

CUT BOTH WAYS

Lichfield & Hatherton Canals Restoration Trust



Ladybird poppy at Fosseway Heath in Lichfield.
(See "A Walk On The Wild Side With A 'Wrgie' "
inside for more info). Photo by Lucy Brundell

Issue No. 103
Spring 2020



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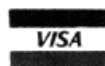
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These are very trying times for all of us with Covid19 and lockdown of work parties and I sincerely hope that all our Members and Volunteers are safe and well. For those of us who are used to being in work parties we are missing our exercise, the sense of achievement and the wonderful camaraderie.

We will also suffer financially as our regular fundraising events start in Spring: Eric and Doreen's All Day Coffee Morning and the Quiz have already been cancelled, and it's likely that summer events at which we sell raffle tickets will be cancelled, too. We have decided to postpone the AGM until September.



But we made huge progress in those few weeks before lockdown. It's always better to be "cup half full"! The progress will be reported elsewhere in this edition and for those of us who live locally the progress is very visible on Falkland Road and Tamworth Road, though the huge progress on Gallows Reach is only seen by the walkers, joggers and the occasional cyclist.

Another good thing to report is that one of our Patrons, Michael Fabricant MP was appointed chair of the "All Party Parliamentary Group for the Waterways" in February. The Group has asked us and two other Canal Trusts to attend a meeting in Westminster and give a 10 minute presentation! We will be raising the profile of restoration and its benefits at this influential forum, and I'm sure that Michael will use his year as Chair to continue that.

While the Work Parties have been stopped the "behind the scenes" work can and must be done. Directors and Officers are all continuing to put their usual hours in to Finance and Funding; dealing with complex local planning issues by working with neighbouring housing developers and councils' planning departments; matters concerning our land and property including corresponding with HS2; H&S; marketing, events and our increasingly seen social media and website and ensuring that we get very good local media reporting; sourcing materials in a timely manner; Membership correspondence and so on.

That "so on" has unfortunately included the need this quarter to respond to a couple of complaints. Whatever line of work one is in if one is to limit any damage to reputation it is vital to respond quickly, objectively and professionally. The subject of the complaints was the mess we were making as work progressed along Gallows Reach (between Gallows Wharf and the footpath linking Tamworth and Longbridge Roads) and from there along Tamworth Road. The Trust has been awarded Community Infrastructure Levy funding from both District and City Councils but like most grants they are time limited.

Given the amazingly wet winter we did indeed produce a great deal of mud. What I must also add is that those of us regularly out on site lose count (though we should try and record it!) of the numbers of passers by who sing our praises for the wonderful work we are doing.

That seems a good note on which to end, and in a way takes us back to where I started with Covid19 as I am certain that the ever increasing paths we are creating have been so valuable to our local community for safely taking exercise in the fresh air.

Chris Bull, (Chairperson)

DUKE OF EDINBURGH VOLUNTEERS

Lichfield and Hatherton Canals Restoration Trust received the Queen's Award For Voluntary Services last year, and the Trust is particularly proud of its record of introducing young people to the benefits of volunteering. It has received a record number of Duke of Edinburgh volunteers.

The Trust's chairperson Chris Bull explains here why she is especially pleased with the current crop of Duke of Edinburgh Award volunteers.

"For many years LHCRT has had young people volunteering as part of their Duke of Edinburgh Awards, and we are delighted that several who long ago completed their necessary hours carry on," she said.



Duke of Edinburgh Award youngsters at Fosseway Heath

"Harry Wem is one of them: in his seventh year, now putting all the skills he has learnt in helping to maintain the Trust's machinery and plant to good use studying mechanical engineering at University.

"Liv Baker is another: now in her third year with the Grounds Team, and energetically turning her hand to anything, including making a superb Vote of Thanks at the Queen's Award ceremony and doing a full day on the BBQ at Huddlesford Heritage Gathering.

"She usually brings her equally energetic Dad, too!

"A year ago, there were six DofE volunteers; by October 2019 there were 11; there is now a record 16, ranging in age from 14–19.

"Many of them, especially the older ones pursuing their Silver and Gold Awards, also have other commitments such as school work, sports matches and Scouting.

"Most are working on one of LHCRT's sites every Saturday, whatever the weather, with the Green/Grounds team, and we also have two youngsters now working with our plant maintenance team.

"Whatever they're tasked with they do enthusiastically, though planting daffodils was not one of the favourites.

"They love to get stuck into harder graft, especially when they can stand back and see what fantastic progress they have made.



"Have a look at Falkland Road: They have filled and carefully placed many of the sandbags, raked the new bank and moved and laid turf; they have cleared tons of hedging and tree offcuts and made habitat piles at Gallows Reach; they have stacked bricks, saving the time and skills of

our construction parties; they happily get very mucky clearing the by-wash; repaired fencing and also willingly done other grounds team work such as deseeding the wild flower beds on Tamworth Road ready for reseeding and rescued and replanted celandines at Fosseway.

"Their work is hugely valued by LHCRT, and we all love their commitment and energy.

"With this number of young people we might have been short of tools and gloves, but thanks to a £1,000 grant last year from TSB's Community Fund specifically for equipping our growing numbers of young people; others are Scouting Groups and Queen's Croft High School.

"Thanks to all of you and to TSB."

Tam Reid, (Publicity Officer)

Donations to the Trust: 1st January to 31st March 2020

Donations during this period from individuals and groups, plus ancillary items, totalled £29,983 including those to the Tunnel Vision Appeal plus Gift Aid tax claims for UK taxpayers who completed the required formalities.

