

STAFFORD RIVERWAY LINK

(A Community Interest Company)

E-mail : srl2010@hotmail.co.uk

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.

Newsletter No 22

May 2015

Hello to all our SRL Members,

It is about 6 months since the last update. The Autumn to Spring period is always busiest for work parties as the summer months find many supporters on holiday.

If you joined us on a work party in the last busy restoration time, we hope you enjoyed the work. If you didn't, you missed out on a few pleasurable experiences which have been a mix of hard graft and good fun. The site itself has undergone some changes. The foundations of the lock cottage have been partially exposed and we look forward to finding the pig-sty! The old basin has a definite shape and we have been busy with some 'bigger machinery' than our spades, forks and rakes. There is always a sense of achievement when one unearths another bit of brickwork, albeit from the cottage or from the former canal edge. Our volunteers are also kept busy keeping the new hedge weeded so the saplings are not suffocated and strimming the new – or even old, depending on your viewpoint – towpath. Once we found the lock cottage the fence had to be altered and we are grateful to Mr. and Mrs. Finney for allowing us to extend 'our' land to include the likely area of any further discoveries.

Perhaps the most pleasurable occasion was the siting of the signpost which stands near to the proposed junction and directs on towards Stafford! The other 'fingers' on the post show Great Haywood, Wolverhampton and, opposite to Stafford, River and Canal Rescue, who contributed to the funding for the signpost. We are so pleased that they do intend to return to the site indicated, following the devastating fire last October. Our thanks, too, to the amazing members who made the sign and then sited it. Although we didn't unveil it, we certainly celebrated it's arrival with ribbon-cutting, celebrity guests, speeches and cake! Well, we rate Olive as a celebrity, being a former occupant of the cottage and looking very lovely as she performed the honour of cutting the ribbon adorning the signpost!

So, as you can see, joining a volunteer morning brings a lot of reward. There is one more in the near future –

23rd May – come and admire our handiwork and see what you can contribute. If you are not able to dig or weed we also appreciate tea makers and givers-of-moral-support. We **will** see The Link in water one day!

Obviously one of the biggest ways to support us is to **RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP!** For most people membership was due to be renewed in April. Several are outstanding. Please do continue to support us as there are lots of areas that require funding – surveys, reports, even petrol for the mower etc. We need you and, please, we need your money too!

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 my original research and I have also transcribed some primary sources.

Recent uploads to the Website include the following articles:

- *The History of the Lock House.* The text to the original 2010 article has been extended from 4 to 7 pages to include more personalised memories from Olive Price who lived at the Lock House in the 1940s and 1950s.
- *The story of William Sambrook and his Family.* This is another article in the *Lock Keepers of Baswich Series*. William was the longest serving Lock keeper at Baswich and lived at the Lock House from about 1849 to 1875 and again from about 1886 until 1889. Do you think that all will be well? Will their children survive? What chances against smallpox and tuberculosis? Perhaps have a handkerchief ready, it may be needed. The Workhouse continues to take care of the needy until it is time to go. There's a connection with *HMS Victory* and a campaign medal too. It is not for me to mention "bigamy". Mustn't miss that appointment

with Albert Pierrepoint either - so don't hang around too long.

- *Work Party Report November 2014 - Major excavations.* An important work party which uncovered some of the foundation walls of the Lock House and tiled floors.
- *Work Party Report December 2014 - Lock House Update.* Excavation of the site of the Lock House continued. Also present was Elizabeth Thomson (CRT Heritage Adviser).
- *Photographs of the Baswich Area in August 1951.* Twenty photographs relating to Baswich Saltworks have recently been uploaded onto the *Britain from Above* Website. Many of these images fortuitously include the Lock House, Roving Bridge and former Basin. Follow the link in the article to access the images which I have annotated



on their Website. The images of the Lock House give us a better understanding of the arrangement of the upper floor of the building; they also allow us to interpret the foundations of the ground floor, unearthed at recent Work Parties, with greater certainty.

Several new articles will be uploaded onto the SRL Website over the next few weeks, including information about some of the artefacts found and the story of *Harry Holloway and his Family* (he lived at the Lock House between 1899 and 1929).

Do check the Website regularly for updates - use the refresh key (f5) if necessary.

David Jones (SRL History & Research)



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