quickly joined the party already working on the scour opposite the storm-water culvert. During the afternoon a contingent from Staffs. & Worcs. Canal Society appeared and the scour was soon reduced and reeds removed and burned. Bush and rubbish tidying had continued up to the top lock and it was a scene of co-ordination and co-operation. Unfortunately we were all cut a bit short in activity when one of the people pulling rubbish out of the canal pulled out a grenade - and the pin was rusted away! The police arrived and took it away nonchalantly - they thought it too old to be dangerous - but we learnt it spent the night under a large lump of concrete! Sunday continued in much the same vein with more of the channel being cleared, the portal being cleaned and painted white and the top lock also being 'spruced-up'. This was followed up on 21st March 1970 with another attack on the scour and further clearing-up of dumped rubbish etc. out of the canal.

We were further assisted by Hewell Grange lads when they attended at Parkhead on 11th July to do some brick-laying around the top lock/Pensnett Canal areas. The main impetus to the restoration of the Canal and Tunnel (re-opened in 1973) was the "Dig & Cruise" event of 26th/27th September 1970. 300 people attended on the Saturday and just under 350 people on the Sunday!! Activity had been pretty hectic between all the participating volunteer groups over the previous few weeks and we had received a lot of help with equipment from Midland Earthmoving Ltd., Tube Clamps Ltd., M. & W. Grazebrook, Dudleymix Co n ete, Dudley Borough Council and B.W.B. The Council also provided washing facilities, accommodation and dinner for about 90 volunteers who had travelled from all parts of the country!

Several boats had moored at the bottom of the locks in the Basin and these enthusiasts were 'up and at it' by 8am - we were officially starting at 10am! We had help from 15 canal societies and all branches of the I.W.A., several youth clubs, scout groups, schools and colleges and not forgetting Hewell Grange Borstal (again). We surprised ourselves at the enormous amount of rubbish removed from the drained locks and kept three large dumper trucks working continuously the whole weekend. The Council's lorry was also kept very busy removing rubbish to the local tip. Rubbish was removed from both lock pounds pretty well down to the puddle and the locks themselves were cleaned down to the brick floor .





It was a very full weekend at Parkhead of course, but there was also a Cruise taking place - a gathering had taken place at Halesowen and the flotilla arrived at lunchtime on the Sunday. On board were the Mayors of Halesowen and Warley and their Councillors and Officers, plus B.W.B. representatives and several members of the local Press - in all about 20 boats attended. In addition to all this there was also a sponsored walk arranged from Warley to Parkhead. Both teams of boaters and walkers upon arrival 'mucked in' and helped out on the Sunday.

In summary it was a splendid weekend with superb organisation and tremendous co-operation between volunteer organisations from around the country, local Borough Councils, British Waterways Board and many local industries.

Although the actual start of the restoration of the complete line of the canal from Tipton Junction through to Parkhead Basin did not begin until 1972, the initial impetus was definitely the enthusiasm and achievement shown in "European Conservation Year 1970" at Parkhead.

Richard Jones

Dudley No. 2 Canal Corridor

The Trust has teamed up with British Waterways and Groundwork West Midlands to seek funding to improve the Dudley No. 2 canal corridor from Parkhead to Old Hill.

The project will address issues of inadequate access and poor condition of a key stretch of the canal. Its broader aim is to connect walking trails and cycle ways to the main towpath. The towpath itself will be improved where necessary to provide a continuous route between two major nature reserves (Bumble Hole and Saltwells).

We aim to engage local communities, school children and young people to participate in activities which promote healthier lifestyles and introduce them to the history and heritage of the canal as well as the educational aspects of the nature reserves. The canal will provide a green corridor, improving biodiversity locally by planting and soft bank protection. With this improved infrastructure and by working in partnership with local Primary Care Trusts a series of healthy walks can be developed. This improvement will also encourage more local people to use the area, enhancing the perceived safety of the area and to take advantage of improved signage and interpretation.

On completion an extended launch period will take place to introduce new audiences to the history and heritage of the area.

