

GRAND TRUNK



*Kerry and Steven's wedding
At Alrewas in February
(see p.8)*

Picture courtesy of Waterway Images



May/June 2018

www.trentandmerseycanalsociety.org.uk

Chairman's Bit

Even though it didn't happen on our canal, I have to start with the Middlewich Breach! The Middlewich Branch of the Shropshire Union Canal breached in the very early hours of 16th March. Although nothing is certain, the most likely cause was vandalism. Apparently all the paddles on both Stanthorne and Wardle locks were raised and left up. A water-level sensor on Wardle Lock alerted CRT, who closed the paddles there, but didn't realise that paddles were also up at the next



lock (15 minutes up the branch). Water then backed up above Wardle Lock, as the overflow weirs there and below Stanthorne Lock couldn't cope. Eventually water overflowed at the lowest point, which was on the embankment by the River Wheelock aqueduct. This water gradually scoured out the ground until the breach happened. Luckily the water ran safely to waste in the River Wheelock, leaving a very large hole and one side of the aqueduct exposed.

The next morning we looked out of the bedroom window and saw an empty canal with our boat sat on the mud. A few days later CRT put in a fabric dam and raised the water level temporarily so that trapped boats could escape. We are now safely moored at Barnton, thanks to the generosity of a friend who lives there. It seem unlikely that the we will be able to return to our home mooring before Christmas.

What effect has this had on our canal? Firstly, the water level above Big Lock varies more than usual as there is no feed from the branch. Secondly, boat traffic north of Harecastle is reduced (especially so whilst Marple Locks stay closed for repair). Thirdly, local hire fleets are losing business as customers contemplate the reduced choice (no Llangollen, no Four Counties Ring, and no Cheshire Ring). CRT hope to announce their full repair plans soon, but currently expect to start in June and take six months.

If anyone would like a copy of the AGM reports (see next page), please ask Roger or Margaret (details p.23). Photo of train ride, Roger Evans

Trent & Mersey Canal Society AGM

On 12th May 24 people attended our AGM at Fuller's Wheels and Water Museum in Stone. Chairman Roger reported a quiet year for the Society, with all mileposts north of Harecastle now painted and Cheshire Locks work-parties proceeding slowly. There will be no Society calendar this year, as it is no longer economically viable. Unfortunately requests for photos with a view to making Christmas cards had only one response (from Sandra Lawson who submitted 3 pictures). The committee will make a decision regarding these.

Society finances remain healthy and talks went well in the past year. The next season is fully planned. The stall did well at three outings, but did not attract many new members. Numbers continue to cause concern and it was felt the society needed some new projects.

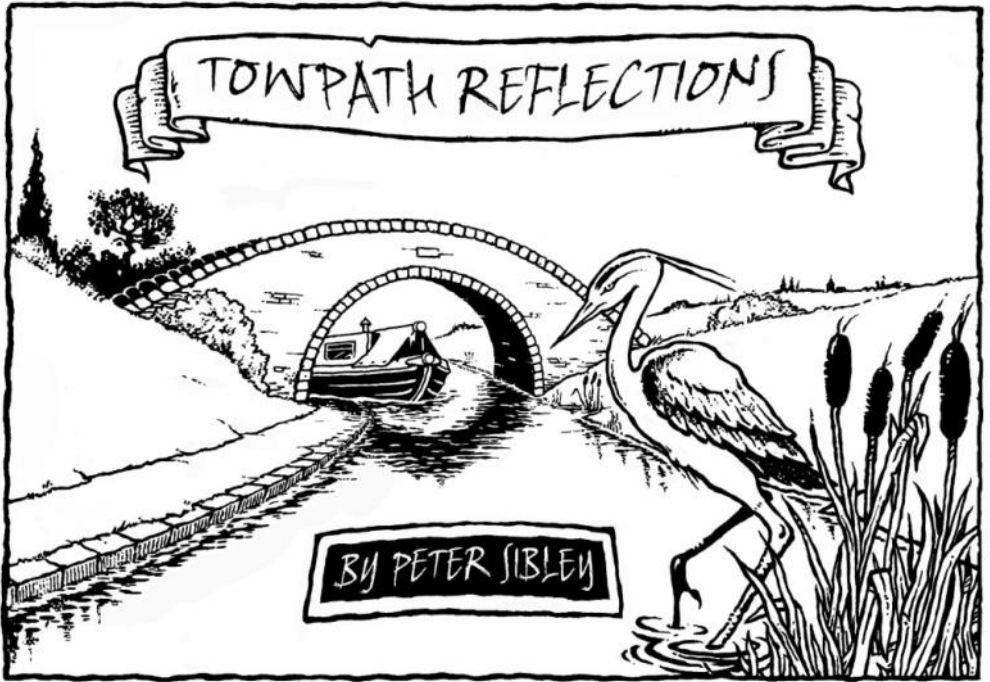
Gratitude was expressed for the society's support of Burslem Post and concern was voiced about the likely impact of HS2 in the Fradley area.



