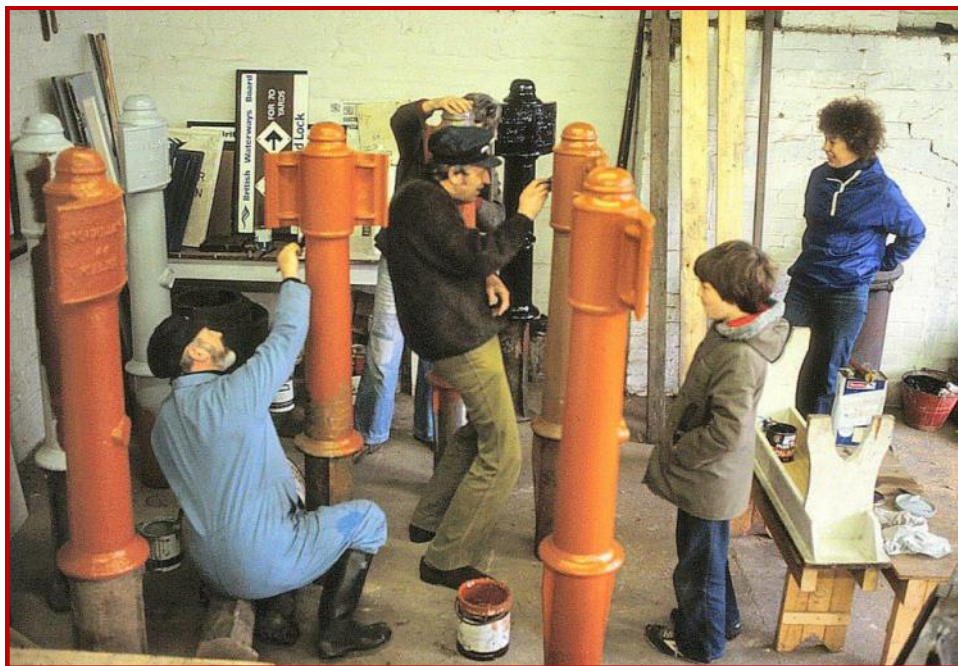


GRAND TRUNK



Painting the four original posts that were found under rubbish in one of the arches by Dallow Lane Lock, before replacing them through Burton. It is – by courtesy of BW – in the workshops at Fradley. Rob Davies in the centre, with son Andrew watching him to the right. Another great T&M character - Billy Bird – is on the left. (See obituary p.8)

Photo by Waterway Images



November/December 2017

www.trentandmerseycanalsociety.org.uk

Chairman's Bit

I am pleased to report that our Cheshire Locks working party (run jointly with IWA North Staffs and South Cheshire) has successfully “branched out”. As well as continuing to repaint Church Locks, they recently took part in a 5-day offside vegetation clearance project from Hardings Wood Junction to below Wheelock. Many overhanging branches were cut back, so hopefully the way ahead will now be clearer (and a bit more visible) for boaters.



As mentioned last issue, we are now taking “Christmas” orders for calendars by post along with orders for clothing, hats and bags. See details on the next page of this issue. However, even better, why not come along to our next talk and buy one there without the cost of postage. If you can’t make it to a talk, they will also be available at our Christmas Meal on December 1st. See page 17 for full details of the menu, closing date for orders, etc. Why not come along and tackle one of Margaret’s famous quizzes?

On a sadder note, this issue contains the obituary of Rob Davies. His name will be familiar to our longer-standing members as he was very active in the early days of the society, particularly on our milepost project. Hence this issue’s cover picture. Our thoughts are with Rob’s family at this sad time.

Speaking of mileposts, repainting has slowed with the wetter colder weather, but we still need volunteers to re-paint the posts in Staffordshire (and parts of Derbyshire). Why not look forward to Spring and let me have your details now?

Next issue will be 2018, so I will take this opportunity to wish all our members a wonderful festive season and a very happy New Year. Let’s hope 2018 is a great one for our canals, with fewer stoppages and water problems, and lots of eager volunteers!



Editorial

We are just back from a month exploring San Francisco, New Zealand and Singapore and having difficulty returning to Greenwich Mean Time! San Francisco was lovely, but has a big homeless problem. New Zealand seems to have forgotten to build any canals, but is otherwise wonderful, and Singapore is very vibrant and very hot!



Our new boat is now a piece of metal, but our New Year cruise will be on our beloved Lady Margaret (see if you can spot her in *Towpath reflections*). ***Merry Christmas everyone.***

Calendar 2018



Here is the amazing front cover of our brand new calendar (a big hit at Ilkeston). Competitively priced at £3.00 each, these are available at meetings and the Christmas meal. We also take “Christmas” orders by post for calendars (postage £2 extra) along with orders for clothing, hats and bags.

