

THE LEGGER



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Editor's Note

Merry Christmas to all, here's hoping this year will be better than 2020 and that you all have an opportunity to catch up with loved ones, friends, and family. Any articles or ideas for inclusion in the Spring 2022 edition of the Ledger need to be with me by Friday 18th March. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Christmas and New Year has always been a time of reflection and acknowledgement of our activities. It's hard to think of a more complex, challenging and also inspiring year as we have experienced with 2021. I know as I wrote my last Winter report I believed the upheaval of Covid was going to be behind us but cancelled Christmas events in 2020, 100 days closure at the start of 2021 and ongoing restrictions were just some of the additional measures we have had to contend with. But I am so proud to also look back and see just how hard our team fought to stay open, stay safe and make the best of all the challenges thrown at us. A Heritage Fund audit of the initial grant money given to us concluded that we had not just survived, we had thrived, a sentiment I would echo. A visit to site shows all the new works and improvements on site, both in the visitor sight and also behind the scenes and though we have said it on a number of occasions its worth repeating – well done everyone.

To continue to survive and thrive, in normal operating periods as well as extreme cases we have to keep moving forward, adapt, try new things and evaluate our activities and understand the return we get from them. We accept not everyone will agree with some of these changes but they are all done to help us achieve our mission of protecting the caverns, tunnels, mines and waterways and making them engaging for all.

Jeff Luesley- Chairman

CEO REPORT

2021 has certainly been a fast paced, blink and you might miss it year for us all here at DCTT. It's amazing that as I write this, we have just completed our very successful Halloween Event and Christmas is really beginning to take over. Decorations are popping up all over the site, parcels are arriving everyday filled with everything we need to put on our sold-out offer. It's all very exciting.

We have had quite a change in our staffing in recent months, something I know a lot of other organisations have also experienced. The past year has given many the push to try something new or chase their dreams. Though we are always sad to lose people it has also given us opportunities to develop our existing staff and grow their roles. We will be recruiting over the coming months but for now we are running a little short on staff which is putting many under pressure, especially at what is a very busy time for us.

Developments on site continue with the new till system being put in – this will really improve both how we sell our products but also the admin requirements. Our new website was launched at the end of October, please check it out we are so pleased with it. We also have the extra additions to the Little Skipper Play Boat, the new maintenance shed and electrical works in the caverns and tunnels.

We have been working closely with Discover Dudley and the Council to promote the area and wider region, this has included TV Adverts, M6 billboards and bus back campaigns. A new heritage attractions map is being brought out which will be available for all, and we are working with the other attractions to look at joint offers for the Future – in particular to support the Commonwealth Games.

Our amazing laser scanning project – funded through Historic England has now finished and we have a range of amazing outputs from this which we are keen to continue to develop. Two new digital screens have been added to the Biffa Gallery to showcase this. New signage on site has begun to appear, all tied into our marketing campaign, work has begun on getting the boats ready for Dry Dock and we have next year's event program in place and ready to develop – exciting times!

Traci Dix-Williams—Chief Executive

ALAN HAZELDINE - A GOOD COLLEAGUE & A CLOSE FRIEND

I first met Alan when I joined the Board of Dudley Canal Trust (Trips) Ltd in 2001. We both quickly realised that we had a lot in common. Both had started our careers at very junior levels in our organisations and ended up heavily involved in management buyouts, also we shared a deep love for canals, both owning narrowboats and both preferred strong and independent partners! Our friendship grew from that point and because all four of us had a thirst for knowledge, travel & music, we enjoyed many great times together over the following years.



Two occasions particularly come to mind. The first was a week we all had in Paris together – it was certainly a thoroughly enjoyable culture week – we did not miss too many museums & historical landmarks but we also

“Alan & Yvonne at Notre Dame”

enjoyed the good life, particularly jolly evenings in a small local restaurant/bar, where Alan and I (over the course of a couple of evenings!) managed to consume their stock of Armagnac! The other was a holiday we all had in the Isle of Man, a place none of us knew much about. We exhausted ourselves exploring what must be one of the most interesting and unique Crown dependencies.



“Even at our age we managed to get to the top of the Laxey Wheel!”

On the Trust front, what I admired about Alan, was that he gave his all to the Trust and achieved much, but without fuss and bother (in fact, Yvonne used to say that if you cut him, he would bleed DCTT) – he was your ideal man behind the scenes. In 2012 it was felt that the time had come for us to consider modernising our ‘welcome’ at the southern portal, both to meet the changing needs of today’s visitors and also to enable us to have better interpretation and ‘welcome’ facilities for our visitors. A Steering Group was set up, which was responsible for planning the concept and design of the Portal and then the implementation of those plans. I worked closely with Alan and the others on this and saw his skills and his modesty first-hand. As you can imagine this work was quite a challenge for a small organisation such as ours, not only the actual planning and supervision of the contractors, but also ensuring that we never lost sight of the Trust’s charitable aims, responsibilities, and heritage – Alan’s long history with, and knowledge of, the Trust was absolutely invaluable.

On this last this point, I would like to quote from a short history about himself and the Trust, that Alan wrote not so long ago:-

“Of all the time I have spent with the Trust, the most rewarding time and proudest moment was the work carried out with Jeff, Mike and the late John Atkins on the steering group that saw through the transformation of the Trust from a wooden shed on the towpath to a truly magnificent headquarters building “The Portal” and all the associated services we now have to offer.”

As has been said before, Alan was a unique and irreplaceable asset to the Trust, but also, he was a close friend of mine and others – he will be greatly missed.

Jeff Luesley



Alan Hazeldine

It is with great sadness that we report the death of Alan Hazeldine. Alan Joined the Trust in 1989 after going on a trip into the tunnel. He was heard to remark later that he had never been so busy since picking up a membership form after the trip. At that time, the Trust was moving from an organisation that moved mud to one that was conducting lengthy negotiations with British Waterways and other official bodies. Recognising that Alan had senior managerial experience (he was a director of Chance Glass from 1992 to 1999) Chairman Vic Smallshire persuaded him to join the Committee. Alan was membership secretary from 1996 to 2012 and then Treasurer, and also, in this capacity, serving on the Board of Dudley Canal Trust (Trips) Ltd. When the Dudley Canal Trust & the Trips company merged, he also became a Trustee of the new Board of Dudley Canal & Tunnel Trust.