With the official business out of the way, attendees were treated to an individually-tailored picnic lunch and a look around the museum. Rides around the boatyard on a

small train and the opportunity to pull signal levers were especial treats.

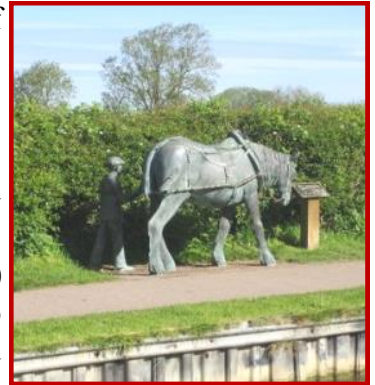
Finally, Roger and Martin Fuller gave us a talk on the collection of items for their museum. A metal detector seemed to be important in this process!



We left Valerie and Peter moored on the Welford Arm.....

Wednesday 13th May.

We woke to a beautiful morning and set off early to make the most of the weather. This section of the canal is really beautiful. It continues its winding about right up to Foxton Locks, which is certainly the straightest part, down 2 staircase flights of 5 locks each. The view across the countryside from the top is amazing. There were plenty of visitors about even at 9-10 in the morning. It took a mere 50 minutes to reach the bottom lock where we were observed from the bridge by a coach load of tourists from Cornwall!



*Horse at top of Foxton
Locks*

We moored up at the bottom and had a cup of coffee, then went to explore the site of the inclined plane. We visited the old boiler house where there is a museum

devoted to the inclined plane, including a scale model of the lift in its hey-day.

We went back to the boat and continued our way to Market Harborough where we moored at the visitor moorings just outside the terminal basin and walked into this historic old town in the sunshine. We moored here at this quiet spot for the night.

Foxton Locks

Market Harborough market square



Thursday 14th May.

We moved round into the basin first thing this morning to use the facilities block, then headed off back to Foxton. It was very quiet on the cut this morning, we didn't see another boat on the move until we reached the swing bridge at Foxton Village, where a hire boat was just coming through!

We turned at the junction and headed for Leicester. We had a near collision with a community boat on a blind bend. The problem with this part of the canal is that the width is considerably restricted by reed beds that grow out from the bank and overhanging undergrowth and trees. It's difficult to imagine the canal was built for two over twelve-foot wide boats to pass.

We passed another boat in Saddington Tunnel, this morning being the first time that this has happened during our passage through the last 4 tunnels. At the north end of Saddington Tunnel the towpath doesn't seem to exist at all and in other places on this canal is in a poor state. When we did get to a good bit of towpath we pulled in for lunch. Just when we were thinking of setting off again, another boat passed us and we quickly untied and set off, managing to catch them up and accompany them down the next 8 locks (which was a great help to both of us).

During this time the rain started and steadily got worse. By the time we got to Kilby Bridge (where there are excellent moorings) and tied up to a row of cast iron bollards in record time, we were soaked. We dived inside to dry off! There is a waterways maintenance yard here with a working hand-operated crane they seem to use for loading stop boards. There are some nice old buildings incorporating a facilities block.

Friday 15th May.

A bright sunny morning from the weather forecast, it remained sunny into the afternoon. We waited for our travelling companions to arrive then set off together and carried on non-stop till we got to Leicester. We carried on down the straight mile (with its ornate bridges) still in bright sunshine until we reached secure moorings at about 2pm. We just about managed to squeeze in by asking the couple on the end mooring if they would move along a bit.

There is only room for about 4 boats here, which for a city the size of Leicester is not really good enough. We had a late lunch then went to the tourist information centre to get a map and topped up with fruit and vegetables from the market which is virtually next door. It is claimed this is the largest covered market in Europe! However, several people we have spoken to agreed with us that Birmingham and Leeds have far bigger markets.

Saturday 16th May.

