

GRAND TRUNK



Frosty Autumn day on the Trent & Mersey



September/October 2016

www.trentandmerseycanalsociety.org.uk

Chairman's Bit

Somebody asked me why I was missing from last issue's cover photo taken at Middleport Pottery when we celebrated the 250th Anniversary of "cutting the first sod". The answer was very simple, if rather embarrassing. I set off, by car, from the centre of Birmingham 2½ hours before the ceremony. Plenty of time I thought for a drive of 50 miles which usually takes around an hour! However, unbeknownst to me, the Aston Expressway (A38M) was closed for repair that Saturday, so it took me 1½ hours to



reach the M6 (instead of about 10 minutes); then the M6 had a big jam, so that the drive took 3 hours in total. In the end I only missed the ceremony by a mere 15 minutes as other (more important to the ceremony) people had been delayed too by the same M6 jam! Must be a moral there somewhere ...

Our talks season will have started by the time you get this issue with a double-header by a past chairman, Malcolm Turner, showing a film of an old society boat trip + a talk about a projected "fly" trip by NB Saturn from Ellesmere to Castlefield. Why am I telling you this as it will be too late for you to attend? Well, actually it is to encourage you to come along to our NEXT talk on 21st October by Richard Parry (chief executive of CRT). I'm a bit embarrassed (again) to have to admit that Margaret and I will be unable to attend his talk as, when I arranged an October holiday back in January, I forgot to work out when our talks would be! So please do come along and fill the room for Richard. That way I might feel a little less guilty!

I do plan to be at all our other events (unless I get something else wrong of course ...).

Don't worry, our usual exciting raffle and brand new calendars will be coming along without us!.....Ed.

Editorial

Welcome to Autumn! Our brand new calendars are ready and waiting for buyers (see p.21), and our exciting talks season is about to commence. If you can't find your card, details are on p.4/5). Also this Autumn, don't forget the amazing dog race night at Red Bull on 29th October (p.6).

We are just back from cruising to Pelsall on the BCN, where we worked (hard) at the Festival of Water. Nowadays the site is put up in 3 days and taken down in 2 (you may be surprised to learn that one of the few things I am really good at is putting up and taking down Heras fencing!). We nearly didn't get there, as we only got as far as the good old T&M in Middlewich before we realised our engine was not charging the battery. We pulled straight into King's Lock Boatyard and there was a three-hour delay while the electrics were sorted out! We still have to replace our engine mounts and repair the floor of the gas locker– I think we'll have *The Lady Margaret* gold plated next!

While we were moored at Pelsall, Aslan (our intrepid young cat) came in one morning without his collar, which sports a metal disc and expensive locating device. We used our handset to track down the collar, not in a small coppice where we expected to find it, but somewhere in the impenetrable corner of a resident's garden. At 11am we took time off from the WRG stall and knocked timorously on the front door. In common with everyone else we met, the resident gentleman was kind and helpful (phew). He even provided me with a hard hat and torch with which to enter the hedge! WE FOUND IT.



Just in case you think we are staying at home and taking up knitting now, at the beginning of October we are flying to Washington (D.C., not Tyne & Wear) in order to consume art and history, oh and I understand there is a canal in Georgetown which we will be investigating. With a bit of luck, there will be pictures in the next magazine.

T&MCS social calendar October 2016 to April 2017

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

Friday 21st October 2016

Canal & River Trust

Richard Parry, the Chief Executive of Canal & River Trust will present a general overview of the Trust's progress and plans.

Friday 18th November 2016

Canal Poetry

Jo Bell, the first UK Canal Laureate, is called 'one of the most exciting poets now writing' by the poet laureate, Carol Ann Duffy. A regular on BBC Radio 4 and 6 Music Live, she lives on her boat in Macclesfield and will be reading and talking about her work as a writer.

