

## Withington - a Vital Village

Readers of *S&News* may recall the account given last year of a “Warm Evening in Withington” when one of our trustees, Brian Nelson, was invited to speak at their annual Parish meeting and was given a very warm welcome to the village. There was a high turnout to the meeting and great interest shown in the proposals to bring life back into their canal which has lain derelict for so long.

In the year which followed Withington became involved in the “Vital Villages” scheme and has used this initiative to research opinion from all local residents on the restoration proposals in order to hear of both their support for the scheme and any concerns they may have. This involved Brian in further visits to the village to meet with their project co-ordinators and we now have the results of their findings which will be given a detailed response. There was further opportunity for dialogue with key representatives of the village when Withington were invited to an evening cruise from Norbury Junction on Jubilee, as part of the public relations enterprise reported on elsewhere in *S&News*.

There then followed a phone call which took Brian somewhat by surprise - an invitation to open their summer fete! Whilst unaccustomed to such an honour he was pleased to be given the chance to return to a village where he is getting a real feel for the importance of the canal in such a small community and the significance that its restoration will have. Indeed the site of the Fete was adjacent to the line of the old canal. The warmth of the welcome was evident once again, both from familiar faces and from the wider community who had come out for this major event in the village’s calendar. The Trust’s display stand was well visited and there were lots of fascinating stories from the older residents of the times when the canal was a major focal point and lifeline in the village. Brian was taken over to the Church where a picture from an old Shropshire Calendar of the early fifties has pride of place by the front door and shows the church with its picturesque reflection in the still canal waters.

A particular benefit from the day was the opportunity to meet some of the farmers whose land includes the canal line and who are understandably concerned about their fields being subdivided or access being made more difficult for their machinery. Hence return visits have been planned to look carefully at these farms to see what can be done to minimise the possible impact.

The work that has been going on in Withington over the past year demonstrates the mutual benefits for both the Trust and local communities when good relationships can be cultivated and an active dialogue on common interests and concerns entered into. The Trust is keen to hear from other communities and interest groups along the route in order to establish the same level of accord wherever possible. Please contact the Secretary, or any of the Trustees (details inside front cover), and we will identify the most appropriate member of the Trust to liaise with you.



*The Canal at Withington c. 1952*