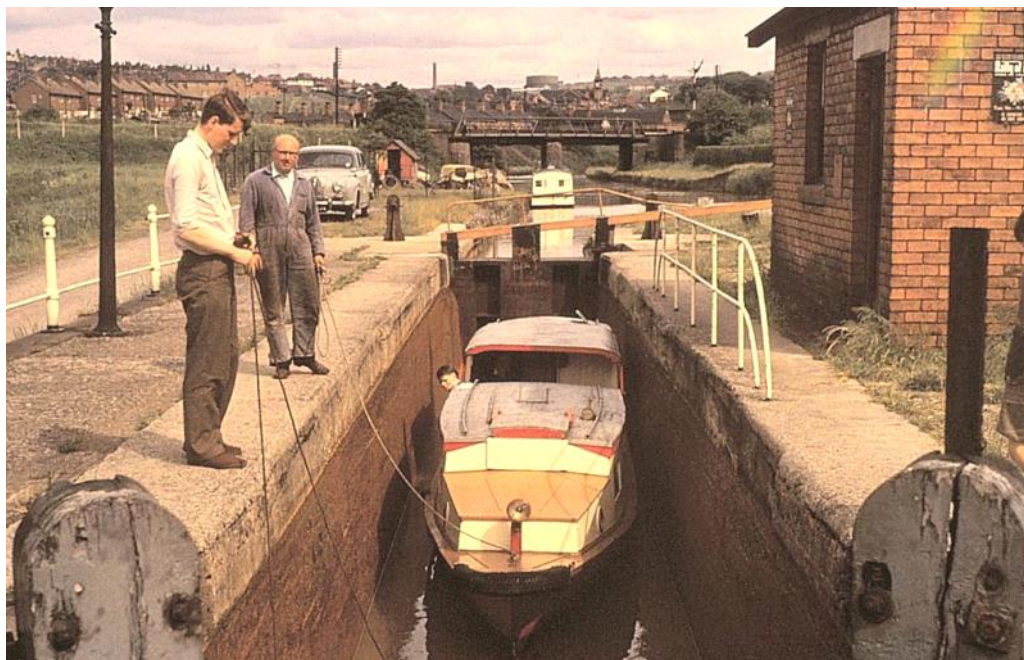


GRAND TRUNK



A Picture from Graham Palmer (founder of WRG)'s Collection

Kidsgrove Top Lock, dated to 1960, as on the wall on the right is a poster promoting the 1960 Stoke-on-Trent National Rally (unless it had been left up and was later).

Thanks to Waterway Images



May/June 2016

www.trentandmerseycanalsociety.org.uk

Chairman's Bit

I'm currently finalising the Annual Report ready for our AGM in Stone, so most of my mind is concerned with what we did in 2015, rather than what is happening now. However one recent event is worth reporting here.

If you have been on our web-site (other than the news and diary section) in the last few weeks you will have noticed that it looks very different, although the information is still basically the same. The site-name has also changed slightly with "co" being replaced by "org".



These changes all started when we were told that the person who had built, and then maintained our website on a "cost per-change" basis, was about to retire. This meant that we would have to move our website to a new host. We could either pay somebody to move the site, or do it ourselves. It was quickly decided that we should do it ourselves, and also ensure that all future maintenance could be done by us with no "cost per-change".

Luckily, Steve Wood (a fellow canal enthusiast whose paying job involves creating websites) volunteered to help us get started. He set-up a basic site, and then between us we copied all the information from our old site and tested that everything still worked. At this stage it was decided that, since we haven't been a limited company for several years, we should really use "org" rather than "co" in the new name. However when the new site went live we made sure that anybody using the old name would automatically be invisibly redirected to the new site.

In future we will be using the new "org" name on all our new literature, but will ensure that the old "co" name still works for many years to come.

Editorial

Hi everyone!