The capital works will be delivered by BW and their contractors under the supervision of a project manager, a qualified landscape architect. One of the contractors uses locally recruited unemployed, giving them training and work experience to improve their long term employment prospects. Groundwork West Midlands have produced engagement strategies for community, schools and young people.

A Stage Two application has now been submitted and we must wait to see how it is received. For further information about the project do not hesitate to get in touch and I will be happy to answer your questions.

Alan Hazeldine
Honourary Treasurer

alan.hazeldine@btinternet.com

Friends And Neighbours



Bumble Hole Conservation Group was founded about 15 years ago. Its aims are to conserve the areas known as Bumble Hole and Warrens Hall Local Nature Reserves and educate visitors about conservation and the heritage of the sites.

Bumble Hole is located at Windmill End Junction on the Dudley No. 2 Canal and is a little green oasis in the heart of the Black Country. Boaters emerge from the dankness of Netherton Tunnel into a beautiful area of woods, pools and meadows. The reserves cover over 100 acres and contain a wide variety of habitats encouraging a surprising array of wildlife. Sandwell MBC have planted hundreds of trees to create woodlands and meadows. It's hard to believe that it has only existed since the 1970s, when an old industrial site was landscaped to create a public open space for recreation. Originally the area was covered by coal mines, coke ovens and iron furnaces and was criss-crossed by railway lines, one of which was the Bumble Hole Line (a victim of Dr Beeching's axe in the 1960s). Slag and spoil heaps covered the ground and there were very few trees to be seen. There is still much evidence of its industrial past. The old colliery spoil heap makes an excellent viewpoint and the old railway line is being developed into a lovely woodland walk. As well as the famous Netherton Tunnel, which celebrated its 150th Birthday in 2008, we also have Cobb's Engine House. This is a listed building which contained a beam engine and was used to pump water from the mines. It was working for nearly 100 years, from 1830 until

1928. The miners' strike forced the miners to shut down the engine and when the strike was over, the mine was too badly flooded to re-open so the engine was dismantled and sold for scrap. The cast iron bridges, made at the Toll End Works in Tipton, are also listed structures, much loved by photographers and artists.

Much has been done to improve the area over the last few years. Benches have been installed and paths improved. We have planted over 100 new trees, 1000 wetland plants and 8000 snowdrops. Changes to the mowing regime has resulted in the return of two species of orchids to our meadows. We created floating islands on one of the pools. As a result, tufted ducks and little grebe are breeding there. We also have herons, kingfishers, kestrels, cormorants, spar row hawks and buzzards as well as many smaller birds.

The Group also runs the Visitors' Centre and tries to open every day except Christmas Day. We are all volunteers and our efforts were recognised in 2008 when we were awarded the "Hardest Working Friends Group" in the Dudley MBC Green Spaces Awards. We work with local schools, adults with learning difficulties and scout/guide groups. We also organise guided walks, boat trips and other events to promote the area.

Bumble Hole is a very special place run by very special people. Why not pay us a visit? You can be assured of a warm welcome and our hot chocolate is fantastic!

Contact us on 01384 814100 daily, between 10 am and 2 pm.



Repainting Sagitta

After much discussion around the August committee meeting table, it was decided that the paintwork on Sagitta was to change back to a Grand Union Canal Carrying Company Ltd. 1930's livery. There were three choices of livery in those days, but the decision was made to go with the King George VI Coronation colours of red, white & blue.

On 20th August Sagitta was put into the lock outside the cottage at Parkhead and, starting on the roof first, armed with an industrial sander, I removed (down to the metal in places) the many layers of paint that had been built up over the years.

I spent a few days constructing and welding various things - a shelf and somewhere to hang our coats etc in the engine room and also such things like door slams and bolts to make Sagitta more secure. The rear vents were like something you would find on a chest freezer so I made some G.U. letterbox type vents.

