

# STAFFORD RIVERWAY LINK

(A *Community Interest Company*)

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**Patron:- The Lord Stafford, DL, FRAGS**

*Objective: To promote the restoration of the historic river and canal waterway linking the county town of Stafford to the national waterways network for the benefit of the community and all interested groups.*

Newsletter No 37

January 2024

Greetings to all our Members and our very good wishes for 2024!

It's a while since we sent a Newsletter out. Unlike some of the restoration groups and projects, ours has a small membership and a full-blown, regular magazine communication isn't justified. Perhaps we should all be spreading the word and inviting our families, friends, acquaintances and any other folk you can think of to join. Not all our members are local – indeed we have members throughout the UK and even abroad. There just aren't enough of you! The cost of membership is minimal and comes with benefits! One local pub offers a welcome discount on food orders to all members producing an up-to-date membership card. Go with a group of four and the chances are you'll cover the membership sub on that first visit!

Our regular volunteers do, naturally, come mostly from local members but we also have 'passing boaters' moor up if we're having a work party and offer a couple of hours help. Occasionally they may be members. If not, they may like what they've encountered and subsequently join. Sometimes, members visitors will join in if their visit coincides with a work party. What is always guaranteed is a friendly welcome, light refreshments and a choice of volunteering jobs

General work parties tend to be on the second Saturday of each month, but do check on the Facebook page, and will often involve landscaping activities – tree planting, bulb/wild flower planting, hedge trimming, lawn mowing etc. It could be we'll have been asked by the building team to prepare some ground for their next task, so moving bricks etc could be on the agenda. Which brings us to the building team and their amazing progress. They tend to work mid-week and their plans depend on suitable weather and sufficient team-players to make a work-force that day. Anyone interested in that side of things, send your details to the email on the website and I can assure you someone will be in touch. You don't need to be a builder as they always need folk to push wheelbarrows, keep the water butts filled (cement mixing!), not to mention make tea to keep them going. Their work has been much praised for its professionalism and is the envy of other restoration projects. You could be a part of the team!

An overview of our volunteering side followed naturally from the opening paragraph but we need to include some words from our Chairman, so some thoughts from Paul.

## **From the Chair:**

Being Chair of any organisation is not everyone's cup of tea. I know of people who would rather stick pins in their eyes than be on a committee. I am immensely proud of the work our members and volunteers have done over this last year. Being Chair I get an overview of the whole project, so I can fully appreciate all the unseen work that has gone on behind the scenes. We are really grateful to our sponsors, but without the hard work of certain members in making contact and "selling" the idea of SRL we would have no sponsors. The project is managed by a relatively small committee. We have vacancies for a **Fundraiser** and a **PR person**. If you feel you could contribute to the project by undertaking these activities please get in touch. Membership of the committee is not essential to these roles, although you would be most welcome to join us. (Meetings are once a month for two hours). We also have a vacancy for a **Secretary**.

This coming year looks good. We will complete the floor of the basin and start work on the bridge over the basin entrance. Thank you for being part of this.

Paul Bryan.

**Social Events:** The Riverway Link is not all about physical input. Members know how to enjoy life in a more light-hearted way.

From October to March, we hold an evening social event at **Stafford Boat Club**. Our thanks to **SBC** for allowing us to use their clubhouse free of charge. We, and they, hope those attending will support the bar as this helps their funds. Prices are very reasonable! Our social evenings usually include a speaker. We have had some fascinating talks from a variety of people, sometimes connected to other restoration projects, sometimes from those well-travelled on both our own Inland Waterways or further afield. We have had input from an author, from musicians and also hosted festive quizzes and games. There is usually a raffle and we laughingly say that the small income raised in this way keeps our volunteers in tea and coffee, not to mention biscuits. We also pay for small amounts of fuel for the generator etc from these smaller sources of income, keeping the 'big money' (never enough!) in the capable hands of our treasurer for the greater expenses of surveys etc. What's coming up in the next months? In January, we have a speaker from the Burslem restoration group in Stoke. In February, one of our members from distant Surrey (see paragraph 1) is coming up to give another talk. His first talk was one of the best we've had. This guy is not a narrow boater but a sea-going chap who has sailed round Cape Horn in tall-ships 4 times, I believe. Do come and support his talk. The March social has yet to be arranged. All such meetings start at 8.00p.m. at the Boat Club.

When the opportunity arises, SRL members will take our promotional display boards, leaflets etc to events, usually canal-based. There are often canal festivals to be found through the spring, summer autumn months. We held our own event in May, 2022, which was well attended and much enjoyed and raised about £4000. Such events take a lot of organising, but we just might hold one later this year. Such events depend on available and reliable help. Fancy joining in? Available, maybe, in September? Hard work, perhaps, but also a lot of fun/ Tempted? You know how to get in touch! Maybe, joining us at an established event that we are attending could give you taste of the camaraderie to be enjoyed. Check out our website or Facebook page which may tell you if SRL will be attending an event. Offering even an hour help on a stand means those manning it can escape for a comfort break or a sneaky look at the stalls and trade boats.