Alan was heavily involved in the negotiations for the improvement work on the Dudley no. 2 Canal and increasingly stood in for Vic during the latter's illness. Alan's forte was negotiation and a forensic inspection of agreements and financial documents. As with many of us at that time, Alan found participation in work parties was a welcome break from paperwork and was involved in the digging up and transportation to Dudley of the 'Flying Scott' work boat. From Hillmorton Locks



Alan (in red) with Vic rescuing the 'Flying Scot'

Apart from Trust Committee work, my own recollections of Alan are from the time that we spent doing living history. Despite an apparent laid-back appearance, Alan could be relied on to make a success of any task from coping with last minute changes to the program to steering a working boat. With a dry sense of humour Alan was great fun to work with, was a good friend and will be greatly missed.

Derek Gittings

From the Archives

The 1st to 3rd of October 2021 commemorates the 50th anniversary of a project that was known as the Dudley Dig-In. As such, I have reproduced 3 archived articles from previous 'Leggers' below. These will show newer members what the Trust was involved with all those years ago, and also a reminder to our older members of what they may have been involved with.

Mike Skidmore, Volunteer Archivist.

INTRODUCING THE DUDLEY DIG-IN

As announced in the July Bulletin, the D.C.T. and the Friends of the Black Country Museum are jointly organising a mammoth work party to clear the canal arm and basins leading off the Dudley Canal into the Museum site, between the Wolverhampton New Road and the Tipton Road, Dudley.

It will be a week-end project, actually starting on the Friday afternoon of the 1st. October, when the equipment will start to arrive and some of the far-away Volunteers' will start to arrive on the site and at the accommodation in the centre of Dudley. Work will start in earnest on the Saturday morning at about 9.00a.m. and is expected to continue until about 5 p.m.-ish. The same is expected for the Sunday. Any Members, friends, family, ad infinitum, are urged to come along for a while, or a complete day if available, and help to get this section of canal arm into a cruisable state. Plant will be hired for the weekend to help remove some of the more obstinate objects, but your help is really needed to make the whole thing become alive and successful.

We have been very fortunate in as much that Messrs. Murphy Bros. Limited of Leicester have loaned us a 22RB land-based dredger for the more difficult work of dredging the arms during the weeks 27th. August to about the 10th. September - completely free of any charges! This very generous gesture has been put to full use and by this time has already made short work of about half the length of one of the arms! On Friday 3rd. September the metal girder bridge over the entrances to the arms will have been cut-up and the pieces stored away on the Museum site, ready for disposal a little later on. The bridge was in a very dangerous state of decay (as was mentioned in the last Bulletin) and about the end of July vandals attacked the one end, and caused it to fall into the approach canal to the Dudley Tunnel.

To return to Murphy Bros, dredger - the initial 'sod-cutting' took place on the Noon of 27th. August and initiated the first physical construction of the Black Country Museum on the Site. Mr. Eigo, the Site Manager from Murphy's Brierley Hill works was there to see the start and the driver of the dredger, 'Norman', from Lawley, Salop is now getting very interested in the site itself and has even accepted a Membership form! Although the dredger will get the hard graft done, it must be emphasised that this is just the preliminary to the October Dig-In. Anyone who can spare any time at all will be most welcome to come along just for a couple of hours or more if they can spare it, work of a constructive nature can be found for all - if you can bring along a spade or a weed / grass cutting implement it would be useful, as the task of providing everyone with a tool could be very expensive and also impracticable.

The entrance to the site will be from the Tipton Road, by the Sea 'ship' and the Saddle-Tank Engine "Winston Churchill" - a recent Black Country Museum, acquisition. Please sign-on as you enter, the refreshments will be close at hand, as will toilets and First Aid. A lot of clearing and levelling of the edges of the arms will be necessary as the towpath at the edges has been missing for a long time. Brick-laying will also be done in abundance, with weed-clearing being done first along the sections concerned. The abutments of the Metal girder bridge that spanned the entrance to the arms will also be completely demolished and flattened - this will need a large and

continuous effort as all the material has to be taken away and dumped - by canal of course! All the canal from the tunnel entrance to the junction with the Birmingham Canal is also scheduled for clearance along the towpath and therefore anyone, with appropriate, tools would be very useful along this stretch. If you cannot come at all over the week-end and feel that some support would like to be given, please send a donation of money instead! The week-end is costing £100 plus, so any donations would be very welcome to cover the cost of hire of plant etc. over the week-end. Hope ter see yer theer, ovr kid!

Richard Jones - Canal Manager.

The Dudley Pre-Dig

On the morning of Friday, 27th August 1971, the sun was shining on an extensive tract of bull rushes near the New Birmingham Road, as it had done, on and off, for over thirty years. According to old maps this had been part of Lord Ward's Canal, but in recent years it had been of interest only to historians and moorhens. Three weeks later a light breeze ruffled the surface of one of the widest and deepest sections of the midlands canal network, what had happened in the meantime to bring back to life some 750 feet of Lord Ward's Canal in an age when talk is so often of closure?

The story begins at 11.00a.m on that auspicious Friday with a low loader trying, without success, to negotiate the double bend at the entrance to the Black Country Museum site. Nothing daunted, its load, a 22.RE dragline, made its own way along the road to Tipton Road Sewage works. (This road follows the track of the tramway that used to run from Castle Mill Engine and Boiler Works to Conevgre Furnaces. - Hon. Historian.) With the opposition confounded and the cynics silenced, the much-discussed museum was about to take shape. Our President, Mr Basil Poole, had achieved the extraordinary feat of persuading Murphy Bros, of Leicester to part with the dragline from their open-cast mine at Amblecote for three weeks and to provide an operator from their Gornal site all free of charge.

The Site Agent from Amblecote, Mr Johnny Eigo, manoeuvred the 22RB into position near the junction of the Museum arm and the main Dudley Canal. Then, at 12.00p.m. precisely and witnessed by Richard Traves and several Trust members, the "First Sod" of the Black Country Museum was cut. Appropriately, this was about 22 cubic feet of sedge and sludge from the canal. Industry grew around the canal system of the midlands and flourished because of it, so what better start could there be to an industrial museum?

A few sweeps across the canal were sufficient for Mr Eigo to decide that the job was fairly straight-forward and he handed over to the driver, Norman Jeffries, from Lawley, Shropshire. Norman, who usually operates a face shovel, claimed to have had little experience in handling a dragline. However, his efforts as the afternoon progressed soon gave the lie to this. By the time he had finished for the day at

7-00p.m. the stop-narrows had been dredged to a depth of over 4 feet from wall to wall without so much as a scratch on the rubbing rail or brickwork. Trust members Cliff Sherwood and Dave Apps assisted by cutting down undergrowth, indicating the line of the canal and generally supporting the operation. These members spent many hours on the site every day that work was in progress and several others came to assist at lunch times, weekends and during the evenings.

