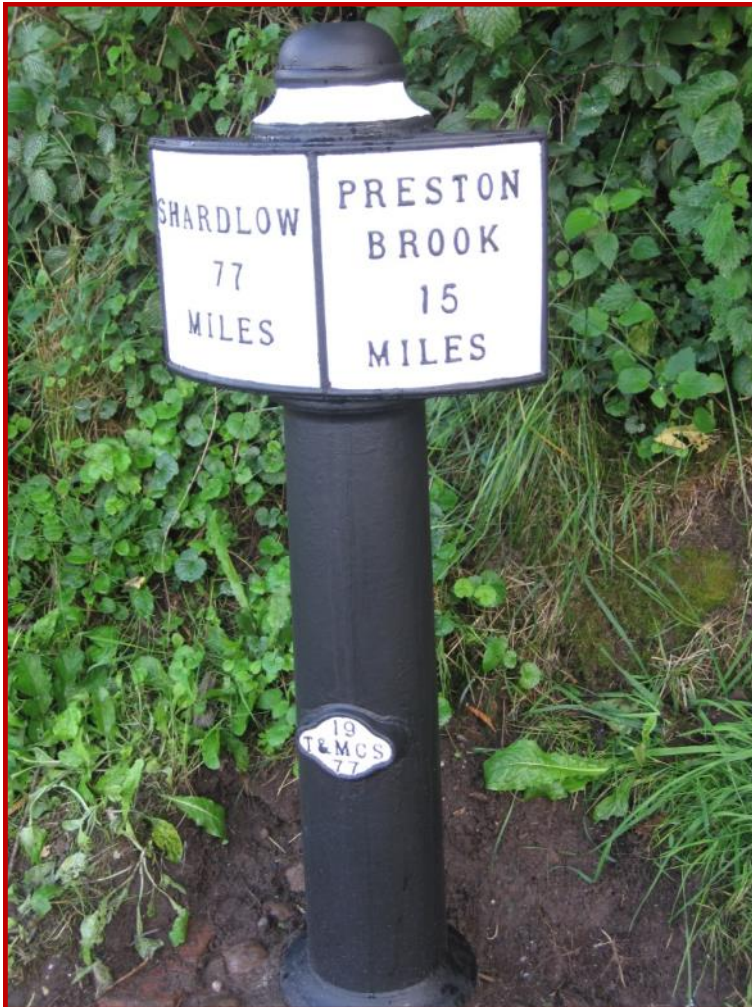


# GRAND TRUNK



*Guess where this  
One is!*



*See page 6*

**September/October 2017**

[www.trentandmerseycanalsociety.org.uk](http://www.trentandmerseycanalsociety.org.uk)

## **Chairman's Bit**

We are currently moored at Ilkeston, helping run the society's sales stand at the IWA Festival of Water on the Erewash Canal. Both Friday and Saturday have been dry and hot, and tomorrow is forecast to be even hotter. Can this really be a Bank Holiday weekend?

Our new "Nail Game" (given to us by IWA North Staffs and South Cheshire) is proving very popular and profitable. Also popular has been our range of 2nd-hand decorative plates (for putting up on the wall, not for eating off). I must thank those members who gave them to us. We launched our 2018 calendar here this weekend, and they are selling very well. This year they are slightly more expensive at £3, and will be on sale at our social meetings as usual.



From the start of November (NOT earlier please) we will also be taking "Christmas" orders by post for calendars (postage £2 extra) along with orders for clothing, hats and bags. Full details will be in the next issue.

***Our Wonderful 2018  
Calendar Front  
(picture by Brian Holt)***

***The cover picture attracted lots of interest, and the calendars were by far our best-selling item.....Ed***

## **Editorial**

Hello everybody! Here we are at Ilkeston, hot tired and aground! We had a great cruise here, all the way down our beloved canal and a little of the Trent, before we set off up the Erewash. The locks are hard and the gates heavy, but we teamed up with another boat (crewed by lovely young men), passed the festival site at Gallows Inn Playing Fields and continued to The Great Northern Basin (peaceful and friendly), intending to return to site the next day to start work.