Welcome to another packed magazine. An overview of our AGM is included (p.4/5) for those of you not lucky enough to be there. Following the photo competition, Roger has just sent the details for our 2017 calendar to the printers. These should be ready for sale at Middlewich Folk and Boat and later events (no wonder life goes so fast!).

Gillian tells me that she has some really exciting talks planned for the next season, and details should be in the next magazine.

By the time I start work on *that* one, Roger and I will have been to Norway, where we have a trip booked on the Telemark Canal. I promise to take lots of pictures!



I can't do better than leave you with a picture of our stall (indoors for a change) at Lion Salt Works Steam Fair. Many thanks to Paula and Eddie for their efficient manning at this event– they enjoyed it so much they have booked for next year!

Stop Press!

Dog Race Night

Back by popular demand, those hounds will be racing again at Red Bull Public House on 29th October 2016! Not to be missed!



Trent & Mersey Canal Society AGM (a brief overview)

Following last year's successful event at Lion Salt Works, on 14th May the meeting convened at another excellent (and unusual) venue- Stone Station. The building was completed in 1849 by The North Staffordshire Railway Company (previous owners of our canal) and is a grade II listed building. It was refurbished for community use in 2003.



The meeting began with a short talk about Stone by David Dumbelton. Stone's two major industries were brewing- the most famous firm being Joules (pronounced Jowls) - and shoe-making. The town is attractive, socially active with beer and food festivals, and very much a canal town.

Chairman Roger Evans reported that milepost cleaning and painting continues in the North and the Cheshire Locks painting project (joint with NSSC IWA) is going well, if slowly. Our website is frequently updated and can be found at www.trentandmerseycanalsociety.org.uk

Publicity and sales, now in the able hands of Paula Jackson and Eddie Kingswell, is very vibrant, and the society stall can be found at all the main events in the North of our region. It is hoped to arrange press releases for future events.

The previous year's talks all went well and were very enjoyable. The Society now has its own talk on the Trent & Mersey Canal from Preston Brook to Armitage Tunnel delivered by Gillian Watson. This means we can give reciprocal talks to other societies.



Membership numbers are still a cause for concern, currently running at about 170. There seems to be renewed interest in the Burslem Port Trust project, T&MCS members (and anyone else) can show their support by registering as a friend on the Trust website. There is a link from the T&MCS site.

After the formal business (and

an excellent buffet lunch) David Dumbelton led a guided walk along the tow-path. For one member (John Tackley) this involved an emotional reunion with the butty end Rebekah, used as a flower display below Star Lock. This was originally the stern of John's butty Axe which was discarded after the boat was sold and converted to power.



A boat is worked through lock 28 as the group approach.

*Photos by David Clegg(1&2)
Roger Evans (3)
Waterway Images (4)*

Report on Cheshire Locks Work Party

Thursday 20th April 2016 - A beautiful warm day, but a shortage of numbers

meant that CRT wouldn't let us work on Lock 43, as they wanted work on the memorial garden to take priority, and there were also some hedging "whips" which urgently needed planting. We agreed reluctantly but, after a meeting with CRT management, they know that lock painting MUST take precedence over the memorial garden on future working parties (weather permitting).



Learning



Finished!

Even so 7 volunteers contributed a total of 39 hours work. One team was taught how to build steps to the CRT standard in the garden area including some useful joinery tips for future reference.



Planting whips between locks 44 and 45

The other team planted whips along a 100m length of canal by the locks filling in gaps in the hedgerow. This was a specific project requested by the CRT ecologist; a job that needs to be done in Spring just before the growing season.

Photos by John Brighthouse



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BELLS FOR BRINDLEY

Come along to our event to celebrate the 300th anniversary of the birth of canal engineer, James Brindley and the 250th anniversary of the start of his Trent & Mersey Canal .

