

GRAND TRUNK



AGM attendees at Etruria Industrial Museum (see p.6)

July/August 2019

www.trentandmerseycanalsociety.org.uk

Chairman's Bit

I regret to have to pass on the news that Malcolm Turner (who was TMCS chairman for several years until 2011) died recently. Unfortunately we were on holiday in Canada when we received the news, and were unable to attend his funeral as it took place whilst we were still away. We were pleased to hear that member Ted Thompson, who knew him well, attended the funeral.



Malcolm was always very knowledgeable about the history of our society, and I shall miss his great help in sorting out not only the order of events, but also explaining the “why” to go with the “what”. Earlier this year, for example, he was able to help me untangle the causes of our problem with the charity commission which date back to when we ceased to be a limited company.

Following the adoption of our new Constitution at our AGM, I have been busy sorting out all the paperwork that the Charity Commission ask for when a charity is registered. Finally, once our trustees had signed-off everything, I started filling in the online application. After an hour or so, their system told me that our current annual income is not enough (as it is under £5,000) for us to be able to register online. Instead I have had to email them again (so expect another multi-month delay), asking for permission to be registered manually instead. Possibly more news next issue (or maybe the one after???)

Our stall attended Middlewich Folk and Boat festival as usual. Despite the intermittent heavy rain, a recent donation of 2nd-hand canal books from Alf Overton attracted much interest and sold well. Our nail game also drew people back for repeat attempts to win.

Finally, Gillian has finalised the speakers for our next season of talks (except for exactly who CRT will be sending) so please read the enclosed “talks card” and come along and join us.

Editorial

Hi everybody! I am writing this en route to Waltham Abbey where we are working at the Festival of Water, and it's just 3 weeks since we returned from Canada! I keep being asked what I liked best about the big country. The answer has to be the people. They were unfailingly kind, helpful and welcoming and we felt quite at home. There was plenty of water for us to admire, Vancouver is a deep water port and a continuous procession of cruise ships docked right in the city centre. When we moved on to Toronto we found that Lake Ontario was in flood. We made it across to Toronto Island by ferry, but large sections were underwater or inaccessible. Niagara Falls were an amazing experience, especially as we took the boat trip right into the falls and got absolutely soaked (even with our free plastic macs).

It is great to be back on *The Lady Beth* (with our crew of cats) and cruising again. We seem to have ironed out her teething problems and are becoming very fond of her. We were disappointed at how many of the twinned locks on the Cheshire Flight were out of order again, although they are looking much smarter thanks to the work of the volunteer teams (see p.16/19).

We were also disgruntled when we stopped at the services at the bottom of Atherstone Locks on the Coventry Canal. The rubbish skips were all overflowing, with piles of bags everywhere, and there was no sign of any attempts at recycling. Worst of all, the flush on the Elsan disposal did not work. On the plus side, there were an amazing number of volunteer lock-keepers on the flight, all very friendly. Apparently a large terrapin lives on the flight about halfway up, and they keep an eye on him.

We negotiated Hawksbury Junction without incident, and pulled up outside *The Greyhound* for a quick drink to celebrate. Unfortunately there are no mooring rings, so we took turns to hold the boat while drinking some very nice Cider!

PLEASE NOTE THE CHANGE OF MEETING VENUE 18TH OCTOBER (P.14)



Cruising French Style

In May we had our annual European Waterways holiday where I don't have to drive the boat. For the second year running we travelled with *Croisi Europe* as their boats are not too big, with only 10 cabins and 20 passengers. As we were a bit late in booking the only cabin available was one designed for disabled use which was on the upper deck.

Not only did our holiday include all meals and excursions it also included drinks at the bar, unless you wanted some specific brand of drink, so really nothing extra to spend.

Our home for the week was MV Deborah. It is one of 5 barges of this design that *Croisi Europe* runs on the French canals. They are based loosely on the traditional design of barges to fit the standard Freycinet gauge locks which are 39 metres long and 5.2 metres wide.



The boats are a very close fit, probably closer than a modern UK Narrowboat in a narrow lock.

The boats are quite unusual in their design in so much that they have two engines and two propellers, one at the stern and one at the bow, both swivel through almost 360 degrees on pods; she also has no

rudder, so no power equals no steering. Under normal cruising only the stern engine is used but for close manoeuvring for locks, bridge holes, mooring and bendy canal sections both engines run enabling the boat to move in any direction including spinning on its own axis.