Then disaster struck! Aslan, our 4 year-old cat (who has never put a boating paw wrong) failed to return from his nightly rampage the following morning. Roger went home by train and retrieved his car and the boat stayed firmly where she was while we travelled to site by road– spending all our spare time searching, calling and hoping.

After a third sleepless night, Aslan popped through the cat-flap at 5.30am, hungry but otherwise unharmed. I leave you to imagine the welcome he received. Thank you to everyone who was so kind. and understanding.

*The Lady Margaret* raced to Ilkeston with a full feline and human crew and normal service was resumed. I won't say more than this non-drinker has downed more than her fair share of cider!

See you next time!

### **EXCITING NEW MERCHANDISE!**

Just arrived, Society cloth bags.  
These have a generous shoulder strap  
And a very individual logo!

Only  
£2.50  
each



Pick one  
up from  
the stall or  
at a social.

## More Milepost Miracles

Society stalwarts Eddie Kingswell and his wife Shirley undertook to tidy up and paint the mileposts between their mooring (above Crow's Nest Lock) and Middlewich.



They did this by boat, taking along their dog to help. Shirley dressed specially in her nautical stripey top!







As you can see from this picture, they had their work cut out!



This is just a sample of their work—well done and thank you, Eddie and Shirley.

Now we need some volunteers to tackle the mileposts in Stoke!

## **One Milepost- Good news and bad!**

As part of the milepost campaign anniversary, chairman Roger is recording every T&M milepost on the society website. For those who don't know about the campaign, here is a brief explanation. During the war (the second one) it was feared that the mileposts would assist an invading army to find their way around. Consequently the mileposts were dug up: Some were buried or put in 'safe' places and others just disappeared! Now, after the Society had successfully campaigned for the restoration of Harecastle Tunnel, therefore re-uniting the two parts of the T&M the next task was to restore the mileposts to their former glory so that they documented the entire length of the canal. Sponsors were found for the missing mileposts which were recast just like the originals, but bearing the inscription 'T&MCS 1977'. These replacement mileposts sported plaques at their base giving details of their sponsor, and were ceremoniously unveiled at the time with some very useful publicity (and pictures in Grand Trunk).



On researching the mileposts for the website project, it became apparent that some plaques had mysteriously disappeared. Roger and I undertook to walk to Bridge 176 (between Middlewich and Bramble Cuttings)) and dig at the base of the milepost there to ascertain if the plaque was indeed missing.

The milepost was in pristine condition, newly painted and looking very smart! Saltscape had asked the Society for advice on paint and method, as they had some funding to repaint the mileposts between Middlewich and Preston Brook. They had done a great job on this one, thank you Saltscape. They had also cleared the vegetation at the base of the post, and it was very apparent that the plaque was missing. The bare concrete base and surrounding stones remain.

We hope to replace the missing plaques but more research needs to be done- watch this space!

*Margaret English*

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## Cheshire Locks, July Work Party

*Thursday 20th July 2017*

We tidied up the other small jobs near Lock 41.

First we cut-back the vegetation hiding the fingerpost at the junction with the Macclesfield Canal, now everyone can see where they are going!



*Fingerpost hiding  
behind trees*

*Fingerpost clearly  
visible afterwards*



*Photos by  
David Clegg*





Then we cut back the vegetation, rubbed down and painted the towpath bridge (across an old overflow weir). The railings appeared to have been transferred from somewhere else. They showed a lot of wear from tow-ropes (or had been used for tying up). The base of the railings was of railway origin. How many other things do we travel past and never notice these interesting details?

*Before*

*Photos  
By  
Margaret English*

*After*





**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 3pm 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***

## More Milepost Good News

Following confirmation of the missing plaque from the milepost near Middlewich (see p.6), we have had some very good news regarding the missing plaque from the milepost at Barrow on our Southern section.

