

GRAND TRUNK



Ice at Kent's Bridge, Alrewas
(Picture courtesy of Waterway Images)



January/February 2017

www.trentandmerseycanalsociety.org.uk

Chairman's Bit

“Happy New Year” to all our members.

Recently I represented our society at the unveiling of a new finger-post at Great Haywood to replace the rotten one removed last year (see page 6). I was warmly welcomed by the Staffs and Worcs. Canal Society, especially for our help in persuading CRT to carry out the replacement. That made me think about how much can (sometimes) be achieved for very little effort. All I had done was send two emails to CRT expressing our backing. Apparently the fact that a



second organisation wanted the post replaced was deemed to be significant. So ten minutes sending a couple of emails may have tipped the balance (or maybe they were just being polite?).

Shortly afterwards we got an email from the residents' association of Shardlow asking us to protest to the council planning department about plans for the “Clock Warehouse” to be renamed “The Mill on the Trent” and the historic “Navigation from the Trent to the Mersey” sign to be left off the building. Apparently the pub chain claimed that the central arch (where boats used to unload), had housed a water-wheel to power the mill! The local residents told them that the building was built as a warehouse not a mill, that the central arch had never housed a water-wheel, and that the waterway was the Trent and Mersey Canal NOT the River Trent. The council planning department couldn't help (as the new signs wouldn't contravene any planning regulations) and the pub chain was ignoring the locals.

So, I contacted the council planning department through their website and sent an email to the pub chain. Guess what: the pub chain backed down and apologised profusely to the local residents. Of course the fact that “Waterways World” and “Canal Boat” also got involved could have been what really tipped the balance, but I prefer to think that it was my email ...

Editorial

Happy New Year everyone. We are just back from our New Year cruise to Llangollen, having finally brought our ailing narrowboat back from the boatyard in Christmas week.

Unfortunately we had to call out the boatyard electrician immediately as there was a problem with the alternator (which had been disturbed during the work on our gas locker).



As you can imagine, we were a little apprehensive as we set off on 29th December through a thin sheet of ice, stocked up with coal, a mountain of mince pies, and a shelf full of cat food. This year the fates were kind, the ice melted (but came back for our return), the weather was cold but sunny and the canal was blissfully quiet. We spent New Year's Eve hiding up the Prees Branch and arrived at Llangollen on 2nd January. We acquired our favourite mooring in the basin (right at the side where the cats can roam safely) and hooked up our new long landline so we could spend one night without worrying about being careful with power.

Our amazing boating cats behaved impeccably throughout, although Roger was less than pleased when he donned his wellies and found a dead mouse inside (I don't think they've quite got the hang of Christmas stockings)! En route we noticed a narrowboat which has been out of the water awaiting repair for as long as we have been spending New Year in Welsh Waters: Its licence was dated 1992, so it has been on the bank longer than *The Lady Margaret* has been in the water (and we think we've got problems).

While away we have planned an exciting year of cruising (fingers crossed) and foreign travel. First though *The Lady Margaret* has to have an expensive blacking coat put on her hull to help with our pitting problems— who said a narrowboat was a hole in the water surrounded by metal into which you throw money?.....

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 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.

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

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.

A warm welcome to new life members

**Mr and Mrs A. Chetwyn
of Stoke on Trent**

Welcome back to

**Mr I Andrew
Of Sandbach and Wales
(now rejoined as a life member)**



***and*
Broken Cross Boat Club**

A special welcome to

**Mr N. English
Of Alston, Cumbria**

Hope you enjoy being members of the Society!

Great Haywood Signpost– The Final Episode!

Canal & River Trust chief executive Richard Parry unveiled an impressive new signpost at Great Haywood – junction of the Staffs & Worcester and Trent & Mersey canals on 18 November. The original post, one of a series erected by the Staffs & Worcester Canal Society (S&WCS) in the 1970s at the canal's junctions with other linking waterways, had suffered from rot and had to be dismantled.

The replacement post was funded by CRT, with assistance in manufacture and transport by members of the society. Members involved were honoured on the day: Robert Cox receiving the Tony Guy Plate for carving and painting the letters on the fingers, Glyn Phillips receiving the Bicentenary Award for liaising with CRT and transportation, and Edwin Fasham a gift for cleaning up and replacing the original commemorative plaque.