The forward engine came in very useful when the main propeller was fouled with weed and a short length of old rope as it enabled us to still make good progress until the prop could be cleared.

The main passenger accommodation is on the lower deck comprising twin beds and en suite shower with toilet; each cabin has a large non opening window just a few inches above the water line. There is also one other cabin on the main deck between the bar and restaurant designed for disabled access so there would be no need to use the stairs- the one we were occupying! This had a double bed, a large shower, and a toilet en suite. It also had a very large opening window which would have been nice had the weather been better. All cabins of course had individual heating/air conditioning, WiFi access and satellite TV. The TV failed to work all week but we all agreed that was no great loss and I think most of us suggested that the dish be removed to improve outside visibility while cruising. Also on the upper deck at the bows was a Hot Tub. Like last year, I didn't see anyone use it all week.

All meals were served in the restaurant and half of us made a great effort to circulate, but there were 2 French couples who didn't speak English and 2 Swedish couples (one was poorly sighted), so they always sat at the same tables, which is understandable.

Breakfast was a self-service buffet served between 7-30 and 8-30, the only hot cooked part being eggs. Lunch time was the main meal of the day being 4 courses, starter, main, cheese and dessert served with wine, which slowed the afternoon down a bit. The evening meal was 3 courses, starter main and dessert again served with wine. Before lunch every day cocktails were served in the lounge area. Not something I am really a fan of, a bit like Alcopops!

Brian Holt

AGM DAY AT ETRURIA INDUSTRIAL MUSEUM

The meeting started with tea (coffee or hot chocolate) and biscuits in the café. There was a chance to buy memorabilia and browse through second-hand books. A film was playing showing the mill in steam.

Volunteer Ann Ludford explained she had been associated with the museum since 1988, long before the mill was open to the public. The only workers were volunteers until the mill opened in 1991. Ann became an employee, married another volunteer and after a break, returned in a voluntary capacity once more. The museum is run in partnership with the City Council- the volunteers run the mill but the council owns the buildings.

There was a collection of 'handling artefacts' on display- pottery, bones etc., and Ann promised us an interesting tour after official business and lunch.

After the AGM, Gillian produced an interesting selection of sandwiches and soft drinks and society merchandise was available; then came the promised tour! We divided into three groups of seven or so and set off into the basement, where there was a model of the site in the 1930s. We discovered that many of the work-sites have now been demolished and are earmarked for a modern industrial estate- with the listed mill chimney in the middle!

On to the calcining kiln, where there is a turntable for the delivery waggon (down steep stone steps since subsidence). The gear room is full of Victorian machinery looking as if it has just stopped work, and the grinding room holds ten large pans sporting huge wooden paddles.



The beam engine which drives the mill is beautifully cared for and the highlight is 'Princess' the Cornish boiler of local construction which produces the steam to power the mill operations. It consumes 1.5 tons of coal on each steaming day.

Another fantastic and unusual venue for our AGM- where will it be in 2020 I wonder?

'Princess' photo by David Clegg

CANAL CRUISING COMPANY LIMITED NARROWBOAT HOLIDAYS

Dry Docking Facilities

- 3 Dry Docks
(Available for DIY)
- Boat Repairs & Blacking
- Pump Outs, Diesel & Gas
- Welding & Machine Workshop
- Engine Services



Request
your
brochure
today!

Narrowboat Holiday Hire

Choice of Excellent Routes Available

10% Discount for CAMRA, IWA,
CART Members

15% Discount FORCES, NHS
STAFF, POLICE & RESCUE

(See website for full terms and conditions)



Check Live Availability & Book Online!

Taster Day Hire & Overnight Stay

Crown Street, Stone, Staffordshire ST15 8QN
Tel: 01785 813982 Email: mail@canalcruising.co.uk
Web: www.canalcruising.co.uk

Malcolm Turner

It is with much regret that we have to announce the recent passing of Malcolm Turner who was a one of the stalwarts of the canal society and was chairman for many years. He was also an enthusiastic northern committee member.