At Middleport Pottery, Port Street, Stoke-on-Trent ST6 3PE

11am to 4pm Saturday 23rd July 2016



Bells



Canals



Pottery

Historic narrow boats

Bell ringing demonstrations

2pm re-enactment of first sod cutting ceremony

3pm live performance featuring James Brindley & Josiah Wedgwood

Information displays about local canals

Sales of books and canal memorabilia

Craft demonstrations

Hands-on activities for children

Archive canal film footage

On site café serving refreshments

Middleport Pottery visitor centre open as usual

For further information contact: Middleport Pottery on 01782 499766 or email middleport@princes-regeneration.org

MALKINS BANK LOCK STOPPAGE OPEN DAY

Malkins Bank, on the Trent & Mersey Canal near Sandbach, was the location of the last lock stoppage open day of the Canal & River Trust's (CRT) 2015-16 winter season. The offside chamber of the paired Lock 63 – on what some boaters call 'heartbreak hill' – was drained and open for the public to view the repair work on Sunday 3 April. The weather was kind and both staff and volunteers worked really well in showing visitors through the deep chamber and promoting the waterway and CRT's work.

This final successful event was perhaps typical of the CRT's 16 open days held between November last and April 2016. The total number of visitors was 17,092, an 81% increase on last winter's open days; which was 9,425 from the same number of days. Six days brought visitor in the thousands, and the Kentish Town Lock open weekend attracted 3,750; the largest ever at a CRT open event. 289 Friends of CRT were recruited.

CRT chief executive Richard Parry was there to meet staff and visitors at all 16 open events, except for one, where there were two on one day. Finding it impossible to get to Sheffield and South Wales on the same day, he did make up for it by visiting the Monmouthshire & Brecon Canal on the following day for his own personal 'open day tour'. Visits to these and other CRT events have inspired the often heard remark - 'Is he ever at home?'



Photo by Waterway Images.

CRT chief executive Richard Parry with staff at the Malkins Bank open day (l to r) direct services manager Dean Davies, Richard Parry, team leader Scott Harrison, customer operations manager Manchester & Pennine Waterways Stephen Ballard and waterway manager Manchester & Pennine Waterways David Baldacchino

Poole Aqueduct

These days most people think of this aqueduct as being the place where the Macclesfield Canal passes over the Trent & Mersey Canal, but in fact it is the Hall Green Branch of the Trent & Mersey Canal crossing the main line of that canal. The branch canal crosses the main line by means of the brick built aqueduct immediately downstream of Poole Lock, just the second lock down from the summit and the junction of the two canals.

The Trent & Mersey Canal Company's Act of 1827 authorised them to build the first 1½ miles of the Macclesfield Canal's line, and to charge tolls on cargo carried on it. The aqueduct was built in 1828 of red brick with a stone parapet, and is Grade II Listed. The Hall Green Branch, including Poole Aqueduct, was opened in 1831, at the same time as the Macclesfield Canal itself.