The ceremony was attended by invited guests Roger Evans, David Dumbelton and Roger Savage from the Trent & Mersey Canal Society and CRT, notably West Midlands waterway manager Ian Lane.



After the ceremony they were all invited to afternoon tea at the adjacent Canalside Farm Café hosted by S&WCS.

*(Picture by Waterway Images)
Copy by Harry Arnold*



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Lock 72

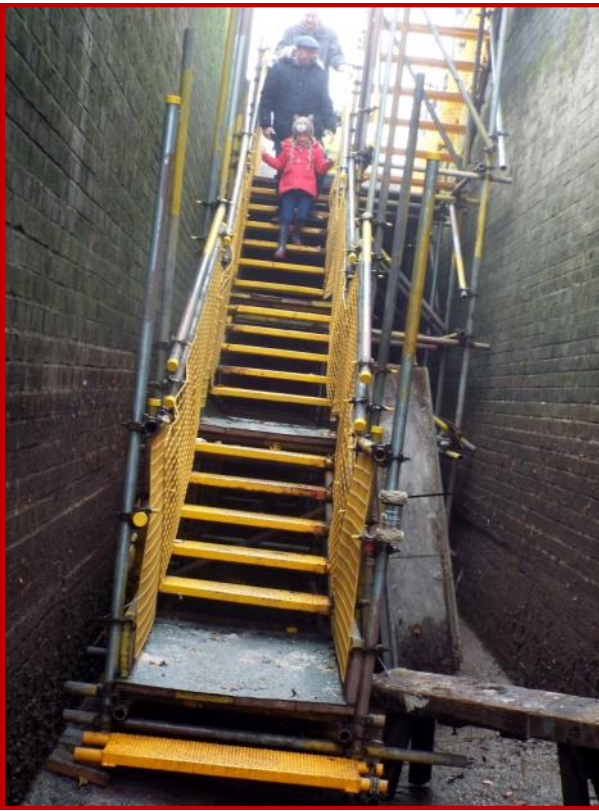
Dozens of people discovered more about Middlewich's waterway heritage with a trip inside a Trent and Mersey Canal lock chamber.

Lock 72, near Middlewich Community Church and Middlewich Narrowboats, was open to the public on Saturday, November 26 as part of a Canal and River Trust open day.

The lock was drained as part of the Trust's essential winter maintenance programme, which saw the bottom gates replaced and masonry within the chamber repaired. The navigation closed until December 10.



Visitors were advised that appropriate footwear was a must, and dogs were not allowed into the lock chamber.

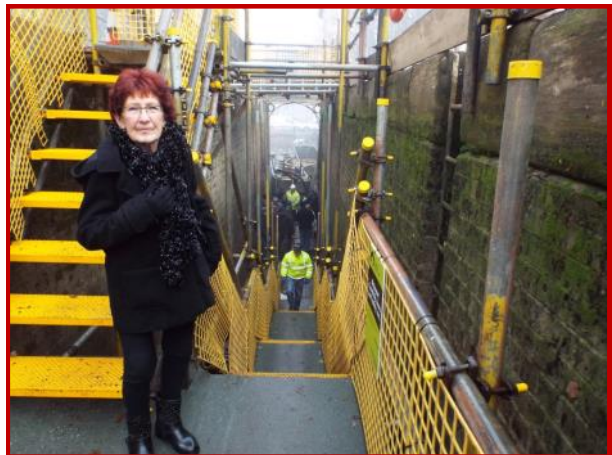


Canal and River Trust engineers were on hand to explain more about the work that is currently being undertaken, as well as the history of the site and the 200-year-old canal.

*From Middleswich Guardian,
(also 1st picture), November
2016*

***Member Shirley
Kingswell
explores Lock 72***

*Photos by Eddie
Kingswell*



Saturn Fly Run

Due to the significant increase in interest & desire to participate in the proposed 2017 Saturn Fly Run, it has been decided to rearrange the event for May 2018.

Numerous opportunities have arisen for community engagement, education & funding from public, voluntary & private sectors and additional time is needed to explore & plan for a far more enhanced event that affords many positive outcomes for both the present & future success of Saturn.

The project will continue and is 'live'. We will be developing timescales and engagement opportunities for which you will be kept informed.