He first became involved with the society in 1986 whilst attending a fund raising rally at the Anderton Boat Lift. Malcolm and his wife used to moor their boat at Grappenall on the Bridgewater Canal. Quite by chance they moored alongside Christine and Ted Thompson's boat, which was to be used as a VIP reception centre for the rally. Not knowing who owned Malcolm's boat, it was moved further down the line. When the Turners returned to find their boat missing, the first person they saw was Ted Thompson and from then onwards became great friends.

Malcolm and Angie helped out at the society's bonfire event at the lift and helped to supply fireworks. They also ran the society shop which was well stocked with many items including their own lace plates with a photo of the lift on them.

Malcolm also loved miniature steam railways and drove the trains at High Leigh Garden Centre. He gave us free rides when we went there with our family.

When the Turners moved from Warrington to Chirk in Wales, Malcolm got involved with the Llangollen railway.

He will be sorely missed by many people.

Peter and Valerie Sibley

I remember Malcolm enjoying himself hugely at Big Lock lockwinds (before the associated paperwork and Health and Safety concerns became overwhelming) and arranging the Society Christmas parties at Anderton Village Hall. He always brought books for raffle prizes (I believe he worked for a publisher) and had a bottle of whisky which we had to roll coins at. The final year there, when we had a power cut, no heating, and partied by

torchlight was particularly memorable– but Malcolm carried on!

Oh yes, and I remember my surprise and delight when he handed me an enormous bunch of flowers when I was awarded the Wedgwood Trophy. At Christine Thompson’s funeral he remarked that there must be a T&M committee in heaven– keep them in order Malcolm!

Margaret English



Malcolm at High Leigh
Photo courtesy of the garden centre

At the AGM the Wedgwood Trophy was awarded jointly to Peter and Valerie Sibley in recognition of many years of service to the society. Peter's regular musings on their travels around the waterways are greatly missed.



Photo David Clegg

Peter has kindly lent me some precious copies of his early *Towpath Reflections*. The one reproduced below was published in the March/April edition of 1991.....*Ed*

The trouble with living next to a canal is that it becomes an enormous distraction, especially when one is engaged on some mundane maintenance work around the house. There always seems to be something going on 'up there' - that is more interesting than the task in hand. I only have to hear the throb of an engine, and, paintbrush or trowel in hand, I'm off up the back steps to the towpath gate to see who is passing.

We've lived here over two years now and the draw of the canal still hasn't worn off, but it's an addiction that I'm quite happy to live with. Even at this time of the year in the depths of the winter the cut has a melancholy appeal and a restful tranquillity that's so hard to define.

A couple of Saturdays ago I took to the towpath en route to the village. It had been a bright clear day but now the sun was just setting and there was already a bite in the air. The canal had been frozen over but a passing boat had broken the ice and it lay in great jagged pieces now glowing a fiery orange reflecting the setting sun as it slipped behind the hill. The air was heavy with the smell of wood smoke which curled lazily in the still air from the chimney of a moored boat whose owner has taken up temporary residence by my garden wall. It was a magical scene and only too soon I had to leave the towpath by the road bridge to continue my walk with the bustling traffic of the Runcorn road.

The following weekend, the weather unchanged, we took the boat to Anderton for a bag of potatoes from the farm. The ice cracked and tinkled like shattering glass as the boat was shunted from port to starboard by the chunks of ice. On turning at Anderton we pushed large slabs of ice over the weir, shattering into small pieces as it fell.

On the return journey we glimpsed a brilliant flash of orange and blue – a kingfisher shot ahead of us and perched on a branch and much to our surprise sat motionless as we passed within a few feet. Of course as usual, I didn't have my camera with me. I suppose we had done him a favour in enabling him to get at his supper!

February has found the ice on the canal still thicker and a covering of snow has given it a very solid appearance. Not much chance for our kingfisher to find a meal now I'm afraid. The herons haven't been much in evidence either lately. Even the canalised sections of the River Weaver are now frozen over.

On Saturday the 9th the local youngsters decided to ignore the dangers and started playing on the ice in Barnton basin. It doesn't seem possible that in a few weeks time the daffodils will be giving their usual breath-taking display on the embankment at Little Leigh.

PETER SIBLEY

WALKING THE TRENT & MERSEY CANAL (IN MANAGEABLE CHUNKS)

We are trialling monthly walks on the Sundays following the socials, initially for 3 months to ascertain the take-up before confirming further 2020 dates.