Assistance in this period was given by the following, in alphabetical order;

Site work:-

- Balfour Beatty Vinci corporate teams.
- BT Corporate volunteering day.
- Chasetown Civil Engineering Ltd, site materials and plant.
- Jaguar Land Rover corporate teams.
- Laing Murphy O'Rourke JV for HS2, corporate team.
- Netherstowe School student activity.
- Savilles, Lichfield, corporate team.
- South Staffordshire College, carpentry students.
- Queens' Croft School, Lichfield, regular volunteer teams.
- Veolia Waste Management Co., corporate team
- Walsall College, bricklaying students.

Other activities:-

- Caja Ltd, consultancy input for National Lottery grant development.
- Lichfield City Council project management support.
- Lichfield Mayor & Sheriff's charity fund-raising events including LHCRT.
- 17 Duke of Edinburgh volunteers mostly working on Grounds/Green team but also on Plant Maintenance

And all L&H Trust volunteer teams on...

- Canal restoration, plant maintenance and repair;
- 'Green and Grounds' Team, planting and vegetation control;
- Maintenance of Heritage Towpath Trail.

Our sincere thanks to all.

Membership rates are:

Adult £10; Family £15; Junior (under 18), Student, Retired or Unemployed £6;
Group (Clubs & Societies) £25; Small Business £100,
Large Corporate £200; Life Membership £200,
Family Life Membership £300 (includes children up to age 18).
To join, please contact the Membership Secretary (see above),
view our website www.lhcrt.org.uk or email members@lhcart.org.uk

Membership Total at 31st March 2020 :- 1977
(Comprising 361 Adult, 958 Family, 218 Life, 429 Retired, 11 Other)

Welcome to New Members – 1st January to 31st March 2020

Ms G Martin, Salisbury
Mr S Bishop, Burntwood
Mr P Slader, Bognor Regis
Mrs J Kaine, Lichfield
Miss L Barrett, Handsacre
Mr G Moreton Tatenhill
Mr I Dickens, Lichfield

Mrs L Dickens, Lichfield
Mr P Newman, Fordingbridge
Mr I Isitt, Cannock
Mrs T Mottram, Stafford
Mr & Mrs K Holmes, Burntwood
Mr J Challoner, Lichfield
Mr A Smith, Chelmsford

In this period, 30 new members have been approved by the board of directors of the Trust. The above 14 new members gave their consent to have their names published in this magazine in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). We welcome you into the membership, and also those who did not give their consent. We could not do the work we do, without your support, thank you.

In my last note to you, I spoke of leaping into the New Year, and little did I know then, that we would leap into the unknown situation of the Covid-19 virus. Under normal circumstances, the British way would be, heads down, carry on as normal, drink tea, and think of England. But these are not normal times. Never before can I remember being told to stay at home and not go out unless absolutely necessary, with a few exceptions. So the decision was made to close down all of the sites, and comply with the directions coming from the Prime Minister and the Health Service.

So, stay at home it is then! I know that I and many of my colleague volunteers who work on the restoration are sad not to be there, progressing the work. We have spare time on our hands, just as the bad weather is abating in way for some fine, dry weather, and where we could push on with our work. There is lots to do.

In a way, I am fortunate to be the Membership Secretary as I do some work at home on membership matters, welcoming new members and sending out their welcome pack; receiving subscription cheques for renewal of membership, and sending out letters to those who need reminding (sorry to those who have been reminded, when they pay by Bankers Order – my fault).

For new or established members, there are several ways to pay your subscriptions: A cheque payable to LHCRT to me, Pay Pal, Bankers Order or our latest, an automatic recurring Direct Debit. Oh yes, and we do still take cash. I want to be kept busy on this, and would love to receive applications for membership (there were 30 new members in the last quarter) and receive renewal notes. The crisis will be over one day, and we will be able to resume the restoration of our canal with renewed vigour, but we do need funds, and they come mainly from membership fees. Thank you to everyone who pays on time. And if you don't remember when your subs are due, drop me an e-mail, and I will let you know. So, heads down, follow advice, keep safe, drink tea and think of the Canal Restoration (or should it be England?) Until next time.....

Brian Williams, Membership Secretary

"500 CLUB" Capital Fund

Our 500 Club gives members a chance to win prizes of up to £400 every three months! 50% of the 500 Club income will be retained for capital expenditure essential for restoration of our two canals... and 50% paid in prizes to its members.

In accordance with Rule 10, we reported a slight revision of the 500 Club Rules in Clauses 3 and 4 regarding the extent of eligibility. A full copy of the updated rules is available on our website.

259 subscribing members were eligible to share £388.50 in the March draw.

So please spread the word.

The winners of the March 2020 draw are (abbreviated for GDPR):

First prize £ 202.02 No 296 White, Godstone, Surrey.

Second prize £ 132.09 No 28 Lock, Lichfield.

Third prize £ 54.39 No 34 Booth, Penkridge, Staffs.

The "500 Club" Capital Fund has been established to raise funds for capital expenditure on land purchase and rebuilding structures on the Lichfield and Hatherton Canals. For an annual subscription of £12 Club Members are allocated 1 chance in each of 4 successive quarterly draws. Based on a membership of 500, the maximum prizes will be:

1 st Prize	£400	approximately 26% income
2 nd Prize	£250	approximately 17% income
3 rd Prize	£100	approximately 7% income

If there are more or less than 500 members, the prizes will be proportionally increased or decreased. So the more 500 Club members we have, the higher the prizes. Remember, membership of the 500 Club is open to everyone, not just members of Lichfield & Hatherton Canals Restoration Trust.

So please spread the word. If you want to subscribe, you can download an application form from our website www.lhcr.org.uk. Pending appointing a new administrator, please contact Bob Williams, Norfolk House, 29 Hall Lane, Hammerwich, Burntwood, WS7 0JP

(advertisement)



Michael Fabricant MP

**Member of Parliament for
the Constituency of Lichfield.**

If you live in the Lichfield Parliamentary constituency, and you require assistance and think your MP can help, you can either write to Michael Fabricant at the House of Commons, Westminster, London SW1A 0AA; or you can email him by using the webform at **www.michael.fabricant.mp.co.uk/contact.html** or telephone his office at 01543 419650 where you can also make an appointment to see him at one of his regular surgeries.

