

STAFFORD RIVERWAY LINK

(A Community Interest Company)

NEWSLETTER Number 19

MARCH 2014

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Patron:- The Lord Stafford, DL, FRAGS

President:- David Kidney Vice President:- Jeremy Lefroy MP

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.

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Hello to all our Readers! Life has, as ever, been busy. Almost immediately after the last work party we went off to Turkey and guess what? The first day saw us on a boat trip on one of Turkey's few navigable rivers! The guide obviously researched his tour guests.....!

However you all want news of our own local affairs so I can happily report that we have had two work parties and a third is planned. First, though, a few words from our chairman, Ivor.

In my last report I mentioned the Staffordshire Waterways Group. This consists of members from regeneration groups like ourselves as well as existing Canal societies, plus representatives from The Inland Waterways Association and Canal & River Trust.

The Staffordshire County Council gives the group as much support as it can, in terms of expertise and where possible help to obtain Funding. To this end we have recently completed a list of the 8 Regeneration projects with details for each relating to time scale and levels of funding required to sustain these projects.

The groups dealing with regen. have been invited to a seminar in May. This is an initiative from the IWA and Canal & River Trust, where we hope to pool our resources to further our projects in the next few years.

So you can see from this we at SRL are not on our own and will continue to work in conjunction with our colleagues to promote our aims.

Finally, please support the work parties if you can and let us know if you are unable so that John Mountfort and John Potter can work out what can be achieved on the day (And what tea and

bikkies will be required!!)

Look forward to seeing you. I. Hind (Chairman S.R.L.)

And now work party reports:-

Feb 16th work party found ten members working harmoniously together in lovely sunshine. It was great to welcome some new folk. Some of us cut back the very overgrown area near the wall bordering the towpath – a move welcomed by walkers! Others carried on clearing dead wood from the hedges on 'our' site in preparation for some replanting at a later date. Yet others were working to establish the line of the old towpath. As we had 'Thistledown' moored up and Ivor had his car-boot facilities as well, between us we provided drinks and biscuits to sustain our wonderful workers. As we had the inevitable bonfire someone mentioned jacket spuds.....Sorry, not this time but a thought for the autumn?

March 9th work party saw another group of SRL members gathering together to use their skills and enthusiasm. Again, these included some new faces so we hope you enjoyed yourselves and will join us on future occasions. I leave it to Yvonne and Graham to comment on the day.

"We had a great day at the recent work party. The weather was beautiful and we had a very good turnout of volunteers. We planted nearly 100 quicks which were donated to us by The Woodland Trust and also some posts were put in to show the original line of the towpath and basin etc. Welcome refreshments were supplied by Vee Potter, who we understand was celebrating her

birthday....what better way to spend your birthday Vee? Thank you very much. Yvonne & Geoff."

I had hoped to include some photos in this newsletter. Several people took some and sent them to me but I have had difficulty, not in inserting them into the newsletter, but emailing the completed document once the photos are included. It seems I end up with a document too big to email. For now we must forego photos. Sorry!

The next work party is on April 27th. All being well, we intend scraping a layer of soil from the site of the canal basin. Who knows what we might find!! This will really show our supporters and passers by that work is happening. We will be there from 9.00.a.m.–12.30.p.m. but here's a thought from a volunteer at an earlier work party. She suggested we could incorporate a lunchtime picnic. Well, we will be well into spring and so far the weather has been kind to us on work party days. If volunteers like to bring their own picnic food, we have a reasonable supply of wine on Thistledown – bought from France and much cheaper than over here so we are not being overly generous if we offer willing workers a glass to accompany their picnic.

This month our historian, David Jones, has sent this contribution. Thanks, David.

History Update

Information about the history of the River Sow Navigation / Stafford Branch Canal is to be found on the History Page of the SRL Website. Much of what appears is original research and I have also transcribed some primary sources.

Research into the Navigation is on-going and over the past few years, although much has been discovered, very many basic questions remain unanswered. I have visited the Staffordshire Record Office, William Salt Library, Stafford Library and Wolverhampton Archives & Local Studies regularly, and also the County Museum Service at Shugborough in addition to the British Library and the National Archives in London. Some material has also been found using the internet.

Material added to the Website in the past two or three years includes:

- Transcripts of several documents, including the 1811, 1814 and 1885 Leases.
- Transcripts of the first five SRL Committee Meetings dating from 1997, and the 2004

SRL Presentation to the Environment Agency.

- A History of the Lock House, together with relevant Census and Electoral Records.
- A series of articles on "The Lock Keepers of Baswich". Those on William Smith and John Gallamore have already appeared and the next one, on William Sambrook, will follow shortly.
- A couple of articles relating to the Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal Society's interest in the Sow Navigation in 1968 and 1976.
- "Bradshaw's Guide to the Stafford Branch" based on de Salis' 1904 Guide to the Canals & Navigable Rivers of England & Wales.

There is still much work to be done. If you have **any** information, memories or photographs of the Stafford Branch Canal or the River Sow into Stafford, please contact me by email [d.j.jones@blueyonder.co.uk]. Thank you.

We are particularly interested in any information, memories or photographs of the following:

At Baswich:

- the Lock House,
- the Basin,
- the Aqueduct,
- the Lock,
- the channel that led from the Lock to the River Sow,
- the Bridge at the junction with the Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal.

In Stafford:

- the Coal Wharf by Green Bridge or the canal channel that led to the Coal Wharf.

Between Baswich and Stafford:

- were there any distinctive features along the River Sow from Baswich into Stafford?"

Any help will be much appreciated.

David Jones (SRL Research & History)

Restoration news from elsewhere...

John and I attended the AGM of the IWA Lichfield Branch. What drew us to this event was the follow-on talk. This was a presentation on the progress on restoring the Ashby canal and anything which includes restoration is a magnet. Doubly attractive to us was the fact that prior to becoming Staffs and Worcs moorers we spent some happy months with the Ashby as our 'home mooring'. It was a

fascinating talk and we pricked up our ears when funding was mentioned. It seems their support included financial input from UK coal and also from one of the Leicestershire councils (town/borough/county? Next time I'll take notes). There was also some input regarding HS2 which could threaten some of the restoration funding. Nevertheless the Ashby folk will be starting the next phase later this spring. We wish them well! Will it be the turn of SRL to give encouraging talks to restoration groups in the future.?