We caught the bus this morning and spent the day at the National Space Centre and also the Abbey Pumping Station Museum next door, both well worth a visit. Unfortunately, although the space centre was well attended, visitors were few and far between at the pumping station, and for 80% of the time we were there we were the only on visitors in sight, so as we left we struck up a conversation with the attendant at the door and spent the next ½ hour or so with him and a very interesting fella he was too!

Sunday 17th May.

We went to the new Richard The Third Visitor Centre today, which is adjacent to the cathedral. This is a must see if you are in the area. It is a first class attraction, imaginatively displayed. We were there 1½ hours. The actual site where the King was found has been preserved and covered in glass panels in the floor of a nearby building, in the car park. After this we went in the Guildhall Museum before we went back to the boat for lunch.

In the afternoon we went to visit the Newarke Houses Museum by the university. We watched two young women feeding swans with three complete loaves of bread!

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Controversy over planning application on the banks of our canal!

Willington Picnic Site (South Derbyshire)

South Derbyshire District Council have provisionally granted a planning application for the erection of a sun canopy/marquee/dining room to the rear of The Dragon public house on Willington Picnic Site, which is a Public Open Space and more importantly part of the Trent and Mersey Canal Conservation Area, (Planning Application Ref No 9/2017/1357).

From the pub's own site

The Dragon, is a 150 year old pub with character, charm and a warm welcome! Situated in the heart of Willington village, backing on to the Trent and Mersey canal. It has recently been sympathetically extended, renovated and restored with the introduction of a new 70 seater restaurant, courtyard and dedicated bar area to complement our fabulous beer garden, on the edge of the canal. There is nowhere quite like The Dragon on a sunny afternoon...

Willington Parish Council and Willington Footpaths and Open Spaces Group objected to the planning application based on what they believed to be contraventions of planning matters contained within SDDC's Local Plan Parts 1 and 2 and contravention of SDDC's very own Trent and Mersey Canal Conservation Character Statement.

Towpath at Willington

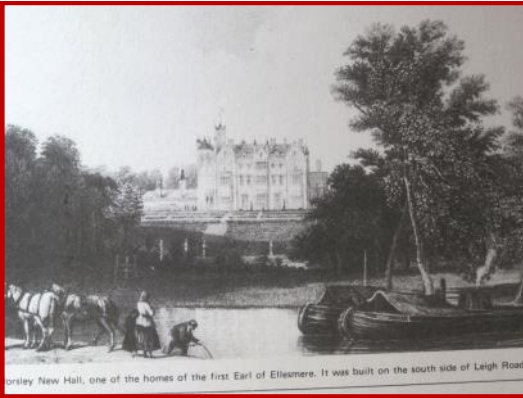
Photo, Derbyshire Life



“Workedslegh” A History of Worsley

Following my article on the 1831 Canal Act, member Mrs Marie Jackson very kindly offered to lend me her copy of *Workedslegh*, written by Ian S. Pratt and published in 1977. The book was intended for the schoolchildren of Worsley and covers its history from Roman times. Although the book does not mention our canal, it deals with the transport revolution and the change from a manorial farming community to a dormitory town.

We learn that mining gradually took over from agriculture and in 1759 the third Duke of Bridgewater famously decided to cut a canal to transport his coal to Manchester. The Duke employed our own James Brindley as consultant engineer and paid him one guinea a week. Brindley’s three-arch stone aqueduct to carry the canal over the River Irwell caused great amazement!



In 1851 the Earl of Ellesmere entertained Queen Victoria at Worsley New Hall. The Queen and Prince Albert travelled by train to Patricroft Station, then boarded a specially-made barge to complete the journey along the Bridgewater Canal. The Queen noted that ‘the boat glided along in a most noiseless and dreamlike manner ...’. She made no comment on the fact that one of the two horses pulling the barge fell into the canal and had to be rescued before the journey could proceed, but on her next visit in 1857 she travelled by road!

Gradually trains, trams and motor cars took over local transport and new industries were established and. Worsley became part of Salford. The book concludes with a list of things which local children might do, starting with St. Mary’s Church. It does not suggest they learn more about the canal!

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Thank you Mrs Jackson.

Margaret English



Join Us on a Canal Work Party

Cheshire Locks, Trent & Mersey Canal Monthly work party on the third Thursday each month Jointly with IWA North Staffs & South Cheshire

Why not join us for our monthly work parties, on the Cheshire Locks between Kidsgrove and Wheelock, carrying out vegetation management and other tasks in the fresh air and good company?