(advertisement)

20-20 VISION



With the Cross-City railway bridge now in place, and restricted funds in hand, it becomes possible for the Trust to engage contractors to approach the Lichfield Canal tunnel site, although the tunnel itself will still need major funding in due course.

However, as the Trust must move forward with what can be achieved with its own and visiting volunteer forces, we are launching a new initiative to fund materials

needed to make progress with the diversion route from the Fosseway Heath site that will later connect with the railway tunnel.

Are you far sighted? Your name could be on the Lichfield Canal far into the future with our 2020 Falkland Road Piling Appeal.

The following pages describe how channel protection for this highly visible section beside the bypass upstream of the railway tunnel using steel piling enables donors to have a short personal tag attached. It might be a name, a pet, a boat or any code known to the donor!

To economise on printing and distribution costs, rather than issuing a separate leaflet, the appeal details on the following pages include an extra removable donation form on pages 13/14.

As many members like to preserve their magazine intact, a supplementary page repeating the donation form has been included specifically to be cut out as shown for submitting your donation and dedication as stated thereon.

Alternatively, donations can be made online by visiting our website page at:

<https://www.lhcrt.org.uk/2020piling.html>

Thank you!

Bob Williams, (Finance Director)



The Queen's Award
for Voluntary Service
The MBE for volunteer groups



**Lichfield & Hatherton
Canals Restoration Trust**

Reg. Charity No.702429. Website: www.lhcart.org.uk

20-20 VISION



Falkland Road



Example of piling tags at Darnford

Far sighted? Your name could be on the Lichfield Canal far into the future with our 2020 Falkland Road Piling Appeal.

Channel protection for this highly visible section beside the bypass using steel piling enables donors to have a personal tag attached.

ONLY £20.00 per pile
(no maximum per donor)

PLEASE USE THE FORM BELOW

If you sign the form as a taxpayer, the Trust can reclaim 25p per £1 on your donation.

Donations can also be made via our website at:-
<https://www.lhcart.org.uk/2020piling.html>

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Please donate to our **2020 PILING Appeal** towards extending restoration of the Lichfield Canal ...

- either 1. **MAKE A DONATION NOW** *in no. 1 overleaf*
e.g. £40 for 2 piles; £100 for 5 piles; £200 for 10 piles
and/or 2. **SIGN A PLEDGE TO MAKE FUTURE DONATIONS**
e.g. £20 a month for 6 months, i.e. £120 for 6 piles, or
£40 a month for 5 months, i.e. £200 for 10 piles



Please enter in no. 2 overleaf

Donations will be acknowledged and for pledges, we will send you a regular payments form for your use.
Donors of £1,000 will receive a 2020 PILING Certificate with an offer of Life Membership of our Trust.

PLEASE ENTER BELOW UP TO 20-CHARACTER WORDING TO EMBOSS ON THE PILING TAG

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
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LHCRT is committed to protecting and respecting your privacy and, in accordance with GDPR, we will only use your personal information to administer your donation. If you do not wish to receive updates from the Trust or any third party with whom we co-operate then please phone 01543 671427.



In January 2020, Staffordshire County Council transferred ownership to our Trust the first length of the Falkland Road environmental corridor, reserved since the bypass was constructed in 2006. This will accommodate a diversion of the Lichfield Canal replacing the original route past the historic Sandfields Waterworks which has been redeveloped since the canal was legally closed in 1954.

Steel sheet piling is a well-proven, robust, long-term solution to water containment where the bank has to be supported, such as for the towpath, or there is limited land available. The Falkland Road section adjoins the now largely complete Fossey Heath section with its public Nature Trail and will add another length to the popular Heritage Towpath Trail flanking the Lichfield Canal.



Whilst our Trust is grateful for the generosity of donors who support the cause, here is an opportunity for you to be recognised by a brief name tag permanently attached to the sponsored piles: for example, a personal name, a memorable pet, a Club group or secret code known to the donor! At Darnford shown overleaf, there are 400 tags from 20 years ago as an acknowledgement to those donors.

Pending acquisition from Staffordshire County Council of the remaining length towards Birmingham Road, work has now started on the initial 85-metre length shown here where 200 piles and fittings cost about £20,000.

We thank all contributors in advance for responding to this 2020 PILING Appeal.

Keep your personal record: I donated /pledged to the 2020 Piling Appeal £ _____ on _____ [2/20]

[Signature]

1. I hereby make to the L&H 2020 PILING Appeal a DONATION NOW of £ _____ .00 and / or

2. I pledge to make to the L&H 2020 PILING Appeal FUTURE DONATIONS of £ _____ .00

EITHER ☐ in a single payment during 2020 ***OR*** ☐ by regular payments of £ _____ per month for _____ months.
Our payment form with your details will be sent to you.

GIFT AID DECLARATION

I am a UK taxpayer and understand that if I pay less Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax than the amount of Gift Aid claimed on all my donations in that tax year it is my responsibility to pay any difference."

Signature (only if a UK taxpayer) _____ Date: _____

Name: _____ Address: _____

Post Code: _____

Email address (if applicable) _____

Please make cheques payable to "L H C R T Ltd - 2020 Piling Appeal" and send with this form to:

LHCRT Ltd, 29 Hall Lane, Hammerwich, Burntwood, Staffs. WS7 0JP.

Alternatively, donations can be made via our website at:- <https://www.lhcert.org.uk/2020piling.html>



THIS EXTRA PAGE ENABLES YOU TO COMPLETE BOTH SIDES, CUT OFF AND SEND IN THE APPEAL FORM WHILST PRESERVING THE ORIGINAL APPEAL PAGES IN YOUR MAGAZINE. KEEP A NOTE OF YOUR DONATION AND PILE TAG HERE.