After about 75 feet from the collapsed roving bridge had been cleared, the rotting timbers of an old Joey boat emerged from the rushes, a suitable point at which to adjourn for the Bank Holiday weekend. Norman resumed work at 7.00 a.m. of the following Tuesday accompanied by "Tom" from the Amblecote site and at least two hours

ahead of the supporting cast! By this time, the Upper Tame Main Drainage Authority, dumbfounded on Friday, had recovered sufficiently to make the quite reasonable request that volunteers' cars should not be parked on the mown grass near the lime-kilns. All duly transferred their vehicles to the gravel track near the filter beds. Meanwhile, the Joey boat had crumpled under the pounding of the 22RB's bucket was emerging as a mound of oak, elm and pine on the bank. A second boat followed with little effort and by the end of the third day there were 220 feet of clear water. On Wednesday morning a third and sounder boat followed suit, when it was requested that in future cars should be parked near the "Winston Churchill", the tank engine donated by Messrs Lunt, Comley & Pitt. The motive for this request was again most reasonable, although a little obscure and requiring an explanation. As anyone familiar with the process of sewage purification well knows, the system depends on a biochemical pyramid, in which a species of small fly plays a critical role. Myriads of these insect's swarm in perpetual motion around the filter beds until the unwary open their car doors in the vicinity. The flies then completely fill the interiors of the cars, to be transported to the four corners of the Midlands. It is obvious that if this were allowed to continue unchecked, the entire process would slowly grind to a halt. (Who wants a car-load of flies anyway? -Ed.)

By Thursday morning much of the bend had been cleared and later in the day Norman moved the dragline back to the narrows to assist in taking away the collapsed bridge. (The roving bridge spanning the entrance to Lord Ward's canal, unsound for many years, had recently been undermined by vandals and it finally collapsed last July.) Cliff burnt the girders into three sections for removal the following morning, but the job went so smoothly that Norman decided to lift the girders out there and then. When the official Party arrived on Friday morning to witness the removal of the bridge, there it was – gone. With the bridge out of the way, Norman started to dredge the junction with the main Dudley Canal. When the original edge of the arm had eventually been located, it was found that two fencing posts were standing in the canal bed. The outer one had moved sideways, and was giving little support to the fence and their presence would have made it difficult for full length boats to enter the arm. There was no alternative but to remove the two sections of fence, so out they came, as a result, the entrance to Lord Ward's canal is now a magnificent stretch of water, 55 feet across and, with a little dredging of the main canal, boats will be able to enter the museum site from either direction. Even with the aid of the 22RB, the removal of the fence was strenuous work, so the appearance of Geoff Elwell carrying an enormous pot of tea was more than welcome.

On Saturday morning, with the entrance completely cleared well out into the main canal, Norman returned to the bend. This had been the junction between the lime kiln branch of 1839 and the later cross-cut, and the acute angle of the bend slowed progress considerably. Much time was spent in pulling dredging's towards the centre of the site and in digging trenches to confine the sludge. The bend was in fact not completely cleared until the evening of Monday, 6th September.

Although Norman was having a well-earned rest on Sunday, there was plenty of activity on the site. The main task was to place a temporary barrier where the fence had been removed at the junction, but at 5.30 p.m. Vic and Joy Smallshire and Dave Ambler arrived in "Aurora". Where "arriving" is perhaps nearer the mark than "arrived", as the main canal has deteriorated to such an extent since tunnel trips were discontinued in June, that it is now barely navigable. However, once she reached the Museum arm, "Aurora" forged ahead with well over 4 feet of water under her to the limit of dredging at the bend - the first cruiser to navigate the restored Lord Ward's canal.

With the corner behind him, and more space for dumping, Norman made rapid progress along the limekiln branch and had reached the old loading chute on the south bank by the evening of Wednesday 8th September. Meanwhile, on Monday evening a second boat had navigated the arm - the Trust's trip boat, bow-hauled by Bob Mullen and Dave Apps who were unaware that "Aurora" had beaten them to it. However, B.C.N. No. 21071 is undisputedly the first narrow boat to use the restored arm! It served a useful purpose in providing a 'gauge' for the bend and access to the centre of the site.

Much of this section is edged with brick, but at the loading point the wharf is built of limestone blocks. Many of these had slipped into the canal, making dredging difficult and causing a slight setback when a tooth broke on the bucket. Several interesting items were recovered from this section. These included various lengths of rail, bits of coal tub, an iron wheel, and a helm post bearing the initials "T.E." (Thomas Element?) an old shovel and some large, ornamented iron plates, as yet unidentified.