Friday 20th January 2017

From Lancashire to Yorkshire

Andrew Hemmings - In the 1950's Britain's waterways were still full of commercial traffic and lined with the mills, factories and ports of a then leading industrial nation. This was the era captured in the photographs of the Lytham Sea Cadets who ventured from the coast via the canals of Lancashire and Yorkshire in 1958 aboard Training Ship 'Queenborough'

Friday 17th February 2017

Waterways of the low countries - from small to large

John Pomfret - The development of waterways in Belgium and the Netherlands from the 13th century looking at a number of examples of trading towns which grew up around waterways (Bruges, Ghent, Amsterdam, Groningen): More recent developments, including waterway enlargements and new waterways for freight use, enclosing of the Zuider Zee and the Delta Project, as well as development of recreational use and a number of restoration schemes.

Friday 17th March 2017

Trent & Mersey Canal posters

Peter Brown will discuss a treasure-trove of 106 Trent & Mersey Canal posters and notices, mainly dating from the 18th century. These give an impression of the canal company's management practices and worries, in a way which doesn't emerge from a study of minute books or other sources

Friday 21st April 2017

The work of the Waterway Partnership

Ray Butler (of the Manchester & Pennine Waterway Partnership) will explain what Waterway Partnerships are, and what the Manchester & Pennine Partnership does for waterway user.

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

Don't forget!!!!!!

Going to the Dogs!

29th October 2016

Back by popular demand!

The Society is hosting a canal-side dog-racing evening in the upstairs room of the Red Bull Public House to celebrate the onset of Autumn.

The evening will start at 7.30 pm. There will be a break about 8.30 for supper, with races starting again about 9.15 (the poor dogs need a rest!).

Bets will be 50p a go, and there will be payouts after each race.

There will of course be the traditional raffle and lots of fun.

Supper is *St. Helen's Lobby* (a sort of hotpot), followed by apple pie. The cost of this is £7.50.

Now the bad news...numbers are limited to 35, so if you would like to attend.....

get in touch with *Gillian Watson* as soon as you can.

Gillian.watson@me.com

01606 835606

Full Address of Venue

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





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Trent & Mersey Canal in Stoke-on-Trent to Get a Face Lift

Stoke-on-Trent's City Council is investing £1 million in the local canal network in an effort to boost tourism and provide alternative transport routes. The authority hopes that a more attractive canal environment will encourage more boaters to stop off in the Potteries while passing through the area. Council leaders also want to promote the canals for walkers and cyclists, thereby reducing congestion and improving public health.

This project will include works to bridges and canal-side buildings, new signs, better lighting and new access points. The work is expected to start next May and be completed by the end of 2017.

Alison Smedley, Campaigns Officer for IWA, who lives in this area, welcomed the plans. She commented "I think it's fantastic that the council wants to encourage more canal boaters to stop in the Potteries. Just a few weeks ago we were celebrating the 250th anniversary of the first sod being cut for the Trent & Mersey Canal at Brownhills. This enabled the Potteries to become the global centre for china production."

From IWA bulletin, August 2016



Etruria Junction

Look at the back cover to see what this used to look like!

Harecastle Tunnel(s)

Harecastle Tunnel is actually two tunnels - though only one is navigable today. They sit, side-by-side, on the Trent & Mersey Canal just north of Stoke-on-Trent. Both are nearly 3,000 yards in length. The first Harecastle tunnel was engineered by James Brindley, took eleven years to construct, was completed in 1777, and was more than twice the length of Britain's longest tunnel at that time. The second was required to relieve congestion in the first, and was built by Thomas Telford. It took just three years to complete, and opened in 1827.

With the benefit of 50 years' engineering advances, Telford could excavate a wider tunnel, and provided a towpath for the boatmen: those using the Brindley tunnel had to 'leg' their boats through. After completion of the Telford tunnel, both bores were used, running one-way traffic in opposite directions. Today, Brindley's tunnel is long-closed - a result of subsidence from local mining operations. Though the Telford tunnel remains open, it too suffers from subsidence: the towpath has been removed, and headroom is in places considerably reduced. Since the tunnel was not designed for use by engine-powered boats, there are no ventilation shafts. However, between 1914 and 1954 an electric tug powered from an overhead wire inside the tunnel pulled boats through.