Contact Roger or Margaret (details on p.23) to arrange this.

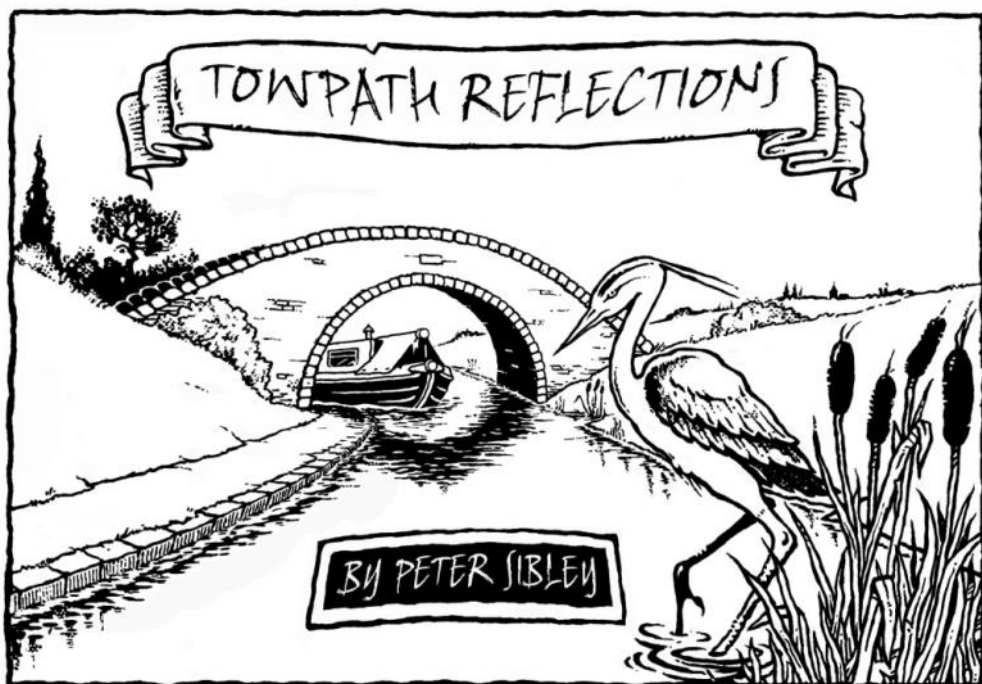
Below is our unusual cloth bag logo.

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Friday 1st May



*Passing double moored boats
at Middlewich*

We set off this year on our annual canal trip with - for the first time ever - no clear idea of where we were going. I have endured several weeks of ill health so we decided to 'play it by ear' and see how I coped with boating. We proceeded in a southerly direction towards Middlewich. The weather was dry with sunny spells, but a chill wind blew.

We were pleased to see progress on the Lion Salt works at Marston and look forward to visiting it in the near future.

We were however surprised at the lack of progress on both the new marinas. The one opposite Orchard Marina seems to have been going on for

ever and the Oakwood Marina in Billinge Flashes has not progressed at all in the last 12 months. Could there be lack of demand?

We moored for the night at the foot of Big lock. After dinner we formulated an itinerary. We would attempt the Leicester Ring which we hadn't done for 12 years or more. We would head South via the Shroppie then decide when we got to Autherley junction which route to take.

Saturday 2nd May.

Boaters it would seem are a hardy breed, for despite awful weather which was cold and windy with occasional showers thrown in all day, there were plenty of boats about. We set off early, had lunch at Barbridge and stopped for the night at the top of Hack Green Locks. We took turns in steering the boat, one going inside to warm up by the stove, so we didn't get too cold. It was a rather uneventful day!

Sunday 3rd May

Rained heavily through the night. We were woken by rain hammering on the roof. It was still raining the next morning, but less heavily. We left it till 9am before we set off but it was still raining; there seemed fewer boats about today. The weather improved, we even had a few sunny intervals but short showers kept up through the day. We were helped through Audlem Locks by the crew of a following hire boat. We decided to call it a day when we reached Market Drayton.

We had chatted to a farmer a good while at the top of Adderley Locks, and had seen 3 kingfishers today!

