

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

One of the most notable features of the Worcester and Birmingham Canal is its locks and tunnels. There are no less than 5 tunnels on the canal ranging from the mere 106 yard tunnel at Edgbaston, Birmingham to the massive 2726 yard tunnel at Kings Norton. Within the Conservation Area the Tardebigge Flight comprises a total of 58 locks, each of which must be painstakingly traversed in the challenge to meet the River Severn at Diglis Basin in Worcester. Challenges have been a characteristic of the history of this canal, not only from an engineering aspect (the canal involves a drop of 475 feet) but also politically. It took three major attempts and a substantial change of route before Parliament passed the Act which would allow construction to start. The first surveys were commissioned by the proprietors of the Stourbridge Canal in 1785, but it was not until 1815 that the first cargo made its way to Worcester. A period of relative tranquillity in the history of the canal began. However, it was barely 26 years later when the Birmingham-Gloucester Railway opened and signalled the gradual decline of the canal as a mode of freight transport. This century the canal has experienced more turbulence as the canal changed ownership to the Sharpness New Docks Company, was closed, re-opened and nationalised before the last canal-borne coal shipment reached Worcester in 1960. It has only been from the beginning of this decade that the function of the canal has changed to accommodate other uses, the most significant of course being recreation and tourism. Increasing awareness of the canal as a recreational resource and the need to preserve and enhance the environment has led to the designation of this as a Conservation Area in 1987. The setting of the canal is as important as the canal itself and must be protected from insensitive development. Some canal-side buildings are listed in their own right as buildings of architectural or historic interest, for example the Old Engine House, Plymouth House and the Wharf buildings at Tardebigge. But for unlisted buildings in the Conservation Area special controls apply. These regulations are outlined in this leaflet.



WHAT IS A CONSERVATION AREA

Conservation areas are designated by the District Council as areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character and appearance of which the Council considers desirable to preserve or enhance. Designation gives additional planning controls, but the success of measures to protect and enhance an area depends on there being community support, particularly from property occupiers. It is the special quality and interest of the area, rather than the merit of individual buildings that is the prime consideration in identifying conservation areas. It may be the group value of listed buildings, their relationship to each other, property boundaries, archaeology, spaces and landscape between the buildings and their materials and craftsmanship that are important. The interest often extends beyond the physical character since the social and economic history is usually instrumental in how the area still appears today.

CONSERVATION PLANNING POLICY

Planning policies effecting how the Council will deal with development proposals will be included within The Local Development Framework. Any policies affecting conservation areas will be produced in consultation with the public.

COUNCIL CONSERVATION AREA RESPONSIBILITIES

The Council has other duties in respect of conservation areas. These include the preparation of character appraisals, which say what is historically and architecturally special about the area and what detracts from it. These are necessary before proceeding to the preparation of policies and proposal for preserving and enhancing the conservation area, which are a statutory requirement. These measures require public support and consultation is implicit. Where the character of an area is threatened by development that is normally permitted, such as replacement of original windows with UPVC ones, the Council can instigate additional controls requiring planning permission for such changes.

WHAT DOES DESIGNATION MEAN

The Council is required to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character and appearance of conservation areas and their settings when determining planning applications. The applications have to be advertised and the Council must take account of material objections in their decision. Conservation area consent is required for the demolition or substantial demolition of buildings and complete boundary walls and gates. Additional planning controls apply in conservation areas, which would normally be permitted in other areas. These relate to the size of extensions, the type of external cladding permitted, inserting dormer windows and satellite dishes.

GRANTS

The Council can make grants available for the repairs of buildings of historic importance. Subject to funding, eligible work would include conservation repairs to the external structure, including the reinstatement of authentic architectural details. The Council also has provision to make grants available for conservation area enhancement schemes.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Advice can be obtained from the Planning and Environmental Services Department of Bromsgrove District Council and Worcestershire County Council.

Conservation Officer - Tel: (01527) 881326 Conservation Area consent, planning, listed building matters and historic building grants.

Tree Officers - Tel: (01527) 881321/1320 Tree matters including tree protection, consent and tree preservation orders.

Archaeology Officer - Tel: (01905) 855454 Archaeology protection/recording.

REFERENCES AND PUBLICATIONS

Lock Keeper's Daughter by Pat Warner Canal Corridor Study
Alvechurch Local History Magazine Bromsgrove District Local Plan
Paint Roses and Castles by Anne Young
Worcestershire Structure Plan 1966 - 2011
West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy 2001 - 2021
The Emerging Bromsgrove District Local Development Framework
Planning Policy Guidance No 15 - Planning and the Historic Environment
Planning Policy Guidance No 16 - Planning and Archaeology
The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990
Guide to the Principles of the Conservation of Historic Buildings. BS 1793



BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL
HEAD OF PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT SERVICES
THE COUNCIL HOUSE, BURCOT LANE, BROMSGROVE B60 1AA

WORCESTER & BIRMINGHAM CANAL CONSERVATION AREA

DESIGNATED
JUNE 1987



BROMSGROVE
DISTRICT COUNCIL

THE CONSERVATION AREA ALONG THE WORCESTER AND BIRMINGHAM CANAL INCLUDES THE CANAL AND RELATED BUILDINGS AND STRUCTURES.

A DETAILED MAP SHOWING BOUNDARIES IS AVAILABLE AT THE COUNCIL OFFICES.

'THE TARDEBIGGE FLIGHT' which is the longest flight of locks in England, begins its descent towards Worcester at Top Lock Cottage by lock 58 and finishes at Lock 29. This is a particularly interesting section of the canal retaining its unique character with fine views across North Worcestershire. Along the flight the canal cottages, bridges and locks display original features such as paddle gearing and balance beam quadrants. Local materials were used for construction including blue brick paving and bullnose coping from the Black Country and sandstone from nearby quarries. The length from locks 28 to 23 is known as the Stoke Flight.

