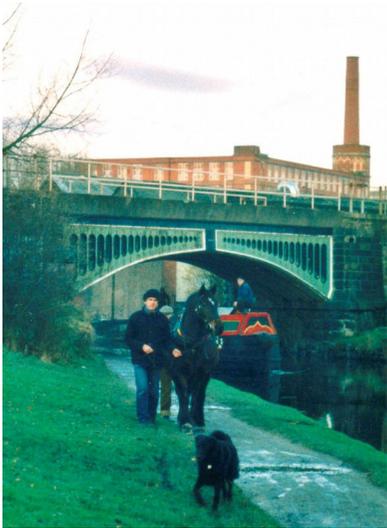


The project has several benefits:-

- It reduces waste by ensuring that unwanted goods are reused or recycled.
- It takes freight off the roads and demonstrates the potential of canal transport.
- It enables people to learn some of the skills of operating traditional narrow boats.
- It recreates for the public canal scenes that were once commonplace, demonstrating the job that they were built to do.
- It generates a regular income to help keep the boats running for future generations to enjoy..

Lilith normally works with the restored motor boat Forget-Me-Not but she is occasionally horse drawn. During her centenary year of 2001 the boat made a horse drawn trip over the newly re-opened Huddersfield Narrow Canal, carrying the first load over the summit for 80 years.



Lilith on one of her horse-drawn trips

How you can join in or help us,

**find more information
or contact us**

The Wooden Canal Boat Society always needs more volunteers and one of the jobs is to learn about life as it would have been living aboard and explain to visitors to our boats at Portland Basin in Ashton-under-Lyne. If you feel you'd like to do this, or any other volunteering see below for our contact details.

- Come on a monthly **RECYCLING TRIP** from Portland Basin
- Become a **member or Trustee**.
- **Contact us via our Website:**
wcbs.org.uk
or
- **Email:** general@wcbs.org.uk
- **Find us on Facebook** - search on 'Wooden Canal Boat' for the main page then link to the project or shop pages
- **Visit our shop:** 173 Stamford Street,
- Ashton-under-Lyne, OL6 7PS
- **Phone us:** 0161 330 8422

THANK YOU - hope to see you soon

OUR BOATS

Lilith

The boat that was the start of our society and which is now a vital part of our Recycling Project



WOODEN CANAL BOAT SOCIETY

In 1901, the year that Queen Victoria died, a humble wooden boat was launched into the dark oily waters

of the Birmingham Canal Navigations (BCN.) A very simple boat, shaped like a box with a point on each end, she was one of many hundreds of 'Joey' boats that carried the materials of West Midlands industry on short journeys around the Black Country. The boat had no cabin and no name, just the number 9 in the fleet of Coombeswood Ironworks.



Coombeswood was a dramatic industrial spot on the Dudley No. 2 canal. This waterway ran from Dudley along a winding route through the hilly land, resounding with the noise of metal working.

At Gotsy Hill it entered a short but atmospheric tunnel, emerging again from a little rat-hole into the fiery, steamy, smoke-filled clamour that was Coombeswood.

Towering high above the murky water of both sides were iron furnaces, rolling mills and cranes that reached across the water to make a cavern-like effect. The canal was crowded with boats, both Joey boats and long distance family narrow boats, some loaded deep down others empty, riding high in the water.

Beyond Coombeswood, the canal continued through Lapal Tunnel, much longer than Gosty Hill, to Selly

Oak where it joined the Worcester and Birmingham Canal. Built originally to rival the B.C.N. the Dudley Canal was eventually taken over by that company. After a long struggle with mining subsidence Lapal Tunnel was closed in 1908.

Along with many other Joey boats, No. 9 was used to bring coal from pits to fuel the furnaces and to deliver the finished iron to factories near the BCN and to 'station basins' for trans-shipment on to railway trucks for delivery farther afield. She would be either horse drawn or towed by a steam tug as part of a train of boats.

By 1922 the works had become part of Stewarts Lloyds group and specialised in tube production. No. 9 was altered to carry the long steel tubes. After the 2nd World War iron production ceased and lorries were increasingly used for transport. Parts of the works were only accessible by water however and the boats continued to be used to carry tubes out of the works for transshipment on to road vehicles.

When the steel industry was nationalised some of the boats were repainted in British Steel colours. The industry was in decline however and soon the works closed down.

We think that No. 9 left Coombeswood in about 1970 and went to canal contractor Alfred Matty. Along with several other boats she was purchased and towed to Chester in 1974 by a wandering boat dealer. He sold the boat to a student who intended to turn her into a houseboat. It was then that she gained the name 'Lilith'

The student started re-planking Lilith's hull, learning on the job and making plenty of mistakes. He dropped out of college and moved into the new Ellesmere Port Boat Museum as resident voluntary caretaker. Gradually the old timbers were replaced and the emphasis changed from residential use to a future in canal carrying. A back cabin was built to the traditional pattern for booty boats.

Major work was carried out at Runcorn and in 1983 Lilith slipped into the Bridgewater canal with only one pre-1974 plank remaining.

In 1987 the Wooden Canal Craft Trust was formed to preserve some of the surviving wooden boats. Lilith was donated to the Trust and she was put to work carrying musicians and entertainers around the canals to raise awareness and funds for reforestation projects. She was clothed up and a forecabin was built. Meanwhile, the motor boat Forget-Me-Not was being restored beside the Ashton Canal. Later the trust was reorganised as the Wooden Canal Boat Society, a registered charity.



Getting Lilith in place for a recycling trip.

In 1996, the current recycling project began using Lilith as its main boat. Every month volunteers meet at Portland Basin, Ashton-under-Lyne, then take the boat for a trip to Droylsden where clothes and bric-a-brac are collected from 250 homes. This is carried back to Ashton on the boat, sorted and sold in our shop on Stamford Street.

Items that can't be sold for re-use are stored and then sent to recycling plants, if possible by boat.