This was reported as missing as far back as 2001, and was particularly special as it was unveiled by celebrity farmer Ted Moulton.

Long-time Southern section member Vaughan Wheatley found the plaque loose in the hedge bottom whilst out walking and took it home for safe keeping.

The plaque appeared to have been hit by machinery of some sort (presumably a mower) at the top right-hand corner. Vaughan discussed the possibility of replacing the plaque with society stalwart Alan Bates but alas, Alan's illness overtook things.



Ex-committee member and milepost painter Dave Brewin now has the missing object and discussions are continuing as to how best to replace it—

*watch this space!*



## **If you haven't been to The Lion Salt Works in Wincham, Northwich yet, WHY NOT?**

We really recommend that you make a plan to do so. The staff are very knowledgeable about the industry and its history so a trip around the museum itself is really worth a try.

The café has lovely hot and cold drinks and a selection of sandwiches and snacks and even an ice cream freezer.

There is a gift shop with a variety of items you may like either as a memento for yourself or as a gift for a friend or family member. There are even pocket money type gifts for the younger members of your party along with a great outdoor play area (some of which even look sturdy enough for the 'grown up' kids amongst us.)

Both Eddie and I have been to a couple of events over the last year or so here with the Trent & Mersey Canal Society stand. May Day bank holiday in 2016 saw the inaugural Vintage Transport Event on the Sunday and Monday which was well attended by both large engines and small and even a steam boat. Although the weather wasn't very favourable everyone seemed to enjoy themselves. We set up the stand indoors with our usual fare of used books, ribbon plates and our nail game and both Eddie and I enjoyed ourselves immensely, even signing up a couple of new members for the society. We enjoyed ourselves that much we booked our stand in for this year's event before last year's had even finished.

### ***Fast forward 12 months.....***

So this year the weather was more favourable and the event had definitely grown in popularity. There were vintage cars along with both the expected small and large traction engines and this year there were three working boats, Shropshire Union fly boat 'Saturn' and motor boats Buckden and Shad. There was even a trip boat for people to take a cruise along our canal to the Anderton Boat Lift.

We set up our stand again indoors where there were a couple more stands this year which gave people some variety of things to see and do. We had a

few new items for sale – our cotton shopping bags and also neckerchiefs, for dogs & people alike and even had a couple of new helpers on the stand, Anne Davies and Anne Chetwyn, who helped Eddie on the Saturday.

Although we didn't gain any new members this year (we will try harder next year – we have booked again already) we did manage to raise £54.30 to add to our account.

On behalf of Trent & Mersey Canal Society we would like to thank Phil and all the staff at the salt works for their help in setting up the stand and looking after us so well during the weekend. We were made to feel so welcome we even got to enjoy a couple of staff perks.

*If anyone would like to come and spend an hour or two with us at a future event to see how much fun we have your help would be appreciated and we would make you very welcome*

*Paula Jackson & Eddie Kingswell*

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Cheshire  
CW9 6ES**

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Tuesday to Sunday 10.30am-4pm (Nov.-Jan.)**

**Admission prices  
Adults £6.50  
Concessions £5.50  
Child £4.00**

**Annual and family passes also available.**

## **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 20th October 2017.....**

Ian Rogers

### **Knot Tying**

Ian will talk about the International Guild of Knot Tyers and knot work and demonstrate how knots are tied and used both in boating and decoratively.

**Friday 17th November 2017.....**

Ann Pollard

### **Staffordshire & Worcester Canal**

Ann Pollard is the Secretary and much more for the Staffordshire and Worcester Canal Society and will give us an insight into their canal that we might not otherwise see.



**Friday 19th January 2018**.....

Ray Johnson

**Brindley and Wedgwood, Chalk and Cheese**

An appreciation of the career of James Brindley from contemporary correspondence and writings of his great friend Josiah Wedgwood. Plus video clips of some of the 300th Anniversary events in 2016 and extracts from Ray's documentary on the history of Canals and Canal Boats. Experts, archive film and unique personal reminiscences reveal the changing face of canals and the boats that worked them.