**The Site, Sponsors, Surprises:** I will cover this in reverse order because, literally in the last 5 minutes, as I'm writing this, a local chap who is moving to Cumbria, has donated to SRL a second lawnmower that will be redundant in his new home! He has delivered it, complete with instruction book, and it is currently safely stored in our shed. We have thanked him profusely and as he follows our progress he will, no doubt, see photos on Facebook of well-maintained grass areas such as the Lock House garden.

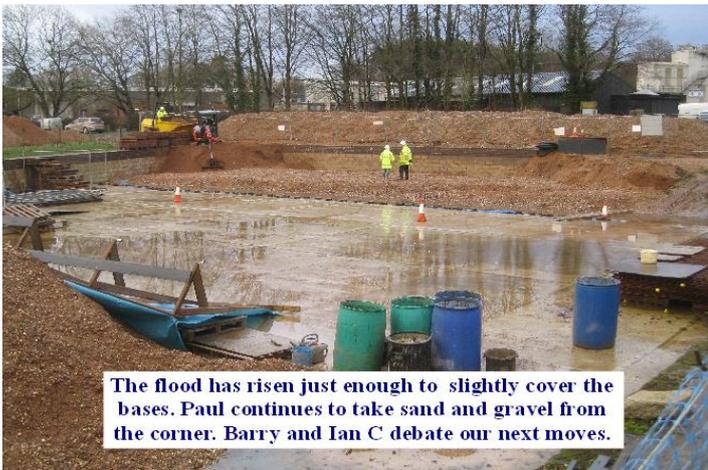
Our sponsors continue to be so important to our progress. Breedon cement have just been contacted re the next delivery of cement in a few week's time. Other local businesses still help out in so many diverse ways. Titanic brewery sell a beer in some local outlets, labelled 'The Link'. Titanic give us a donation from every bottle sold. Local building suppliers are amazing in what has been supplied. Although to name everyone here would be quite a task, sponsors have provided signs promoting their businesses which are displayed on our site-container, or on the fence. These face the canal and the towpath so are seen by boaters, cyclists, fishermen and walkers. Without such support, we would struggle with our progress. Compared to other groups, we are not so cash-rich, but we are indeed extremely rich in cement, bricks and sundry building needs. Also, as well as the aforementioned lawnmower, we were donated a very nice BBQ which we have been told to use as we see fit. It has not yet been decided if we should use it for social occasions should our wet weather finally improve or if we should sell it for funds.

The site! Well, for those who may not have seen it for a while, progress has been amazing. The canal basin gains more of its solid base when weather permits, which in turn means the sand/gravelly pile recedes. The

latest estimate is that the basin floor will be finished by mid-July/early August and that will be followed by starting work on THE BRIDGE! More trees and hedge plants have been planted. Bulbs are increasing. Watch out for daffodils, snowdrops, lily-of-the valley, cyclamen, bluebells etc. Wild flower seeds flourished and we had a vibrant display last year.

All of this, be it building or landscaping, has been achieved by members volunteering and bringing family and friends. I think this takes the Newsletter content full-circle so to end where we began, we appreciate all our members and volunteers and would love to see more of you.

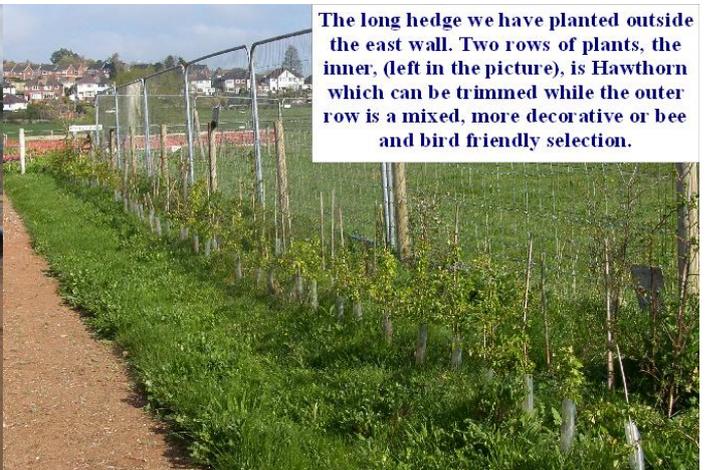
Best wishes, everyone. Vee Potter.



The flood has risen just enough to slightly cover the bases. Paul continues to take sand and gravel from the corner. Barry and Ian C debate our next moves.



This is the deepest we have been flooded this winter. No work down in the basin today!



The long hedge we have planted outside the east wall. Two rows of plants, the inner, (left in the picture), is Hawthorn which can be trimmed while the outer row is a mixed, more decorative or bee and bird friendly selection.



Corporate member

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