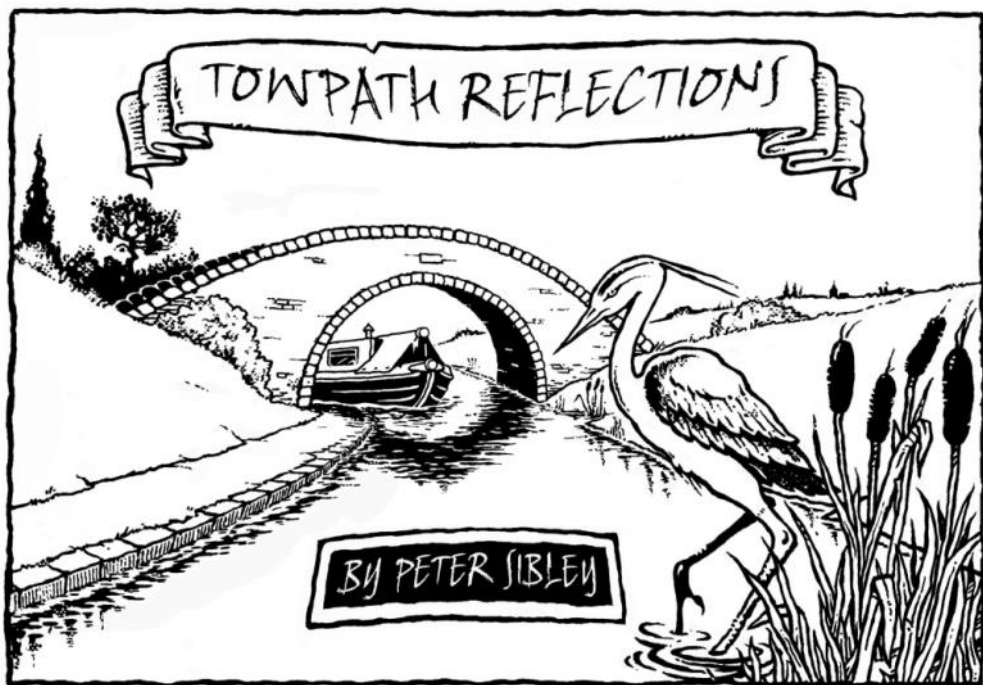


***Poole Aqueduct from
above Red Bull***

***...and looking back
from the next lock***



Photos by Alison Smedley



We left Val and Peter moored by Isis Lock.....

Wednesday 14th May

We were woken early by the diesel trains coming into Oxford station. It was a fine bright morning so got up shortly after 6am. This must be the busiest towpath we've ever moored against. The passers by are comprised of commuters heading for the station and joggers out exercising. Later students come by in droves on foot or by bike, also university lecturers and dog walkers. The cycle racks at the station house hundreds of cycles, more than we have ever seen before in one place.

After breakfast we went to Isis Lock once more. Valerie observed (on peering through the office window) that the lock keeper must have been back last night as his specs were missing from his desk! We got into conversation with a couple of oddly dressed young hippies who were waiting to buy a licence. They turned out to be a couple of exceptionally likeable people. Apparently they were heading for Reading and their first trip up the Kennet and Avon.

The lock keeper arrived and sold the hippies their licence and us an Imray's Guide to the Thames and said we could buy a week's licence. As

we were not leaving until next day we decided to buy it at Godstow Lock. Valerie had packed a picnic lunch and we caught a bus to Woodstock where we visited Blenheim Palace. As it was such a glorious day we spent it exploring the enormous park and lakes.

We sat at a lakeside picnic table and got out the flask and biscuits. This did not go unnoticed by a nearby pheasant who came right to us and took biscuit pieces out of our hand. Gaining confidence he then jumped up onto the table to see what else he could scrounge. It would seem that everything at Blenheim was done on a massive scale.

When we arrived back at the boat I renewed the fuel pump filter, topped up the prop shaft greaser, topped up the fuel tank and rigged up our anchor and chain in readiness for the next day.

Thursday 15th May

About 4.30 this morning we were rudely awoken by loud foreign voices and suddenly realised someone was on the rear of our boat. We leapt up and put on a light which must have scared them off, but that was the end of our nights rest! The day dawned bright and sunny- a perfect start.

We set off down Isis Lock and out through Sheepwash Channel where the old disused railway swing bridge is. The stream was flowing really strongly through here and we needed nearly full revs to make any headway. We turned right at Fourways and out onto the Thames proper. Progress was still



Isis Lock

slow at first till we reached Port Meadows where the river widens dramatically. We reached Godstow Lock just before 9am when the lock keeper arrives. We locked through ourselves then bought a week's short term license when the keeper arrived. Her name was Sarah, a delightful person who explained about red and green marker buoys. Always pass red buoys on your left and keep green ones to the right when going up stream and the reverse when coming down stream. This knowledge was put to the test soon after when a couple of tight bends appeared so marked.

The river in these parts winds through very remote and peaceful countryside with flood meadows full of buttercups. At Eynsham Lock the B4044 crosses via an ancient stone toll bridge. Shortly after this a sudden bend in the river revealed a green marker to the right? In a panic I got it wrong and lurched to a sickening halt mid river, aground on a sand bank. Fortunately the crew of a boat moored nearby saw us and kindly came over to us with their boat and pulled us free.

