

# GRAND TRUNK



**September/October 2019**

[www.trentandmerseycanalsociety.org.uk](http://www.trentandmerseycanalsociety.org.uk)

## Chairman's Bit

The Charity Commission have now replied to me saying “Due to the charity’s income being under £5,000 you do not currently meet the minimum requirements for registration as a charity so that is why the system will not let you complete the form.” They do however go on to say “If the charity established by the Constitution is to remain active, and although this charity does not meet the minimum requirements for registration with the Commission, the trustees can still register with Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs which will allow the charity to receive the benefits for being a charity.”



Basically, we can't be a registered charity with the Charity Commission, but we can still claim Gift Aid provided we register with HMRC. The trustees do indeed “wish the new (unregistered) charity to remain active”, so we will close down the old charity and register the new one with HMRC.

So far I have successfully closed down (dissolved) the old (registered) charity 326498 with the Charity Commission, and have asked HMRC to remove it from their records too (having first successfully claimed Gift Aid up to the end of June). Once we have confirmation from HMRC that they have removed the old charity, then we will request them to register the new one, so that we can claim Gift Aid in future.

What a palaver !!! Hopefully it will all be sorted soon ...

Elsewhere in Grand Trunk you will see reminders of our new season of talks. Don't forget that the first talk (in October) is at Kidsgrove Town Hall, but that future talks (from November) will be at Red Bull as usual.

Also please note that Gillian has had to postpone her planned season of walks along our canal.

Finally, don't forget that our Christmas Meal will be at Red Bull on December 6th. More details will be in the next issue.

## Editorial

Hello everybody!

I am writing this while travelling home from this year's Festival of Water at Waltham Abbey. We had a fantastic trip down and my worries about travelling through London turned out to be quite unfounded. There are indeed a great many boats in and around London and the facilities are stretched to the limit. However, lock landing spaces are honoured and all the boaters we met were friendly, polite and helpful (if a little dippy and sometimes unsure what they were doing!).

Unfortunately the festival was a little disappointing. We all worked very hard and the site was ready in good time *but* the weather turned hot! Too hot to walk around a field and eat baked potatoes, too hot for the giant water balls to function, and the public either stayed at home in their gardens or went to the seaside.

After the festival we sailed down to Limehouse and enjoyed an escorted cruise through the Thames Flood Barrier and back up to Brentford. A report of this experience is on pages 10 and 11.

Now we are homeward bound the weather has turned cold. Not a problem on the Grand Union, where the double locks keep us warm (but water levels are still an issue), although I was caught one chilly morning steering with a hot water bottle on my knee. We got rather damp on the shallow and winding Northern Stratford and our prodigal cat is complaining about the number of bicycle monsters invading his towpath.

Finally, could I make a heartfelt plea for articles and news for this magazine– let's make the Christmas issue really special!



Cover picture: vegetation on Stoke Locks Gate , taken by Ed.

## **Winter Stoppages on T&M**

### ***Lock 75, Big Lock, Middlewich, Trent & Mersey Canal***

Starts: 06/01/2020 08:00

Ends: 31/01/2020 16:00 inclusive

Type: Navigation Closure

Reason: Repair

Towpath closed? No

Repair leakage through the bottom gate cill. Repair gate planking and forebay chamber masonry.

### ***Between Bridge 154 and Bridge 151A, Wheelock, Trent & Mersey Canal***

Starts: 25/11/2019 08:00

Ends: 13/12/2019 16:00 inclusive

Type: Navigation Closure

Reason: Repair

Towpath closed? No

A closure is required to carry out weir repairs and repairs to the washwall in the Wheelock area.

### ***Lock 22, Haywood Lock, Great Haywood, Trent & Mersey Canal***

Starts: 04/11/2019 08:00

Ends: 22/11/2019 16:00 inclusive

Type: Navigation Closure

Reason: Repair

Towpath closed? No

A stoppage is required to carry out gate, cill and balance beam repairs.

### ***Lock 62, Pavilion Lock (Off Side), Malkins Bank, Trent & Mersey Canal***

Starts: 04/11/2019 08:00

Ends: 29/11/2019 16:00 inclusive

Type: Navigation Closure

Reason: Repair

Towpath closed? No

A closure is required for the replacement of the head gate.

