

GRAND TRUNK

**A rainy day on the Trent & Mersey Canal
(Bridge below Big Lock, Middlewich)**

Photo by Andrew Leese



November/December 2016

www.trentandmerseycanalsociety.org.uk

Chairman's Bit

You may remember from the last issue that Margaret & I were planning to be away during October so I was having to apologise about missing the October meeting (a talk by Richard Parry). I'm pleased to report that the meeting went very well with Paula and Gillian making us look redundant. As usual there is a short report on our website for members who, like me, couldn't attend [See www.tamcs.org.uk/meetings].



We thoroughly enjoyed our 2½ weeks in Washington DC and we had booked a hotel only 50 yards from the C&O (Chesapeake and Ohio) Canal. We walked (several times) the Georgetown section of the towpath and even attended an event to celebrate the towing-away of their old trip-boat (see Margaret's article on pages 8/9). The National Parks Service is about to re-restore 2 of the 4 locks in Georgetown and build a new trip boat to pass through them, but don't get too excited as the final 2 locks into the river are cascaded and there is no intention to restore them (nor most of the rest of the 184½ miles).

Also while we were away, a new finger-post was due to be erected at Great Haywood to replace the rotten one removed last year. Our thanks to the Staffs & Worcs. Canal Society who alerted us to both the removal of the old post and the installation of the new one. Unfortunately the welcome news came too late for us to let members know about it in the September issue of Grand Trunk, so we all missed seeing the new one erected (see p. 20 for more details plus the unveiling date).

Our "Going to the Dogs" evening went very well at the Red Bull pub (see page 18, and we are having our Christmas Meal there this year. See full details of the menu (and how to book) on page 15.

Editorial

Here we are, back from America and rushing to get the final edition of 2016 out so you can all book for our Christmas meal! Is it too early to wish everyone a happy Christmas? I hope not!



We had a wonderful time in the USA, visited lots of museums and art galleries, were allowed into the Capitol and saw the actual Declaration of Independence. We visited all the memorials on the National Mall and were moved by the Kennedy graves in Arlington Cemetery. Our only regret was that we couldn't make it to Great Falls, where the Potomac makes its sharpest drop and the C&O Canal bypasses the falls in a series of locks—there is also an iconic waterside tavern there. Unfortunately the only access is currently by (very) expensive taxi; maybe next time!

Our boat, *The Lady Margaret*, is in the boatyard (again), this time for emergency repairs to the gas locker and new engine mounts. This year she has spent longer under repair than either at her home mooring or cruising. We still expect to make our annual post-Christmas cruise to Llangollen, I'll tell you all about it next time.

On the subject of magazine content, **I am very concerned that I get sent very little information about matters of interest about and along our canal.** Research into local newspaper articles and CRT's doings is no substitute for personal experiences and comments.

For example, on 31st October a boat sank in Weston Lock, can anyone tell me more about this, did anyone photograph the incident? A magazine is only as good as its contents—***I need your help!***

Let's make 2017 the best year ever for Grand Trunk!

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 2nd December 2016

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

See p. 15 -don't forget to book!



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.

Many thanks to Tim Boddington for pointing out that for some considerable time, the Society has been 'proud to support Burslem **POST**' on p. 23. Unless my computer has fought back, this has now been rectified and we are once again proud to support Burslem **PORT**!

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

Milepost Painting

Society stalwart John Lawson and his faithful companion Dave Sproson have been busy all summer painting and renovating the mileposts between Harecastle Tunnel North Portal and Rode Heath. Here are some pictures of their work.



**Milepost 25
Hassall Green**

Primer coat

All finished!



Milepost 26 →



← **Chells Hill**



**Milepost 29
Red Bull**

Before

After



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Sad Tale of *The Georgetown*

The Chesapeake and Ohio Canal runs for 185 miles from the mouth of Rock Creek in Georgetown to Cumberland in Maryland. It gains 605 feet in height and was the brainchild of George Washington. He envisaged the opening up of the interior and harnessing of the Potomac for transport and industry. Like so many canals its function was overtaken by the railroad. Today, it is managed by the National Park Service, a U.S. Department of the interior.



We were delighted to be staying in Georgetown, almost on the banks of the canal during our recent holiday. Imagine our horror when we learnt that the canal was to be drained shortly after our arrival, and the historic canal boat

The Georgetown was to be broken up! The boat's home mooring was by the bridge above our hotel, from where it was used for boat trips. It had not however moved since 2011 and



was now beyond repair. The first thing we did on arrival was to dash down to the C&O to take as many pictures as we could of both boat and waterway.

