STOURPORT CANAL BASINS LIKE YOU’VE NEVER SEEN THEM BEFORE!

Scaffolding is rising out of the ground all around the historic basins of Stourport. Millions of pounds is being spent to reinvigorate the canal basins and reinstate them to their former glory as a primary attraction for Stourport-on-Severn.

Fourteen cottages on Mart Lane and Severnside are sharing in £250,000 of works to replace windows, repair roofs and chimneys and restore the two hundred year old garden walls.

Alex Ball, Project Manager explains; “The most important thing about Stourport Basins is the group heritage value of the basins and buildings. There are 29 listed structures within the conservation area so all of our works to the site will try to maintain continuity and quality of the gardens, cottages and basins.”

So why Stourport?

Two hundred and thirty years ago a little hamlet called Lower Mitton was dramatically reinvented as a major transhipment port. Stourport, as it became known, was born and grew into a bustling town focussed on the movement of goods and materials from river-faring boats to narrow boats and vice versa.

As one of only a few towns born out of the canal age, Stourport’s Georgian Canal Basins hold a wonderful richness of history and character that is recognised as too important to allow any further deterioration of the site. British Waterways, as owner of the basins and many of the buildings in the conservation area, is now delivering a complex restoration project with the help of nine funding partners to restore and protect the basins for future generations.
WHAT’S HAPPENED SO FAR?

The first year of the restoration project officially started in November 2005. Listed below are just a few of the developments and events that have taken place during the last 10 months.

- Archaeological dig - in carefully targeted areas where we wanted to learn more, works were carried out by Worcestershire County Archaeologists and 15 volunteers. A wonderful discovery was made of an unrecorded secret underground passage between The Tontine Hotel and the now demolished toll house. An open weekend was held at the end of the dig which generated huge public interest as people came to investigate what had been uncovered.
- Memories day - local people and those with knowledge of Stourport were invited to share and record their stories and memories of Stourport from the past.
- Buildings restored - Two small buildings on the north edge of the site have been restored; the Ticket Office and Lichfield Basin Office.
- £400,000 spent - The first year of restoration has seen £400,000 spent on the refurbishment of Engine Basin and the riverside, and fees for all the preparation work for the next two years.
- Preparation and planning - Detailed plans for the next two years building and landscape restoration are being developed.

MILESTONES 2006

The following dates represent significant points during the restoration including events and dates when works start.

Clock Warehouse started - 4 September
Heritage Open Day tours - 9 & 10 September
Mart Lane Warehouse started - 11 September
Barge Lock stoppage starts - 8 October
Big Draw Event - 26 October
Mart Lane Cottages complete - 27 October
Narrow Lock stoppage starts - 30 October
All building works complete - 29 December
All stoppages finish - 23 December

The restoration works have been carefully planned to cause minimum disruption to residents, businesses and boaters in the basins. We hope you agree that the minor inconveniences caused are worthwhile to secure the long term future of the basins and associated structures.

- Heritage training – Seventeen waterway employees and contractors were trained in the use of heritage mortars on the old dry dock wall.
- Community consultation - special evening s were held for moorers and residents to answer questions on the project.
- £400,000 spent – The first year of restoration has seen £400,000 spent on the refurbishment of Engine Basin and the riverside, and fees for all the preparation work for the next two years.
- Preparation and planning – Detailed plans for the next two years building and landscape restoration are being developed.

GLAMOROUS GARDEN DESIGNS FOR THE TONTINE

Hundreds of people attended the Tontine Gardens design event on the 19th & 20th August. The event was organised to provide an opportunity for people to come along and meet the restoration team and share their thoughts and aspirations for the future of the Tontine Gardens.

Advice was then provided by the local garden trust and disability groups to provide possibilities for the new garden.

The Tontine Gardens date back to the 1790’s when the canal was opened and the gardens were the focus for fashionable society who enjoyed their riverside location and saw them as ideal for entertaining. The restored Tontine Gardens will be redesigned to reflect this wonderful Georgian history, while encompassing modern ideas collected during the weekend which could include: a fully accessible garden with

- David and Maurice layout the old garden outline
- an open air performance space, a picnic area and a sensory garden.

A huge thank you to everyone who attended and helped out over the weekend providing us with lots of great ideas and memories of the gardens and canal basins.

WELCOME TO THE WILDLIFE AT STOURPORT BASINS

Look closely around Stourport Basins and you’ll see it’s not just boats that make them their home.

