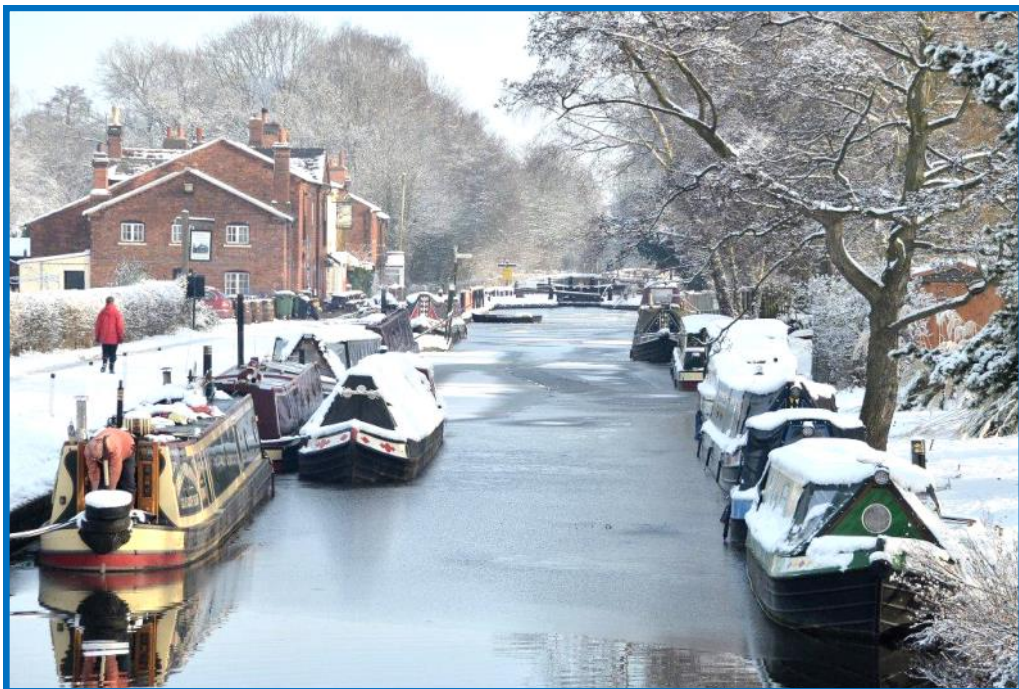


GRAND TRUNK



Fradley in Winter

Picture courtesy of Waterway Images



January/February 2016

www.trentandmerseycanalsociety.co.uk

Chairman's Bit

Over New Year we cruised to Llangollen (and back). Very enjoyable despite the almost constant rain. We were very surprised to find that Tilstock Park Lift Bridge No 42 (the “Green” one) now needs an anti-vandal key to unlock the winding gear, as we hadn’t heard about this change anywhere. I have asked CRT why the change wasn’t publicised (even on the stoppages website, like it was when they had to fit them to locks 35 and 40 on our canal), but have had no reply yet (*see below*).



I mentioned last time that 3 of the duplicate locks on the Cheshire Flight are currently closed temporarily, but that only lock 63 had made the winter stoppages list. I am pleased to report that one of them (lock 60) is now scheduled for a new bumper board on 18th January. Lock 65 is also scheduled for a new bumper board on 14th January. Hopefully this is a misprint as lock 66 (not 65) is the other currently closed lock.

This year sees the 250th anniversary of the start of work on our canal. On 26th July 1766 a ceremonial “Cutting of the First Sod” by Josiah Wedgwood took place “below Brownhills” with James Brindley in attendance. This was followed by a sheep-roast in Burslem market-place that afternoon; the lighting of a bonfire in front of Wedgwood’s house in the evening; and accompanied by “sundry other demonstrations of local rejoicing” according to Jean Lindsay’s history. Our committee are currently considering how best to celebrate the event. We have already heard that bell-ringers are hoping to ring peels at churches along the line of the canal, with a special one being rung from a mobile belfry at Middleport Pottery (under a mile from Brownhills) on Saturday 23rd July 2016 (3 days before the actual anniversary).

Bridge 42 is owned by Shropshire County Council.. Following reports in the local press and representations by CRT, the lock is to be removed!

.....***Ed***

Editorial



Hello everybody, and welcome to 2016!

This is turning into a year of very mixed emotions for us. Firstly, we were very sorry to hear of the death of Alan Bates, a stalwart member of the society. There are obituaries on pages 20 AND 24.