We discovered that *The Georgetown* was to have a grand send-off the next day, so we made sure we returned from downtown Washington (very American!) in good time. There are four locks which take the canal down into Rock Creek. The junction lock stands permanently open and is in poor repair, while the second pound is very low and choked with weeds. There is evidence of concrete slabs on which the boat used to rest blow lock three, but it is currently un-navigable. *The Georgetown* had been moved into the fourth lock, which had been filled for the occasion. She had a rudder front and back and, in common with other C&O traffic, was pulled by mules. The two animals chosen for her final journey were in a temporary pen beside the lock and were enjoying all the attention.

The small National Park office beside the canal (which is hardly ever open) was staffed for the occasion and we were able to look at photos of the waterway in its heyday and buy badges (me) and books on the subject (Roger). The workers were delighted that we had taken the trouble to attend the event, especially as Roger wore his T&MCS baseball cap!

Drinks, slices of pizza donated by the (expensive) pizzeria nearby, cake and model mules were offered to the bystanders. While the local dignitaries were speaking we gathered up our precious models and ran to the next bridge. We were in time to see the (real) mules pull *The Georgetown* out of the lock and off on her journey out of sight. She was steered by a helmsman in period dress and fended off by crew dressed the same way (see back page).



The next day the locks were opened at both ends and the canal drained. It looked very sad, though mercifully free of the debris usually found in English canals. I am happy to report that before we left USA the canal was again full. Presumably local residents had requested re-instatement of their waterway, and any faults found were not serious. A new boat is to

be built, and we would love to return and travel on her. *Margaret English*

If our friends in the South need to recover after New Year's Eve!....

IWA Lichfield Branch Forthcoming Events

WALK - Sunday 1st January 2017

Our traditional New Years Day Walk; this year a circular walk from Huddlesford and along the Coventry Canal. This is an easy 3 mile walk on level ground with 2 stiles, on quiet country roads, farm tracks and a towpath. Leaving the pub car park we initially head north-east before passing through two farms to join the canal at Brookhay cottage. We then return past Streethay Wharf and Kings Orchard Marina to our starting point.

Meet at 10:30 for a 10:45 am start at The Plough Inn, Huddlesford Lane, Whittington, WS13 8PY. Contact Clive Walker on 07866 201873 or clive.walker@waterways.org.uk

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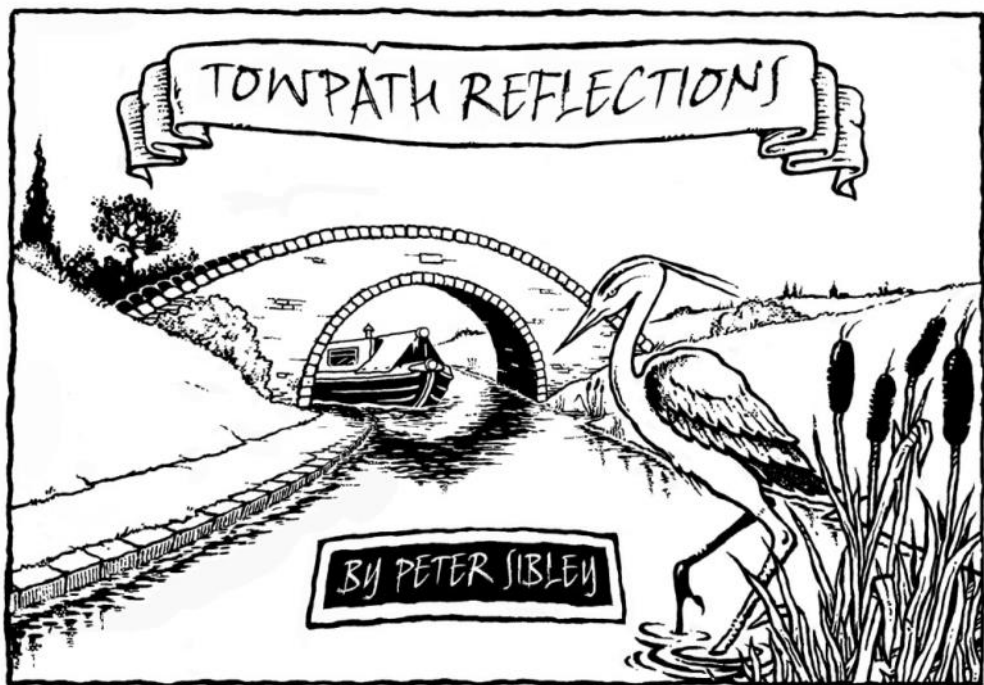
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We left Val and Peter putting their fete up after visiting Kirklington.....

Thursday the 22nd of May.