Work parties run from 10am to 3pm on the third Thursday each month (except December) and volunteers are welcome to come for a couple of hours or all day. The meeting place varies each month, so please contact us for details.

All tools and equipment will be provided. Volunteers are advised to wear old clothes, stout shoes and to bring waterproofs in case of rain and a packed lunch if staying all day.

Contact: John Brighthouse
John.brighthouse@waterways.co.uk?07808878317

Middlewich Branch Breach



During the night of 15th March a large amount of water descended into the pound below Stanthorne Lock. The (already waterlogged) banks were unable to cope and the canal breached just beyond Nantwich Road Aqueduct, breaking the popular Four Counties Ring, of which our canal is such an integral part. The canal is currently drained between Stanthorne Lock and Wardle Lock, on the south side of Middlewich town centre, a distance of just over three quarters of a mile. The towpath has also been closed along this stretch.

It appears paddles had been left up at Stanthorne Lock, and vandalism may have been to blame for the disaster (the badgers' name has been cleared!). Fortunately the water poured harmlessly into the river below and no-one was injured, although between 15 and 20 boats were within the drained section, including one boat between Wardle Lock and the breach, which remains stranded.

The Middlewich Branch connects the Trent & Mersey Canal just south of Middlewich town to the Shropshire Union Canal at Barbridge Junction, a distance of about 10 miles. Constructed in 1827, it is nearly 200 years old.

Fast action by emergency staff has resulted in nearly 10,000 fish being rescued from the stretch of canal in Middlewich affected by the breach. MEM Fisheries staff spent a full day rescuing roach, perch, gudgeon, bream

and eels from the three quarter mile length between Stanthorne Lock and Wardle Lock. They collected the affected fish, including a massive 4lb eel, into large buckets and then released them into The Trent and Mersey Canal beyond Wardle Lock, towards Middlewich town centre.



Fish Rescue in Progress!

While the canal was de-watered volunteers from *SUMBA* (Shropshire Union Middlewich Branch Adopters) and local residents, led by CRT did their best to clear the canal bed of the usual bikes, shopping trolleys, traffic cones and tyres.

The Trent and Mersey came to the rescue again when water was pumped from its supply (after a temporary dam had been built below the breach) to refloat the stranded boats. All who wished to were able to escape onto our canal and continue their journeys. Two boats chose to remain, and sat upon the mud until mid-May when they accepted a chance to escape.

Efforts are being made to keep the canal bed in water to prevent cracking, and some brickwork may be undertaken where the lack of water has uncovered deficiencies at bridgeholes. Unfortunately, breach repair will be a time-consuming and costly business. In the meantime, locals (human and canine) peer longingly through the towpath barrier and promise to never again take the canal for granted!

Photos, Roger Evans

T&MCS Social Calendar to May 2018

The location is the Big Lock and can be accessed on 2 levels. For those who prefer not to use stairs, there is access to the room at the back of the building via the door facing the lock, we can arrange for your drinks to be collected from the bar.

There is no charge (we have a raffle to pay for the room hire) and no need to be a member.

If you want to make more of an event of your evening I can recommend the food, I usually eat there before each talk.

Some speakers will bring associated objects and products to be viewed or bought, we positively encourage interaction.

To find Big Lock by road, :

Webbs Lane, Middlewich, Cheshire,
CW10 9DN

Telephone: (01606) 833489

<http://www.thebiglockpub.com>

The room will be open at 7.30pm,
the talks will start at 8.00pm,
in two 40 minute parts with a comfort break.



Contact: Gillian Watson 01606 835 606

Hold the Dates!

<u>Date</u>	<u>Subject</u>	<u>Speaker</u>
21/09/2018	RNLI	Mark Thomas
19/10/2018	The Uttoxeter Canal	Steve Wood
16/11/2018	Braunston canal age transport hub	John Pomfret
18/01/2019	Murgatroyd's Brine Pump Middlewich	Mike Walton
15/02/2019	The Darjeeling Himalayan Railway	Patrick Marks
15/03/2019	The Wooden Canal Boat Society Story	Chris Leah

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Welcome to New Member

**Mr Allan Pickering
Of
Arnold, Nottingham**



We hope you enjoy being a member of the society

The views expressed in this publication are not necessarily those of the **Trent and Mersey Canal Society**. They are, however, published as being of interest to our members and readers

New GDPR regulations and our Society

Hopefully members will be pleased to hear that we will NOT be asking you to complete a detailed consent form giving us permission to use your personal information to do a long list of specific tasks. One such form that I had to fill in recently even asked me to tick a box to allow the charity to use my name and address details to post my members' magazine to me! However you may be wondering why we aren't making this sort of request when many other societies are asking their members to complete consent forms.