Today, diesel-powered boats use the tunnel: to solve the ventilation problem at the southern end an air extraction fan-house has been built around the portal. Unless a boat is actually passing the portal, airtight gates are closed, allowing the fan system to extract more efficiently. The tunnel apparently suffers from a 'haunting manifestation', the ghost of one murdered Kit Crewbucket, whose headless corpse was dumped in the canal. During the 19th century, boatmen were so convinced of her existence that some would choose a long detour to avoid a trip through the tunnel.

Autumn and Winter opening times for Harecastle Tunnel

Every day from 1st September – 31st October, the tunnel will be open for passage (no booking needed) from 8.00 – 17.00. Last arrival time for guaranteed passage through the tunnel will be at 15.00.

Every Monday, Wednesday Friday and Saturday from 2nd November – 31st December, the tunnel will be open by appointment only. Please call 03030 404040 giving at least 48 hours notice. Tunnel passages from 8.30. ***(But see stoppage list on p.20!)*** ***The use of lifejackets while in Harecastle and other tunnels is strongly recommended by the Trust.***

Pop-up Banners

The Society is considering updating the pop-up banners which many of you will have seen at the sides of our amazing stall.

In order to do this we need good quality photographs of the wonderful places and happenings along our canal.

Unfortunately, as the pictures have to survive being blown up to a considerable size, images from mobile phones will probably not be suitable.

If you have any pictures you would like us to consider, please forward them to Roger Evans (full details on p.23).

Example of pop-up banner



Stoke on Trent Boat Building Co Ltd

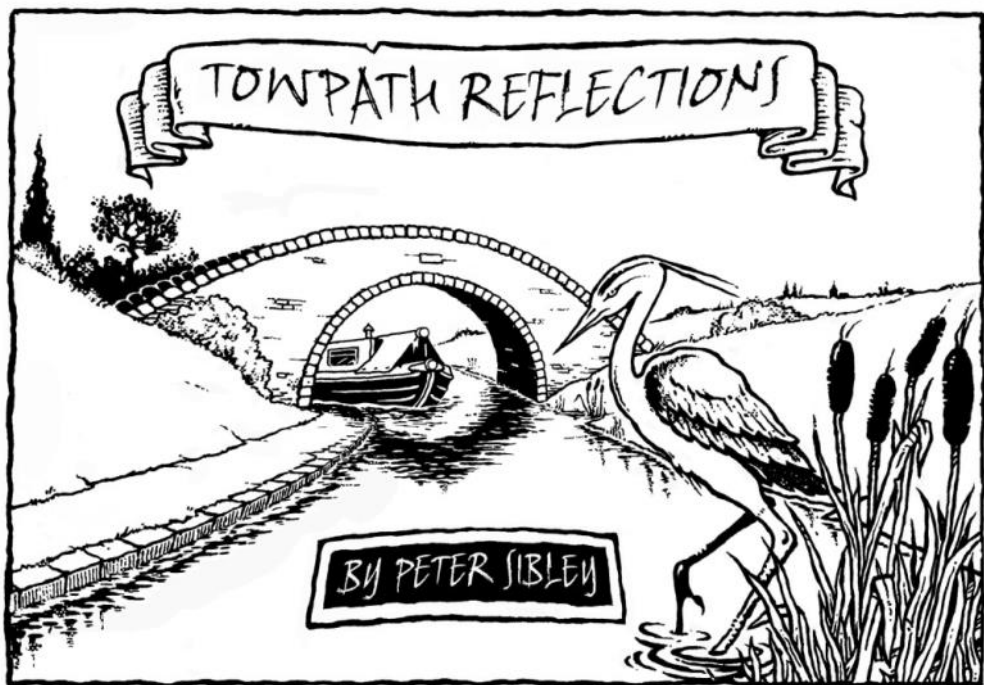
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We left Val and Peter moored on the Thames at Lachlade.....