The goals and aims remain the same and we will be commencing in March 2017 with our first consultation & reminiscence event in Manchester.

*Bill Walker
The Saturn Project*

Stoke on Trent Boat Building Co Ltd

DISTINCTLY DIFFERENT



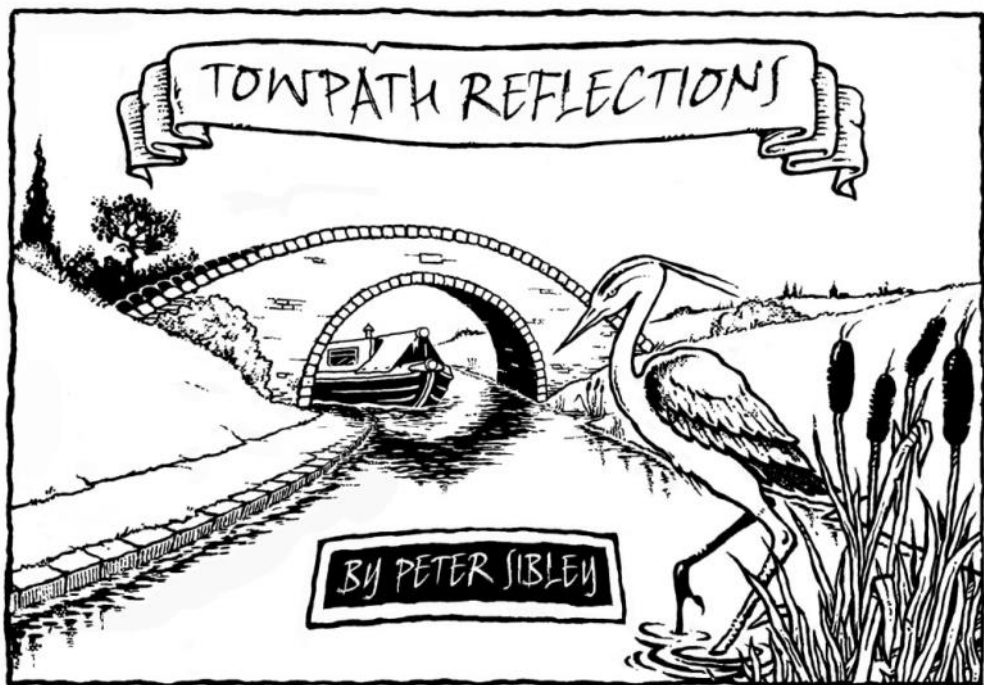
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We left Val and Peter returning to their boat at Banbury.....

Sunday 25th May.

We went for a walk round Spiceball Park this morning. We set off after lunch as the weather was improving. We moored at Cropredy and let Henry (our tortoise) out for a towpath walk in the sun. Once again he became star of the show! We moored opposite Cropredy Church. The clock chimes every quarter of an hour day and night, but strangely not the hours, so if wakeful during the night, you still don't know what's time it is!

Monday 26th May.

Bank holiday Monday: It rained pretty well all day today, fortunately quite lightly at first, so we tackled the locks. There were many boats going the other way which worked in our favour. The rain gradually got heavier so we pulled in at Fenny Compton and had an early lunch. The rain became a little lighter so we went for a walk up the hill to Wormleighton Village. It was very small but totally unspoilt and very quiet as the main street was a cul-de-sac. There is a strange old 14th century Manor House with a massive gate house with a tower to one side. Some large mature trees stood on a green behind the gate house and a narrow pathway led down to the churchyard. A flock of sheep munched peacefully amongst the gravestones. One of the

old cottages behind the church used to be a post office according to a plate on the wall, and this was in a tiny village of around 30 residents. Despite the drizzle, 3/4 of a mile up the hill had been worth it. Remote villages abound in Oxfordshire and apparently there are at least 40 villages and churches within walking distance of the canal.

Tuesday 27th May.

We set off at 7am today to try and avoid congestion at Napton locks. The weather was not good, cold and very grey drizzly rain. We arrived at Napton locks just before 10am. The locks were busy but nobody got held up as boats were going up and down. We got to the bottom of the flight at 11-45am. We moored round the corner for lunch after which we decided to carry on to Braunston, but the rain became heavier and the wind strengthened so we moored by bridge 101 for the night. I topped up the diesel tank. Whilst Valerie was cooking the dinner, a roast with stuffed chicken wrapped in bacon, there came a tapping on the window. A hungry swan attracted by the smell was rattling on the glass with its beak!