I donated £ _____ to the 2020 PILING Appeal on (date)

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Scissors icon

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The Queen's Award
for Voluntary Service
The QAVS for volunteer groups

✂

1. I hereby make to the L&H 2020 PILING Appeal a DONATION NOW of £ _____.00 and / or
2. I pledge to make to the L&H 2020 PILING Appeal FUTURE DONATIONS of £ _____.00

ENTER YOUR
FILE TAG NAME
OVERLEAF

EITHER ☐ in a single payment during 2020 ☐ OR by regular payments of £ _____ per month for _____ months.
Our payment form with your details will be sent to you.

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Signature (only if a UK taxpayer) _____ Date: _____

Name: _____ Address: _____

Post Code: _____

Email address (if applicable) _____

Please make cheques payable to "L H C R T Ltd - 2020 Piling Appeal" and send with this form to:

LHCRT Ltd, 29 Hall Lane, Hammerwich, Burntwood, Staffs. WS7 0JP.



Alternatively, donations can be made via our website at: <https://www.lhcert.org.uk/2020piling.html>

Weather for this quarter hasn't helped us at all. For several days, the rain was just too much and, although the volunteers turned up to help, the rain was so relentless that by lunchtime the only sensible thing to do was to call it a day and all go home.

Still, nevertheless, work has progressed well down at the Falkland Road end of our Fosseway site. Most of our work, as of now, is concentrated on that stretch of the canal from the new canal basin by the unused railway bridge, following Falkland Road towards Claypit Lane and beyond. Sandbagging along the top of the roadside grassy bank has raised its level to match that of the canal basin. Back filling with soil and sand to the road side of this sandbag wall has enabled the original turf to be replanted. This sandbag wall peters out about a third of the way between the canal basin and Claypit Lane. As of now, all but a short section of this sandbag wall has been built and re-turfed. Along the top of the sandbag wall a timber fence has been erected. At the bottom of this fence numerous hedging whips have been planted, also bulbs and other plants, which in future years will make the area very attractive to walkers and boaters alike. Spare turf has been put to one side for future use. The towpath, which skirts the field to the South of this section of the canal, will be quite a lot higher than the field itself and the spare grass turfs will be used to support its edge. The 'Oss' just to the left of our site entrance has had to be temporally repositioned. Where it had been living needed building up to the same height as that on the right hand side of our site entrance. To the road side a sandbag buttress was built, and to the canal side wall a concrete block and brick inner wall was constructed. The resulting space gave room for 'Oss' to be resited in what will be his permanent pad. He is now standing proud, at the same height as the half sized canal boat on the other side of our entrance.

Now that the roadside banking has progressed to this stage we are able to work on the profile of the canal itself. The height of the bed of the canal has been established and we've commenced concreting it. Concrete is being used as in future the bed of the canal will be used as a haulage road for transporting all the spoil from further down the canal towards Birmingham Road. It is intended to progress the building of the canal's side walls as we extend the concrete base. These walls will be the subject of a future blog (coronavirus permitting).

There is still some brickwork to be completed within the canal basin and concrete infill of the new walls. So still plenty to do. Thanks to all our volunteers for their help during this last quarter.

You, our volunteers are the life blood of this restoration.

Hugh Millington, Work Parties (Lichfield)

The views expressed in Cut Both Ways do not necessarily represent those of the Trust or the Editor. They are however published as being of interest to our readership.

I am a volunteer for Waterway Recovery Group, and during 2019 I had been working on the dry part of the canal during the first week of July, at Fossey Heath in Lichfield. Here the Lichfield and Hatherton Canals Restoration Trust are restoring a one mile section of canal for the local community and to enhance the site for wildlife.

We know that many a building site looks awful and the wildlife disappears as they have to find a new home, the habitats do alter and new plants and insects quickly begin to establish themselves. Over the week, I inspected a section of this canal that had recently been restored between December and January 2018-2019, to see what early successional plants had taken.

To our surprise the area had recovered very quickly and was thriving. This blog will take you through my findings and explore the interesting wildlife uncovered.

A bit of background: Fossey Heath is a narrow area about one mile long between farmers' fields and a raised railway embankment. The soil is very dry and is acidic in most places with a hedgerow expanding along the towpath side and thickets of bramble and secondary succession species along the railway embankment.

The site was a riot of self-seeded flowers and deeply rooted plants that had recovered and responded to new conditions. Let me list them, with some of the benefits they have.

There's a large clump of nettles – the best place for furry caterpillars of the peacock butterfly. Of course they are also food for us – nettle soup! Once nettle leaves are boiled, they lose the power to sting. Nettle pesto is also nice with pasta! In medieval times, thrashing your back with a bunch of nettles was a cure for arthritis.



White briony

There is white Briony, making garlands of white flowers which will be followed in autumn by necklaces of red berries. Although they are poisonous to us, the birds find them quite a delicacy.

Higher up the bank are brambles. They provide a great source of nectar for bees and flying insects

which the predatory orb spider catch in their webs. The fruits are consumed by field mice, blackbirds and other garden birds, and in autumn butterflies and wasps will eat the over-ripe fruits.

Higher still, amongst the gravel of the train bed, are another group of plants loved by grazing rabbits, ants, solitary wasps and jumping spiders. The railway embankment provides a dense cover from predators for rabbits, foxes, mice, voles and it will probably will attract hedgehogs to make a home there.

A WALK ON THE WILD SIDE WITH A 'WRGIE'

Along the canal path between oak trees, we identified many ladybirds and their larvae, which are a natural pesticide to aphids and other species that are considered a pest to your garden.