We set off for Llangollen just after Christmas in pouring rain (of course!). We were having a great time in spite of the wet clothes everywhere, when we discovered we had a very serious problem with a leaking water tank. Further investigation revealed rotting woodwork and bad rusting on the inside of the hull. We love *The Lady Margaret* dearly, but are now considering the possibility of replacing her— watch this space!

On the plus side, our family asked if we would like to join them for the second week of their holiday in La Palma (one of the smallest Canary Islands). I don't think there are any canals there, but as usual I'll try to find some water to photograph for you. We had already booked a trip to Norway in July, where we will be cruising on the Telemark Canal, definite photo opportunity there!

I am looking forward to seeing some of you at the exciting talks Gillian has planned for us in 2016, and it does look as if CRT are committed to solving some of the problems on the Cheshire Locks (see p.4). Our canal's 250th birthday should also be an exciting time, and of course we shall be working at Pelsall rally in Birmingham in July (probably limping there with an empty water tank and a bailing bucket).

Apologies for not including the promised pictures about the canalside development in Middlewich— not enough room! They will be in the next edition, honestly!

Thank you to everyone who contributed to the magazine in 2015— keep them coming!

Lock 63, Cheshire Flight

Those of you who boat (or walk) up the Cheshire Flight towards Harecastle will know that the towpath lock of the pair which comprise lock 63 has been closed for some considerable time.

The problem seemed to be that the structure was becoming unstable, but the actual constituents of the central island were unknown, and too much investigation might prejudice the remaining offside lock.

Research is ongoing during the winter stoppage season, and Canal & River Trust have kindly supplied us with some photos, so we can follow progress.



Piling is in progress from the top, down, so only the top metre of the island has been investigated. This has however revealed that the fill material in the upper 1m is basically general fill, no puddle clay as such, just a mixture of soil and rubble. This knowledge could be extremely important for the future if we assume that all the lock islands were constructed in the same way.



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Stoppage at Wychnor Lock

Wychnor is a bit of a different lock in that it is the entrance to the river section and has an unusual offside top paddle arrangement incorporating a flood paddle. The purpose of the current stoppage is the renovation of these.

It is also perhaps nice that the shed is being used. This 'shed' and the attached crane are of historical importance as it was a transhipment warehouse for goods from canal to road, particularly for fly-boats, and particularly for stuff heading south in the period before the Coventry connection was made.



The society (through Harry Arnold, as chairman at the time) was consulted about its history and conservation by the then BW Architect Peter White OBE who ensured that it was restored and renovated.

*Pictures courtesy of
Waterway Images.*

*Thanks to Harry Arnold for
passing this information on
to me.....Ed.*



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Talks for The T&MCS social calendar September 2015 to April 2016

The location is the Big Lock, run by Jackie and Ken Pickles. The Big Lock can be accessed on 2 levels.

If accessed from the road level you can collect your refreshment from the bar before going down stairs to the function room.

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, and we can arrange for your drinks to be collected from the bar for you.

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.

Where appropriate the speakers will bring associated objects and products to be viewed or bought. We positively encourage interaction.

To find Big Lock by road, the address is:

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

Friday 19th February 2016

An evening of historic films from the Caldon Canal

Caldon & Uttoxeter Canals Trust is pleased to present an evening of historic films about the Caldon Canal. This will include two films dating from before and after the restoration of the canal, Caldon Canal - A Cut Above The Rest (1970) and Caldon Canal Restoration (1978), as well as a number of short films from various sources including both TV and amateur footage.

Friday 18th March 2016

President travels from Etruria to London 2012

The steam-driven narrowboat *President* was built in 1909 for Fellows, Morton and Clayton, entered their carrying fleet in 1927, and was chosen to represent Staffordshire in the Thames Diamond Jubilee Pageant in 2012 to mark the 60th Anniversary of the Queen coming to the throne. The film shows the boat travelling from Etruria, to London and then in the pageant itself.

Friday 15th April 2016

The Restoration of Bugsworth Basin

We will see the various openings, the Basin's present success and conclude with "Where do we go from here"; followed by a short but very topical illustrated talk on the Brunner Mond Alkali Works at Malkins Bank and the limestone traffic between Bugsworth Basin and Malkins Bank.

***There are no new members to welcome
for this issue.***

***Does anyone have friends or relatives whose
New Year Resolution was to join a
Society?***

Tell them about us!