Wednesday 28th May.

Yet another dismal day with drizzly rain on and off. About ½ hour after we set off I caught sight of clouds of steam ahead in the distance. It turned out to be N.B. **President** towing the butty **Kildare**, presumably returning from Braunston to its base at the Black Country Museum. We filled up with water at Braunston from a tap, the cover of which didn't lock. The whole area round the tap was flooded with water from a leak at the base and was pouring into the canal. On top of this the elsan disposal



point was out of action and this also was swimming in filthy black water (the content of which I would rather not think about)! By the time we arrived at Hillmorton I was quite bedraggled from the constant drizzle. We had lunch before tackling the locks. Despite the weather the canal was exceptionally busy, probably because it was half term week. We just managed to find moorings in Rugby close to Tesco's.

Thursday 29th May.

We took a walk into Rugby town centre which turned out to be considerably further than we thought it would be, through a rather down at heel suburb and past the railway station, which looks as though it has been rebuilt and is now a rather uninspiring disappointing place which has a multi-story car park just above the ugliest erection it is possible to imagine. All this from what was once a great railway town. However the town centre made amends. It is a pleasant mix of old and new buildings with a farmers' market going on in

the market place. At the end of the High Street in Lawrence Sheriff Street stands the famous old Rugby School where a game with an egg shaped ball was played, a game of course which is world famous.

There is also a new covered shopping precinct and new library and art gallery which we visited. There is also a separate Rugby Football Museum.



Clock in Rugby Shopping Centre

We caught a bus back to the canal bridge and then had lunch during which a never ending stream of boats passed in both directions. As we left our mooring a boat coming up behind filled the gap we had vacated seconds before. Due to the congestion we were forced into passing another boat coming through the bridge. We suddenly recognised it as being a couple of friends from Barnton on the way to the Kennet and Avon Canal. A brief break in the traffic allowed us to have a chat whilst under the bridge. We carried on and soon arrived at my favourite stretch of the North Oxford through All Oak Wood and the following cutting. We replaced our gas cylinder at Rose Narrowboats at Stretton Stop.

The main line railway follows the canal for some distance here and we moored for the night at a point where the canal bows briefly away from the railway.

ALL CHANGE AT FRADLEY

THERE are major changes at Fradley, around the historic junction of the Trent & Mersey and Coventry canals and its well-known Swan Inn. Fradley Junction is a conservation area and the majority of the buildings and structures are Grade II listed.

The Kingfisher Holiday Park & Café have acquired the premises operated by Fradley Marine Services: the building and shop attached to The Swan, the dry dock opposite, all the mooring rights around this, and those along the towpath, which extend from outside the pub to below Middle Lock. In recent years Kingfisher has invested a considerable sum in improving and modernising what used to be simply a caravan site.

Owner Jim Collins has stated that the permanent moorings - from opposite the caravan site office up to the lock - will remain; but the rest, on both side of the canal above Junction Lock, will be casual visitor moorings and boats will be charged for their stay. There are discounts for those using Kingfisher's facilities. He believes this is the only way to stop boats just being left.

The shop will be renovated and reopened next Spring, selling a whole new range of groceries, supplies for boaters and souvenirs. Mr Collins plans to tidy the whole place up and has had staff clearing away years of rubbish that had accumulated around the dry dock. The unsightly plastic awning over the dock entrance will be removed and when current winter commitments are fulfilled he will only hire it out for private owner work: **No heavy boatbuilding!**



Mr Collins has also built a major new entrance from the entrance lane below Bridge 50 and bought the land to construct a new road around the back of the nature reserve into his Kingfisher site. This is a version of a 1960's proposal which foundered because various owners couldn't agree. He has tidied up and installed bollards in the area by the gate (stopping cars being left there and wrecking the verges).

At The Swan Inn newish owners Everards Brewery have applied for planning permission for some alterations to the exterior, including new, rather large, signs and lighting. ***IWA Lichfield Branch are commenting.*** Apparently Lichfield District Council is not too happy with interior 'improvements' that have been made. Grade II listing does also apply inside buildings.