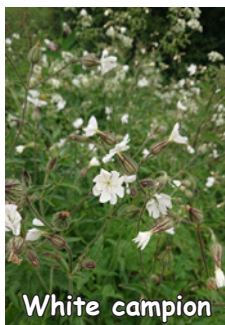
There were grasshoppers and other bugs, hoverflies and at least two different species of bees. The predominant flower along the path is the white campion, with big ornamental poppies naturalised and deposited by birds in their droppings. The red ones with black bases to their petals are known as ladybird poppies but we saw no ladybirds on the plants but plenty of hoverflies.



Ladybird nymph



Ladybird



White campion

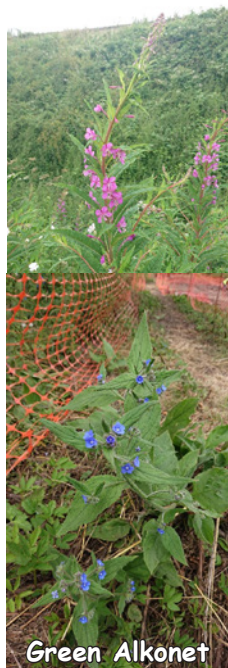


Ladybird poppy

Amongst the red and white flowers were others. The red spires of Rosebay willow herb were probably brought over from America by rail men who went to build their railways. They have spread throughout Britain, mainly on railway sidings and cuttings.

Comfrey has large green leaves and is one of the first plants to establish themselves. Their leaves make a wonderful liquid fertiliser for garden plants. Six leaves in a bucket of water, leave for four weeks and stir. It smells horrible! Dilute it half and half with water and feed your special plants after rain!

Green Alkonet is the bright blue flower that looks like a big forget-me-not. It has tiny hairs on the stem and leaves, so climbing insects cannot reach the flowers – bees love it though! It also has long tap roots, like comfrey so it can reach the damp soil.



Green Alkonet



Comfrey



Right on the edge of the path are some smaller plants. The scarlet pimpernel actually closes its petals when it rains, making it hard to spot on a cloudy day. Blackbirds, black beetles and robins have been around us whilst digging out the old canal, looking for worms, centipedes and millipedes. It's been very good for the birds but not so good for the mini-beasts.

An old, brown toad was carefully moved to the damp area under the hedge where it sheltered under a rotting trunk. There were plants that we photographed but didn't recognise and quite a few mini-beasts also.

The area has created a diverse habitat and a wild-life corridor which should continue to grow and bring enjoyment for many years.

Christine Monks, WRG, July 2019

Photos by Lucy Brundell

ANNOUNCEMENT

It is with much sadness that we announce the sudden death of Mr Noel Sweeney, founder and Managing Director of Chasetown Civil Engineering Ltd and related businesses. Our Trust has benefitted greatly over many years from the constant generosity of Mr Sweeney in supporting our work in different ways. Most recently, his particular interest in making provision for college students to put their construction training into practice at Fossey Heath is an aspect that may well be continued in his memory.

The All Party Parliamentary Group for the Waterways (APPGW), which held its inaugural meeting for the new Parliament on Tuesday 25th February, has appointed Michael Fabricant MP as its new Chair.

At the meeting held in Westminster the Group also agreed key topics that would be addressed over the coming months, including the importance of protecting waterways heritage, how waterway restoration can act as a catalyst for much wider regeneration, and encouraging access to the waterways for sport and leisure use.

Michael Fabricant is well known for his support of the waterways in his Lichfield constituency, particularly the work of the Lichfield & Hatherton Canals Restoration Trust of which he is a Patron, and is a previous recipient of IWA's (Inland Waterways Association) Parliamentarian of the Year Award.

Among the vice chairmen and officers of the Group are a number of newly elected MPs as well as some long standing waterway supporters, including: Lord German OBE, Simon Baynes MP (South Cwtyd), John Cryer MP (Leyton), Bill Esterson MP (Sefton Central), Mark Garnier MP (Wyre Forest), Jason McCartney MP (Colne Valley) and Craig Williams MP (Montgomeryshire).

Paul Rodgers, IWA National Chairman, said "The IWA wholeheartedly welcomes Michael's appointment as Chair of the APPGW. He fully understands the importance of the UK's inland waterways and the ongoing need for adequate funding of the publicly owned waterways, and we look forward to working with him over the coming months and years."

Michael Fabricant MP said "It is not just boaters who make use of our canals and inland waterways, it is also those who enjoy exercising along towpaths, those who enjoy the tranquillity of our waterways whether they be in the countryside or city,

and it is the wildlife that our waterways so encourage. I am looking forward to chairing this influential All Party Group and highlighting both in Parliament and elsewhere the importance of waterways to the economy and environment of our nation."



Photo shows (left to right) Michael Fabricant MP & Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group for the Waterways and Paul Rodgers, National Chairman of the Inland Waterways Association (IWA).

Women have always played an integral, if underrated, part in canal construction.

Traditionally, navvies were men, but women and children could be involved in building tasks too, and women, of course, looked after the home while their men-folk worked.

The first boats had all-male crews, with families living in cottages on the bank, but as competition from the railways grew, it made sense for women and children to come aboard as extra labour and to save rental costs.

The feminine influence no doubt led to the decoration of boats with brightly-painted landscapes and crocheted lace, the 'Roses and Castles' folk art that characterises today's leisure narrow boats.

The Second World War saw the rise of the 'Idle Women', the canal-based equivalent of the "Land Girls".

The Idle Women, whose nickname was derived from the initials 'IW' displayed on their badges, volunteered to operate canal barges, carrying vital supplies through the country's waterway network.

As canals moved towards primarily leisure use, the drive for restoration was again a traditionally male pursuit, but women continued to play their part.

Nowhere is that influence more important than in Lichfield and Hatherton Canals Restoration Trust, with a group of women playing leading roles.

LHCRT Chairperson Chris Bull

Chris, who, unusually for a woman in 1969, went into industry working on long term planning for Shell and then moved to Burton as marketing intelligence manager for Bass Worthington.