**Friday 16th February 2018**.....

Bill Walker

**Fly Boat Saturn**

Bill will talk about the lives and history of the Fly Boatmen and the Shropshire Union Company.

**Friday 16th March 2018**.....

Derek Smith

**Cruising on Remote Waterways**

Derek and Jeanne Smith are keen trail boaters and share their experiences in this illustrated talk that looks at cruising on remote waterways, mainly unconnected waterways that are under restoration.

**Friday 20th April 2018**.....

Phil Clayton

**Joeys, Joshers and James A BCN Miscellany**

An introduction, accompanied by pictures, words and music, to the beginnings, development, working life, decline and renaissance of that wonderful network of waterways known as the Birmingham Canal Navigations, together with a little about the work of the BCN Society.

***There will be a separate card with meeting dates included in the next issue. In the meantime...HOLD THE DATES!***

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

**A RURAL REVOLUTION  
THE STORY OF A STAFFORDSHIRE FAMILY  
AND THEIR VILLAGE**

**David R. Roberts 2016  
Matador, Leicestershire**

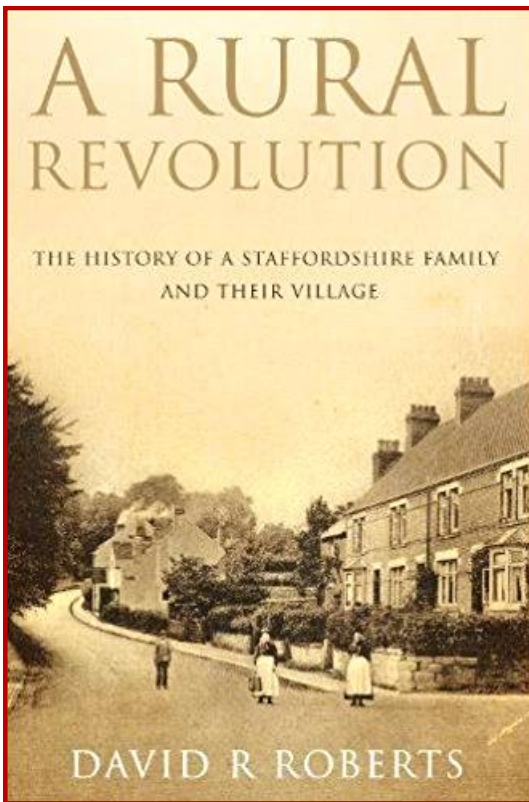
An alternative (but not as interesting) title to this book might be *A History of Social Change resulting From Developments in Transport*. That's just in case you were wondering why this review is in a canal society publication! Anyone interested in the Victorian era, transport (particularly The Trent & Mersey Canal), and village life, will be enthralled by Roberts' account. Yes, this is a history book, but one written very differently from the usual tome.

The book starts with a death—that of William Sproston in 1896. It traces the fortunes of the Sproston family, not always chronologically, to Nel Sproston who died in 1988. In case of confusion, there is a family tree, a map of the canal and another of the three villages of Great and Little Haywood and Colwich where the family put down roots after moving from Middlewich. A really interesting facet of the book is the way the author hangs digressions about many different changes on the family saga. The fact that William had seventeen children, for example, leads to a discussion on child life expectancy in the Victorian era and the insanitary conditions of country cottages and in industrial cities. In chapter three the tale suddenly dives into the past, when mention of Middlewich leads to a discussion on the civil war.

Chapter four, the longest in the book, deals with the arrival of canals, with their history beginning in 6 BC (p.36), and details how the Trent & Mersey made Staffordshire the hub of the canal system. There is even an early photograph showing William Sproston's canal boats about 1890! Railways and roads follow in subsequent chapters, together with details of how the

new transport systems shaped and altered village life and discussions of (almost) related matters like old age pensions, the suffragettes, and the similarity of HS2 upheavals to those of earlier times.