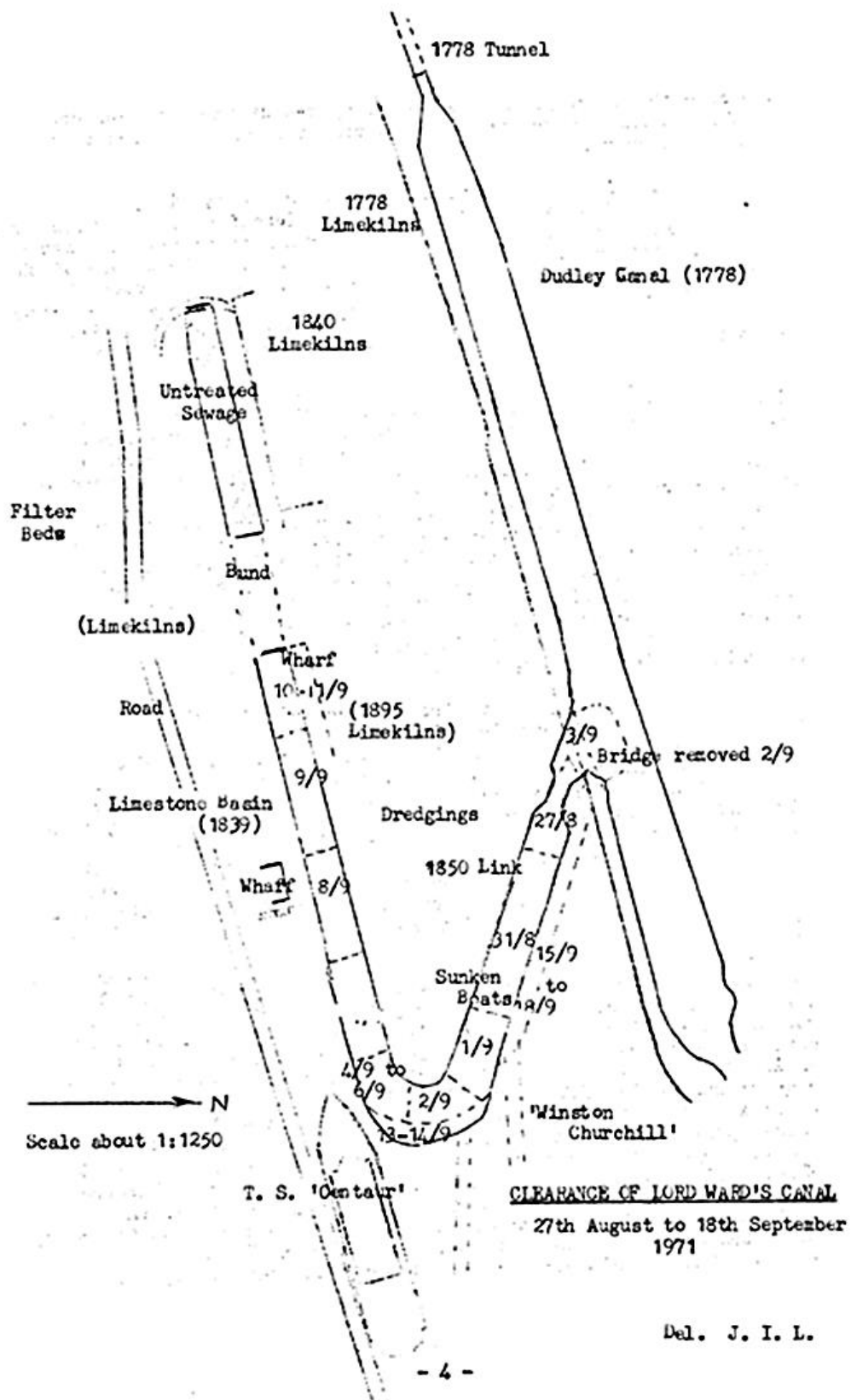
Progress was slower towards the present end of the arm. Here the wharf was buried under several feet of rubble that had to be dug away for about fifteen feet from the water's edge. The rubble contained a quantity of partly burnt limestone, presumably from old kilns near the bund. The lime had resulted in a lush growth of trees and other vegetation near the bund, but no remains of the kilns were found. When the canal and bank had eventually been cleared, remnants of the old wharf were revealed, but the brickwork was in poor condition above water level.

At the beginning of the third week, Norman drove the 22 RB to the outside of the bend near T.S. 'Centaur'. Part of the bank was cut away to enable boats of up to 50 feet in length to wind, and the bank near the Training Ship was graded to improve the appearance of the corner. Later in the week Norman excavated a temporary slipway where small boats can be launched, and then roughed out a canal-side walk from the bend to the main canal. Although this reduced the area of flat land at the top of the embankment to some extent, in the interests of safety it was thought desirable to have a level path between the bank and the canal.

Norman and the 22 RB departed at 10.30 a.m. on Saturday, 18th September, leaving behind them a magnificent expanse of water that would gladden the heart of any canal preservationist. However, there is more to the operation than the mere reclamation of 750 feet of derelict canal. As a result of it, the Black Country Museum has taken a first and significant step towards becoming a reality. This step was, of course, engineered by Mr Poole and the Friends of the Museum and was made possible by the unbounded generosity of Murphy Bros., but the Trust also played their part. By giving their full support to the operation they helped to ensure that maximum benefit was derived from Murphy's contribution.

Although the Trust's main commitment at present is to bring about the restoration, reopening and development of Dudley Tunnel, the "Black Country Museum" is regarded as an important adjunct to this aim. Practical support for the museum project was promised earlier this year and the Trust's involvement in the events that preceded the 'Dudley Dig-In' goes part way to fulfilling this promise.

J. I. Langford.



The Dudley Dig-In

Clearance of the Black Country Museum's Canals and Towpaths, 1st to 3rd October 1971 [Part of this account was published in a special edition of Contact (No. 152, Summer 2010) to commemorate the 40th Anniversary of the founding of the Friends of the Black Country Museum.]

By the end of 1969 progress towards creating a Black Country Museum was gathering momentum. After much deliberation, the museum was to be built on land soon to be vacated by the Upper Tame Main Drainage Authority in Tipton Road, Dudley. Also, a considerable number of exhibits had been acquired by Richard Traves, Curator of the Dudley Museum, one of the first being the early post box made by the Dudley firm of Cochrane & Co.

In order to gauge support for the museum, Dudley Council arranged a public meeting in the town hall at Dudley on 10th February 1970. The response was overwhelming and the hall was filled to capacity. The main outcome was the eventual formation of an Advisory Committee to oversee the development of the museum and the launching of 'The Friends of the Black Country Museum'. There followed what seemed to be interminable negotiations to acquire the land and nothing was happening on the site, except that the 'Winston Churchill', a somewhat jaded saddle-tank locomotive donated by Lunt, Comley & Pitt, had been placed next to the New Birmingham Road to draw attention to the intended museum.

In order to maintain public interest in the project, John Hoyle, Director of Dudley's Museums, Libraries and Arts Department, felt that some activity or event on the site was needed. Accordingly, together with Richard Traves, he met Vic Smallshire of the Dudley Canal Trust and me, a trustee and also Vice-chairman of the Friends, on 31st March 1971 to consider clearing the canal arms and adjoining land by volunteers. This was to enable a rally of vintage boats and vehicles to be held on the site. A joint committee was formed - the Canal Clearance Committee - drawn from members of the Trust and Friends and with myself as Chairman. The working party, called the Dudley Dig-In, took place during the first weekend in October, 1971, 50 years ago.

Such an enterprise was of course a new venture for the Friends, but I and other Trust members had more than a little experience of canal restoration, culminating in the Dudley Dig and Cruise in the autumn of 1970. This was a major working party at Parkhead Locks and around the southern portal of Dudley Tunnel. However, the scale of the Dudley Dig-in exceeded all expectations.

Richard Jones, who was responsible for volunteer registration, reported that about 300 volunteers were present on both the Saturday and Sunday. These belonged to 45 different clubs, societies and other institutions, from as far afield as Bristol, London, Nottingham and Macclesfield, plus many 'locals'. 30 boats, including several former working craft, brought volunteers to the site. About 24 firms and individuals provided equipment free of charge. These included a large Ruston Bucyrus (RB) 22 dragline, two JCB diggers, four dumper trucks, a mortar mixer, maintenance boats and three pumps. Over 200 small tools, 20 wheelbarrows and waders were loaned by Dudley Council and equipment was also provided by British Waterways Board. Allocation of tools was supervised by Vic Smallshire and all were returned intact at the end of the weekend except one grass hook!