Fradley Swing Bridge

A few years ago on the Ashton Canal a girl lost her legs sitting on the end of a swing bridge as it was being closed. Following a review the Fradley swing bridge was identified as a safety hazard as, it appears, it was the only swing bridge on the system that wasn't locked and its lightweight construction could easily lead to misuse. In 2014 CRT engineering staff put up a notice on the bridge to the effect that in future the bridge would be locked. All passing boaters would have to unlock the bridge before passing through and lock it again afterwards.

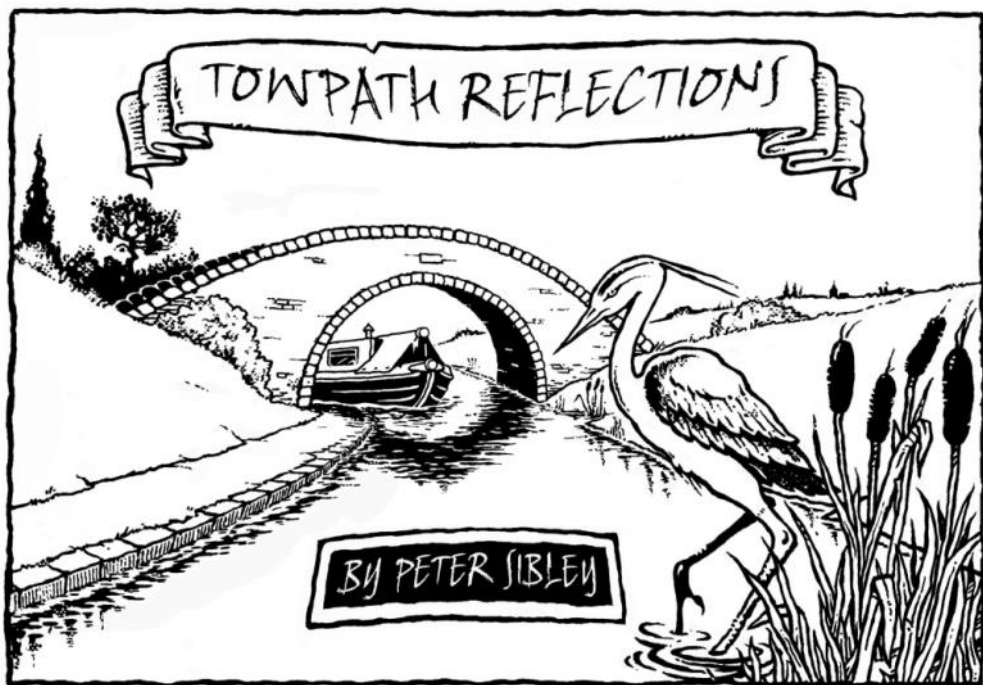
Fradley is the busiest junction on the system and during peak periods there can be queues of boats waiting to pass through. Making each boat lock and unlock the bridge would make this situation much worse, especially as there is very little space for boats to wait in the junction pound. Lichfield IWA raised this concern with CRT management who agreed. CRT have devised an alternative engineering solution that satisfies the safety concerns without unduly disrupting boat traffic. This involves putting a brake on the bridge pivot ensuring that the bridge can only swing slowly.



During last year several people have raised questions about the bridge's legal status (it isn't a public right of way) and whether it was needed at all. However the engineering solution removes the immediate relevance of the debate.

I am grateful to Mike Bending (Navigation Officer, Lichfield IWA) for this information.....Ed.

Photo courtesy of Waterway Images.



We left Val and Peter moored at the top of Bascote Locks.....

Friday 9th May.

We made an early start today. We thought that we we would get as much done as we could before the forecasted rain arrived. It was quite windy and that, combined with the rain, would not have made for pleasant cruising. We went through Itchington lock then the 1st Stockton locks when a boat appeared behind us. We waited for them at the 3rd lock then shared the locks together up to Calcutt. The weather by then had improved and the sun came out and no sign of the rain.

We had been told yesterday that Napton locks were out of action due to a collapsed wall at one of the locks. Apparently the locks had been closed for 5 days as a result. However the locks were supposed to reopen at 12 o'clock on Friday which meant that they would be reopened by the time we arrived. We pulled in for lunch at a pleasant spot overlooking a hillside field full of cattle and overlooked Napton windmill. Several boats came from the opposite direction which was a good sign indicating that the stoppage was over. After lunch we set off once more towards the start of Napton locks. Rounding the

bend we were confronted by a queue of 6 boats all waiting for the locks. It seems that only a few boats had come through when they had to close again whilst they moved the work boat and finished off the temporary repair. It was 2 hours later that we arrived at the first lock. Far more boats were waiting to come down. One lady said that they were 26th in the queue at one stage!

