

OffCuts

Lifestyle news from Stourbridge Glass Museum
and the British Glass Foundation

STOURBRIDGE
GLASS MUSEUM



Stourbridge Glass Museum – how it came into being.

The remarkable tale of the period from the formation of BGF in 2010 to SGM official opening in 2013.
Now available direct from the museum. All proceeds to BGF.

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With *GlassCuts* 248

Welcome ...

... to **OffCuts**, our occasional lifestyle bulletin that accompanies your regular **GlassCuts** offering an informal look at goings-on in and around Stourbridge Glass Museum and the British Glass Foundation.

Down by the riverside

I have this theory; it stems from some years back when I was escorting a group of American tourists around the pretty South Staffordshire village of Kinver. 'Gee' said one, pointing to a timbered building *'that looks ancient'*. Without thinking anything of it I threw back: *'Not really, it's only about 300 years old'*. He gaped at me sternly. 'Sir' he intoned, *'do you realise you have just written off our entire history?'* Oops.

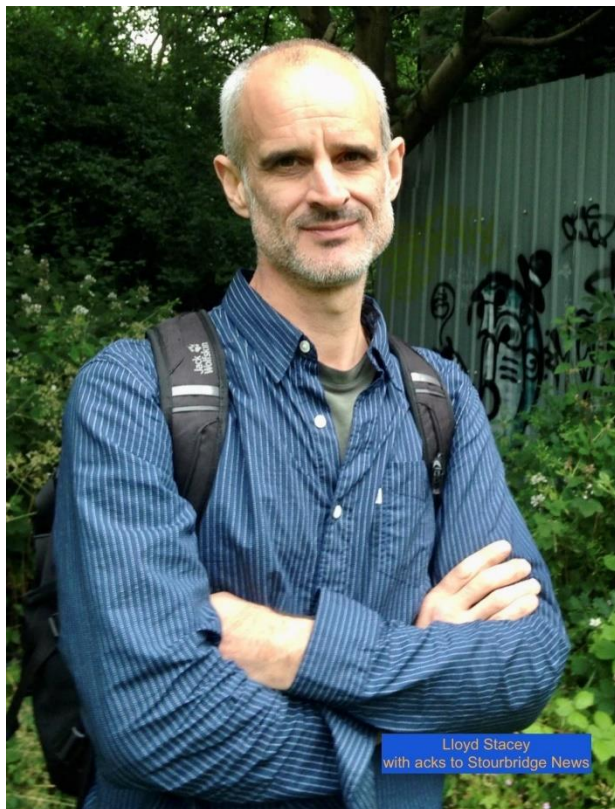


And therein lies my theory, the fact is that here in good ol' blighty we are blessed with so much history and its artifacts that we become blasé, indeed, as admitted here, I did so myself once. Until I realised that only when the last ancient woodland has been tarmacked, when the last burial mound succumbs to a golf course and the last castle becomes a theme park will we look ourselves in our collective eye and lament 'Oh no, what *have* we done?'

So it is that with great pleasure we report on one hidden gem which, with the studious dedication of one man and his team, has been saved from such ignominy. The more usual access to our featured location (or at least the former foundry bit) is off Bradley Road in Stourbridge, but you'll not be surprised that as an inland waterways man I introduce it by way of the canal that runs right past it.

Take a stroll along the towpath from Canal Street in Stourbridge and after a quarter-mile or so or so you reach a rise in the path where it passes over two bridges. These are the remains of barge tunnels that gave boats access to the works behind the wall. Still referred to locally as Bradley's Ironworks this was the former Foster & Rastrick, makers of the pioneering steam locomotives *Stourbridge Lion* and *Agenoria* in the 1820s. The works closed its doors for the last time in 1982 and lay in ruins until sanity prevailed and the patently iconic building found renewed life as a medical centre.

Ah but; take a closer look at the building on the right. This is Riverside House and was the home of the Ironmaster. It was in use until recent years; in 1982 the Staffordshire & Worcestershire Canal Society held a boat rally and the occupiers kindly provided a water supply via a hose. Then, in an act of criminal negligence at which we seem singularly adept, the house and surroundings also fell into dereliction.



Enter one Lloyd Stacey. I am privileged to say I first met Lloyd when Riverside House was but his dream. I am now the more so to see how he has turned his vision into reality. Dare I suggest in a manner and timescale that coincidentally echoes the genesis of our own museum, but let me not digress. In a nutshell, Lloyd has brought together a team and secured funding that has seen a venerable but moribund site transmogrified into 'a project ... (that) has the potential to transform the prospects of a whole community.' Or so says Kate Braithwaite MBE, and as Operations Director at UnLtd (grant funders who support social entrepreneurship) she should know.

Operating under a mantra of 'Transforming lives can transform people' Riverside House has become the hub of an entire social regeneration project based around a health and wellbeing centre focussing on working with the disadvantaged and across the gamut to interaction with schools and colleges. Meaningful social interaction and activities are achieved through the delivery of traditional crafts, the arts, ecology, heritage, food and nutrition. Development is ongoing, with future plans including more diverse workshops and events. This is no idle promise and the accolades are already flooding in, as reported in a recent *GlassCuts* when the centre was the recipient of the *2024 William Shenstone Award for the environment*.

As for 'the main man', Lloyd Stacey has over 20 years' experience working with young people with complex special educational needs and developmental difficulties. He is a qualified artisanal carpenter and furniture maker and has a decade of experience in a variety of design and build projects including project managing large-scale architectural refurbishments. Talk about not sitting on your laurels, for four years he also managed two farms including a 100-acre beef and sheep farm in mid-south Wales.