You have probably seen the initials **GDPR** a lot recently. They stand for General Data Protection Regulations (which come into force this May). Basically (in non-technical language) these regulations require ALL organisations to justify why they collect and use personal information (known as "data"). There are 6 "lawful bases" for processing such personal data. Many organisations have chosen "Consent" as their lawful base, and therefore have to ask for permission from their members for each way they want to use such data. Other organisations, including ours have chosen "Legitimate interests", which (according to the Information Commissioner's Office) is most appropriate "where you use people's data in ways they would reasonably expect and which have a minimal privacy impact".

Very importantly, we do **NOT** share any personal data with any other organisation, nor use that data ourselves for anything other than society business. However you probably still want to know what data we collect, why we store it, and how we use it :-

Name and address – So that we can post your magazine to you, and contact you if necessary to resolve a problem.

Email address and telephone number (only collected if you wish to share them with us) – So that we can contact you more quickly if there is a problem with your membership (e.g. magazine returned marked "Gone Away", or your Standing Order not paid one year).

Type of membership (Life, Honorary, Annual) – So that we know whether we need to check if you have paid your membership this year.

Whether you have signed a Gift Aid Form, and the date of signing – So that we can reclaim tax from the government on your membership payments and any donations. If you have later told us that you no longer pay tax (so that you don't want us to reclaim Gift Aid in future) then we will also hold that "cease" date to make sure we remember to stop claiming for money received after that date.

Dates, Methods and Amounts of payments by "Annual" members – So that we can check when your membership is due for renewal, and whether to send you a reminder if you haven't renewed in April, (or just to wait for your next payment, especially if you tend to pay by standing order on a date different to our standard date of 1st April). We also need to use the dates and amounts of these payments when reclaiming Gift Aid (if applicable). For a new Gift Aid form, we can reclaim tax from your previous 4 years payments (provided that we have stored that information of course).

Any Special requests made by you that we need to remember – So that we can do as you have asked. For example some members ask for their magazine by email instead of by post. Other members pay 2 subscriptions (one for themselves, the other as a gift for somebody else), so we need to remember who to remind for payment.

Finally we do **NOT** store any information about your Bank Account. We never even see the Banker's Standing Order form (if you completed one). However we do see any cheques you send us of course, but we don't record any information from them other than the name, date and payment amount.

I hope that puts your mind at rest, but please contact me if you have any questions, or want to create/amend a Gift Aid Declaration. As usual please contact Margaret if you want us to add/change/remove your email address and/or telephone number(s).

Roger Evans

Readers might like the following extract from a splendid little book!....Ed.

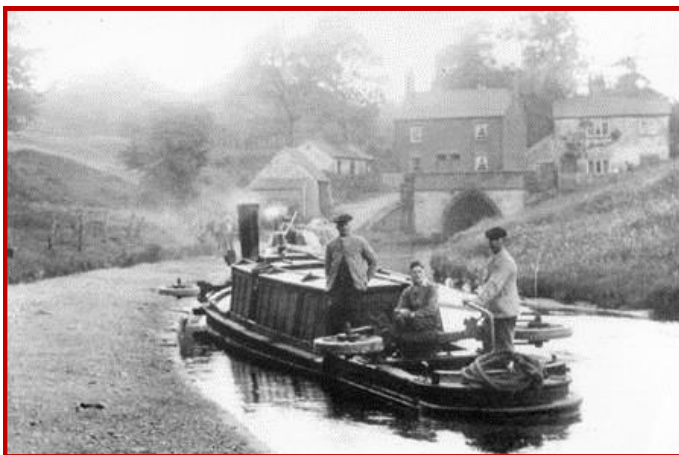
Extract from Adventure by Canal
(George Tansey 1950)

Harecastle Tunnel....an inky-black boring dripping with slime and bulging with the weight of the hill on its back for over a century is just wide enough to take a narrow boat through its two-mile length.