***Lock 70, south of Middlewich, Trent & Mersey Canal***

Starts: 04/11/2019 08:00

Ends: 22/11/2019 16:00 inclusive

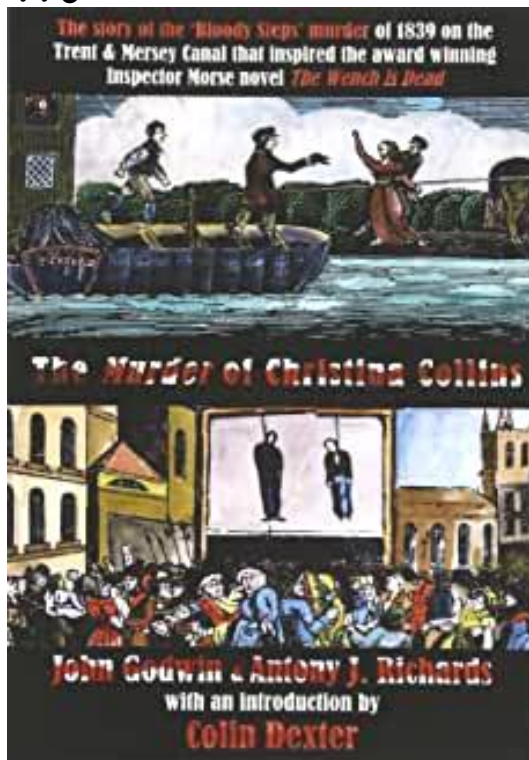
Type: Navigation Closure

Reason: Repair

Towpath closed? No

A closure is required to replace missing brickwork in the lock chamber.

***Happy Halloween*** (see page 20/21)!



**See page  
21!**

The Murder of Christina Collins Paperback – 21 Feb 2011  
by John Godwin (Author), Antony J. Richards (Author), Colin Dexter  
(Introduction)

## A canal-themed housing estate in Stone

A few years ago a new housing development, The Whitebridge Estate, was built on the offside of the T&M immediately north of Stone and sited below the bottom lock of the Meaford flight. It was decided that the streets should be named on a canal theme and so the following list was created:

**Navigation Loop** – the main circular route through the estate

**Brindley Close, Bentley Rise and Darwin Close** – the first obviously connected to James Brindley and the other two to Thomas Bentley and Erasmus Darwin, Wedgwood's mates who helped get the canal proposals through Parliament.

**Harecastle Rise, Saltersford Rise and Barnton Edge** – the tunnels, obviously.

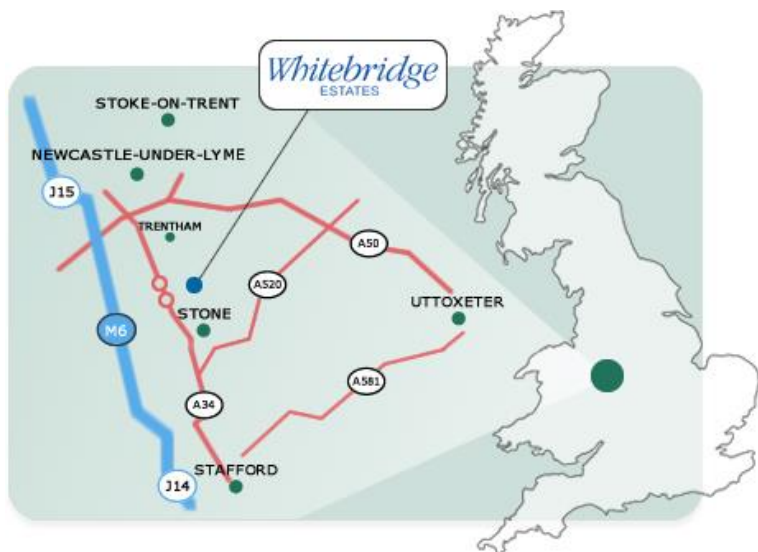
**Anderton Way** – to give the place a lift.

**Rangeley View and Dixon Close** – Stone-based manufacturers of the mile posts, later called Rangeley and Diggles!

**Rudyard Close** – a prime source of water.

There may be other names and I'll be on the lookout for Wyatt Way, if the estate gets developed further and more modern names are needed

*David Dumbelton*



Based on information contained in the article The Canal Heritage of Whitebridge in the Summer 2019 issue of the Stone and Eccleshall Gazette and written by Philip Leason MBE.