The first welcome you’ll get on site is usually a splash and a quack from the resident ducks, closely followed by the swans and sometimes a moorhen or two.

If it’s a bright day, look just under the surface of the water and you’ll catch glimmers of some of the hundreds of fish that inhabit the basins, gathering food from under the moored boats.

Many birds make their homes in the buildings around the basins. House martins are particularly common and if you follow the twittering, you’ll notice their half moon shaped mud nests which can be seen under the eaves of some of the buildings.

As you wander around the basins, watch where you put your feet as below there are many types of wildflowers, from those on the lawns to the riverside, and insects including bumble bees and butterflies and even the humble stinging nettle is a food plant for caterpillars.

These furry, flying creatures have been seen all over the basins, hovering up insects around the upper basin, the Yacht Club, The Angel public house and around the bridge over the River Stour. You may even be able to hear their high pitched squeaks as they echo-locate their way around obstacles and find their prey.

Next time you visit the basins, take time to stop and look around. You might find more than you ever imagined.

The award winning Lichfield Basin office reawakened to its former glory as part of the restoration work.

The welcome to the wildlife at Stourport Basins

The programme of works at Stourport Basins until the end of 2006.

Please refer to the following table to see how works may affect you.

![Programme of works at Stourport Basins until the end of 2006.](image)

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Alex Ball
Project Manager

What’s your role in the restoration?
Overall responsibility for the project, reporting to funding bodies and ensuring delivery of the outputs and objectives within the £3.2million budget.

What are your aspirations for the restoration?
Re-engagement of the town with the basins as the birthplace of Stourport. A finished project which Stourport and the Funders will be proud of and that will be a tourist destination on the international map.

Oliver Giles
Assistant Project Manager

What’s your role in the restoration?
I am responsible for the education, events, volunteering and community consultation participation aspects.

What are your aspirations for the restoration?
I hope the restoration will unlock the full potential of the Basins as a community resource and encourage local people to visit and understand the site.

Mike Spears
Construction Engineer

What’s your role in the restoration?
I am responsible for managing the construction phase of the project with our framework contractor Morrison Construction.

What are your aspirations for the restoration?
I hope the project enhances the surrounding environment by successfully re-inventing the basins and the associated buildings in a sympathetic manner in keeping with original construction details.
DRIVING STOURPORT FORWARD

The Stourport Forward Market Towns Programme is now racing ahead. In 2005, British Waterways took on the role of Accountable Body enabling this major three year regeneration programme to take place. £616,000 is being provided by Advantage West Midlands and this is projected to draw an additional £3.3 million to the town in the form of match funding through all the projects within the programme.

There are two major projects. Firstly, the ‘Restoration of Stourport Canal Basins’ by British Waterways, the cornerstone of the programme, designed to transform and invigorate tourism within the town. The restored basins will provide a new focus for leisure and recreation and lead to an increase of up to 100% in new day visitors to the town.

It is predicted that an additional £1.7 million will be spent by these visitors leading to the creation of up to 70 full time jobs.

Secondly, the ‘Revitalisation of Sandy Lane Industrial Estate’, which will include the creation of a new gateway and section of footpath, small business improvement grants and resurfacing of several roads.

Other projects include the ‘Stourport Pride’ Report, a ‘Wheels To Work’ project, the creation of Manor Farm Ball Court, the Restoration of Stourport Methodist Church Garden and several small ‘Community Chest’ grants.

Stourport Forward Board and Partnership are already planning the continuation of the regeneration programme when the Market Towns Funding ends in March 2008.

For further information please contact Liz Durnell, Programme Manager, T: 01827 252233.

FURTHER COMMUNICATIONS

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LOCKING THE LOCKS AND EMPTYING THE BASINS

This winter, British Waterways is carrying out major civil engineering works to Stourport’s canal basins as part of the Basins Restoration Project. £900,000 is being spent to repair some of the main basin structures including the narrow and barge locks, Lower Severn Bridge and the swing bridge across the lower basin. The works will involve a closure of the locks to allow water levels to be reduced in the lower basin and locks to carry out the repairs.

Works will include;
• removing and replacing damaged brickwork in the lock chambers
• replacing coping stones (with new and reclaimed sandstone)
• filling voids behind lock chamber walls
• new foundation on the four corners of Lower Severn Bridge
• widening the swing bridge

Further details of all works can be found on plans at the basin office which is open 8am til 4pm daily or at other times by appointment.

Bridges and other structures will be repaired and replaced during the engineering phase of works.