Now it was time to start putting on the red oxide undercoat. I gave the cabin three good coats. Then I concentrated on the bow, including moving and replacing the headlamp (which was inadequate) and was also in the way of opening the bow locker. So a hole was cut out of the vertical cratch cover to fit a new sealed beam headlight (which is a lot brighter) and we can open the bow locker a lot better now .

Upon closer inspection of the inside, it looked like this area of the boat had taken a lot of water in the past - I did find the drain holes all blocked up! After a good scraping and wire brushing I managed to shovel out a whole bucketful of rust before red oxide was applied. The rest of the bow was painted the same to protect it.

The rear counter area was in a bit of a state, the first thing was to straighten out the bent tiller! If you steered the boat you would understand what I mean! You would put the tiller in the middle of the hatch and the boat would drift to the right! So with plenty of heat we managed to straighten it out, that was after cutting off the tiller chain which was welded onto the swan neck with a 6" nail on the end to be used as a tiller pin! The intention is to fit a nice brass tiller pin to smarten the boat up.

By this time a few days had gone by where the undercoat had enough drying time so that it could all be rubbed down again using a flat block. Then it was a waiting game to pick a good day: no rain, no wind, not too cold but also not too hot as this coach enamel has a habit of drying too fast.

After the first coat of bright red was put on I had to give it a day to dry properly so that it could be rubbed down again to put on the second coat, the same again for the third coat of paint. I then gave it 3 days for that lot to go off hard before Gavin came along to help me line up the masking tape to paint the blue borders on. Again giving it a few days drying to remask the blue borders and paint on the 1" white lines. The bow and stern were done exactly the same.



Photograph Steve Bingham

The hull above the waterline was scraped off and painted with bitumen. The chimney stacks were stripped down, repainted and all the brass polished.

Garry Waterhouse of Net & Cover Services made and fitted the new cloths which look great. Joe Hollingshead made the new front fender. Derek Harrison (Tug Atlantic) said that he had found two original brass G.U. portholes to go onto the boat. We were very lucky to get these, so with some elbow grease I set about cleaning them both to a nice shine. They were then drilled and tapped to go onto the two sides of the cabin, where the licence will be displayed. I also managed to pick up some white rope to fit over the cratch area of the boat called "strings". This was done for decoration as well as holding the cloths down on windy days. I managed to get all this work done just in time for the working boat gathering at the Black Country Living Museum which took place on the 26th/27th September where I was pleasantly surprised by the amount of people that did not recognise the new look Sagitta!

Dave Perks of Signs & Symbols was commissioned to demonstrate the fine art of signwriting on the cabin of Sagitta in front of the many hundreds of visiting public, painting the Port of London address with all its registration and fleet numbers on.

Over that weekend we were very lucky with the weather with each of the days dry & sunny

So as far as the paintwork, Sagitta is now finished. The Boat has been photographed in its new paint scheme and emailed to British Waterways for their approval. A few days later the reply came back of "congratulations on a job well done"! The ballast has also been moved to trim the boat up better with the bow 3" lower in the water and the stern 3" higher which has now levelled Sagitta out, to make it handle a lot better.

There are still ongoing repairs and modifications to be done over the winter which are mainly inside, with the aim for getting it ready for the beginning of the 2010 season.

Steve Bingham

BOAT MOVEMENT DATES FOR 2010

SAGITTA

2rd, 3th & 4th April
Coventry Basin.

29th, 30th & 31st May
Crick Boat Show.

12th & 13th June
Stoke Bruerne Boat Rally.

26th & 27th June
Braunston Historic Boat Gathering.

17th & 18th July
Foxton Locks Boat Rally.

28rd, 29th & 30th August
I.W.A. National,
Beal Park, Reading.

24th, 25th & 26th September
Parkhead Canal Festival.

2nd & 3rd October
Water & Light Festival, Merry Hill.

16th & 17th October
Stourbridge Open Weekend.

Dates could be subject to cancellation or alteration at any time.
We are going to need Volunteer crews to move these boats during the
year. Enquiries to Steve Bingham 01384 214868 home, or
ste.bingham@talktalk.net

BITTELL

17th & 18th April
B.C.N. Clean up, Ocker Hill.
(plus Flying Scott)

1st, 2nd & 3rd May
Tug and Joey Gathering at BCLM.