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*Another Towpath Reflections from the past.....*

Sunday morning dawned grey and chilly in Barnton, and a stiff breeze ruffled the water of the canal uninvitingly. Eight thirty came and 'Kinver' was gently ticking over and warming up the engine room.

Soon Val and myself, four bleary eyed friends and an eager dog were clambering aboard laden with garden rakes, 'welly' boots, rubber gloves, magnets and a whole 'ruck' of black poly bags, and most importantly a goodly supply of victuals. We cast off, gently easing the throttle forward and with a turbulence on the water we slipped away and within a few minutes were entering the gloomy portal of Barnton Tunnel.

Where were we going? What was it all about? To the uninitiated we were off on what is already becoming something of a tradition—the Trent and Mersey Canal Society's annual 'Litter Pick' canal spring clean.



Our destination was Preston Brook where we were to start our section of the clean up. The previous year's event was thoroughly enjoyed by all the members of our little band. The weather had been perfect, the scenery enchanting, the company congenial - and the litter came thick and fast.

By lunchtime we were famished - something we put down to exercise and fresh air.

Well, the food - the wine and the conversation mingled pleasantly, So much so we could have remained there all afternoon, but with half our stretch still to do we had to 'press on'. By the time we reached Saltersford Tunnel the roof was piled high and we were just able to squeeze through.

Well, that was last year. Would the magic work again this year? We would soon find out! As we turned the boat at Dutton stop lock and brought out the rubbish bags the sun emerged from behind a cloud, the wind seemed to have dropped, and I knew all would be well.



Once again the debris was raked out from under hedges, from behind trees, and out from amongst long dead grass and reeds. Even our canine assistant joined in the spirit of the event by diving and retrieving floating sticks and branches and the odd plastic bottle from the cut. Lunch time arrived and once again a combination of fresh air, good food and good company prolonged our stay.

The afternoon brought a steady stream of man's carelessly cast away unwanted junk, and on arriving at Saltersford we were able to deposit a whole boat load of rubbish in the skip kindly provided by B.W. On arriving home we just had time to shower and change before leaving for our get together at Winnington Rec.

Throughout the winter period the thought of rubbish was seldom far from my mind whilst at home. Every time I go out onto the towpath I am greeted by the sight of all manner of junk cascading down between the trees in the steep wooded canal bank opposite. This is all the discarded belongings of certain Barnton residents who have developed a nasty habit of tossing their rubbish over the garden fence - 'out of sight' out of mind! seems to be their motto.

However, Mother Nature is once again coming to the rescue, albeit temporarily. Slowly but surely a mantle of greenery will spread and blot out the offending view. This is especially apparent at the moment on the steep bank on the towpath side where an all enveloping carpet of green spear shaped leaves has suddenly appeared covering large areas of the bank. Bruise the leaves and a strong onion smell pervades the air. The leaves are of the rampion or wild garlic and very shortly the area will be clothed with a mass of white flowers.

The towpath has dried out now and the canal side grass has sprung up lush and emerald green. I think March and April see a greater transformation than any other period in the calendar. From winters gloom to the promise of Spring in a few short weeks.

Peter Sibley

*Picture from Wikipedia*

## Thames Adventure

After the Festival of Water we decided in a moment of weakness to join a convoy of narrowboats going from Limehouse to Margaretness, below the Thames flood barrier (led by the St Pancras Cruising Club)- it seemed like a good idea at the time!

We had a little time to spare on the way to the docks, so we explored some of the Bow Back Rivers. We circumnavigated the Olympic Stadium not once, but twice, taking note that any attempt to stop or moor was punishable by a fine of £150.00. We had a splendid view of Amish Kapoor's controversial Olympic sculpture, which we photographed from every angle. On the second pass we were lucky enough to be locked through Carpenter's Lock with its radial gate.



Looking back, we saw the other boats awaiting this experience strung out across the river because they dared not moor!

Fortified by this side trip we arrived at Limehouse and attended the compulsory briefing. I was quite calm up to this point, but we were advised in detail of a great many things which could happen if we forgot our complicated instructions. We could be stopped and searched by the river police at any time, we could run aground, hit a wall, be swamped by faster vessels, be arrested (or shot) if we deviated from our course. We retired to bed in trepidation, ready to lock down into the ebb tide at 5am (use navigation lights, blast your horn on entering the river and remember you will heel over as you turn).