In the early part of the 20th century a thousand boats a week used the two tunnels and you could hire a ‘Rodney, who would lie on his back on your boat and push it through the Brindley Tunnel with his feet against walls and roof. For this superhuman task he asked ninepence a trip and a good meal. There are no Rodney’s now. The Telford Tunnel has theoretically a tow-path, but it is submerged in parts and is virtually impassable.

We were wondering how to tackle the tunnel when we saw a peculiar craft lying in the deep gloom of its mouth. Bless my soul, we were saved! If it wasn’t a water tramcar, an electric tug, with William O’Grady as skipper, waiting and willing to tow us through behind him!

The tug, which used its electricity to haul itself along by a winch and underwater cable, proceeded at the pace of a snail, the roar of an express train and showers of blue sparks. Behind us, the sunlight dwindled, became a tiny circle of dingy orange hue then a pinpoint of light, then was gone.



***Preston Brook
Tunnel Tug***

*Steamershistori-
cal.co.uk*

Meaford Lock 31 Open Weekend (3rd February)

The works at Lock 31 included replacement of the bottom gate as well as repairs to the top gate quoin and chamber brickwork.

Gate re-lining at Lock 33 was carried out within the same navigation closure.

The show-stopper was the opportunity to get beneath the water line and walk in the drained lock chamber, with CRT's team of experts on hand to answer questions. As well as explaining the techniques used to repair this lock, they showed all the weird and wonderful items found in the lock when it was drained of water!

The event attracted considerable interest and was a great success!



Photo Brian Deekin

Please send contributions for the next issue to me, Margaret English, by e-mail to margaretetlm@hotmail.com, by post, or by hand. Remember, this is *your* magazine. Contributions from the South especially welcome!
Last date for inclusion in the July/August edition is **01/07/2018!**

Mystery Oil Spill

On the 7th April beleaguered boater, deprived of the delights of the Four Counties Ring by the breach, could not even escape (or enter) the environs of Middlewich. Following heavy rainfall, a large amount of oil appeared in the Trent & Mersey at Lock 67, Booth Lane Top Lock (popularly known as Crows Nest Lock). The canal was closed while action was taken to remove the pollutant from the water and investigate its source.

Nearby boaters reported that an outflow from the new housing estate nearby may have been involved, or remains from an old Foden's site could have been disturbed.



Whatever the cause, C&RT act promptly to minimise the damage. Special cloths which soak up oil (we've all used them in engine compartments) were floated on the water surface to gather up the spillage.

Later, an oil tanker was commissioned to suck up the oil and remove it for safe disposal.

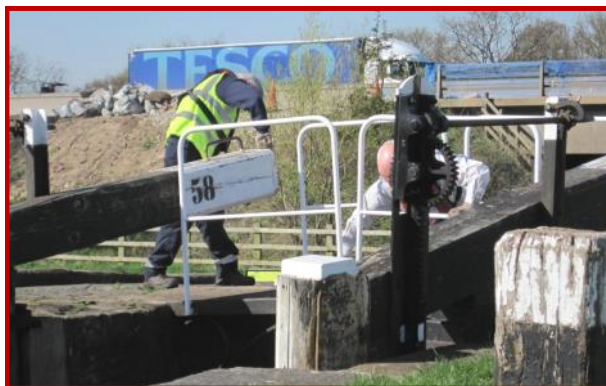


Oil Tanker to the Rescue!

The canal was re-opened on 8th April. In the hope that this was an isolated incident.

Photos by Eddie Kingswell

Cheshire Locks Work Party



19th April dawned sunny and hot. As work on lock 58 had been delayed by bad weather, six intrepid volunteers set to work with gusto. The traffic on the M6 thundered past, workmen continued to convert it to a ‘smart motorway’, and horses were exercised in the paddock below.

The locks team prepared and painted top and bottom lock gates on the towpath-side lock and gave the old wooden strapping posts the same treatment.



The ladder railings in the offside lock had been prepared earlier, and these and the tail-bridge railings were painted a gleaming white. Passing boat crews were full of praise for the new look. Hopefully the work will be completed next month.

Picture 1: At work (Margaret English)

Picture 2: Finished (John Lawson)

Picture 3: Ladder rails 1/2 done! (M.E.)

TRENT AND MERSEY CANAL SOCIETY

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*The Trent & Mersey Canal Society is proud to
support Burslem Port*

Bringing Boats Back to Burslem



*Soaking oil from Booth Lane Top Lock
(see p.20/21)
Photo Eddie Kingswell*

No room for an editorial this time, see you in July!