Sunday 18th May.

Yet another great day. The Farmer came round and collected our mooring fee of £4. In conversation I asked him about Inglesham Lock. It seems that he was convinced that the Thames and Severn Canal would never be reopened. He knew several landowners who had built substantial farm buildings over the line of the canal, and that a new route would have to be constructed. Also, at Stroud considerable industrial development had taken place over the line of the Canal! Four boats had left that morning, so we moved along closer to Halfpenny Bridge. The Cotswold branch of our family arrived to visit us and they set up a barbecue and cooked us our lunch.

After that we took them for a little cruise up and down the river as far as the Round House, then back down the river as far as St Johns Lock and back. Lechlade is not the place to be for lovers of peace and quiet on a sunny summer Sunday. It seems to draw people from miles around. 'The Riverside' pub and café (with rowing boat hire) seems to be the nucleus of it all. Drunken teens and twenties were messing about in boats all over the river and jumping off them into the water. Others were jumping off either the foot-

bridge at Inglesham or Halfpenny Bridge into the water amongst dozens of swan which other people were feeding!

After seeing the family back to their car and saying goodbye we went back to the boat, cast off and set off down the river once more. We moored up just above Buscot Lock by a field of grazing cattle. Peace and quiet again at last!

Monday 19th May

We left Buscot and worked through the lock about 8 a.m. The weather was still bright, but we were told that tomorrow could be back to normal. We carried on back down the river to Kelmscott and moored up on Kelmscott



Manor's own mooring, then went for a walk round the idyllic little village which was as quiet as the grave. It is probably busier on Wednesday and Saturdays when the manor is open. There is a very attractive looking little old pub called 'The Plough at Kelmscott' (see picture). The manor was built as a farmhouse around 1600. When William Morris first saw Kelmscott Manor in 1896 he was

enchanted by this 'heaven on earth' and it became his country retreat until his death in 1896.

We went back to the boat and stopped for lunch just before Rushey Lock in the middle of nowhere. We then carried on to another 'middle of nowhere' mooring opposite Chimney Wildlife Reserve. We were fascinated by a swarm of black flying creatures which we christened 'up and down flies' because that is literally all they do constantly flying up and down a couple of feet either way at considerable speed. We couldn't capture one in order to identify it because if you take a swipe at one they instantly disappeared!

Tuesday 20th May

We set off about 7.50a.m. and heard the cuckoo again. The day started bright but soon clouded over. After working through three locks ourselves we arrived at Pinkhill Lock where a volunteer assisting the lock keeper solved the mystery of the 'up and down flies'. After describing them he told us that they were mayflies that only live for one day as flies after emerging from larvae that live in the water. We stopped at Eynsham Lock to take on water and empty the loo. As there are 24 hr moorings here we stopped for

lunch then went for a walk up to Eynsham Village via the old stone toll bridge over the river. The village has many ancient stone cottages. We picked up some supplies at the Co-op then went back to the boat. We decided to stay the night here, where the sound of water cascading over the weir lulled us to sleep.

Wednesday 21st May

We woke to find a very misty morning and the weir was scarcely visible but within an hour the sun had burnt its way through to reveal a beautiful still morning. After getting away from the turbulent waters at the foot of the weir, the river became like a mirror with scarcely a ripple as we glided along slowly through beautiful countryside, making a very fitting end to our week on the upper Thames.

All too soon we were entering the backwater just above Kings Lock (which leads to Dukes Cut and the Oxford Canal). This cut has become clogged with a dubious collection of scruffy old boats right up to Dukes Lock. To use the lock one has to wait in a bridge hole at the mouth of the lock. Should another boat come up the lock it would be extremely difficult to pass.

We moored for lunch on the lock cut of the River Cherwell below Bakers Lock. We had intended to visit the Heyfords (Upper and Lower) in the afternoon but after chatting to a gent at Pidgeons Lock we decided to moor at the old worked-out limestone quarry that had been turned into a nature reserve.