We duly joined the river without incident and made our way over to the right as instructed (and, yes, we did tip alarmingly). The ferries and speedboats were still in bed and the Thames was flat calm. We avoided the shallows around the O2 dome, kept to the correct side of the buoys, passed the Woolwich Ferry and headed for the barrier in a neat line just as dawn was breaking. I don't think I will ever see another sunrise like that! A beam of light

shone down through the open barrier gate like Stonehenge. We were given permission to cross the barrier and carried on down to Margaretness.



Now for the hard part, we had to idle in the water until the tide turned (and eat breakfast) and return upriver on the upcoming tide. The huge push-tugs were now working and the ferries were in full swing. As we passed Limehouse the mighty river was churned up by

speedboats, tourist trips, ferries and the harbour police. Our little convoy bucked and rolled, at the mercy of huge washes. Our front deck was awash and John (who was sitting there) was soaked to the skin. We hung on and kept going through all those famous bridges. We managed to avoid being shot for infringement of the exclusion zones around The Houses of Parliament and the MI5 building, and the river calmed down as we left the tourist zone.



We arrived at Brentford in good time to lock up from the river at the right state of the tide and felt very brave and proud of ourselves indeed.

*Margaret English*

***Vintage mechanical novelties and devices are latest fun attraction at  
Northwich's award-winning Anderton Boat Lift***

On Saturday 7 September, the Anderton Boat Lift opened an exciting new addition to its free interactive exhibition area – a ‘Novelty-orium’ - comprising 22 fun, vintage machines and novelty amusements dating from the early 1900s – 1940s. The games on display include a beach-themed game of Carousel as well as Gypsy Fortune, Bullion and Shoot. Skilfully brought back to full working life, these coin-operated machines can be used for just £2 for ten tokens. These nostalgic machines are intended as amusements only and no prizes are given.

The Anderton Boat Lift, owned by the Canal & River Trust charity, is free to enter, including its exhibition area, grounds and waterways-themed play area. Charges only apply if visitors want to enjoy a boat trip through the lift or along the River Weaver.

This quirky and fun collection of mechanical amusements allow visitors to take a fascinating journey into the past, to a time before computer games and hand-held consoles. Visitors will be transported back to a time when people were delighted by Shoot, a game of skill, where getting the ball in the goal was the simple aim. Nostalgic games like Winning Cups and Jack Pot, Gypsy Fortune, Tip ‘em off, Bullion, Jack Pot and Extra Win are other early examples of amusements that entertained and amazed generations from start of the last century.



All exhibits are for amusement only and the old pennies are sold as valueless tokens and cannot be exchanged for cash.

*Press release*

## Proposed walks on the Trent & Mersey Canal

I hope that this does not disappoint too many of you, the walks will not commence in October 2019 as planned, but may be re-timetabled for the spring.

**I will let you know if a revised timetable is planned for 2020.**



*Gillian Watson*

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Please send contributions for the next issue to me, Margaret English, by e-mail to [margaretelm@hotmail.com](mailto: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 November/December edition is **01/11/2019**



***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 at rear, 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 Bristol 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](mailto:johnandsandra@uwclub.net)**

## Cheshire Locks

The work party on 15th August enjoyed another fine day. Five volunteers completed the finishing touches to the single Lock 51 and the balance beam numbers were added by Dave Sproson and John Lawson the following week. The team then moved down to the twin lock No. 52 to continue preparation work on the bottom gates and rails, paddle gear and strapping posts to enable a coat of paint to be applied in the afternoon. Some vegetation cut back on the offside and clearance on the quadrants also.



Preparing  
Lock 52



Lock 51  
Finished

*John Lawson*

## Alternative Cook (Jennifer Thomas)

*From Grand Trunk March/April 1995*

*In honour of another canal-The Grand in Ireland, here's a special for St. Patrick's Day:*

**Grand Lamb Stew-** and would you believe it starts in the hedgerow?

The tips of young nettles are what you are looking for and the 2oz you need will pack into a tumbler but won't sting you. Wash them and finely chop them, just as you would parsley. Pop them in a casserole (or slow cooker) with a mix of chopped vegetables- 1 large onion, 3 carrots, some celery and 4 potatoes cut into rough cubes. Cube 1lb of meat from the shoulder of lamb and seal in a little hot fat, then drain and lay on top of the vegetables. Add 1 tablespoon each of chopped parsley and thyme with a little rosemary and a sprinkling of freshly ground salt and pepper.