It rained heavily during the night. We watched the rabbits bobbing about outside as we sat eating our breakfast. We set off at 8:15 a.m. and moved on three and a half miles to Lower Heyford, where we went to have a wander around the village. There is a very handy railway station here with an entrance onto the platform directly off the towpath. Oxford Narrowboats have a hire base here opposite the station.

We crossed the canal by the B4030 road bridge and headed up the road for a short distance where a footpath off to the left led us across a field to the village. This is a haven of peace and tranquility with picturesque unspoilt stone cottages and houses in every direction. I imagined there's quite a bit of wealth here, for most of the properties in this part of the village seemed in immaculate condition and those that weren't were having work done. There is an old school house in the Old Market Square and a pub on the corner. There was a large tree in the centre of the square with a circular bench around it. From the pub a street leads down past a tiny cottage that

must have been a post office, as there is still a collection box set in the wall. The street curves down round a bend to reveal an iron lift bridge across the canal. All the rest on the canal are of timber construction with the possible exception of the new electrified bridge at Thrupp.

We made our way back to the boat for lunch, after which we carried on to Upper Heyford, another similar village. We walked up towards the church with a view to getting a look at the old manor house and massive old stone tithe barn, but it seems the best view is to be had from the canal. The church is currently closed during the day whilst building workers carry out repairs to the roof. However, we got chatting to a friendly builder who said it was alright for us to have a look round. The church yard has a lot of graves of airmen from as far afield as Canada and New Zealand. The gravestones of the men who were killed during the war are arranged in rows of military precision.

We walked up the street of thatched cottages to find an old shop we remembered visiting on our last visit here during our first boating holiday in 1968. However it apparently closed up, along with one of the two pubs when the US Air Force base closed in 1993.

We returned to the boat and were carrying on towards Somerton when the heavens opened, so I pulled into the next available mooring and tied up for the night. We had two passengers today - mayflies which both arrived on the slide hatch and stayed for over an hour quite bedraggled. Their delicate dragonfly like wings trembled in the chill breeze. They seemed to lack energy, perhaps waiting for a burst of sunshine and warmth to give them some. I got to thinking as I cruised along about the quirks of nature and how such quite attractive creatures lived for just a few hours; a good percentage probably never even see a single ray of sunshine!

Friday 23rd of May.

It rained heavily during the night. At 6 o'clock this morning the sun shone but by 7 o'clock dark clouds filled the sky. We set off at 7:30 with the view to making good progress before the rain started. I had to help Valerie open the heavy lower lock gate at Somerton deep lock as the arm is so high she couldn't get much push on it.

We pressed on to Banbury, arriving about lunchtime and tied up opposite the museum. After lunch we went into the tourist information centre in Castle Quay Shopping Centre (next to our mooring) and inquired about possible places to visit on Saturday.



From the Tourist Information Centre stairs leads up to a glass sided enclosed bridge which crosses the canal to the museum. The bridge acts as a canal and Waterways gallery from which there is a good view of Tooley's historic boatyard. From the bridge we noticed that it was now raining quite heavily. After our museum visit we shopped for essential supplies and got wet!

Saturday the 24th of May.

It was raining when we awoke, and was still raining heavily at 9:30, so we decided to catch the bus into Oxford to visit the Ashmolean Museum. We got into conversation with a gent at the bus station who turned out to be a mine of information on just about everything. He was very interested in the fact we were off a boat and was intrigued by the number of places we could get to on the canal system. We chatted continually all the way to Kidlington just outside Oxford where he lived. What with that and the fact that the bus windows were all steamed up we saw nothing of the villages we passed through on our journey.

It was still raining when we arrived at Oxford. The Ashmolean Museum is Britain's oldest Museum and was set up in 1683 by Elias Ashmole to house the artefacts and curios collected by the seventeenth century naturalist and royal gardener John Tradescant. There is so much to see that one single day doesn't do it justice. We sat outside lunch time (as it had thankfully now stopped



raining) and ate our sandwiches. By 2:30 we were becoming a bit weary- there is only so much culture you can absorb in a day, so we came out and caught the 3-15 bus back to Banbury. By this time the sun was shining and the bus was less than half full so we enjoyed the one hour 20 minutes trip through the delightful villages of Tackley, Steeple Ashton, Deddington and Middle Barton.

the **SATURN** PROJECT

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ty Liaising with Boaters

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CONTACT Bill Walker on 07900 897846

Our 2016 Christmas Meal **(with Quiz and Raffle)**

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Friday 2nd December

7:30 for 8 pm

Starters

- * Homemade Vegetable Soup with Crusty Bread
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- * Christmas Pudding with Brandy Sauce
- * Apple Pie & Custard
- * Homemade Lemon Cheesecake



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Bookings must include your choice for each of the 3 courses

Please book with Margaret English (by Email, Post or Phone)

Email: margaretetlm@hotmail.com (Note the repeated “etet”)

Post: Use the Registered Office address on page 23)

Phone: 01606-834471

Last Date for Booking is Friday 25th November

*We are limited to 35 places
so please let us know if you can no longer attend.*

Opening hours at Harecastle Tunnel

Steve Wood of IWA (North Staffs, South Cheshire) had written to CRT about the tunnel opening hours over the winter - needing to book 48 hours ahead, needing to book by 22nd December for any passage over Christmas and New Year, and needing to be there by 8.30am (not practical as people don't want to moor at the north end of the tunnel).