Dudley Baths were opened for the benefit of volunteers on Saturday evening. At 7 o'clock, Vic Waring, Dudley Council's catering officer, assisted by John Hoyle, served a four-course meal to almost 100 volunteers at the Old Sutton School Canteen, where there was sleeping accommodation for Friday and Saturday nights. A room at The Priory, New Street, was provided for recreation on Saturday evening and NALGO (now part of Unison) made available their club facilities. During the weeks prior to the event, the canal arm had been dredged free of charge by Murphy Brothers of Leicester. This had been negotiated by Basil Poole, President of the Trust and Chairman of the Friends. The afternoon of Friday, 1st October, was spent in preparing the site, listing equipment and removing a section of

fence (**A** on plan) to provide access from the main canal to the museum site. The working party commenced early on Saturday morning and ended at 6 o'clock on Sunday.

John's Ambulance Brigade manned a first-aid post. Fortunately they had to deal with no more than a few minor cuts. There were display stands with plans for the museum and information about the Dig-In. The visitor centre was staffed by Malcolm Berridge, Dudley's Deputy Town Clerk and Secretary of the Friends, and by Joy Smallshire and Shandy Garnell of the Trust.

At an early stage of the Dig-In the wharf between **b** and **c** was cleared to enable brick laying to commence. At the same time the bank was levelled to provide a path 4 ft in width along the wharf. Paths were also constructed from T.S. 'Centaur' down to the wharf at **b** and across the foot of the bund at **c**; the latter provided access to the centre of the site until it was replaced by Broad Street Bridge. The bank between **b** and **c** and the bund was cleared of undergrowth, but small trees were left standing. 44 ft of brick wharf (**D**) and 18 ft of earlier stonework (**E**) were restored or rebuilt by a party from Hewell Grange HM Young Offenders Institution under the direction of Keith Tyler. These lads, trainee bricklayers, built walls at Hewell Grange and then knocked them down, but here and previously at Parkhead they had the satisfaction of knowing their handiwork was permanent. About three courses of 'stretcher and header' brickwork needed to be rebuilt and the remainder were cut back and refaced. The edge of the wharf was finished with bull-nosed blue bricks on both brick and limestone sections.

A second wharf at **F** was cleared of debris and the wall above water level was found to be unsound. This wharf formerly served three limekilns, of which nothing remained, and it extended about 50 ft from the bund. The entire canal bank between **F** and the junction with the main canal at **G** was cleared of dredgings and levelled in preparation for a towpath to be laid. This work was carried out by the two JCB diggers, assisted by volunteers. Some levelling and grading was started at **H**, but abandoned, owing to the unstable nature of the bank. As part of clearance of the arm, the remains of three wooden Joey boats were removed and burnt, along with trees and undergrowth. In addition, a group of Friends and sea cadets, under the direction of Richard Traves, spent the weekend painting 'Winston Churchill'. Although the primary aim was to reinstate the canal on the museum site, some work was carried out along the tunnel approach, to make it easier for the Trust to operate boat trips through the tunnel. The portal and narrows were dredged to a depth of about 5 ft using a JCB 3C excavator and dredgings were removed from the site. Railway ballast was cleared from the offside bank at **K**, where it had been deposited by storm water. The towpath was cleared and levelled between **A** and **J**, loose material was removed from the old bridge abutments (**G**) and some dredging was carried out near the New Road bridge (**L**). Another wooden Joey boat, at **M**, was cleared of rubbish, pumped dry and raised, and then removed from the canal.

While the main objective was to clear the canal arms and their environs, an important aspect of the Dig-In was to publicise the intended museum. Publicity before, during and after the event was ably handled by Michael Miles. Posters were displayed throughout Birmingham and the Black Country and initial dredging was covered by the Sunday Mercury, Dudley Herald and Express & Star. Reporters from the first of these spent Friday afternoon and Saturday morning on site, going to some lengths to cover all aspects of the work. The following day, the centre pages of the Mercury were devoted to a pictorial record of the working party. Likewise, a reporter from the Express & Star spent the weekend on site and an account appeared in the Saturday edition of the paper, with further reports during the following week. Accounts also appeared in other local papers and representatives from Radio Birmingham and the BBC Midland Region made recordings during Sunday afternoon that were broadcast later.

Members of the public visited the site in droves, particularly on the Sunday as a result of publicity the previous day, and restricted areas for viewing the work had to be designated. By the end of the weekend, word about the intention to create a museum of the Black Country in Dudley had spread throughout the entire West Midlands and beyond. The Mayor of Dudley, Councillor Dr Kate Rogers, visited the site at 3 O'clock on Saturday, accompanied by the Deputy Mayor, Alderman Ted Morris, and Mrs Morris. The Mayoral party, escorted by myself, Basil Poole, Alan Garnell

(Chairman, Dudley Canal Trust), John Hoyle and Richard Traves, spent two hours walking round the site, meeting volunteers and viewing the visiting boats. Refreshments were then provided by the Parents Association of the Sea Cadets. Other visitors included Alderman Perry and Councillor C.T Squires of Wolverhampton Corporation, Douglas S. Warren, Dudley Borough Engineer and Surveyor, Div. Supt W.P. McIntosh of St John's Ambulance Brigade and Lt Cdr Derrer, Commanding Officer, Dudley Sea Cadets. Councillor David Caunt of Dudley visited the site on Sunday, having worked hard with a shovel on the Saturday. In fact, a noteworthy feature of the weekend was the interest and support of Dudley councillors and council employees, some no longer with us, who voluntarily gave of their time and expertise.