When we arrived there we spoke to couple out exercising their dog who suggested that we climb the steps that lead through a small wood to the top of the quarry and out onto a bridleway that leads to the village of Kirtlington. We took their advice and had a very pleasant hour or so exploring the old stone village and got into conversation with a gentleman who lived in the old vicarage. He was busy tending his immaculate front garden ready for a garden open day that was coming up shortly. Apparently, as the village grew the church decided that the old vicarage was no longer large enough so a much larger and grander rectory was built with large grounds, completely surrounded by a large stone wall (from the old quarry no doubt). There was also an old manor house almost opposite the old vicarage that was having a great deal of money spent on it. This had been rescued from near dereliction by a wealthy Londoner from Chelsea.

We returned wearily to the boat and made a much needed cuppa and put our feet up!

Flower Power in Brittany

Since we have retired we've headed to Brittany a few times and, apart from one visit when the heavens opened continuously for three days, we've spent many happy hours walking beside the Nantes à Brest Canal. This 226 mile long canal was built between 1804 and 1836 to provide a safe waterway link from Nantes on the River Loire to Brest on the Atlantic coast whilst the English navy were blockading Brittany's ports. Much of the canal was built by Spanish prisoners of war, including the section at Blain where the canal passes by a very impressive chateau. The canal was used to transport barrels of wine, sand, fertilisers and agricultural produce from the Loire area, whilst at Blain cider apples, oak wood and charcoal were loaded.

Through navigation from Nantes to Brest was stopped in 1920 when a section of the canal including 16 locks was submerged when the Guerlédan dam was built and in 1957 the 13½ mile length from Pontivy to Guerlédan was closed. Much of the rest of the canal can still be navigated and it is very popular for holidays afloat although we did wonder about how much tuition had been given when at Rabinière Lock we advised some English people on a hire boat that they needed to open the paddles to make the level equal. They thanked us for this info but then proceeded to open the paddles on the bottom gate without closing the top gates! At this lock grapes were growing and there was a lovely smell from the lavender bushes surrounding the lock.

We stayed a couple of nights at Saint-Congard in the Camping Municipal du Halage (halage is the French word for towpath) which only has 35 pitches and needless to say is next to the canal. From here we walked along the towpath to Malestroit passing fields of cattle and sweetcorn and the large oak trees provided us with some shelter from the sun. The old town of Malestroit has many gothic and renaissance houses and good moorings for boaters. We passed a couple of locks which had colourful flowers



growing beside them and a lock lady by one of them certainly wasn't that busy, and was deeply engrossed reading a book whilst waiting for the next boat to appear (see picture on facing page!)



At the village of Le Roc Saint André we stayed for a few nights at another small campsite which again is next to the canal. The campsite owner collects and restores old caravans and offers six vintage caravans which can be hired on a B&B basis. The oldest one is built of wood and is a Winchester from 1934 and all of these old caravans are in immaculate condition.

We walked along the towpath to Ville aux Fruglins lock where there was a pretty lock-side cottage and lots of flowerbeds and hanging baskets by the lock and on the lock gates. We watched a boat go down the lock and all the gear for closing/opening gates and paddles was worked by the lock lady with a remote control.



We then walked in the opposite direction to the village of Monterlot where there was another lock and moorings. This village seems to be keen on plants as well as recycling - old boots and shoes had been planted up with flowers to form a great display in the park and along the towpath by the lock.

Annette & Terry

NB Emily and Steamboat Sidney
Kennet & Avon Canal

August Cheshire Locks Work Party

We had 7 volunteers, including 3 new ones. We typically do 6 hours each so this will equate to 42 hours contribution. In addition John Lawson & Dave Sproson each contributed 7 hours earlier in the month painting mileposts; equivalent to 14 hours. So in total we did 56 hours of work this month. We have finally finished the work on lock 43 comprising the painting of the lock gates, footbridge & adjacent railings and clearing of vegetation in the area. We also started preparation on lock 42, so next month we will be working on that lock .