'PLYMOUTH HOUSE', built in 1812 was formerly an old inn known as the 'Plymouth Arms'. It is said that the inn's closure was due to the drowning of drunken leggers in the nearby tunnel.

'LOCK 58 (C. 1812-1813)'. By this lock there is a side pond and sluice. Lock 58 is the top lock of the Tardebigge Flight and is also the deepest at 15 feet against 7 feet for the others.

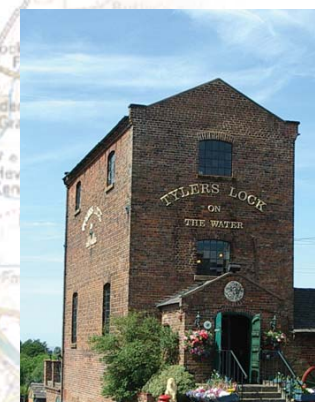
'THE OLD ENGINE HOUSE' formerly used to back pump water from the nearby Tardebigge Reservoir (level with Lock 50) up to the summit level above Lock 58 and until 1915, a Newcomen-Watt beam engine was in operation here.



'TREES AROUND TARDEBIGGE RESERVOIR' include oak, hawthorn, poplar, elm, field maple and silver birch. Willow carr (copse) is found along the marshy eastern shore. The reservoir is rich in birdlife with both breeding and over-wintering fowl. The aquatic habitat includes yellow iris, flowering rush, amphibious bistort and skullcap.

TREES IN A CONSERVATION AREA

Trees can make a significant contribution to the character of Conservation Areas. You must give the Council six weeks' notice in writing if you want to carry out work on trees, which are more than 7.5 centimetres in diameter (measured 1.5 metres above the ground). Non-compliance with this provision is an offence under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. These provisions are only a summary and full details of the exact legal wording can be obtained from the Council.



↑ The Old Engine House

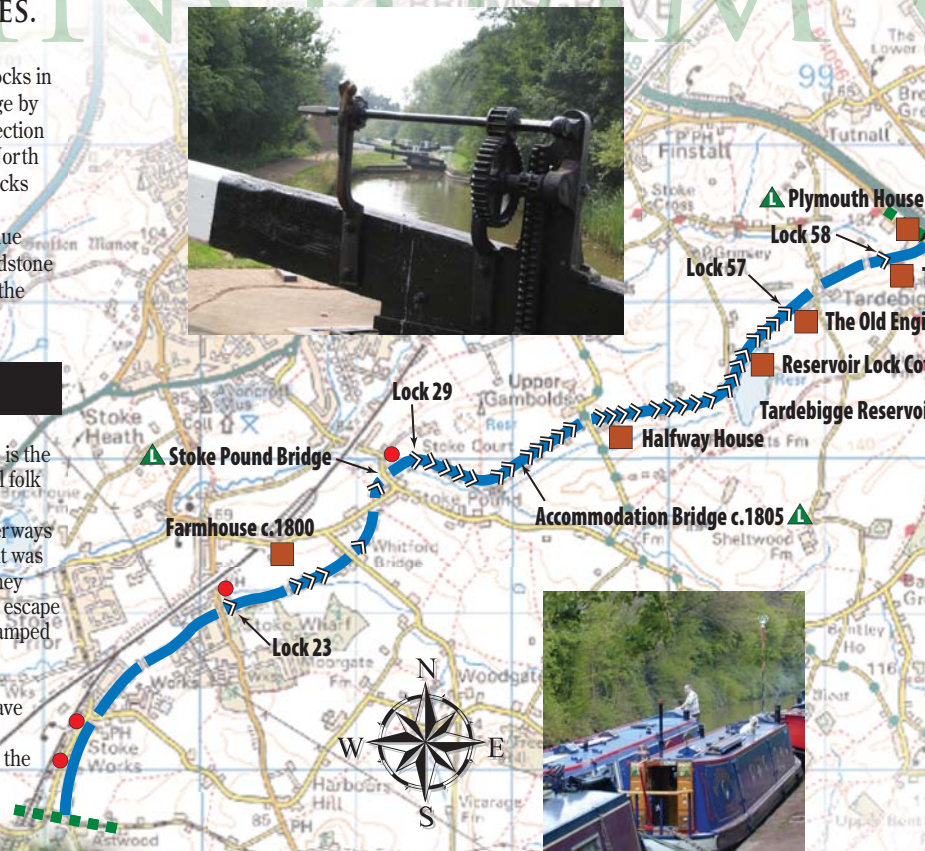
← Tardebigge Reservoir

CANAL BOAT ART



'ROSES AND CASTLES' is the name given to the traditional folk decoration of narrowboats, originating from inland waterways in Britain. For canal people it was perhaps one way in which they could express creativity and escape from the often harsh and cramped conditions of family life on a canal boat. The theme of castles may have originated from the highly decorative metalware which the boats transported, or even dreams of better living conditions. The roses and sometime daisies may just have come from simply missing a cottage garden.

'TARDEBIGGE NEW WHARF' was originally an old canal community where housing was provided for employees. Boats and canal equipment were repaired in adjacent workshop buildings. The site also has more recent historical significance. A plaque commemorates the meeting of Tom and Angela Rolte with Robert Aikman in 1946, who met to found a campaign to save Britain's waterways from neglect and dereliction.



↑ Narrowboats at the Old Engine House



← Reservoir Lock Cottage



KEY	
	Canal and Locks (Worcester and Birmingham Canal Conservation Area in Bromsgrove District)
	Listed Buildings (All locks along Tardebigge Flight are listed)
	Buildings of Interest
	Public Houses