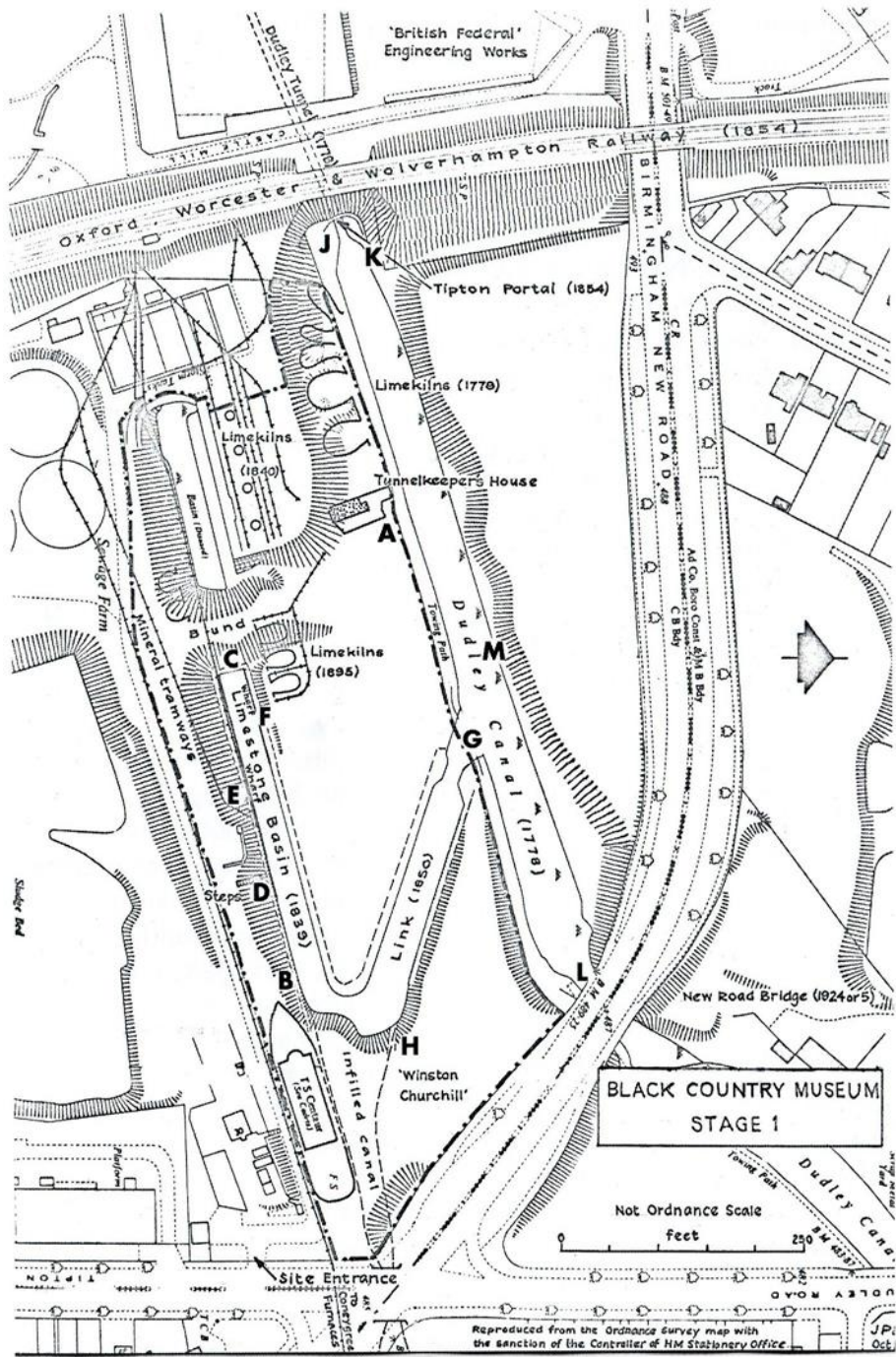
At 5 o'clock on Sunday, after almost 35 years of dereliction, the Museum Arm, the surviving length of the branch to the limekilns, was reopened by Mrs V. Hoyle. The ceremony took place on the stern of 'Dreadnought' at the stop-narrows near the entrance to the arm. After Mrs Hoyle had cut the tape and declared the arm to be open again, 'Dreadnought', owned by Don Payne, who subsequently did sterling service in the Museum as chain-maker, then proceeded up the arm past a 'guard of honour' of 'navvies', for Mrs Hoyle alighted at the newly-built wharf.

During that October weekend 40 years ago the site had been transformed and the first practical step towards creating the museum had been made. It was to be many years before a rally of vintage boats and vehicles took place, but occasional open days were held from the mid-1970s onwards. The canal was the central feature around which the village gradually grew and it remains so to this day. For those who took part in the Dudley Dig-In, it was an unforgettable experience, one that is unlikely to happen again. Even if the general public has the will nowadays to spend a weekend wallowing in mud, where would one start in carrying out a risk assessment for such an activity!

Originally written, and the map below annotated by Dr J. Ian Langford



Bittel when owned by British Waterways







Wonderful day collecting our Queen's Award for Voluntary Services. Thank you to all concerned who helped us achieve this prestigious and welcome recognition of the work we do. Without the support of volunteers, we could not offer half the activities we do. A special thanks to Lyn Head and Ron Hurley who braved the stage to collect the award on our behalf.



ABIATHAR HAWKES GLASSMAKER.

Abiathar Hawkes, was the son of Thomas Hawkes and his wife Sara *nee*; Parkes. He was baptised on the 6th of February 1749 at St Thomas's Church in Dudley.

His first recorded location was in the High Street where he commenced his business as: Geast, Hawkes and Seagar in 1770. Synonymous with the Hawkes family for years Dudley Flint Glass Works was built on the corner of Stone Street and Priory Street in Dudley. Prior to this, the site was called the 'Horsepool', an open body of water believed to relate to the presence of a watering place for animals, situated on the fringe of the medieval town. Abiathar Hawkes, the founder of the glassworks, is first mentioned in a trade directory dating to 1766 although it seems likely that the Dudley Flint Glassworks was built sometime in the early 1770s. Lead or flint glassmaking was developed in London in 1676. The high lead content (commonly up to 15%) gave the product a density that produced a strong and brilliant glass that was ideally suited to cutting. This glass became a highly sort after but very heavily taxed product. The Hawkes family ran the glassworks, sometimes in partnership with other glassmakers, but it was under Thomas (one of Abiathar's four sons, he later became MP for Dudley in 1834) that the firm became particularly famous for its diamond-cut glass, opal turquoy and gold enamel. By 1835 the Hawkes's business was amongst the most heavily taxed in the whole of the Dudley and Stourbridge glass-making area. This led to the closure of the works in 1843, only two years before the duty on glass was finally abolished. Several craftsmen who developed their skills at these Dudley works moved to Wordsley contributing to the reputation of Stourbridge being at the centre of the glass making industry.