"My daughter was born before maternity leave was statutory so the commercial career ended!" she said.

"By chance I found part time work in Higher Education and then Further Education, ultimately as Assistant Principal at Tamworth & Lichfield College, and retiring in 2005".

"Putting my feet up wasn't for me! I did some part time work on adult literacy and numeracy and in 2007 embarked on 'Granny on a Gap Year' with a number of Voluntary Service Overseas placements in Namibia, St Helena Island and Tanzania until 2015".

"Volunteering gets in the blood! I am passionate about conservation and through such work with Lichfield's Countryside and Parks Conservation Group and Staffs Wildlife Trust I heard about LHCRT, and joined the Grounds/Green Team".



"I still get out there and muddy on Saturdays, on Tuesdays with Queen's Croft High School youngsters and also with the numerous youth groups who work with us on an ad hoc basis and I love it!"

"I also sit for ages in front of my laptop and in meetings on the all important 'behind the scenes' work".

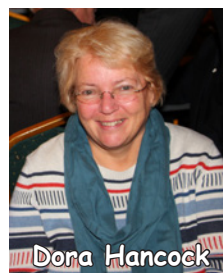
"My volunteering keeps the body and the brain in good form, and has allowed me to get to know the most amazing bunch of people. Thanks, LHCRT!"

Company Secretary Dora Hancock

Dora's background is in accountancy and education.

"After completing a degree in maths, qualifying as a Chartered Accountant and gaining a teaching qualification I began a teaching career at Shrewsbury College in 1984," she said.

"During my teaching career I worked at Staffordshire University, Birmingham City University, Leeds Beckett's University and Aston University teaching accountancy, tax and finance. I have written two books, one on the UK Tax System and the other on International Finance".



"My husband and I bought our first narrowboat in 1989 and are keen boaters".

"Before I retired I interviewed Peter Buck, the Trust's engineering director, and as a result decided to attend a Trust meeting".

"I quickly found myself agreeing to be minutes secretary and then company secretary".

"I found that the aims of the Trust and the work they were doing appealed to me and my desire to be involved in something that was big enough to engage me in retirement".

"Working for the Trust has enabled me to contribute to my community more widely, perhaps most successfully with Lichfield in Bloom but also with several groups of young people ranging from Beavers to students following the Duke of Edinburgh programme".

"I have also very much enjoyed meeting people from the wider restoration community and CRT".

"I find that people involved in canal restoration tend to be very positive people who are willing to do what it takes to make things happen".

Communications Director Christine Howles

Christine is a member of the Chartered Institute of Marketing (CIM).



She began her career working as a housing officer for a Midlands-based housing association before side-stepping into communications and marketing and studying for a marketing qualification at evening classes and during maternity leave.

She now works full time as communications manager for South Staffs Water.

Christine said: "I started volunteering for LHCRT five years ago, when I moved house closer to the canal route and saw that they needed help with their social media presence".

"That role soon grew and I'm now a trustee, heading up the events team, looking after volunteer recruitment and many other things besides".

"LHCRT is very inclusive, so although we may be unusual having so many women as volunteers, it's not something that's crossed my mind until now".

"All of our volunteers, regardless of gender or any other characteristic, are united in the common goal of restoring the canals".

"I work full-time and have a family including two boys aged 14 and 10 so a lot of people ask how I find the time to volunteer".

"A lot of what I do, I can do in short bursts before or after work, but then I do use a lot of my spare time at the weekends".

"I do tend to bring it on myself though as I easily find more work for myself and then have a new project to take on".

"However, when you're passionate about something, it's very easy to get completely wrapped up in it".

Health and Safety Officer Sharon Oliphant

Sharon describes herself as an experienced, dedicated and enthusiastic health and safety professional.

"I have more than twenty years' experience working in the utilities and construction sectors with a mechanical, electrical and civil design background – a world away from college days and training to be a cartographer!" she said.



"Currently working for a specialist contractor to both the water industry and wider water environment, it was a pleasure being asked to volunteer for LHCRT in the health and safety role enabling me to use my day time skills to support a project that will bring the Lichfield and Hatherton canals back to life".

"To ensure positive health and well-being I firmly believe in being able to maintain a healthy work-life balance and sometimes for me being busy is best!"

“Through the support of my family and employer and with my time management skills, I am able to give something back to the community through my volunteering”.

Sarah Morley

Sarah has been a member of LHCRT for several years and is usually sat behind her desk at home designing their leaflets, posters and logos. “I saw their Facebook advert for work party volunteers and thought I would contact them about it,” she said.

“I’ve seen a lot of the work they have done at Gallows Wharf and Gallows Reach along the Tamworth Road as I walk my dog along that route most days”.

“Before going self-employed I worked for a number of construction companies but only ever got to visit sites to take photographs, so this was a good opportunity for me to get out on site and actually do some manual labour”.

“I spend Wednesday mornings with the team at Fossey Heath and they are all friendly and welcoming and encourage me to get involved with something different each week”.

“So far I have helped to bolt a metal ladder to the canal wall and concrete it in, mixed my first wheelbarrow of cement for the bricklayers and have been shown how to use the diesel cement mixer”.

“We’ve been busy filling in the cavity walls and so have been mixing plenty of cement for that”.

“Each batch of cement takes 40 spades of sand and gravel, two bags of cement and three buckets of water, so it’s definitely a good workout filling the mixer up each time!”

“Next week I’m being shown how to drive the dumper, so watch this space!”

“I work for myself at home and it can be quite isolating sometimes, so this is a great way to escape the four walls of the office for a few hours each week and get to know some new people”.

The Trust’s Marketing Team

The team is heavily reliant on its women members Sue Williams, Bev Marshall, Hilary Smith, Pat Ainge, May Brown and Margaret Beardsmore, a photographer with a passion for Staffordshire and canals.