The affected lock was the 3rd lock up. It seems the wall that had collapsed was the sloping approach retaining wall to the lock. This had apparently weakened the lock wall itself and a heavy steel frame has been constructed at the lock entrance to strengthen and support the lock walls. This is a temporary repair that would have to suffice until the wall can be rebuilt during the winter stoppages programme. We finally reached the top of the flight at 6 o'clock but continued on to Marston Dole Lock before we could find a mooring.



Saturday 10th May.

It rained heavily during the night and we had another heavy shower whilst having breakfast. However it started to clear and the sun shone through shortly after we set off about 8am. There was a very blustery wind which was quite exhilarating as we negotiated the many twist and turns that the South Oxford is famous for. We had a brief respite from the wind as we went through Fenny Compton Tunnel - the tunnel that is now merely a pleasant wooded cutting as it was opened up in 1868. We stopped for lunch in a sheltered spot below Claydon Locks. After lunch the weather took a turn for the worse, alternating between burst of sunshine and sudden but short lived squally showers. We finally moored for night in a quiet sheltered spot just short of Banbury town centre at 6-15pm.

Sunday 11th May.

We stayed put on our mooring. The weather was gloomy and there was still a blustery wind. We went for stroll round Castle Quay shopping centre right on

the canalside. Tooley's Boatyard from which Tom Rolt set off on 'Cressy' and inspired the writing of his book 'Narrow Boat' is preserved in the centre of the development. There is a glazed covered bridge across the canal from the Tourist Information Centre to the museum, both of which are closed on Sundays. We went outside and wandered round the old town which has many old buildings and several old coaching inns.



There is a commemorative plaque in the market square just outside the Cornhill entrance to the shopping precinct denoting the site of the old Banbury cross which was destroyed by the Cromwellians. There is also a cast plaque with the old nursery rhyme "Ride a cock horse to Banbury Cross" emblazoned on it. A new market cross with a statue of Queen Victoria on it stands some distance away. I assume it was erected to commemorate the Queen's diamond jubilee. On the opposite side of the road is a statue of a horse with a fine lady in the saddle with lines from the nursery rhyme engraved round the base.

After lunch we went to Morrison's to replenish our supplies - our last chance before Oxford. We went back to the boat and I lit the stove to warm up Henry (tortoise) who being a cold blooded creature, needed the heat to wake him up. Valerie took the opportunity of cooking the evening meal on it. I found some more fallen branches in the adjacent wood and replenished our stock.

To be continued.....

Meanwhile, back in Northern France

We returned to France in our motorhome last June for 2 weeks in Normandy and it wasn't very long before we were walking by a waterway again. We were in the Department of Calvados and booked into the campsite at Ranville which was an ideal base for exploring the 8¾ mile long Canal Maritime de l'Orne. This canal runs from Caen where there are moorings for 92 boats in the St Pierre basin to Ouistreham where it joins the English Channel. The canal is still used by commercial vessels and there is a large quay with cranes at Blainville where wood from Africa is imported whilst iron, coal and cereals are loaded to be exported from this site.



We walked from our campsite and crossed the tidal River Orne which feeds the canal and we were soon at the bridge at Bénouville which took us over the canal. This is a rolling lift bridge and is the famous Pegasus Bridge. It was renamed after the 6th British Paratrooper Division that took control of it on 6th June 1944 - "Pegasus" being the emblem that British Paratrooper Divisions carry. The bridge was built in 1934 but was replaced in 1994 by a stronger bridge to take account of the volume of modern traffic and the original bridge is in the park of the Memorial Pegasus Museum. Next to the bridge are various World War 2 memorial sites including plaques where the two Hansa gliders landed on D-Day and on the opposite side of the canal is the first house that was liberated in France. Ranville, where we were staying, was the first village to be liberated although not much of the old village exists but in the centre is an immaculately kept British Military Cemetery where there are 2,562 War Graves.