On 27th October 1774 he married Mary Wright at St Mary's Church Stafford by licence, in which Abiathar Hawkes was described as a 'Gentleman of Dudley', the marriage produced four sons. It was about this time that he became involved in promoting the proposed Dudley Canal. Hoping to benefit from the communication it was expected to provide, he became the treasurer of the Dudley Company and proprietor of the Stourbridge Company. On the 18th of February 1778, he bought five shares in the new Dudley Canal Navigation from Henry Seagar, a chapman (merchant) of Birmingham for £400. Three months later on the 22nd of May 1778 he sold two of his shares to Frances Ward, The Lady Viscountess Dudley and Ward for £260. assuming that he bought and sold them at their market value price they had risen from £80 each to £130 each within a matter of 3 months.

The first record of the Dudley Flint and Glass Works at Stone Street is also connected with the canal building scheme. The outline of the glass cone was first depicted but not named on Snape's canal map of 1785. This suggests Hawkes left his High Street premises and built a new cone sometime between 1781 and 1785 Dudley's Poor Rate Assessment of 1787 proves this to be the location. It states that Abiathar Hawkes was the owner of 'Ye Glasshouse' in Stony Lane. He had a house and offices in the High Street, as well as owning property in Back Lane and Wolverhampton Street, Dudley. In 1788 he had a new ten pot furnace built at the end of Priory Street by Wordsley furnace builder John Richardson.

By now Abiathar Hawkes was among the 'Respectable Gentlemen and Professional Men' of Dudley. He was educated by Benjamin Clements at Dudley Grammar School. These 'Gentlemen' were the driving force behind the industry and social development in Dudley. On 13th April 1786 one of the earliest building societies in England was formed to establish an hotel. The Dudley Arms in High Street with a marketplace at the rear. These subscribers included many leading gentry and tradespeople. Along with Abiathar Hawkes was George Ensell of Holly Hall Glassworks and William Penn of Phoenix Glassworks.

The Stourbridge and Dudley canals were part of a single scheme initiated in 1775 to bring coal from the mines around Dudley to works near Stourbridge and also to the River Severn towns by way of the Staffordshire and Worcester canal, and to carry ironstone and limestone for local use. The scheme was so well supported particularly by glass manufactures that Parliament passed the Stourbridge Canal Act the following year on 2nd April 1776 the same day as the Dudley Canal Act. The first General Assembly of the Stourbridge Navigation Company was held at the Talbot Hotel in Stourbridge on 1st June 1776 where many glassmakers signed the minutes of the meeting. The first meeting of the Dudley Canal Company was held at the Swan Inn in Dudley on the 6th of June 1776. The principle shareholders were Lord Dudley and Ward, T.T. Foley and a group of businessmen from Dudley and the surrounding areas, this led to Abiathar Hawkes being appointed treasurer and Thomas Dadford Snr as the surveyor at no more than £80 pa. It was also agreed that boats passing a lock should be charged 6d a ton with a reduction to 2d for lime and limestone. The Dudley section of the canal was finished about 24th June 1779, the Stourbridge section taking a little longer. The entire canal was fully opened to traffic in December 1779, it became an immediate success.

About 1796 Abiathar Hawkes resigned as treasurer of the Dudley Canal Company for health reasons and Dixon and Amphlett, bankers of Dudley were appointed. In their thanks for his services the company especially mentioned his 'liberal assistance' in lending money to enable the canal construction work to continue.

He died on the 17th of January 1800 at the age of 50 after a long illness and was buried ten days later on 27th January 1800 at St Thomas's Church Dudley. His memorial exists today on the south wall of the chancel in St Edmunds Church Dudley.

Research: Dudley Archive Services.

Reference:

Glassmakers of Stourbridge and Dudley 1612 – 2002 by Jason Ellis

The Canals of the West Midlands by Charles Hadfield

The Birmingham Canal Navigations vol – 1768 – 1846 by S. R. Broadbridge

Dudley Flint Glassworks Archaeological Investigations at Stone Street Square, Dudley, West Midlands 2003 by Steve Litherland

DAVID FORD

KEEPING BUSY

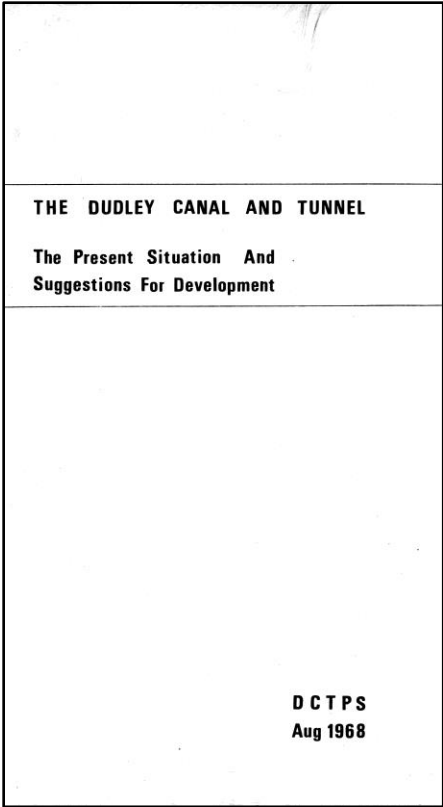
Richard Jones has had a look back through his paperwork and diaries and has picked out just a few of the Trusts activities from the past.

D.C.T. Autumnal Past-Events Diary

10/1963 - "Last Opportunity Cruise" by Worker's Education Association raises some 300 students one Sunday and leads directly to the formation of the Dudley Canal Tunnel Preservation Society two months later.



9/64- first newsletter to around 280 members sent out - entitled "Bulletin" (now Ledger).



9/68 - The Committee issue a Report on the canal's present situation and our proposals for development.

10/68 - Officers of the Society and British Waterways top "brass" meet in London H.Q. to discuss our proposals and a short time later agree to the restoration of the canal, tunnel and Parkhead locks.

11/69 - we officially become the Dudley Canal Trust.



10/70 - word gets to us that the land alongside the tunnel approach canal is up for sale - this would make an ideal site for the proposed Black Country Museum we have always believed, and we tip the "wink" to Dudley Council!



10/71 - the Trust and the Museum Friends heads-up over 300 canal/museum volunteers to clear the Museum site and canal arm of debris, with help from Midlands-based Murphy Bros. diggers.



10/72 - Dudley Council agree a price for the proposed museum site.

10/74 - the Trust seriously consider the costs of converting our manually-propelled trip- boat to some form of mechanical propulsion, with seating, electric lighting and a P.A. system.

9/75 - our newly-converted trip-boat "Electra" is officially launched with a full-time Skipper - John Horton.