Two of the Thames famous tributaries join in this area, the River Evenlode, and the River Windrush which joins immediately above another beautiful old bridge at Newbridge which carries the A415.

We moored for the night $\frac{3}{4}$ mile above Shifford Lock in the quietest most peaceful spot imaginable. No road of any description, no railway, no distant wail of emergency vehicles and no barking dogs! We let Henry (our tortoise) out on the grass for a wander and we watched the sun sink in the west to the accompaniment of a blackbird's song, which reminds me we actually heard a cuckoo today. The last time we remember hearing one was when we were boating on the River Wissey on the fens 4 years ago !

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Personally Speaking (Joan Walley)
Are boats set to sail into Burslem again?

By *The Sentinel* | Posted: April 21, 2016

Leanne Bagnall



Burslem Port Trust members Richard Barnes (trustee), Steve Wood (project adviser), Roger Savage (chairman), Graham Hill (secretary), Bryan Carnes (adviser) and John Brewer (trustee).

In The Leopard in Burslem there's a permanent reminder of two great engineers and entrepreneurs of their day who sat down over a pint to plan a canal which was to transform not only the English landscape but also the economic prosperity of North Staffordshire.

James Brindley and Josiah Wedgwood were true pioneers and industrialists. We all prospered from the legacy of the Trent and Mersey Canal. But only recently have we started to give sufficient attention to the decline of the canal network after it was inevitably superseded by rail and road.

Many cities have seen a full canal renaissance and Stoke-on-Trent deserves no less. Now is the time for us to be even more ambitious about the role canals play in our local recovery.

Fortunately every age has its visionaries and enthusiasts, and the many conversations that canal stalwarts David Dumbelton and Roger Savage had over a pint in the White Swan in Middleport were just as inspirational as those of Wedgwood and Brindley.

Knowing how canal restoration had transformed wider economic and environmental regeneration elsewhere, why couldn't we open up the now abandoned Burslem arm of the Trent and Mersey to bring boats back to Burslem they asked? Why not indeed.

Since 1996, backed by the Trent and Mersey Canal Society, they have relentlessly pursued their dream, establishing the Burslem Port Trust, gaining support of Inland Waterways Association, the Canal and River Trust, other bodies and local people.

They got Stoke-on-Trent City Council to safeguard the line of the canal so it can't be built over and recruited volunteers who cleared up the site in anticipation of moving to the next stage of actual restoration. But this is where the project gets stuck.

Many hurdles remain as the Trust contemplates how to secure funds, draw up a business case for integration into the wider investment programmes and start construction. But finally there may be light at the end of the tunnel. Firstly tourism, nature and industrial heritage-led regeneration are high on the agenda.

Next, the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and city council are forging ahead with the Etruria Valley scheme, a flagship investment to create jobs using European funds right next door to the abandoned arm. Much better to phase the canal site into the long-term plan rather than risk undermining the new investment by having dereliction alongside sparkling new construction.

The Health and Wellbeing Board has also singled out walking to help beat obesity. At the same time, the council has confirmed a £1 million capital investment to improve the city's canal infrastructure. All the more reason to go one step further and find a way to revive Burslem's abandoned arm.

Canal tourists bring spending power, and far better they should do so in Stoke-on-Trent than speed through as fast as a narrowboat allows them. Just as important is the pressure from residents to improve the neighbourhood, boost health and wellbeing, and improve a disused site and eyesore.

The key now is getting everyone – landowners, planning authority, LEP and Environment Agency – to work together.

Last week's breakthrough came when the Local Enterprise Partnership and Stoke-on-Trent City Council agreed to join in our approach to Severn Trent Water proposing a collaboration.

Timing is always key and it may just be that if Severn Trent's plans to locate to Hanley are signed off, there will be an even greater incentive to look after their adoptive home.