The plan is to start at Preston Brook and move along the towpath in small chunks looking at and discussing what we see / find.

Below is a description the first three walks.

This is not restricted to T&MCS members, bring your friends and family.

If you will be joining in please let Gillian Watson know on

gillian.watson@me.com or 07976 318 356 so that she knows who to look out for before setting off.

20/10/2019

Start: Preston Brook Tunnel South Portal

End: Saltersford Tunnel South Portal

This will be an easy walk with many stops to look and discuss what we find along the way and include walking over Saltersford Tunnel.

From arrival to driving away approximately 2.5 hours

Meeting: at 10.30am in the Café at Northwich Antiques Barton. Leaving cars there, at Saltersford Tunnel and Preston Brook to accommodate return.

17/11/2019

Start: Saltersford Tunnel South Portal

End: Anderton Lift

This will also be an easy walk with many stops to look and discuss what we find along the way, and includes walking over Barnton Tunnel and a guided tour of the Anderton Boat lift site.

From arrival to driving away approximately 2.5 hours

Meeting: at 10.30am in the Café at Northwich Antiques Barton. Leaving cars there, and at the Anderton Lift to accommodate return.

20/01/2020

Start: Anderton Lift

End: Broken Cross

This will be another easy walk with many stops to look and discuss what we find along the way, and includes a walk around the Lion Saltworks site.

From arrival to driving away approximately 2.5 hours

Meeting: at 10.30am in the Café at the Anderton Lift. Leaving cars there and at the Broken Cross to accommodate return.



Stoke on Trent Boat Building Co Ltd

DISTINCTLY DIFFERENT



Still building quality narrowboats since 1980 Complete service on one site from bottom plate to the last brushstroke....

NEW BOATS
BROKERAGE
+
BOAT LENGTHENING
REBOTTOMING/
REPLATING
+
Hull blacking.
Repaints.
Engine service.
Diesel, Chandlery.
Pump out etc.

Longport Wharf, Stoke on Trent, Staffs ST6 4NB
Tel: (01782) 813831
www.stokeboats.co.uk email: office@stokeboats.co.uk

Please send contributions for the next issue to me, Margaret English, by e-mail to margaretelm@hotmail.com, by post, or by hand. Remember, this is *your* magazine. Contributions from the South especially welcome!

Last date for inclusion in the September/October edition is **01/09/2019**

Due to popular demand.....

For the coming season , all events **EXCEPT FRIDAY 18TH OCTOBER**
(*SEE BELOW*) will continue to be held in the upstairs room at:

**Red Bull Public House
Congleton Road South,
Stoke-on-Trent
ST7 3AJ**



***Talks are 7.30 for 8.00pm
(Get a drink and come on
upstairs!)***

***For further information
contact: Gillian Watson
01606 835 606***

There is no charge for attending and no need to be a member. Gillian recommends the food– she eats there before every talk!

Some speakers will bring objects or products to be viewed or bought– we positively encourage interaction!

The room will be open from 7.30pm, talks start at 8.00pm in two forty minute parts with a comfort break (and raffle) between.

Friday 18th October

The landlord at Red Bull apologises profusely that the pub will be closed for refurbishment for the week of our talk (and for a little while afterwards). A new venue has had to be found for this meeting only.

See next page-

Venue for this meeting only!

**Kidsgrove Town Hall
(also known as Victoria Hall)
Liverpool Rod
Kidsgrove
ST7 4EL**

Parking down right-hand side or on street.

Billinge Flashes– A brine run with an ice age legacy.

Ros Todhunter.

Melting glaciers and salt extraction have left their mark on the T&M canal at Billinge Flashes and The Lion Salt works in Northwich, sites of past and (highly probable) future bank collapses.

Back to Red Bull Public House

Friday 15th November

Down the Tidal Severn by Narrowboat

Patrick Marks

Sharpness to Portishead with a pilot, Followed by ‘bonus footage’ from Portishead to Briston under a famous bridge.

Friday 17th January 2020

Down South

Phil Clayton

London, River Thames, Lee and Stort and River Wey

Friday 21st February 2020

Women and Children living and working on canal boats

Bill Walker

Bill will take us through the significant changes experienced by women and children when they had to leave their cottages and live on the boats instead.

Friday 21st March 2020

CRT– speaker TBA



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 Lawson
07940 878923 johnandsandra@uwclub.net

Finishing Touches– Lock 49



Pictures by John Lawson



.....and it was a glorious day!