Roberts is keen to point out that although the praise for canal (and railway) construction goes to Thomas Telford and his like, they were actually made by the ordinary unnamed navvies doing dangerous work (p.82), while boat people were ostracised (p.49). The book however, has its moments of humour, as when Roberts wondered if the Romans practised on 'B' roads (p.62).



The book has been well-researched and there are source notes at the end, as well as a comprehensive bibliography. It was slightly surprising to note that the likely location of Job Sproston's boat building business (by lock 57 at Hassall Green) is stated to be a restaurant and shop (p45), as both have been gone for some years. However, the buildings certainly still exist. The front cover shows the Main Road at Little Haywood in the late 1800s, and the picture is repeated on the last page. The story ends as Nel Sproston leaves her cottage to start a new life- is there more to come I wonder?

*Margaret English*



## The Canal de St Quentin and the Hindenburg Line



***Cambrai Moorings***

Continuing our motorhome trip in north east France we stayed for a few nights in the town of Cambrai where the navigable River Escaut joins the Canal de St Quentin.

We enjoyed walking along the towpath by the canal where all the locks are paired and have a central quay. We passed a fishing competition that was being held in the very short section between locks 2 and

3 from 7am till 7pm – there can't have been any fish left to catch after 12 hours!

During World War 1, after two years of war on the Somme, the German army set up the defensive Hindenburg Line which incorporated some sections of the Canal de St Quentin. This Line included Cambrai and on 20 November 1917 the first full scale tank battle in history began there when the Royal Tank Corps and British Third Army advanced. Operated by a crew of eight the tanks then were rudimentary and steering took three men, each on separate gearboxes who communicated by means of hand signals as the tank's internal noise made spoken communication impossible. There was no ventilation and temperatures inside could rise to 48°C. Of the 179 tanks lost in the Cambrai battle, few were destroyed by the enemy – the majority broke down and were abandoned by their crews!

The Canal de St Quentin was officially opened by Napoleon in 1810 and about 20 miles south of Cambria is the Riqueval tunnel at Bellicourt which takes the canal under the hills at Riqueval and Bony. Construction of this tunnel took 8 years and at 3 ½ miles long it is the longest tunnel still in use on the French waterways. There are no ventilation shafts in the tunnel and so no engines can be run and a tow service is provided by a chain tug which

picks up electric power from overhead cables. It moves by means of a 5 mile long chain laid at the bottom of the canal and anchored at each end. It is designed to tow a maximum of 30 barges and it takes on average two hours to go through the tunnel. When we visited two towing tugs were moored near the tunnel entrance and above the entrance by the Tourist Office a tug built in 1910 has been turned into a Towing Museum (*see right, Tunnel tug below*).



During World War 1 the canal here was also part of the Hindenburg Line and the tunnel at Riqueval was used by the Germany army as barracks. They put 34 barges in the tunnel which were used for accommodation and sealed it at both ends and it was to become