Steve suggested that it should be open on specific dates and that people should be able to just turn up. This suggestion has been adopted by CRT and announced at the user group meeting. ***The tunnel will be open for unrestricted bookings within the winter opening hours on 23rd, 24th, 28th, 30th and 31st December.***

NOTE – CRT had **NOT** (on 1st November) changed the details on the stoppages web-site, so members are advised to contact them and check whether the arrangements have actually been changed to those shown above between Christmas and New Year. Also please remember that the tunnel was closed from 5th November for “brickwork and fender repairs within the tunnel, and waterway wall repairs on the northern approach”. It is due to reopen on 16th December.

Investigations into emergency mobile phone usage within the tunnel are ongoing, but the high iron content within the enclosed space is causing problems.



*Photo
Courtesy of
The Daily
Mail*



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 Kids Grove 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

T&MCS Dog Racing Night

On Saturday 29th October there were strange happening in the upper room at Red Bull public house! 29 members and friends of T&MCS enjoyed a hearty meal of St. Helen's Lobby and apple pie, and then went quite wild!

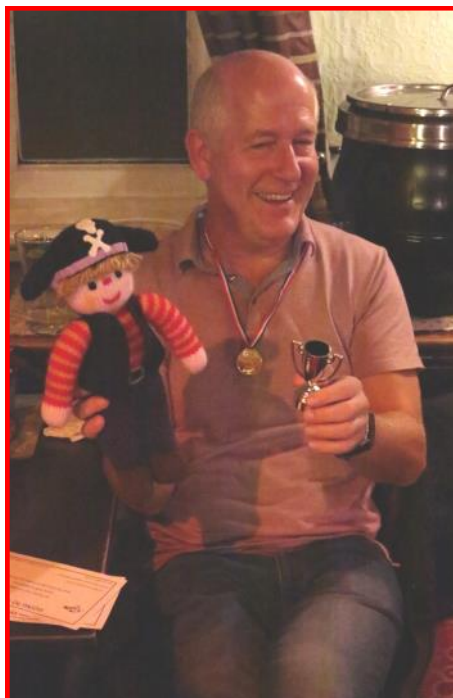


The room was cleared and four dogs raced from one end to the other with the aid of handlers who were sitting with their backs to them! Betting was fast and

furios, with the excellent Paula calculating and paying out winnings in double-quick time. Boisterous encouragement was given to the dogs and a great time was had by all. A dog-themed raffle caused great amusement and Hallowe'en was in evidence with the lucky ticket holder receiving her own witch!

Overall winning handler was Steve Murphy (right) who was rewarded with a pirate for his crew and an enormous cup!

Thanks to Gillian for organising the event, Eddie for training his dogs and wife Shirley for putting up with him!



A warm welcome to new members

**Mr J Harris
of Newcastle Under Lyne**

**Mr J. Hambbleton
of Rode Heath**



Hope you enjoy being members of the Society!

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Great Hayward Signpost

You may remember that last year the iconic fingerpost at the junction of The Trent & Mersey and Staffs & Worcs. canals at Great Hayward was taken down. CRT maintained that the base of the post was rotten and dangerous.

The post was originally erected by the Staffs & Worcs. Canal Society, who were understandably aggrieved and campaigned for a replacement in the same format.

Thanks to the efforts of the Staffs & Worcs. Canal Society (supported by T&MCS) a new signpost was provided by CRT in September and was transported to the site by boat. It was lowered into a pre-prepared hole and the 'fingers' were attached after it was positioned. It is now installed and looking fine.



The old fingerpost

(photo By Row17, CC BY-SA 2.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/>.)

There will be an official 'unveiling' on Friday 18th November attended by Canal & River Trust CEO Richard Parry. The Society will be represented by our chairman Roger Evans and committee member David Dumbelton.

We hope to have some pictures of the event (and the new milepost) in the next edition of the magazine.



Calendar Time!

(Last chance for Christmas!)

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.

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 January/February edition is 01/01/2017.

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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Telephone: 01606 834471

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

Bringing Boats Back to Burslem



***The Georgetown on her final journey
(see p.8/9)***



***.....and her
propulsion system!***