*Lock 50 prepared and painted-
With special attention to wet paint signs!*



*A couple of years ago the Cheshire Locks team (joint with IWA) grumbled about leaving their painting on a dry day to plant 'whips' (rooted hedge plants) in the hedge below Red Bull.
It turned out to be worth it as they are growing well!*



Photo by John Lawson

Welcome to New Members

**Mr John Hall
of
Sandbach**

**Mr N. Abbott
of
Hartford, Northwich**

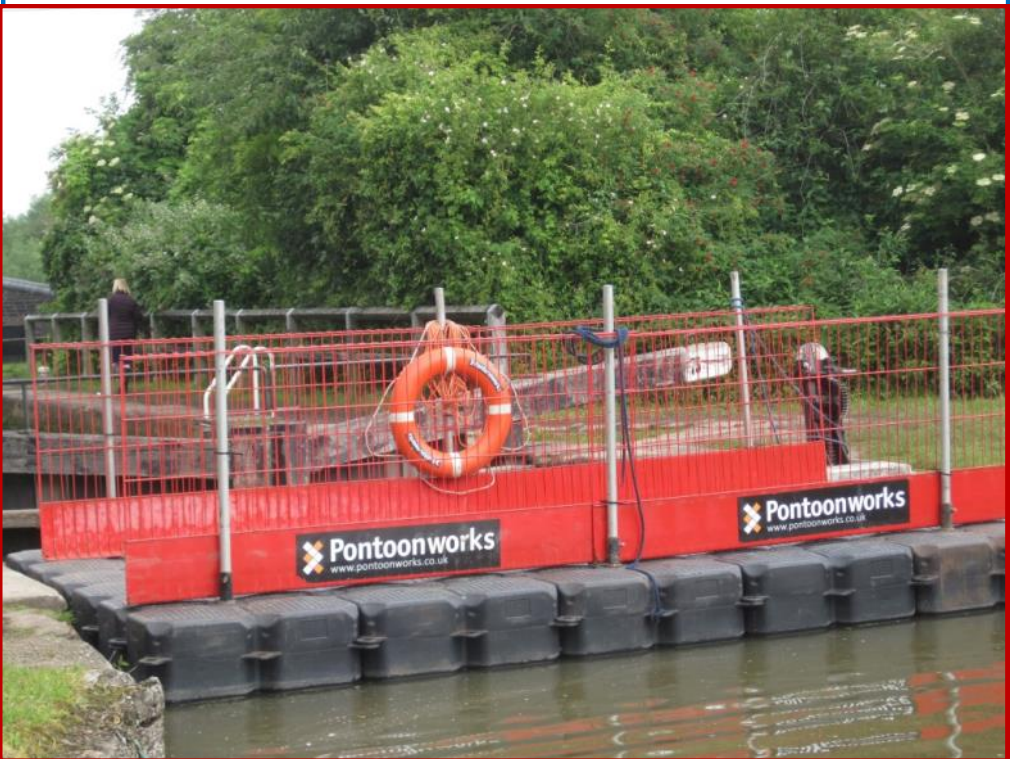


We hope you enjoy being members of the society

More on Big Lock Tail Bridge

Remember the closure of Big Lock tail bridge over safety issues? Apparently a temporary scaffolding bridge was considered (as there are no immediate plans for repair), but this was rejected as the bridge is a heritage structure.

Accordingly, for Middlewich Folk and Boat Festival, a pontoon bridge was provided which could be pulled out of the way when a boat needed to pass. This was manned by CRT and was not operational at night. It was removed immediately after the festival.



I make no comment on the needs of boaters!

Margaret English

For our friends in the South.....

Lichfield IWA July and September

Sunday 28th July 2018 – ‘Lock Wind’ at Barton Turn Lock. Our annual fundraising and social event on the Trent & Mersey Canal, from 10 am to 4 pm. Help from experienced lock users will be appreciated to assist boaters through this very busy lock, talk to them about IWA and hopefully receive lots of donations. We also need help with the sales stand and several volunteers to bake us some home-made cakes, which always sell well. We will have a small gazebo beside the lock with refreshments available, and a barbecue at 4 pm outside the pub for those taking part. If you can assist on site, even if only for a couple of hours, or with baking, please contact Helen Whitehouse as soon as possible at helen.whitehouse@waterways.org.uk or on 01543 491161.

