



13th August 2009

PRESS RELEASE

Centenarians Reunited at the Black Country Living Museum's Historic Boaters' Gathering

Saturday 26th & Sunday 27th September, 2009

Two centenarian canal boats will be reunited at the Black Country Living Museum's Historic Boaters' Gathering on Saturday 26th & Sunday 27th September, 2009, along with 25 other historic working boats. 101 year old tunnel tug, Sharpness who used to work the Worcester and Birmingham Canal Tunnel, will moor alongside 100 year old President, the only preserved steam powered narrowboat on the canals today.

Sharpness, the first motor powered tug, was built to work at West Hill Tunnel by steamboat builders Abdda and Mitchell, hence Sharpness' unusual low, sleek 'steamboat' design. Sharpness would pull a train of boats through the tunnel and then wait on the other side for her next customers. Sharpness would also work as an icebreaker.

President', who celebrates her 100th birthday this year was built in 1909 in company dock at Saltley, Birmingham and cost just £600. In its heyday the steamer would have usually worked 'fly' (day and night) on the canals between London, Birmingham, Coventry, Derby, Leicester and Nottingham with a crew of four men or women working continuous shifts. Cargoes would have been valuable spices, tea, wool, cheese, soap, sugar, wheat,

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barrels of beer and spirits, tinned goods and even bedsteads and bicycles.

Working boats rekindle a forgotten way of life as they demonstrate cargoes being trans-shipped, fender making and canal art. Boating enthusiasts and visitors can also navigate their way along the emerald green waterway of the narrow 3,000 yard long Dudley Tunnel where trips to the limestone caverns include Little Tess and the famous Singing Cavern.

-Ends-

Photo Opportunities

Images attached.

Journalists and photographers are invited to attend the Museum on Saturday 26th and Sunday 27th September.

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