We were lucky to see the Pegasus bridge being raised a number of times to



allow boats to pass and a couple of hundred yards from the bridge we saw a stone plaque marking the site where during the night of the 8th/9th of

June 1944 the first Bailey Pontoon bridge in France was built. We continued walking by the canal to Ouistreham and passed lots of wild orchids in flower and saw old photographs on an interpretation board of the steam-tram which ran next to the towpath in the 1890s.

By the 100 year old lighthouse at Ouistreham there are two locks which give access to the English Channel – one is 636 feet long and 57 feet wide and the other built in the 1920s when the canal was deepened is a massive 738 feet long and 93 feet wide. In the smaller lock there were lots of visiting boats as part of a weekend Maritime Festival including a variety of



old sailing craft, a military frigate and even a Viking longship. Trips on the old sailing boats on the canal were popular and other activities included Dragon Boat racing, kayaking, a model boat exhibition, free tasting of locally smoked mackerel and a grand firework display in the evening.

Annette & Terry
NB Emily and Steamboat
Sidney
Kennet & Avon Canal



Join Us on a Canal Work Party

Cheshire Locks, Trent & Mersey Canal Monthly work party on the third Thursday each month

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 4pm 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

Visiting Brindley's Grave

The celebration of James Brindley's 300th anniversary reminds me of a somewhat unusual T&MCS 'ritual'. Some members of the then committee met at Pat and Millie Osborn's house to plan one of our rallies and a mile-post unveiling (Burslem, May 1981) after which the subject of James Brindley's apparent small stature came up. Possibly because the present Etruria statue was under discussion.

Pat offered the opinion that Brindley must have been a short man as the stone slab covering his grave was not very long. He then asked had we actually seen this important historic site which was literally just up the road. As most of us hadn't, we set off in a convoy of cars, in pitch darkness, to remedy this situation.

Led by Pat, by the light of torches, in the graveyard we paid our homage to our late and possibly vertically challenged famous canal engineer. It was just fortunate that there were no police patrols about as they would never have believed what we were doing!



*Photo courtesy
of Waterway
Images*

Left to right are – Barbara Bridgewater, Millie Osborn, Gerry Harris, Ron Gerrard, Harold Potter, Rob Davies, Geoff Bridgewater and Pat Osborn.

NEW £10M LION SALT WORKS MUSEUM WELCOMES ITS 10,000TH PAYING VISITOR

The Lion Salt Works Museum, near Northwich in Cheshire, is proving a huge visitor success. Despite having been open for just 20 weeks, on Sunday 22nd October it welcomed its 10,000th paying visitor. One of the UK's newest visitor attractions, the unique site officially opened on 5 June, 2015. The Museum has fun, interactive and educational exhibits, including a dramatic sound and film exhibit and a 'subsiding house'. Restored with a generous grant of over £5m from the Heritage Lottery Fund, there is an exciting year-long programme of activities that can be found at westcheshiremuseums.co.uk.

Councillor Louise Gittins, Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure and Well-being at Cheshire West and Chester Council, said: "One of the reasons for the Museum's immediate success is that it appeals to a wide variety of people. Visitors delight in the interactive displays and enjoy learning more about salt – something all our bodies need to function properly. Other people are attracted by the 30-year restoration story and the buildings which are Grade II-listed and a Scheduled Ancient Monument.

"It is also a treasure trove for those who have a passion for industrial heritage and geology. *Located on the Trent & Mersey Canal* and having its own moorings and entrance directly from the canal, the Museum also attracts visitors passing on boats and narrowboats. The Museum also appeals to our youngest visitors for whom the specially-designed play area and butterfly garden are a ready-made area for having fun."

The Museum has a large conference room seating up to 150 and this has already hosted plays, meetings and conferences (including the Society AGM!). It is also available for wedding receptions.

For regular visitors to the Museum (an annual pass is available), the café has just launched a coffee loyalty card. For every eight coffees purchased, a ninth is absolutely free. For fans of Emma's new winter gingerbread latte this could be a particular bonus. Coffee loyalty cards are available at the café.

The Museum was restored over four years at a cost of over £10m by Cheshire West and Chester Council and the museum gives a fresh insight into the

story of salt and its significance to Cheshire and the UK. It is one of the last four historic open-pan salt-making sites in the world

The Lion Salt Works is located in the heart of the Cheshire countryside but is just over 20 miles from the centre of Manchester. It is well-served by rail (Northwich and Lostock Gralam stations), footpaths and boat. The Museum has plenty of free car parking space and visitors can visit the café, themed play area and established Butterfly Garden free of charge.