Long gone are the days of Severn Trent's HQ being in Burslem, but they still retain a sizeable depot here and have every reason to team up to be part of the solution.

We now have an understanding that the next step is for us to co-ordinate an urgent assessment to understand what risks there might be to water assets or to flooding.

Much now hangs on this appraisal as those involved will be working flat out to complete this next step of an objective impact study.

So, at long last, David and Roger know that they have left no stone unturned in their efforts to transform the Trent and Mersey Canal at Middleport. Depending on the outcome, it may yet just still be possible for them to realise their dream, benefit the wider community and bring boats back to the Burslem Arm.

If a way forward can be found you can be sure that they will be looking for all kinds of support to help this project on its way.

There are no new members to welcome for this issue.

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

Tell them about us!





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

John Morin

Passed Away 15th April 2016, Aged 83 Years

I suppose Angela and I have known John Morin for just over 25 years. He was tempted to join the Society by Millie Osborn who, with her husband Pat, were stalwarts in the Potteries for many years.

After helping us out at Big Lock weekends and Firework Displays for a year or so John became more involved and eventually ended up doing most of the Society's printing as well as editing, publishing and distributing *Grand Trunk* for us. Over the years he has saved the Society probably tens of thousands of pounds doing these valuable and time consuming jobs.

He was a regular at our Anderton Village Hall Christmas Parties and although living alone, he always came laden with goodies for the food table, some of which he made himself.

His value to us was recognised and he has been awarded the Wedgwood Trophy on two occasions. First in 1995 for his work on *Grand Trunk*, the latter only last year in 2015. He was also honoured and elevated to become a Vice President a few years ago when he retired from his charity printing operations.

In late summer 1992, John joined a party of Northern Members on an adventure to the South of France for a boating holiday on the Canal du Midi. His qualification for acceptance to the group was that he said he could speak conversational French. Well, the first night we found out that his conversational French was non-existent, and he took one look at the food on the restaurant menu and declared he was vegetarian. By the end of each evening after a hearty meal with which we'd usually consumed some good French wine, Angela and Sylvia Gerrard would walk behind him, warily watching him weave his way back to the boat and hoping he wouldn't fall in. On another occasion we'd moored up near a little village called Cassiolet, famous for a thick, rich flavoured sausage casserole. After a hearty meal we staggered back to the boat, and decided to move away from

the mooring as a gang of local youths were drinking under a bridge only a short distance from us. Cruising by headlight and scanning the towpath with our torches we eventually found what looked like a gap in the reeds and John volunteered to leap off and take a rope onto the bank. Unfortunately when he hit the reeds they started to sag and he started to sink. We all howled as he scrambled up on to dry land and pulled us to a safe mooring. He, bless him, saw the funny side of it too. Finally, on the Ferry home John's other secret was blown, when he couldn't resist the meat pie on offer in the boat restaurant, he guzzled that down with great gusto, wondering why we were all laughing at him yet again.

He was a good mate for many years, we'll both miss him and so will his other friends in the canal world.

Rest in peace John, you've truly earned it.

Malcolm Turner



A few years ago John organised an amazing coach trip to the boat lifts and inclined plains of Northern France and Belgium.

Chairman Roger took this picture of John deep in thought (perhaps he was thinking of the right word - his French hadn't got any better) on the trip.

Thank you John, it was a wonderful experience!

BRIDGE 9

For readers unfamiliar with the southern section of our canal, bridge 9 is situated about a quarter of a mile above Weston lock in South Derbyshire. The bridge enjoys two names, Fine Georges Bridge or Scotch Bridge. I personally prefer the former name rather than the more prosaic alternative. In common with other bridges in the area, it is grade 2 listed.

The society has been in communication with BW/ CRT for over a decade now as the bridge has become increasingly derelict over the years. Progress with repairs though has been hindered by the fact that the bridge, rather unusually, is not owned by CRT but by *Hanson's* who are involved in gravel extraction in the Trent Valley.