Monday 4th May (Bank Holiday)

After a peaceful night we awoke to a sunny dawn. I decided (curiosity got the better of me) to go and inspect the handiwork of a small gang of local teenager vandals we had heard sawing away deep down at the foot of the steep wooded embankment (at the top of which we were moored) that previous afternoon. They later passed us with the saw wrapped in a sweater. I climbed over the chained up gate from the towpath and descended 50 steep steps. A large section of handrail had been sawn through, uprooted and thrown into the stream which runs under the canal, together with several small trees and branches, it seems they were trying to ford the stream.

We decided to go for a stroll round Market Drayton and refresh our memories of the pleasant old Shropshire Market town. The place was eerily quiet, but then it was only 8-30am and a bank holiday. We returned to the



Market Drayton

full swing. We managed to find a place to moor at the water point to replenish our supply: We also had showers and emptied the loo. We carried on to Gnosall where we moored for the night.

Norbury Junction



boat for coffee before setting off. We had seen no one on the move until we arrived at Tyrley and encountered a boat in every lock coming the other way. Tyrley locks are our favourite locks on the Shroppie. We surprisingly passed no one in the narrow and long Woodseaves Cutting.

We had lunch on the move and arrived at Norbury Junction about 2-45pm. It was a hive of activity here as the Norbury Boat Festival was in



Heritage Narrowboat
Dane

Dane, one of Britain's last remaining wooden built narrow boats, came home' to [Middleport Pottery](#) in [September](#) following a £150,000 restoration.

The boat was built in around 1946 at Mersey Weaver, which used to be based next to the Middleport Pottery site, where the Steelite factory now stands.

(full article can be found in Stoke Sentinel)

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OBITUARY – ROB DAVIES

T&MCS members will be sad to hear of the death of stalwart long-time society campaigner Rob Davies, who passed away suddenly, following a short illness, on 6 September at the age of 77. Born in North Wales, a career in bank management with NatWest led to him and his family moving into a canalside house on the Coventry Canal at Whittington 44 years ago.

The family became waterway enthusiasts and boat owners and – as bank managers are always vulnerable to this - Rob was cajoled into voluntary work for T&MCS by the then chairman Roger Lee. He became society treasurer and successfully steered the society's finances over a number of years. Rob also became involved in masterminding campaigns and events, such as those for the milepost replacements and the restoration of the Anderton Boat Lift.

As an IWA member he became treasurer of the Midlands Region but on a wider basis he was a director of National Waterways Festivals and a joint vice-chairman of the board. Supervising the organising of IWA national events and with a very much hands-on role in those in the Midlands; such as the massive Black Country ones. He received a prestigious IWA Richard Bird Medal for his work for the association.

When the idea of preserving and restoring a Shropshire Union Canal fly-boat was mooted he was one of the two joint-founders of the project. Which became the Shropshire Union Fly-boat Restoration Society and led to the restoration of Saturn and its current operation as an educational facility. Again, his financial acumen led to HLF and other grants and the full funding. He was still actively involved as a trustee and was elected as one of the two vice-presidents

Following the reopening of Ireland's Shannon-Erne Waterway he was again one of the two people who led a major anniversary of the original Ballinamore & Ballyconnell Canal by taking a flotilla of English canal boats (by ferry) across the sea to that country. They spent two weeks in a major celebratory cruise on the canal and the Shannon and Erne systems.

Buying a new boat equipped with a traditional Russell Newbery engine, Rob joined the owner's Register. He became its Administration Manager, only retiring recently after dedicating 18 years to the role. His contribution was enormous, as he also organised the first five Register boat rallies, handled the production of – and often edited - 61 newsletters, and introduced merchandise.



Locally, close to home, he was a trustee and committee member of the Lichfield & Hatherton Canal Restoration Trust and an active member of the marketing committee.

The village of Alrewas was gridlocked with parked cars and Alrewas Methodist Church and the attached schoolroom packed out with Rob's friends

from all over the waterways for his funeral. Some RN owners came by boat. He left a legacy of achievements and friendships and will be missed by many. Our condolences go out to Helen, Rachel and Andrew and all of Rob's family.

By Rob's dear friend, Harry Arnold

Photos courtesy of Waterway Images (see also p.19)



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 Brighouse
John.brighouse@waterways.co.uk 07808878317

Recent Work Parties

Thursday 17th August 2017

We started work on Church Locks (locks 47 & 48). Most of the metalwork around both locks was prepared and painted.

Thursday 21st September 2017

Work continued on Church Locks (locks 47 & 48)

Thursday 19th October 2017

Painting of metalwork completed on Church Locks (locks 47 & 48), but heavy rain prevented completion of woodwork painting.

Thursday 16th November 2017

Painting of woodwork on Church Locks to be completed, weather permitting. In the event of rain, the work party will take place on the following week.



