

# STAFFORD RIVERWAY LINK

*(A Community Interest Company)*

E-mail : [srl2010@hotmail.co.uk](mailto: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 24**

**November 2016**

Hello SRL Members,

As November creeps by with its mix of glorious autumnal sun, foggy damp mornings and occasional torrential showers we can bring you items of news to really raise your spirits!

Did you attend the work party at the end of September? If so, are you still smiling at what was accomplished? If not, I hope to write a report that makes you wish you had been there! We held a week-long work party, of which the most memorable day was that attended by no less than 162 – yes, 162 – volunteers from a local based IT company, RISUAL. They had gathered their entire workforce from all around the country to participate in a community day. They do these things about twice a year and we were the lucky recipients of their enthusiasm and physical stamina. Can you picture it? We organized them into several groups, one laying the new road (more on that later), one group working on the towpath, one on the lock house area and one in the canal basin. Towpath work extended to beyond St Thomas Bridge, thus helping the local Baswich Canal Group with their project as well. 162 extra bodies wielding pick axes, pushing wheel barrows, digging, raking, moving bricks and always smiling! All credit to the bosses who got it together and

also joined in with equal enthusiasm! A very big thank you, RISUAL. I have overlooked the numerous side. We did have an invasion of cows, calves and 'the bull' (very docile with his little harem) Apparently, on occasion the fence gets damaged! Needless to say, it was all sorted but I have to tell you, bovine creatures don't work hard like humans do.

Referring to the above, most points of work will be familiar to you. Suffice to say, all are showing signs of improvement. But 'laying the new road'? We have always encouraged our volunteers to drive round the edge of the field, thus causing least damage to the field on which the land owners graze their cattle. They always support our project. Without their support, this project would not be happening. In consultation with them, we are making a better defined and better surfaced roadway which follows the line of the hedge. Obviously, this is not a tarmac road but is perfectly adequate for our use and obliterates the ruts etc in the field. It is not yet finished and will continue to be a part of future work party plans. Let your imaginations fast forward to a time when there will be water, boats, visitors absorbing the history of the lock house, even a tea room...the road takes on a degree of importance.

**\*\*\* NEXT WORK PARTY: SATURDAY 19<sup>th</sup> NOVEMBER 9.30 a.m. \*\*\***

The SRL committee, along with some members who are 'regulars' to any activities have been putting their heads together to try to make the SRL more meaningful to those of you who perhaps cannot be as physically active. Ideas to date include new fund raising incentives and possible regular social evenings. Other canal restoration groups have organised 'buy a brick' fund raisers. However, to restore the Link in the most suitable way we are looking to use 'blocks' so how about a '**Buy a Block**' scheme? Suggested cost of each block - £5. Perhaps our far-flung members might like to think they are contributing further to the restoration even if they are too far away to join us at work parties etc. **Please share your thoughts with us.**

How does a regular social evening sound? We have the offer of a room at 'The Sun' in Stafford for the evening of Wednesday, 1<sup>st</sup> Feb 2017. We will probably have a speaker – we have already thought of enough to cover the first few meetings and would try to ensure they were relevant to our group. We have not finalised the details yet but will let you know as soon as we have. Proceeds from any social events would, hopefully, cover the costs, of these evenings as we would not want to be draining funds better spent on restoration. It will be an 'open evening'. Please bring your friends. As members, do let us have your ideas.

#### Chairmans update.

I would like to add to Vee's comments about "RISUAL" who, as a company do community work throughout the year. We have been put on their list

for small workparties which involves approx 15 people, so we look forward to seeing them again soon.

We have also appointed a company as consultants to help with the work we should undertake regarding the route into Stafford Town Centre and are currently looking to employ a University to provide a further Survey on Hydrology. So please get involved if you can and support the social events.

#### History Update from David Jones

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

Research is on-going and several articles are in various stages of preparation including one about Edwin Wall (Lock Keeper in the 1870s and 1880s) and another about some of the artifacts found during Work Parties ... an article on the 1861 penny, unearthed in 2016, has already been uploaded.

Many historical newspapers have been digitised and are on the Internet. They can be accessed through subscription sites such as *Findmypast*: [www.findmypast.co.uk](http://www.findmypast.co.uk). Relevant newspapers include the *Staffordshire Advertiser* and the *Staffordshire Gazette and County Standard* which sometimes mention the River Sow, usually in the context of adult suicides or children drowning accidentally rather than as a working navigation.