**Vegetation
At lock 42**

(before
work on
the left and
after on the
right)

*Pictures by
champion
veg clear-
er, Dave
Clegg*





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 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

Letter from David Baldacchino

Further to the recent announcement of the change in CRT boundaries, I am including a copy of this letter from our waterways manager.....Ed.

Following the recent news that the Central Shires Waterway was being broken up to be managed through the adjacent waterways, I wanted to write to you to introduce myself, make sure that you were aware of how to contact us and share a little information about the waterway.

I have been Waterway Manager of Manchester & Pennine since it was formed in 2009, and am supported by a very able and experienced team based at our office at Red Bull, Kidsgrove. The waterway is very diverse both in terms of its use, where places it passes through, its issues, and the character of its canals. I strongly believe that the addition of the Caldon Canal, and part of the Trent & Mersey Canal will be a great fit with our other canals.

We have a very active waterway partnership – key recent achievements driven by them include substantial elements of volunteering supporting vegetation management, and our most recent success of part of the Peak Forest Canal being awarded a Keep Britain Tidy Green Flag, joining the Macclesfield Canal which was the country's first canal to achieve that status.

The areas of canal now joining Manchester & Pennine are

- The Trent and Mersey Canal, from Great Haywood (Bridge 74) up to the old boundary just south of Harecastle Tunnel
- The Caldon Canal and all its reservoirs.

The operational maintenance team based at Etruria is unchanged and continues to be led by Andy Whitehouse whose team is now one of 4 lead by Stephen Ballard – our Customer Operations Manager.

For volunteering, please contact Steve O'Sullivan who is our volunteer development coordinator.

Our Customer Support team is based at Red Bull and led by Tracey Jackson. If you are contacting us by phone you will start to be directed to there in the near future.

You may have been dealing with Liz Wood as Development and Engagement Manager. You may not know that Liz recently left the organisation, Gillian Renshaw will be your contact from now

Finally, the waterway includes the excellent visitor centre at Standedge Tunnel, managed by Tim Turner.

For general enquiries please contact us at enquiries.manchesterpennine@canalrivertrust.org.uk. We track all of our correspondence coming to that address and telephone contact to the support team at Red Bull on 0303 040 4040 is the most effective way of raising issues with us or problems that you need to bring to our attention.

We have an active twitter account @CRTManPennine, <https://twitter.com/CRTManPennine> for those active on social media please follow us there.

I hope that this all helps. If you want to know more about the waterway our web pages are <https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/about-us/our-regions/manchester-and-pennine-waterways>

I hope that this change will not diminish your support for Canal & River Trust.

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Winter Stoppages on The tTent & Mersey Canal

Lock 72

From 7th November 2016 to 9th December 2016 at 23:59 inclusive.

Harecastle Tunnel

From 5th November 2016 to 15th December 2016 at 23:59 inclusive.

Bridge 34, Branston Road Bridge

From 7th November 2016 to 14th November 2016 at 23:59 inclusive.

Lock 40, Summit Lock

From 7th November 2016 to 21st December 2016 at 23:59 inclusive.

Lock 27, Star Lock

From 5th January 2017 to 20th January 2017 at 23:59 inclusive.

Lock 5, Swarkestone Lock

From 9th January 2017 to 19th February 2017 at 23:59 inclusive.

Lock 17, Junction Lock

From 4th January 2017 to 26th February 2017 at 23:59 inclusive.

Lock 3, Aston Lock & Lock 2, Shardlow Lock

From 9th January 2017 to 26th February 2017 at 23:59 inclusive.

Lock 32, Meaford House Lock

From 15th February 2017 to 10th March 2017 at 23:59 inclusive.

Lock 30, Lime Kiln Lock

From 15th February 2017 to 22nd February 2017 at 23:59 inclusive.

Lock 21, Colwich Lock

From 27th February 2017 to 17th March 2017 at 23:59 inclusive.



Calendar Time!