There are also to be further changes at the CRT offices and maintenance yard. With the abolition of the Central Shires Waterways area Fradley now comes under the West Midlands Waterways. When this area's Fazeley HQ is closed and staff are moved to the new Birmingham office some will come to Fradley. CRT waterway manager Ian Lane told us that this will take place gradually. It is not clear where they will go, or park their cars; parking is often at a premium due to the popularity of the Canalside Café and the nature reserve.

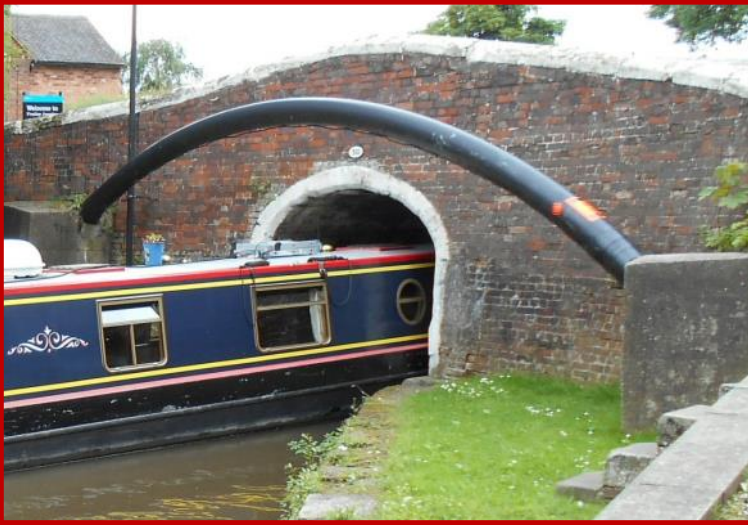


*Thanks to
Harry Arnold
for allowing
me to use this
copy.*

Pictures by Waterway Images

Another Change at Fradley

A further change is the removal of the black pipe spanning the canal below Bridge 70 and Keeper's Lock:



Interesting in that – according to the locals – it was first put in to supply Fradley Airfield with fuel during World War II. Apparently, it is still used for moving fuel (details are difficult to establish) as it was bypassed by

a link beneath the canal about a year ago.

The ends sit in concrete blocks and (as we go to press) have yet to be capped. We understand that the concrete blocks are not to be removed – although IWA Lichfield Branch requested this – even though they stand against a Grade II listed structure; dating from at least 1771 when this section of the canal was first navigable.



With true large organisation efficiency, even though it was disused, the pipe was painted and notices asking to report any tampering attached just before it was removed. Something that nobody can remember ever happening before!

Harry Arnold
(Photos Waterway Images)



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

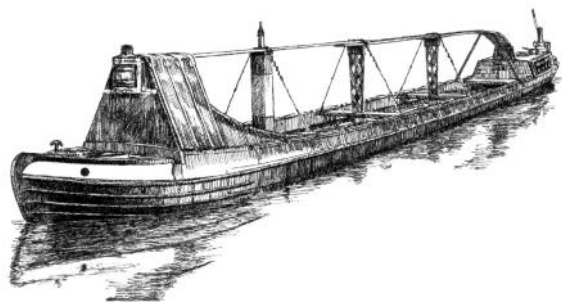
Why not join us for our monthly work parties, on the Cheshire Locks between Kidsgrove and Wheelock, carrying out vegetation management and other tasks in the fresh air and good company?

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

A SUCCESSFUL YEAR **FOR SATURN**



The Shropshire Union Fly-boat Restoration Society (SUFBRs) reports a successful year in the 2016 operation of the educational and campaigning programme of its unique historical fly-boat Saturn.

In addition to welcoming the public aboard, particularly families, at main events on north west waterways, notable specific education events were organised at Trefor (147 children from schools in Llangollen and Wrexham areas), Middlewich (144 children from schools in the town and area), Lymm (228 children from this and surrounding village schools) and Grapenhall (58 children from the local primary school)

For 2017 Saturn is already booked to attend the National Waterways Museum's Easter Gathering at Ellesmere Port (14-17 April), where SUFBRs also traditionally hosts its AGM, and the Middlewich Folk & Boat Festival (16-18 June). Lymm Historic Transport Day (25 June), with Aqueduct Marina's Open day (23 July). Audlem Festival of Transport (30 July), followed by the Whitchurch Boat Rally (2-3 September).

