

GlassCuts

Special Supplement to Edition 85

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PUTTING THE 'CUT' INTO CRYSTAL AND SAYING IT WITH FLOWERS



It is always satisfying when a plan comes together, none more so than when that same plan cohesively links so many apparently disparate strands and all for the good of the community. So we are delighted to announce by way of this **Special Supplement** a series of projects that collectively tick so many boxes we have had to sharpen our pencil half-way through.

We start our tale with the Canal & River Trust (CRT) <https://canalrivertrust.org.uk>, the body that superseded the former British Waterways and which is now the official custodian of much of the canal and river network of England and Wales. CRT is the overarching body but is represented at local level by Waterways Partnerships that bring together enthusiasts from a broad range of experiences to work alongside the local Waterways Manager and his team in the formulation of policies, business planning and other strategic matters. I declare an interest here as a member of the West Midlands Waterways Partnership (WMWP) and have long been eager to promote the close working relationship between BGF and CRT; the 'cut' runs directly alongside the new museum.

CRT works in close association with Centro <https://www.centro.org.uk> to seek ways of improving alternative routes of travel suitable for cyclists, walkers and boaters. Richard Preston, CRT Enterprise Manager West Midlands, has kindly drawn my attention to the progress of towpath improvements along the Stourbridge Canal Town Arm and Main Line from the terminus of the Stourbridge Canal out through to Wordsley, Brockmoor and beyond.

The first phase of this £1.4m project, which includes the section from the Bonded Warehouse in Canal Street to Wordsley, is now complete. The application of an all-weather surface has also included widening and improved access. Over the next two years the work will cover the Main Line of the canal and its branches upstream as far as The Delph in Brierley Hill.

Now to the Ruskin Centre and Glasshouse College, home of the Webb Corbett Visitor Centre and which just happens to be alongside the Town Arm of the canal. Webb Corbett Heritage Officer Ian Dury has advised us of his work with the Dudley Youth Offenders Programme www.gov.uk/government/collections/youth-offending-team-contact-details to engage with nature and the community by manufacturing boxes and other artifacts for use in conservation of flora and fauna on the canalside. *Bravo that man.*



Let us now link this with a call we received recently from Cllr Christine Perks who is promoting the latest *Amblecote in Bloom* award. Last time around, and at the first attempt, she managed to bag a silver award. Never one to sit on her laurels, this year she is going for gold. And her chosen location? The canalside embankment right outside Ruskin. Which means that some of the artifacts made by Ian's wards will be used for *Amblecote in Bloom*.

And for our final connection, it may not have escaped your notice that a certain brand new building is rapidly taking shape alongside the canal opposite the Red House Glass Cone at Wordsley. BGF is conscious of the traffic situation at the renovated site and so is pleased to support any initiative that may help ease it.

So, putting all of this together, we have a revitalized towpath suitable for cyclists, walkers and users of mobility aids that runs right past a glass facility that is home to this year's *Amblecote in Bloom* and which will be using items made by people paying their debt to society. That same towpath then gives safe and unfettered pedestrian access to the new museum without so much as touching a road - just walk to Glasshouse bridge, up the ramp, turn right on the pavement and right again into the new building. We are even trying to mitigate your risk of crossing the road to Red House by the possible provision of a narrowboat ferry between the two - that's very much a 'work in progress'.

And if you would like to know more, then as part of their continually developing and consistently excellent *Discovering Britain* series <http://www.discoveringbritain.org> our good friends at the Royal Geographical Society (with IBG) are currently updating their on-line guide *The Crystal Canal* (see *GCs passim*) to account for the changes. Starting from the Bonded Warehouse along the towpath you can follow the whole story of our amazing glass heritage either on your tablet, as a downloaded document or as an audio guide - and it's all free at <http://www.discoveringbritain.org/content/discoveringbritain/walk%20booklets/Stourbridge%20Canal%20walk%20-%20written%20guide.pdf>

So there you have it; heritage and history, community engagement, offender management, renovation and rejuvenation, local area improvement and renaissance, inter-agency liaison, job creation and much more on top with knobs on; this one has got the lot in spades.

There's a free copy of our publication *In Our Time* (covering the 2012 Portland Vase Project) to the first person who can accurately tell us just how many boxes this all ticks. Because I'm darned if I can work it out.

Congratulations and good luck to all concerned; brilliant stuff. We are on our way.

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