Visitor Admission prices to Lion Salt Works Museum

Adult £6.25 Concession £5.50

Child £4.00

Family ticket (adult and two children) £16.40

Family annual pass: £50.00

Other family and concessionary prices available

Free access to Café, Gift Shop, Butterfly Garden, Play Area and Car Park

Website: westcheshiremuseums.co.uk

Twitter @cwacmuseums Facebook: Weaver Hall Museum and Lion Salt Works



Children looking at model of salt pan

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

Obituary Alan Bates

Society members will be sad to hear that Alan Bates died on Christmas Day after fighting cancer for the last two years. Alan resigned his membership last April in view of his increasing health problems.

His wife Pauline, who nursed him through his illness died suddenly last year too. They will both be missed at the Southern End as they were popular active members, always turning up for Fradley Locking Week-ends and the Saturday night BBQ. They often attended boat rallies the shop attended and helped out as lunchtime shopkeepers.

Alan was Southern Work Officer for a while and did a lot of work on the Fradley and Shardlow cranes. Two more friends we've lost to the mists of time.

Malcolm Turner

There is an obituary of Alan by his son Steven on the back page.

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Boating Batey (Alan Bates)



If, in a dream, you stand outside the Pearly Gates.
Where Saint Peter patiently waits.
You may hear from a nearby cloud, noises, strange, and very loud.

A large gate closes with a mighty thud, and water gushes as in a flood.
Paddles rise, pawls making a clatter, and an ancient diesel begins to chatter.

Then comes a clang, a hefty blow, and then a voice you think you know.
"Sorry mate I couldna stop, I must have summat round me prop".

"Who is that", you ask the Saint, "Oh Him", He says, leaning on his gate.
"He's a chap who conned his way in, with flat cap, windlass, and cheeky grin.

"He navigates now on Heaven's canals, visiting relations, and old pals".
"The Locks are easy, the water deep and clear, and all the Pubs dispense real beer".

"Not for him Eternal rest, but doing what he loved the best".
"Other folks are on clouds, floating, but you'll find that Batey's boating.

*Thanks to Steven Bates for sending me this poem, written by his father before
his illness became too advanced.....Ed*

Sweat-Shirts and Polo Shirts

To make your purchase, simply ring or e-mail Roger or Margaret (details on p.23) to arrange payment and postage.

The garments are navy with a society logo on the left-hand breast.

Sweat-shirt -Price £15 Stock sizes: S, M, L, XL,XXL

Polo-Shirt -Price £12 Stock sizes: M, L, XL,XXL

Lady-Fit -Price £11 (to clear) Stock sizes: S, M, L,XL

Fleecies!

We are now stocking navy fleecies with a full zip opening and the society logo— lovely and warm!

After a trial with a 'small', we are currently stocking small, medium large and XL. Sizes are generous and really need to be tried.

Price £25.00— The Society has decided to retail these at cost as they are quite expensive, but very nice!



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 March/April edition is 01/03/2016.

TRENT AND MERSEY CANAL SOCIETY

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

Bringing Boats Back to Burslem



Alan Bates
(T&M Member
1979-2014)

Alan sadly lost his long fought battle with cancer and passed peacefully away on the 26th December 2015.

Alan joined the Trent and Mersey Canal Society in 1979 and quickly got roped in by Harry Arnold into working on and maintaining the ex FMC Narrow boat Kangaroo which the society had on lease loan from BWB.

Alan and his son Steven and later Grandson quickly became involved in the main projects that the society were undertaking at the time i.e. the mile post campaign.

He took on the role of Work Party Officer from Bill Whitmore in the late 1980's until health problems caused him to give up this role in 2014.

Under Alan's leadership T&M members completed the following projects the reinstatement of the Horninglow Wharfside crane at the maintenance yard Fradley Junction, the refurbishment of the Shardlow Crane and the Swarkestone Crane, mooring rings at various locations from Derwent mouth to Trentham, canal side benches/ picnic tables and repainting/replacement of bridge numbers.

Alan also arranged with the Waterways Recovery Group for society members to undertake restoration work on other waterways i.e. the Montgomery, Stratford, Derby and Grantham canals many older members will have fond memories of these weekends away?

Alan with his late wife Pauline supported, on their narrow boat Alzark all the southern section events and events held by the Greyhound and Swarkestone boat clubs.

Alan will be sadly missed on the southern section of the Trent and Mersey he was a true gentleman of the cut.

Steven Bates.