

STAFFORD RIVERWAY LINK

(A Community Interest Company)

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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.

Newsletter No 29

February 2019

Hello to All SRL Members,

From the chair.....well, actually this month, this is coming **p.p.** Ivor! As always, family support must take precedence and Ivor is busy helping out a family member but sends his best wishes! I can tell you all, though, that he has been beavering away in the background working for the benefit of the project and its supporters. Perhaps the most appealing item of interest at the moment has been his contact with the Titanic brewery again. Some of you will know 'Titanic' support us in a variety of ways, not least, providing free of charge, the room in 'The Sun' pub, where we hold some of our winter social evenings. Last year, some members visited the Brewery in Stoke and Ivor has negotiated a return visit! This will be in April, the date still to be finalised. However, the February meeting is at the Sun, and we hope to be able to update you then. (See future events, later in the newsletter) At the last committee meeting, Ivor noted that one person present had been involved with SRL since its conception back in 1997. That person was David Jones and it seems appropriate to give David's History update 'pride of place' in this newsletter.

History Update (from David Jones, History & Research)

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 in recent months several articles have been uploaded, including:

- * St Thomas' (Baswich) Lock in 1971.
- * The Sun Inn (Stafford), The Titanic Brewery and the SRL.
- * Jenk's 1907 Guide to the Staffordshire & Worcestershire Canal.
- * The Hebe and the Stafford Branch Canal in August 1929.

My article on Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Gazetteers of the Inland Waterways of Britain, 1816-1975: with particular reference to the Stafford Branch Canal / River Sow Navigation received wider circulation when it was published in the November 2018 edition of the Journal of the Railway & Canal Historical Society (RCHS). Also included were two photographs on the back cover: (1) The front view of the Lock House, c 1955, with Olive Shaw in the front doorway, and (2) The Entrance to the Aqueduct from the Basin in 1968.

Other articles are in various stages of preparation.

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

David Jones (SRL History & Research)

The site - Since the last newsletter in October there have been several work parties and it is wonderful to see so much progress. It seems that the more we do, the more interest we attract from 'passers-by' and chatting to dog-walkers, rambler, boat-moorers et al provides a welcome break from the brick cleaning, cement mixing, hedge trimming etc! With this has come an interest in membership as well as an occasional 'new face' at the social evenings. All are welcome. One of our work parties attracted new-comer 'Brian' who arrived in his vintage lorry, laden with tiles he was donating for the cottage floor. Brian has been to several work parties since and is an amazing brickie! Another new face was that of local M.P., Jeremy Lefroy, who found pushing a wheel barrow and cleaning bricks a pleasant change from parliamentary affairs. Our thanks to everyone who joins us and be assured, there is a job to suit all! We never expect our volunteers to commit to entire work parties – the fact that we sometimes hold them over two or three days is designed to allow for all work patterns and commitments. An hour or two is much appreciated as we know that many people spread their time in a lot of worthwhile ways.

It has long been the intention of the committee to acquire a container for the site. This would allow us to store cement etc in dry conditions instead of having to collect it each work party day. Thanks to the generosity of Stafford Boat Club and a donation from BET365 we are pleased to say that by the time of the next work party we could have a container on site. Unfortunately, as I write this, the very cold and potentially snowy conditions, have meant a postponement but with just over a week to go, we still could get it sited. If not, then by the March work party.....!! Another exciting offer has been made to us from Canal & River Services at Weston – that of a welfare boat! This will be moved, first to Stafford Boat Club, where we may need some volunteers to prepare it for our eventual comfort, and then it will be available for future work parties. Shelter from the cold and wet & a decent loo. We are indeed lucky and grateful to all those who are improving our work party conditions and taking such an interest.

Social Evenings We have enjoyed some nostalgic talks over the winter months with topics including the history of SRL from the very beginning, and on a different evening, the history of Stafford Boat Club which proved to be inspirational! If their members could overcome so many obstacles and build such an impressive club, despite membership falling to a tiny few at one point, then so can SRL achieve their goal. If you missed these talks, but ever see them advertised again, do go along! The SRL talk will feature at the IWA Lichfield Branch AGM in March.

Future Dates: Work parties are planned for **Feb 9th and 10th; March 15th, 16th and 17th; April 13th, 14th and 15th; May 10th, 11th, 12th and 13th; June 8th and 9th.** You will see that we have a variety of work patterns and hope that many of you can join us for some of these work parties, which are often great fun and very sociable occasions. **N.B. We are hoping that our old friends 'RISUAL' (local IT company) will be with us again on Thursday, 14th March, thus extending the March planned dates by 1 day!** Hot drinks are always provided, with occasional 'sweet treats' but do bring lunch if you're staying all day. Details can be found on notice boards along the nearby stretch of tow path and at the SRL site boundary fence. You can also phone John on 01785226662. The next **Social evening** is at **'The Sun'** in Stafford on **Tuesday Feb 12th, 7.30 p.m.** The talk will be entitled 'Oh no, not The Titanic', which sounds really fascinating. As said previously, we hope to have a date for the April brewery visit. Numbers will be limited, and the event will cost £5, payable on booking. To tempt you further to the Feb, social, we have a raffle prize donated by another Stafford 'place of note' that prides itself on tempting our taste buds. You'll have to come along to find out what's on offer. Our socials are free to attend but 'The Sun' hopes you'll buy a drink – or 2, and we hope you'll buy a raffle ticket!!

No More space so, best wishes to you all and hope to meet up with many of you soon,
Vee Potter.



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