Dates for other events and school educational visits are at the planning stage - at such regular venues as the Anderton Boat Lift - and we would welcome enquiries from event organisers and schools about venues that may fit in with our outline programme.

One of the major events considered for 2017 has been a Fly-Run from Whitchurch to Manchester. Preliminary planning has revealed great interest from community and business sectors and we have decided to aim to stage the run during May 2018. This will allow sufficient time to explore and plan a far more enhanced event that affords many positive outcomes for Saturn and our supporters, with opportunities for the promotion of education, community engagement and waterways heritage, and offering funding possibilities from public, voluntary and private sectors.

Saturn has now been operating for 12 years and we have a planned long-term programme for her maintenance in exemplary condition. She is currently at Alvecote where Adrian Polglase of AP Boatbuilding is undertaking this winter's work at a cost of £9,500.

Funding is raised by the society's activities and generous donations from individuals, organisations and the boat industry. If you wish to donate, volunteer, join SUFBRS, or suggest an event we might attend, please contact us via our website: www.saturnflyboat.org.uk It will also update you on our 2017 programme of events.

SUFBRs chair, Sue Cawson, said – “We have had a successful year in 2016 and the society would like to thank all members, friends and organisations – particularly the Canal & River Trust – who have worked so hard to make it so. We are looking forward to an even better 2017 and would appreciate help from anyone who can support our work with Saturn”.

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FESTIVE DICKENSIAN CHRISTMAS CHEER AT NORTHWICH'S AWARD-WINNING LION SALT WORKS MUSEUM

Christmas cheer was in high supply at the Lion Salt Works Museum's recent Dickensian Christmas weekend, held on 10 December and 11 December. The Museum is located next to the Trent & Mersey canal, near Northwich, and has its own moorings. The special Christmassy atmosphere of the Northwich Museum's historic site was enhanced by the sound of traditional carol singing by the Rivendell choir, the noisy stomping of Morris dancing from local Earl of Stamford Morris Dancers and the presence of fully-steamed up miniature steam engines from the Amalgamated Miniature Traction Engine Club. All the Museum's staff wore Victorian outfits.

Father Christmas in his Winter Wonderland Grotto was a great hit with the younger visitors who were also fascinated by the snow that miraculously fell from the sky after each visit to the 'Winter Wonderland Grotto'. All activities were free including imaginative craft activities, story-telling in a specially constructed 'Storybox' area and the fascinating 'Cabinet of Curiosities' run by 'Professor Josiah Mace', at which children learnt about old and interesting objects in a magical way.

Thanks to a local appeal, there were enough plastic milk bottles donated by locals to construct a 400-bottle eco igloo. Not only was the igloo a fun place for youngsters to enjoy, it was also a talking point for everyone. The idea behind the igloo was to encourage everyone to consider the environmental importance of recycling.

Councillor Louise Gittins, Cabinet Member for Communities and Wellbeing at Cheshire West and Chester Council said: "This was a joyful, imaginative and well -attended Christmas event. The Museum is very grateful to staff and volunteers, as well as the choir, morris dancers and partner organisations, such as Cheshire Wildlife Trust, who came along to support us. Making the event look effortless requires a lot of organisation and co-ordination.

"It is also a huge logistic exercise for so many miniature engines to come to the site and we continue to be very grateful to the Amalgamated Miniature Traction Engine Club, co-ordinated by Clive Hearsey, for brining so many

fantastic engines to the site. The engines were a joy to see and so evocative of the Victorian era, especially when in steam.”

This year, the multi award-winning Museum was named ‘Heritage Project 2016’ by the National Lottery Association after a public vote. This is one of the top heritage awards in the country.



Father Christmas and his elf (Katherine West, museum and arts manager for Cheshire West and Chester) at Lion Salt Works beside the good old T&M!

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 01/03/2017.

Santa swaps Rudolph for the Anderton Lift

Between 17th and 24th December Santa and his elves cruised from the T&M onto the Weaver distributing presents. Hope you're resting now Santa!



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



Above Alrewas Lock, November 2016
(picture courtesy of Waterway Images)