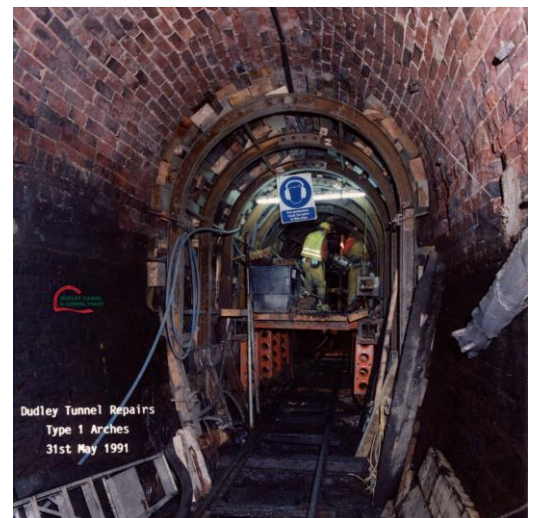
9/76 - the Museum's first full Open Day with the Trust taking visitors on return trips to our Hurst's Cavern.

11/81 - Electra is sent off to have its passenger section of the hull replaced with new metal due to being age-expired.



11/81 - a short section of the southern part of the main Dudley Tunnel is reported to have some unsafe brick lining and is officially closed for further inspection.

Late period 1981 - due to Dudley Council taking on the responsibility of all the limestone mines under Castle Hill, the Trust takes the opportunity to compile a report on a long- felt need to stabilise and re-open one of the mines to canal-trips for visitors. Entitled "Do You Remember the Mines", it advocated the restoration and re-opening of two existing tunnels into the "Singing Cavern". The initial response was encouraging but expensive and would occupy our time and diligence, and that of many other people and Organisations, for the next three years solidly!



DO YOU REMEMBER THE MINES ?

A PROPOSAL FOR RESTORATION

Dudley Canal Trust



THE DUDLEY CANAL AND TUNNEL

The Present Situation And
Suggestions For Development

DCTPS
Aug 1968

12/82 - our first "Santa Specials" was for disadvantaged Dudley Council area children over a one-week period.

Richard Jones



Bittel had a surprise visitor this month. Firefly.

CELEBRITY HOT SPOT

Hello my name is Hilary, and I'm part of the Archive team. I've been going through the Bulletins, Newsletters and Leggers to see which famous people have visited the area, DCT and some that have been through the tunnel. This is what I've found so far.

Famous people from the days of the Dudley Canal Tunnel Preservation Society, The Dudley Canal Trust and through to Dudley Canal and Tunnel Trust over the years are mentioned below. This includes people visiting long before we existed.

Louise Rayner a famous painter in the late 1800's.

Another famous painter, Mr. J. M. Turner painted Castle Mill Basin in 1832.

Marshal Soult, distinguished French military commander, French President and founder of the French Foreign Legion jumped out of the boat when fireworks and arms were let off in the caverns in his honour. C1840

Visit by the Duc de Bordeaux in 1844, accompanied by Lord and Lady Hatherton, Ladies Lyttleton and Fitzgerald, Lord Lofton and the Honourable Lord Lyttleton.

The British Association for the Advancement of Science visited the mines and the famous geologist Sir Roderick Murchison gave a speech in Dark cavern with thousands of people present in 1849.

The Fourth Royal Irish Dragoon Guards performed in the caverns in 1850.

The Staffordshire Militia Band performed in the caverns in 1865.



Here's a bit of information I thought you'd like. When Joy and Vic Smallshire (our previous Chairman) had their son Robert, he became a member as soon as he was born in February 1974. (From Bulletin No.64)

Mr. M. MacFarlane chairman of the Midlands branch of the I.W.A (Inland Waterways Association) during the Dudley Tunnel Protest of 23rd October 1960. (from Bulletin No.3 1964).

Dr John M. Fletcher was persuaded, after a trip through the tunnel, to become President of the DCTPS in 1964. He resigned this post in 1967 due to other commitments. (From Bulletin No.27 1967)

It is recorded that the Earl of Dudley went through the tunnel in a boat borrowed from Matty's boat yard Deepfields on 24th April 1964. A clip of this is available on YouTube

David Hutchings led the restoration the Southern section of Stratford Canal in 1961 -1964. He also visited Dudley Canal Tunnel Preservation Society, and became its Vice-President. (From Bulletin No.1 1964). Bulletin No.59 advises he resigned this post in 1973.

The first foreign students to visit the tunnel were from Volkhouschule school in Ratzeburg near Hamburg in 1965. (From Bulletin No.11 1965).

Workers from the Educational Association in Herefordshire came 13th November 1965. (From Bulletin No.15)

John Brimble, President and one of the founder members of the Black Country Society 27th April 1967

BBC Sound Radio's Jack Domanio from the 'today' programme visited on 21st May 1967

Blackheath Salvation Army went one way through the tunnel 22nd May 1967, the 1st time it's thought to have been done by any of the Salvation Army Branches.

The caverns were opened by Neil MacFarlane M.P. and John Wilson, Chairman of the M.E.B in April 1985.

More to follow

If you have any more information about the important people who have visited us, or what I've found out so far. Could you please email it to: archives@dctt.org.uk

A CLOSE CALL

It had been a normal Saturday with the hire fleets at Basin End, Nantwich and the boats from both SIMOLDA and BW bases were setting off, mainly to LLangollen, when a phone message came through that a serious accident had occurred with the bottom lock at Hurleston, involving a hire boat. Joe Taylor set out by car for the short journey, as did staff from Simolda. At the junction below the locks was a hire boat from the Simolda fleet at Basin End, with a huge section of the lock gate beam standing vertically in the bows of the hire boat.

The boat had arrived at the locks and the hirer put the bow against the closed gates whilst the lock emptied. Now luckily all folk on the boat except the steerer had got off to help operate the lock because as the gate opened into the recess, the beam kept going when it sheared off and fell into the bow of the boat! Incredibly, it was found that the beam had broken the slatted bow seat and put a slight dent in the overhang of the steel roof at the front of the hire boat. No-one was hurt but several were in shock I believe.



It took some time for the call out engineers to get on site with an emergency stoppage and eventually a way of operating the lock was put in place with only one paddle but two gates.

The hirers were transferred to a spare boat and I believe it took a couple of days to remove the beam from the boat and longer still to get the gate back into full operation. I understand that the gate was basically sound and a replacement beam was fitted to get through to the stoppages.

By the following weekend the bottom lock at Hurleston was operational, whether that was as normal or under BW staff control I cannot recall.

I've not heard of its like happening since, unless of course you know different.

Clive Taylor