Thursday 5th September 2019 – Shuttington and the Coventry Canal Walk. This is an easy 5 mile walk with 2 stiles across farmland, on pavements, and along a towpath. Leaving the car park we head downhill towards Shuttington bridge, and take a recently signposted path past Alvecote Pools Nature Reserve to join the Coventry Canal at Robey's Lane. We then head west along the tow path and leave it at the skew bridge, now heading north towards Amington Hall Farm. We soon change direction slightly to approach Statfold Farm. This enterprising business has its own private railway, which is open to the public on selected weekends. We continue south-eastwards along a well-defined track, which marks the boundary between Warwickshire and Staffordshire. At a point marked as Laundry Cottages (now demolished) we head uphill back to our starting point. Meet 10:15 for a 10:30 start in the car park of The Wolferstan Arms, Main Road, Shuttington, Warks. B79 0DP. Contact Clive Walker on 07866 201873 or clive.walker@waterways.org.uk .

Wednesday 18th September 2019 – “A Narrowboat on the Trent”. An illustrated talk by John Lower. Following his well-received talk on the Chesterfield Canal, John returns to tell us about how we go about accessing it, based on his personal experience of 40 years boating on the River Trent. 7.15 for 7.30 pm at Martin Heath Hall, Christchurch Lane (off Walsall Road), Lichfield, WS13 8AY.

Farm Shop News from Great Haywood

The canalside farm at Great Haywood has recently re-opened following expansion to include a new bakery and production kitchen. The family-run farm is alongside the Trent & Mersey Canal and its farm shop has delighted boaters and locals alike for eight years. Owners Chris and Wendy Barton felt that improvements were now needed.

The shop is now a third larger and will make more products on site, as well as enlarging the delicatessen and having a new gift section. Artisan baker Karl Bowyer has also been recruited to make speciality breads and strawberry tarts from the farm's canalside strawberry beds.

The farm opened its café five years ago and both shop and café have gone from strength to strength. Its aim has always been to source high quality local food and drink while continuing to produce their own fruit, vegetables and bedding plants on the farm- and of course, those famous strawberries!

Source: Towpath Talk, June 2019



Farm shop from T&M

www.canalsidefarm.co.uk

TRENT AND MERSEY CANAL SOCIETY

Registered Charity No:326498.
Registered Office: 10 Long Lane, Middlewich, CW10 0BL
Telephone: 01606 834471

OFFICERS

PATRON	Ian Dudson CBE, KSt.J Lord-Lieutenant of Staffordshire
VICE-PRESIDENTS	Steve Guest, Malcolm Gray, Roger Davies-Lee
CHAIRMAN	Roger Evans, 10 Long Lane, Middlewich, CW10 0BL Tel:01606 834471 Email: rogermartinevans@hotmail.com <i>See also Treasurer</i>
DEPUTY CHAIRMAN AND SOCIAL EVENTS OFFICER	Gillian Watson, St. Anns House, 107 St Ann's Road, Middlewich, Cheshire, CW10 0AA Tel:01606-835606 Email:gillian.watson@me.com
MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY, SECRETARY AND GRAND TRUNK EDITOR	Margaret English, 10 Long Lane, Middlewich, Cheshire, CW10 0BL Tel: 01606-834471 Email:margaretetlm@hotmail.com
COMMITTEE MEMBER	John Tackley, River View, Leigh's Brow, Barnton, Northwich, CW8 4HT Tel: 01606 76204 Email jtackley@hotmail.com
TREASURER	Roger Evans, 10 Long Lane Middlewich, CW10 0BL Tel:01606 834471 Email: rogermartinevans@hotmail.com
MINUTES SECRETARY	Paula Jackson, 37 Weaverham Road, Sandiway CW8 2NJ Tel: 07740356286 Email paula.dreamcatcher@hotmail.co.uk
BURSLEM PORT REPRESENTATIVE	David Dumbelton, 32 The Lea, Trentham, Stoke on Trent, ST4 8DY Tel: 01782-641765, Email:david.dumbelton@gmail.com



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

Bringing Boats Back to Burslem



**New finger post directional sign
To Harecastle Tunnel**

Photo John Lawson