The 'mindfulness and wellbeing' aspects of Lloyd's work are doubtless aided by six years formal Zen Buddhist training plus five years Psychodrama therapy. His most recent academic achievement is his Masters in Science in Practical Skills Therapeutic Education which, surprise surprise, he passed with merit.

Lloyd says: *'Social Capital is of primary importance for the growth and sustainability of organisations. When people work together they can achieve remarkable things'*. Amen to that, brother. So, laudable as all this is, what has Lloyd and Riverside House got to do with Stourbridge Glass Museum? Well, quite a lot as it happens. Lloyd is a regular and welcome visitor to our museum where we swap notes and experiences to our mutual benefit. Riverside House will be open as part of the International Festival of Glass this forthcoming August Bank Holiday and we will be supporting him; I am personally grateful for his kind invitation to offer a few words in my capacity as BGF Trustee. Riverside House is also a 'key location' on our guided walk along the towpath through the old glass industries and culminating at Stourbridge Glass Museum.



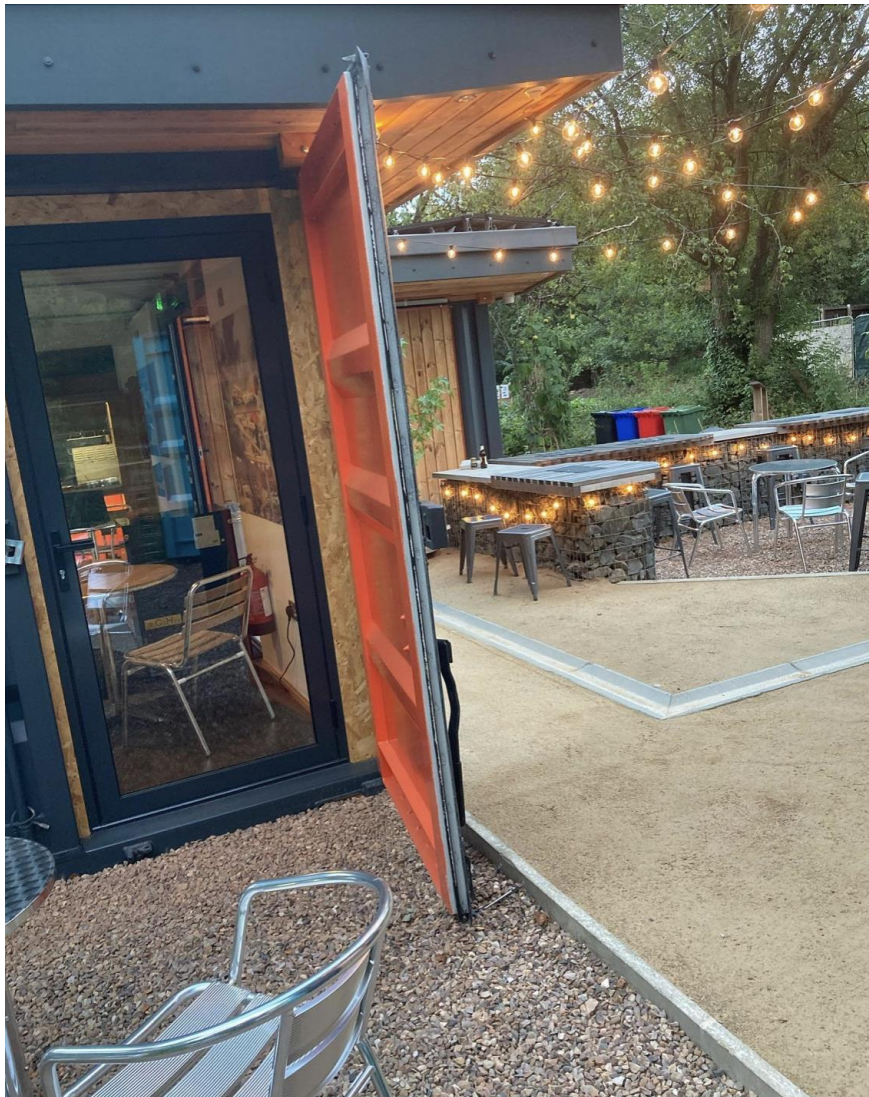


All well and good, but there is one reason for our relationship with Lloyd that stands head and shoulders above others. For the past decade and a half since the formation of the British Glass Foundation we have been supported by the local community on the promise that our 'People's Museum' would in return be an integrated component and outreach arm of that same community. We are up and running. So now, it's our turn to reciprocate.

The Riverside House website <https://www.riverside-house.org.uk> tells the whole story to date and visitors are welcome throughout IFoG. Details of Riverside House as part of the guided walk referred to above can be found in *Jewels On the Cut (II)* by the author and available at Stourbridge Glass museum with all monies to the British Glass Foundation. An online version with audio track, *The Crystal Canal*, compiled by RGS (with IBG) and based on the book, can be found [here](#)



Our thanks go to Lloyd for the usual permissions to reproduce imagery and our best wishes to him in his endeavours to aid those less fortunate than most of us whilst simultaneously safeguarding a remarkable piece of heritage in the process.



In the next edition of *OffCuts*, which coincidentally will accompany the celebratory 250th edition of *GlassCuts* and just ahead of the International Festival of Glass, we will be looking a little closer to home at a lady who will, by then, have almost completed a rather special piece of cameo work. And if that is not clue enough to identify her, then the revelation that she also achieved the same feat actually at IFoG exactly twelve years ago should clinch it.

Join us again soon for more *OffCuts*. In the meantime, *Keep it Glass*.

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