The Trust’s Green and Grounds Team

The women members, whose main aims are to encourage biodiversity and improve the route visually, are Margaret Broadhead, Aileen Salter, Patsy Wilson, Wendy Reece, Kareen Lowther, Linda Collins, Jean Barnett, Liv Baker, a DofE award volunteer, and young volunteer Natasha Matthews.

Tam Reid, (Publicity Officer)



This may well have been the warmest winter so far for many years, but it has been persistently wet! It has affected particularly the Queen's Croft volunteers, as not only are they with us for just over two hours, they also have to walk to and from their school close to the town centre. While the rest of us have decent wet weather gear these youngsters don't, and so we've had to cancel more sessions this academic year to date than in the whole of the previous three years.

The hedge cutting on all sites which I reported in the last edition has continued and must be completed very soon before the birds are nesting. It's also been important to get the Gallows Reach and Tamworth Road to Cricket Lane trees and hedging trimmed back before the "heavy brigade" gets in with diggers and corporate groups continue laying the Heritage Towpath Trail.

We are sure that the "crew cuts" will enable much healthier and thicker regrowth, as has happened at Summerhill.

Other than hacking hedges and trees there's a lot of clearing up to do; the new petrol trimmer has come into good use, and more habitat piles are being made with the chunkier pieces.

The new bund along Gallows Reach will shortly be a "host of golden daffodils", and we transplanted the snowdrops which were growing where the towpath will shortly be made to that bund, too.

We have been transplanting turf too from where the canal channel will be along Falkland Road.

The amount of work done has been possible due to the record number of volunteers now involved with Grounds/Green work. In the last 6 months the regular turnout of adults on Saturdays has doubled from an average of 5 or 6 to 10 or 12; the Queen's Croft contingent this year is a record 17 students; we have a record 14, and still growing number of Duke of Edinburgh Award volunteers.

Foresters Scout Group from Yoxall are now in its 4th year of occasional, but valuable sessions.

We're embarking on a new Scout Group partnership, though perhaps I should say we're building it up: 7th Lichfield Scout Group have in the last couple of years done a few sessions of bulb planting, litter picking, general tidying with us, but right now it's produced small plaques acknowledging the 1,500 or so saplings we've had for free (once we've quickly applied for them before they're all committed!) over the last few years from The Woodland Trust and which now grace Tamworth Road, Fosseway, Summerhill.

When the lighter evenings come both Scout Groups will spend a number of their sessions working for us.

It may well be of interest if I include the hard, quantitative data on Grounds/Green work at end of 2019:

- Recreating lowland heathland at Fosseway: Staffordshire has lost 80% of its lowland heathland in the last 100 years; its Biodiversity Action Plan wants “stepping stones” of lowland heathland
- Creating wetlands at Fosseway: Staffordshire Wildlife Trust’s Wetlands expert is very excited about our plan
- Hard data!:-
- Now have 14 young people doing their D of E volunteering with us – a record for any one time – and totalling 300hrs for 2019
- Grounds/Green adult volunteers hours on conservation in 2019: 800
- Engagement of young people with learning difficulties and disabilities (i.e. Queen’s Croft 16-19 year olds) in 2019: 455hours

Even so, I will put out a call for extra help, as again we were due to receive a donation of 420 hedging saplings from The Woodland Trust. Come and join us and experience the fun and satisfaction!

Christine Bull (Grounds / Green Team)

ANNOUNCEMENT

**Due to Covid-19 this year’s AGM, intended to be held in June, has been postponed till later in the year.
The accounts for 2019 will appear in a later edition.**

GRAND PRIZE DRAW - 2020

Tickets are now on sale for a new Draw this year which we hope will raise more funds – and please some lucky winners – but think of the benefit you can bring to the Trust. Thank you for supporting our work in this way, with a chance to win more big prizes this year!

Please email sponsorship to bob.williams@lhcr.org.uk or phone 01543 671427.

You can buy Grand Prize Draw 2020 tickets from the Trust online shop

In response to the emergency measures imposed by the Government which have led to the cancellation, or at least lengthy postponement of public events to control the current virus pandemic, our Trust has considered other ways of “meeting the public” to maintain some income.

From our website shop, you can now buy tickets in this year’s Grand Prize Draw. Just like any other item on sale, place an online order with payment and we will complete those tickets for you and send an image of them back to your email address as confirmation. That way, the real paper tickets will go into the draw with all others sold this year. Simply go to:

<https://lhcr.org.uk/shop/home/59-prize-draw.html>

Thank you!

David Suchet Tunnel Vision Appeal

Whilst it appears that nothing is being done on the ground for the canal tunnel under the railway, site clearance from the bypass bridge work will take some time, and more so now under Government health restrictions on social mobility. Still, planning continues indoors for the tunnel approaches which will involve negotiations with other landowners and Network Rail in the coming months.

The Appeal must also continue to take the £600,000 gross income so far up to that elusive £1,000,000 to underpin other means of grant support which are under consideration. One of those is our revised Expression of Interest to the National Lottery Heritage Fund which has been prepared. However, the Heritage Lottery has announced that it is suspending all new bids for the time being whilst diverting £50million to support heritage causes deprived of income during closures enforced by the Government pending recovery from the current devastating virus pandemic.

20-20 Vision Piling Appeal

Meanwhile, you see on other pages in this edition a new initiative which can be taken forward by a few volunteers, working apart, installing steel sheet piling on the new Falkland Road section adjacent to the Fossey Heath site. The first £5,000 supply of an expected total over £20,000 has already been delivered.

It is an opportunity for donors to be acknowledged by an embossed metal tag attached to the piling in permanent appreciation like those still in evidence at Darnford from twenty years ago. The Appeal form in this edition tells you how.