The bridge currently presents a very sorry sight to canal users, with large cracks in the abutments and significant portions of the parapets having disappeared, presumably into the canal? Someone, possibly the bridge owner, has recently blocked off access to the bridge by driving steel barriers into the base to prevent pedestrian access. Whilst there would unquestionably be a safety issue should someone try to cross the bridge on foot, the carrying out of any repairs or alterations to the structure needs prior approval because of its listed status. Given the unsympathetic nature of these barriers we believe it is safe to assume that approval hasn't been sought.

My view has been that historically, the ownership issue has perhaps been too convenient an excuse for BW/CRT not progressing repairs on the bridge, as it fell into the "too difficult" basket. I am pleased to confirm though, that through the efforts of Mark Clifford, the Central Shires Buildings Manager, things do now seem to be starting to move with some pressure being put on *Hanson's*, via the local council, to commit to carrying out the necessary repairs before the bridge reaches a point of no return (which can't be too far away). The local IWA branch are also actively pursuing the issue with CRT.

The society has also recently written to South Derbyshire District Council, backing up CRT's efforts to ensure *Hanson's* fulfil their obligations, obtain the necessary approvals and carry out repairs to the bridge.

Further updates will be provided when there is any progress to report.

Dave Brewin



*Bridge Nine
Showing parapet damage*

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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



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

Last date for inclusion in the July/August edition is 01/07/2016.

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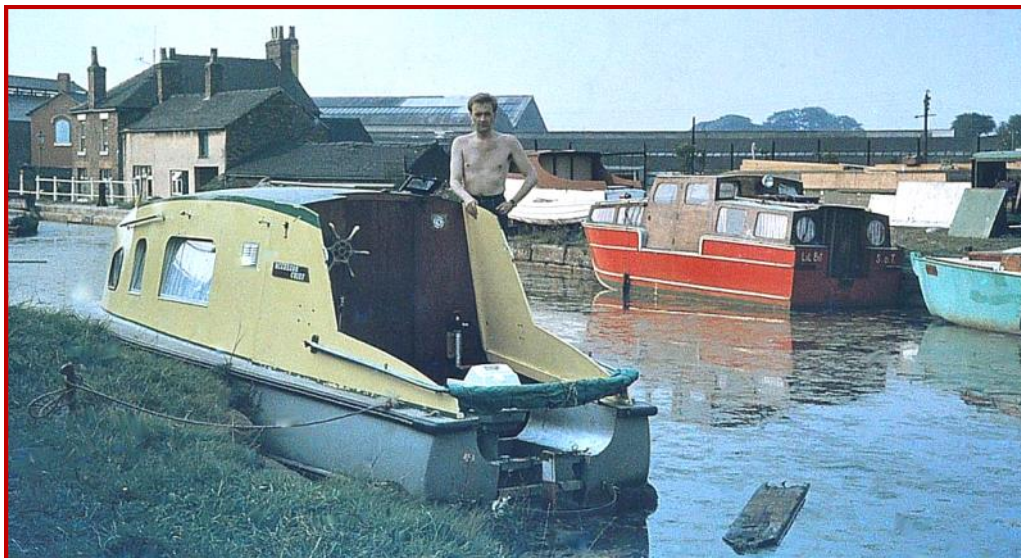
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*The Trent & Mersey Canal Society is proud to
support Burslem Post*

Bringing Boats Back to Burslem



A Young Graham Palmer at his uncle's boatyard in Kidsgrove

Thanks to Waterway Images

Above is another picture from Graham Palmer's Collection, now held by Waterway Images. Graham's uncle had the hire cruiser company at Kidsgrove. Harry Arnold thinks it was called ***Constellation Cruisers***, but without getting one of his old T&M guides out of the roof, can't check.

I am grateful to Harry Arnold for letting me publish these very special pictures. Any further information from T&M and/or IWA Branch members would be of great interest to the society, and especially to Harry, so if you can help— get in touch!

Ed.

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