Make up 1.5 pints of stock (use a cube), bring it to the boil and pour over the ingredients. Pop into the oven and cook in your normal way for about 2 hours. You can put in some jacket potatoes at the same time to mop up the lovely gravy.

In late spring, pick a head of fully opened elderflower on a sunny day (this ensures that the nectar is flowing and this is what you need). Take a bottle of cheap white plonk, apple juice, or even a sweet cider- whichever you prefer- and drink about half a glass. Now you've room to stuff in the flowerhead. Replace cap and leave it at room temperature until 2 hours before you want it. It must have 2 hours in the fridge before you serve it. You'll be amazed at the Muscat grape qualities of taste you're drinking. If there's any left over, either decant it or remove the flowerhead- its very easy to impress guests with this.

English spring lamb will be at its best from May to July. If you find the traditional mint sauce rather strong, use a mix of white wine vinegar and water which will not overpower the fresh mint.

If you want to be ambitious, ask your butcher to bone out a shoulder of lamb for you and then make an interesting stuffing of chopped dried apricots, fresh basil, lemon and breadcrumbs bound together with an egg. Pack



this into the joint. Either roll it and tie it or skewer it into stability. Simply roast in the usual way, but slice to serve.



If you prefer to keep the shoulder in more traditional shape, but still fancy a change, roast it in this unusual way: Cover the top with a thin cover of redcurrant jelly and pour the juice of a large orange over it - you don't need any fat at all. Cover with foil and roast as usual. Baste after 45 minutes and add more juice if necessary. Remove foil for the last 30 minutes. You won't need mint sauce with this version, but do use the juices as a gravy.

## **Welcome to New Members**

**Mr Ian Dethridge**  
*Of*  
**Flimwell, East Sussex**

**Adrian and Susan Featherstone**  
*Of*  
**Derby**



*We hope you enjoy being members of the society*

## *Scarey Trent & Mersey Stories for Halloween*

### *Hear echoes of a killing at Kidsgrove*

The story of the Kidsgrove Boggart involves a young lady Kit Crewbucket, whose husband had been offered a job in one of England's growing cities that meant obtaining lodgings. After a few weeks he wrote to his wife asking her to join him and to bring all their possessions. It is not known for certain why the young lady was in Kidsgrove, possibly the boat that had conveyed her there had reached its destination and was returning to its point of departure. That might help to explain why she went into a local pub in an attempt to find a crew that would be willing to convey both her and her possessions.

Having secured a passage she and the crew of three set off on their journey. As was the usual practice, two members of the crew took the boat through the tunnel while the third led the horse over the hill.

There appear to be two versions of the story. The first is that once inside the tunnel curiosity got the better of the two crew members and they murdered their passenger in the hope of finding items of value among her belongings. The second is that they attempted to rape her and in the struggle she slipped from the boat which decapitated her against the tunnel wall.

Whatever version of events happened, they decided that the most convenient place to dispose of the body was in the tunnel itself. They hid her body in the underground culvert to Goldenhill Colliery, known as Gilbert's Hole.

When the lady failed to reach her destination suspicions arose and a search was made. Retracing her journey, her decapitated remains were discovered where it had been left. Her head was never found which is why the apparition is supposed to be headless. The crew were found guilty and sentenced to death. It was shortly afterwards that locals began glimpsing the figure of a headless woman in the tunnel, around the canal basin and in the adjoining woodland uttering piercing screams.



*Picture courtesy Stoke Sentinel*

### ***Beware the blood stained steps at Brindley Bank***

Christina Collins is reputed to be the first recorded murder on the cut by working boatmen. She had been on her way from Liverpool to London to join her husband, Robert, and had taken paid passage on a working boat. Two of the boatmen were alleged to have raped and murdered her. Her body was found in the canal at Brindley Bank on 15 June 1839, and taken up the steps nearby to the "Talbot Inn"; they are still known locally as the "bloody steps". The boatmen, James Owen and George Thomas (alias Dobell), were hanged on 11 April 1840 for the murder - 10,000 people allegedly turned out to witness the event.