Lock 48 (before painting!)

Picture by Roger Kidd, Wikipedia Commons

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 **01/01/2018!**

From the Picardy Region to Champagne

Driving south from the Canal de St Quentin we joined the Canal du Nord at Péronne and stayed in the canalside campsite there. We were surprised at the number of working boats on the move – most of which were push-tows and within an hour we'd seen 7 go by.

We drove along the Aisne valley and stayed near the Canal de l'Oise à l'Aisne in the village of Bourg-et-Comin. This canal links the Rivers Oise and Aisne and is a route for boats heading south from Calais or Dunkerque and Belgium. From the village we walked along the towpath and beside four locks. By each lock is an ugly grey and very blockish building inside which is the lock control gear and signs before the locks indicated use of a remote control to activate the lock mechanism.



After lock 10 we were on the summit level and we walked to the entrance of the 1½ mile long Bray tunnel. This is lit inside and at the entrance is a huge extractor fan for removing fumes. Access to the tunnel is controlled by traffic lights and we waited to see if any vessels would appear. The first one was a well turned-out pleasure craft and a bit later on

we heard the engine of another vessel and also heard it hitting the sides of the tunnel a couple of times. Then out it came – an empty barge from Dunkerque. The bow was so high out of the water that we don't know how the steerer could see anything ahead at all.

We walked back to Bourg-et-Comin where there is a hydroelectric station next to the canal by the aqueduct over the river Aisne. This was initially built to pump water up to the canal from the river. Between 1925 and 1927 it produced electricity to power the tractor units that hauled the barges. It is now owned by Electricité de France and produces electricity for domestic use. The water is now being taken from the canal and discharged into the River Aisne which is the reverse of its original design.

Our next stop was at Epernay – the Capital of Champagne. We stayed in the campsite next to the River Marne which is navigable to the Epernay visitor moorings. We went into the town and walked along the Avenue de Champagne which took us beside lots of very grand champagne “maisons” belonging to the bigger producers and under the Avenue are cellars containing 200 million bottles of Champagne. Under the Moët et Chandon building alone there are 19 miles of cellars and Winston Churchill called the Avenue “the most drinkable street in the world.”



We walked to the nearby village of Cumières which is surrounded by vineyards. The village is beside the River Marne and along the Quay de la Marne are 8 metal sculptures about 6ft high depicting the work involved to produce champagne from planting, pruning and picking through to turning the bottles and finally tasting. Cheers!

Annette & Terry
NB Emily and Steam-
boat Sidney
Kennet & Avon Canal

Turning the Bottles

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 1st December 2017.....

Christmas Meal

Red Bull public House—see p. 17

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.

Stuck for Christmas presents?

Don't forget The Society has polo shirts, fleecies, baseball caps. Cloth bags and calendars for sale.

See last issue for the revue of A Rural Revolution, which would make a great present.

Or how about an annual membership as a gift– then all your friends could read Grand Trunk too!

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

Ilkeston Festival of Water

Our trusty society stall ventured into the Southern part of our region to attend this year's festival of water on the Erewash Canal. We had three days of glorious weather (yes, even bank holiday Monday!) and met lots of people including vice-chairmen and members– it was lovely to be able to put faces to names.



The stall was opposite to Shreck, the Boat Horse, who regularly set off for walks around the field, his ears protected from flies by a fetching hairnet. Our pop-up banners prompted discussion, as did our pictures of newly-painted mileposts.



Star of the show, however, was our new Nail Game, kindly donated by IWA North Staffs, South Cheshire. Players found it addictive and the children loved picking from our mystery prize box. If you don't know how to play the game, come along to one of the stand outings and find out! You could even wear the official money belt and encourage passers-by to take part.

Next years festival is on the Great Ouse at St. Neots– this is a little too far for the society stall, but our new boat will be there (fingers crossed).



Christmas Meal

Red Bull Public House

Friday 1st December

7.00 for 7.30pm



Menu (announced 10th October) - Cost £17.95

Homemade Soup with Crusty Bread

Chef's Pate with Melba Toast

Prawn Cocktail served with Brown Bread

=====

Traditional Roast Turkey with all the Trimmings

Traditional Roast Beef, Yorkshire Puddings, Potatoes & Seasonal Vegetables

Oven Baked Darned of Cod topped with Lemon & Herb Crust

Vegetable Cannelloni with Mixed Vegetables in Tomato & Basil Sauce

=====

Christmas Pudding with Brandy Sauce

Apple Pie & Custard

Homemade Lemon Cheesecake

*There will be the usual quizzes and a **FREE** raffle.*

A GREAT WAY TO START ADVENT

Why not come along and enjoy the atmosphere. ***You could even buy your 2018 calendar!***

We have to tell Red Bull the numbers and menu choices ***by November 24th. Please let Margaret know*** (by email, phone, or at the November meeting) if you wish to attend, and be sure to include your choices from the menu above.