Bob Williams, (Finance Director)

Copy Date for the next issue is 6th July

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**We are in desperate need of volunteers in the following areas:
finance, engineering, legal work, planning work,
project management and H&S.**

Can you spare a few hours a week, we would love to hear from you.

**Please contact Christine Howles 07852 190855
or volunteering@lhcr.org.uk**

Our Vision

**To reinstate the historic Lichfield Canal and Hatherton Canal
for the benefit of the community.**

**The natural wildlife corridor from Huddlesford to Hatherton will provide
a valuable amenity for walkers, cyclists, boaters and visitors to use
and will bring prosperity to the area.**

**This project will also provide an opportunity for young people to learn about our
history, our heritage and our environment.**

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Principal Aims : To promote the restoration of the Wyrley and Essington Canal from Ogley Junction to Huddlesford Junction (the "Lichfield Canal"), and the Hatherton Branch of the Staffordshire & Worcestershire Canal, and also the construction of a navigable link between the Hatherton Branch and the Birmingham Canal Navigations.

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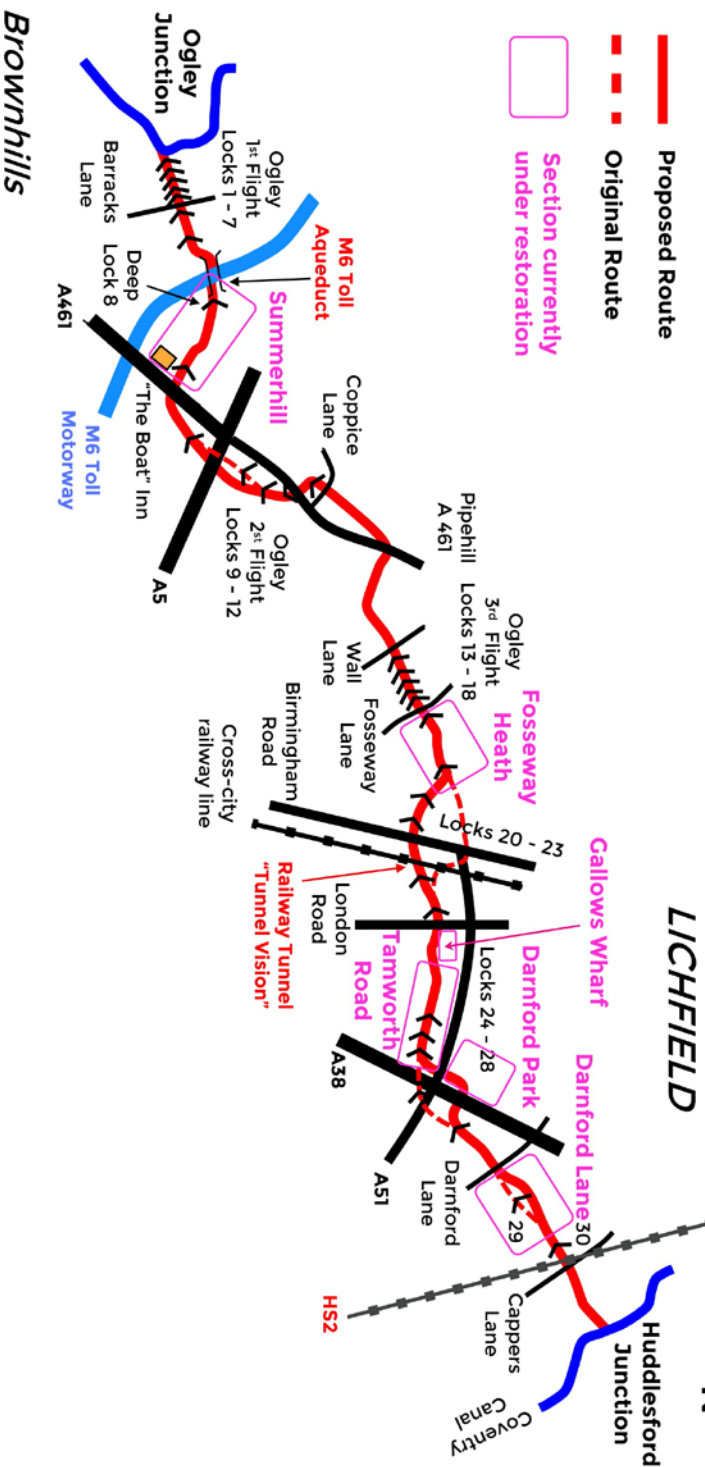
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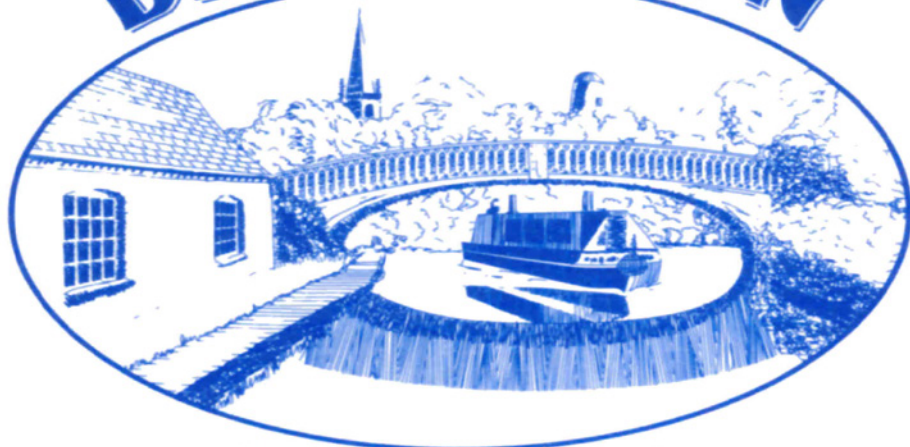
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THE LICHFIELD CANAL

Diagrammatic Plan Not to scale



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