Christina's gravestone is still visible in the graveyard of St Augustine's Church. There is a monument and small memorial garden in Stone at the tail of "Yard Lock" (28) (Workhouse Bridge 94) where she initially reported to Pickford's the fact she was not happy with her situation aboard the boat. She was allegedly last seen alive at Hoo Mill Lock .

The incident was the inspiration for an "Inspector Morse" episode entitled "The Wench is Dead".

*Www.paws4thoiught*

## Lichfield IWA Meetings

**Saturday & Sunday 21st-22nd September 2019** - Huddlesford Heritage Gathering. The bi-annual Lichfield & Hatherton Canals Restoration Trust festival will be held at the usual venue of Huddlesford Junction in association with Lichfield Cruising Club. IWA Lichfield Branch will have a stand there and volunteers to assist in manning it will be most welcome. Contact Helen Whitehouse at [helen.whitehouse@waterways.org.uk](mailto:helen.whitehouse@waterways.org.uk) or on 01543 491161 if you can help

**Wednesday 16th October 2019** – Cromford Canal: Planning for Restoration. An illustrated talk by George Rogers, Strategic Restoration Committee Chairman of The Friends of The Cromford Canal, looking at a mix of current and future restoration issues. 7.15 for 7.30 pm at Martin Heath Hall, Christchurch Lane (off Walsall Road), Lichfield, WS13 8AY.

**Thursday 14th November 2019** - Curdworth and Birmingham & Fazeley Canal Walk. This is an easy 5½ mile walk across farmland, on footpaths, quiet country lanes and the canal towing path. There are no stiles. Meet 10:15 for a 10:30 am start in the car park of The White Horse, Kingsbury Road, Curdworth, Sutton Coldfield, B76 9DS. Leaving the car park we walk in a westerly direction as far as Broad Bulk Bridge, at which point we leave the canal and head slightly uphill towards Wiggin Hill Cottages. We follow the quiet road towards Over Green. Passing the Cock Inn, we continue in a northerly direction towards Grove End, where we pick up a route towards the pretty village of Wishaw. A kissing gate near Rookery Cottages leads us to a footpath that will take us back to the canal at Baylis's Bridge. Walking on historic ridged brick horse treads we pass through the short tunnel at Curdworth and return to the pub for refreshment. Contact Clive Walker on 07866 201873 or [clive.walker@waterways.org.uk](mailto:clive.walker@waterways.org.uk)

**Wednesday 20th November 2019** – “Connections: South Staffordshire Railway, Rail and Canals”. An illustrated talk by Ian Pell, who has extensively researched the connections between this local railway and the canals. 7.15 for 7.30 pm at Martin Heath Hall, Christchurch Lane (off Walsall Road), Lichfield, WS13 8AY.

# TRENT AND MERSEY CANAL SOCIETY

Registered Office: 10 Long Lane, Middlewich, CW10 0BL  
Telephone: 01606 834471

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MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY, SECRETARY AND GRAND TRUNK EDITOR	Margaret English, 10 Long Lane, Middlewich, Cheshire, <b>CW10 0BL</b> Tel: 01606-834471 Email:margaretetlm@hotmail.com
COMMITTEE MEMBER	John Tackley, River View, Leigh's Brow, Barnton, Northwich, <b>CW8 4HT</b> Tel: 01606 76204 Email jtackley@hotmail.com
TREASURER	Roger Evans, 10 Long Lane Middlewich, <b>CW10 0BL</b> Tel:01606 834471 Email: rogermartinevans@hotmail.com
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*The Trent & Mersey Canal Society is proud to  
support Burslem Port*

**Bringing Boats Back to Burslem**



## Lucky Ducklings

No real evidence these are T&M ducklings, but I loved the story!.....*Ed*



TRAFFIC was halted temporarily on the M6 this morning as a string of ducklings crossed the motorway.

The ducklings found themselves dodging motorists between Junction 19 for Knutsford and Northwich, and Junction 18 for Middlewich and Holmes Chapel shortly after 8am, with traffic coming to a stop to help them on their way.

Highways officers were sent to the scene on the Southbound carriageway and moved the ducklings on to a safe place.

Traffic is now moving freely after the disruption.

*10th August, Middlewich Guardian*