The Society's amazing 2017 calendar is now available.

It contains 12 beautiful colour pictures (all taken by members) of our Canal, plus an amazing winter scene on the front cover.

There is plenty of space to note diary details below.

Calendars are available at social meetings and stall events. We have been able to hold the price at £3.50.

If you would like one (or more) sent to you by post, the price including postage is £5.00.



Please send a cheque (payable to "Trent and Mersey Canal Society") to Roger or Margaret to arrange.

For our friends in the South!

Lichfield IWA Meetings

Meeting - Wednesday 19th October 2016

"The Fens and Fenland Waterways" an illustrated talk by John Pomfret. 7.15 for 7.30 pm at Martin Heath Hall, Christchurch Lane (off Walsall Road), Lichfield, Staffs. WS13 8AY

Wondering what to buy for Christmas?

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!

Baseball Caps (new)

One size— navy with embroidered society logo— £8.50 each

All available at social meetings (see p.4/5)



TRENT AND MERSEY CANAL SOCIETY

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BURSLEM PORT REPRESENTATIVE

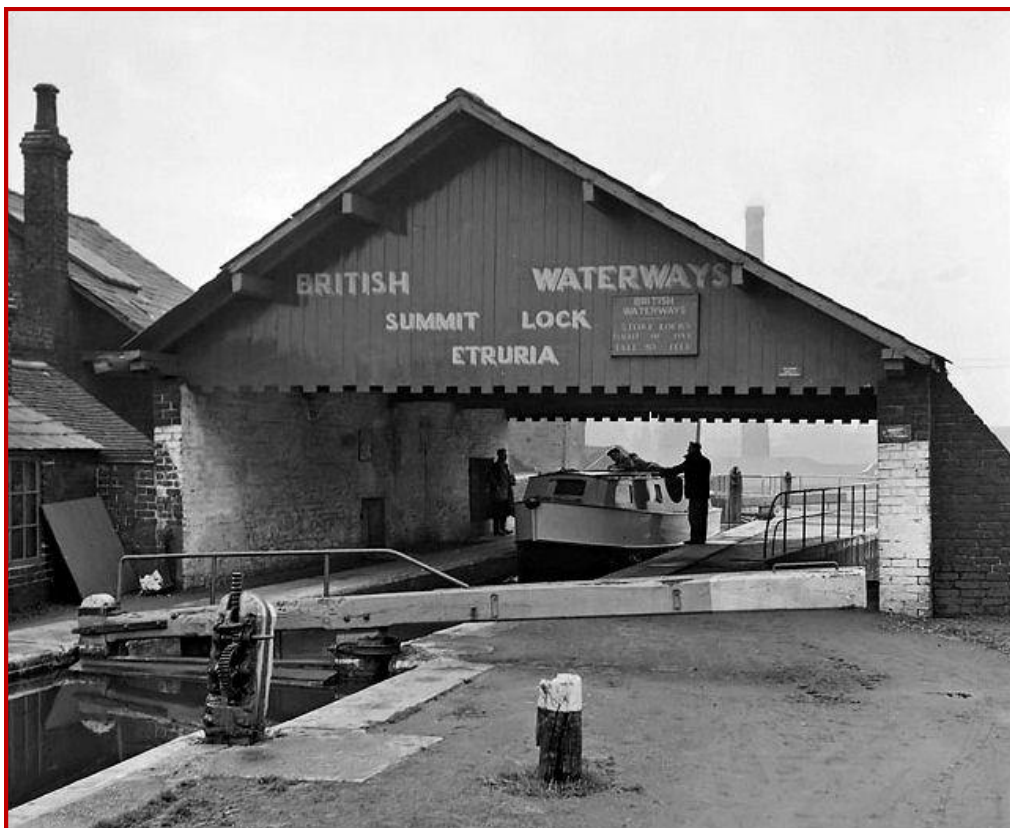
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Who remembers this?



*Summit Lock 1961
Robin Webster, 1961 (CCI)*

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!

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