01606 834471

margaretetlm@hotmail.com

Burglary Suspect in Harecastle Tunnel Rescue

Fire crews rescued a man from a 1.5-mile canal tunnel after he jumped into the water while being chased by police. The man was pulled from Harecastle Canal Tunnel, near Kidsgrove, by firefighters at about 07:30 BST.

Inspector John Ward of Staffordshire Police said officers pursued the man after being called to reports of a burglary.

"The suspect jumped into the canal and was there for about 45 minutes - we had to get assistance from the ambulance and fire services," he said.

Inspector Ward said fire crews used a dinghy to reach the man who was "hiding in the tunnel", which had been sealed off by police.



The suspect, 29, was taken to hospital and has been arrested on suspected burglary offences, he added.

Staffordshire Fire Service said the man was treated by paramedics for suspected hyperthermia. The spokeswoman added the operation involved three fire crews and the water rescue unit from Newcastle-under-Lyme.

From BBC News Stoke & Staffordshire 09/09/2017

....and what happened next!

A 29-year-old man who had to be rescued from a canal while running away from police has been charged with burglary.

Andrew Baker was rescued from the water by firefighters after jumping into the canal and going into Harecastle Tunnel near Kidsgrove early on Saturday morning.

He was removed from the tunnel by colleagues from Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service and received treatment at the scene by West Midlands Ambulance before being taken to hospital.

Staffordshire Police have now confirmed Baker, of Lynmouth Close, Biddulph, has been charged with one count of burglary of a dwelling and and theft.

Stoke Sentinel 11/09/2017



Rob handing over the sponsorship cheque to Roger Lee for the next, NatWest Bank milepost, at the Ash Tree Boat Club milepost unveiling ceremony.

Winter Stoppages on our canal

Lock 1, Derwent Lock

From Date: 6th November 2017 at 08:00 ***To Date:*** 15th December 2017 at 16:00 inclusive

Lock 26, Aston Lock

From Date: 2nd January 2018 at 08:00 ***To Date:*** 20th January 2018 at 16:00 inclusive

Lock 24, Weston Lock

From Date: 2nd January 2018 at 08:00 ***To Date:*** 22nd January 2018 at 16:00 inclusive

Lock 55, Pierpoints Top Lock

From Date: 2nd January 2018 at 08:00 ***To Date:*** 26th January 2018 at 16:00 inclusive

Lock 53, Thirlwood top Lock

From Date: 29th January 2018 at 09:00 ***To Date:*** 23rd February 2018 at 16:00 inclusive

Lock 31, Meaford bottom lock

From Date: 29th January 2018 at 08:00 ***To Date:*** 23rd February 2018 at 16:00 inclusive

Lock 38, Twyford's Lock

From Date: 26th February 2018 at 08:00 ***To Date:*** 3rd March 2018 at 16:00 inclusive

Lock 43, Red Bull Lock

From Date: 26th February 2018 at 08:00 ***To Date:*** 16th March 2018 at 16:00 inclusive

Lock 37, Cockshutes Lock

From Date: 6th March 2018 at 08:00 ***To Date:*** 16th March 2018 at 16:00 inclusive

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Welcome to New Members

**Mr and Mrs Bartlett
Of Shardlow**

**Mr P Rogers
Of Stoke on Trent**

**M/s B. Davenport
Of Davenport's Farm Shop, Northwich**



We hope you enjoy being members of the society

Christmas is coming!

Stuck for a present?

Why not treat someone to a Society sweatshirt, or a polo shirt, or a fleecie?

Our baseball caps with embroidered logo are very popular-

While ***everyone*** should have one of our amazing cloth shopping bags, with shoulder length straps and an unusual logo.



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.....£15.00

Polo shirts.....£12.00

Baseball caps..... £8.50

Fleecies.....£25.00

Bags..... £2.50

Calendars.....£3.00



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

All these items can be purchased at social meetings, or by post (please apply to Roger for postage costs).

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



*Wide-boat on The Trent and Mersey Canal
Below Swarkestone Lock*

(Just a little reminder that from Stenson Lock, our canal is **wide**)
Anyone got interesting pictures of this stretch of canal?

Photo by

Margaret English

 **Merry
Christmas**