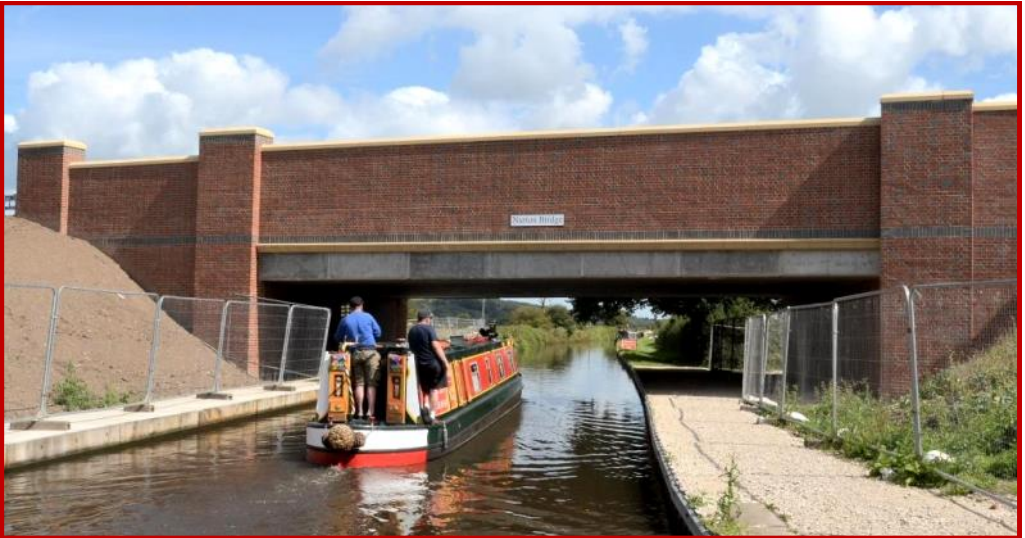
one of their safest shelters. In September 1918 recapturing the tunnel was one of the objectives of the Battle for the Hindenburg Line. The attack was launched and the tunnel fortress was taken by the Americans on 29th September 1918 whilst the Australians recaptured Riqueval bridge which was the only one left across the canal. The Bellicourt American Monument lies above the tunnel about a mile from the tunnel entrance and commemorates the achievements and sacrifices of the American troops in WW1 during 1917 and 1918. Nearby is an obelisk erected in honour of the 4th Australian Division. In this region there are so many War Memorials and Cemeteries but the area is now very peaceful and the scenery is a mix of woodland and wheat and sugar beet fields – a total contrast to the events that took place here during 1918.

**Annette & Terry**

NB Emily and Steamboat Sidney  
Kennet & Avon Canal

## **New Bridge at Branston**

A few issues ago we reported on the new bridge at Branston near Burton (home of the famous pickle), and its part in changing the character of the canal. The bridge is now finished and goes by the name of **Nurton Bridge** (not Burton!). It is named after the development company doing the 'Branston Locks' housing and development scheme– Harry Arnold checked with Staffs CC. to confirm this.



Harry also took a picture of a T&MCS member's boat going under the new bridge. The skipper is Steven Bates, son of the late Alan Bates (see p.11)!

*Picture courtesy of Waterway Images*

Please send contributions for the next issue to me, Margaret English, by e-mail to [margaretetlm@hotmail.com](mailto: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 November/December edition is 01/11/2017.

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## *Christmas Meal*

Following the success of last year's event, the Society's Christmas meal will once again be at :

**Red Bull Public House**  
**On Friday 1st December**  
**7.30 for 8.00 pm**

No menu available as yet, but there will be the usual free raffle and exciting quiz!

**Don't miss it!**

*Names to Roger or Margaret  
Please*



## Water and Wheels

Exciting news! Roger and Martin Fuller are setting up a new museum beside our Trent & Mersey Canal in Stone, devoted to canal and railway memorabilia. They need our custom and our help.

They describe the museum as **a collection of canal and railway items from Great Britain.**

If you have anything of interest you would like to display, you could either,

- 1) Donate.
- 2) Put on loan (5 year renewable).
- 3) Sell on condition that the item is displayed.

**Please contact Roger or Martin to talk about their plans for the museum.**

**Roger Fuller on 0781 822 1826**

**Martin Fuller on 0780 777 8998**

**unit 43B, Limekiln Basin, STONE, Staffs, ST15 8LQ**



# 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***



***Steps Down From Macclesfield Canal at Red Bull***

Not satisfied with clearing all the vegetation from the steps that access the Macclesfield Canal at the side of the aqueduct that carries it over The Trent & Mersey, David Clegg and Ashley (Cheshire Locks Work Party Leader) spent an extra day painting the handrails. In the picture, those on the left are done, the other side is waiting its turn.

*Photo by David Clegg*