12th & 13th June
BCNS Open Weekend.
Tiford Pumphouse.

11th & 12th September
BCBF, Netherton.

25th & 26th September
Parkhead Canal Festival.

2nd & 3rd October
Water & Light Festival, Merry Hill.

16th & 17th October
Stourbridge Open Weekend.

6th & 7th November
BCNS Bonfire, Smethwick.

Website update

The website continues to operate with reasonable success with content being updated at regular intervals. One avenue of improvement we're looking at is the facility for members to join and pay using an online service such as Paypal. Because there is a charge for this service we will need to assess how much it would be used and if it would be cost effective in the long run. The DCT is proud of the fact that our membership costs are one of the less expensive out there and we want to keep it that way, especially in view of the economic situation. Any thoughts you have on this facility, whether you would use it or not, would be much appreciated. Contact details can be found below.

One new 'electronic' outlet of the Trust is the creation of a Facebook page for the Dudley Tunnel. Those of you who have a Facebook account please visit our pages – look for 'dudley canal tunnel' in the pages search – and become a fan. With this facility we can update subscribers with the latest news and views, post very recent images and of course advise on any forthcoming events and social evenings. In addition members are able to upload their own photos, take part in discussions and contact me directly should they have any queries concerning the Trust and its activities.

Webcam news now. These cameras will see me in a home of some sort very soon. Despite an encouraging few days in December when they worked nicely, they promptly 'fell over' during Christmas (this is a technical term I believe meaning broken) and have refused to stand up ever since. We have had to change hard drives, capture cards and fans. The Staff at the towpath are very polite when I ask for a lift in to Singing Cavern to attempt more repairs, so my thanks extend to them. I believe now I'm known to them as 'oh dam here he comes', or 'thank God there he goes'. If I cannot get these things working in the next few weeks I will admit defeat and call it a day for this project.

Alex Parker

contact: info@dudleytunnel.co.uk

Towpath News

Melvyn and the Team spent two days ice breaking trying to get the boats down to Caggy's boatyard for winter maintenance. Melvyn and his staff worked through all the snow and ice in freezing temperatures to get the boats looking their best for the new season so thank you to everyone for a team effort. The Ticket Office, Canopy and railings around site are currently being painted in readiness for the new season. The Green Team have already started work on the Birmingham New Road Entrance in preparation for planting up ready for spring.

We would like to take this opportunity of welcoming two new members of staff joining us for the 2010 Season. Alan Wild is joining us as Skipper and Diane Bagley will be joining Lorraine in our Catering Unit. Pop in and say hello to them when you come down on site.

June Hodgetts
General Manager,
Dudley Canal Trust Trips Ltd.

Situation Vacant

WANTED

HONORARY DIRECTOR for a midlands based waterways charity . Applicants should preferably live within the West Midlands, and should have extensive commercial experience, the intellectual acumen to help to develop and grow the Charity's business, be prepared to contribute approximately 2 hours per week, and attend bi-monthly Board Meetings in Dudley.

The reward is contributing to one of the best canal-based visitor experiences in the UK, at the start of an exciting new phase of development.

Please contact: June Hodgetts on 01384 236275.

Painting The Cut



Malthouse Stables, Tipton

Graham Colbourne was born and bred next door to the Tilted Barrel pub in Tipton. He says school was never his thing and much preferred to sketch trains. After an accident in Tipton Park he lost an eye at the age of 11. A couple of heart attacks forced Graham to retire early and having more time on his hands started to paint watercolours.

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

Cheques and Postal Orders payable to: DUDLEY CANAL TRUST

Please return to: MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY
DUDLEY CANAL TRUST
BLOWERS GREEN PUMPHOUSE
PEARTREE LANE, DUDLEY
WEST MIDLANDS DY2 0XP

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

Parkhead 1972

