

GRAND TRUNK

BW Maintenance boat
Harecastle



Remember the article in the last magazine?
Here she is!

Picture courtesy of Waterway Images



September/October 2018

www.trentandmerseycanalsociety.org.uk

Chairman's Bit

I was pleased to hear recently that work has finally started on repairing the Middlewich Breach. Various proposed completion dates have been mentioned, but basically it looks like they are hoping to reopen the canal around Christmas, although other work will continue afterwards.

Living on the “almost dry” section we have observed the water level falling, then rising as they top it up by pumping from the Trent and Mersey through Wardle Lock. A few weeks ago we noticed that the level seemed to have become much more consistent and decided to investigate. The pump had gone from Wardle Lock and water was running merrily over the stop-planks into the Trent and Mersey. But where was it coming from? A visit to the breach site quickly answered the question. A pipe there was disgorging water into the canal, but from where?



Asking around we finally found the answer. CRT had eventually decided that they could no longer take water from the Trent and Mersey as the levels in Middlewich and on the long section to Preston Brook were suffering. Instead they were now pumping water round the breach, so that water which had been running to waste at Stanthorne Lock was now being used to keep the Trent and Mersey topped up (as it did before the breach). A sensible solution.

Did any of you get to visit the breach on the Open Weekend of 8th-9th September? If you did, and have some good photos, please consider letting Margaret see them as we would like to put some in the next magazine. We didn't make it as we are still journeying home from St Neots.

On a totally different topic, you may wonder why there is another insert in this issue about our 2018-19 season of talks. The reason is that our meeting room at Big Lock has been double-booked after the pub changed hands. Gillian has managed to find a new location for this season, so a new insert was needed! See page 14 for more details. Hope to still see you there.

Editorial



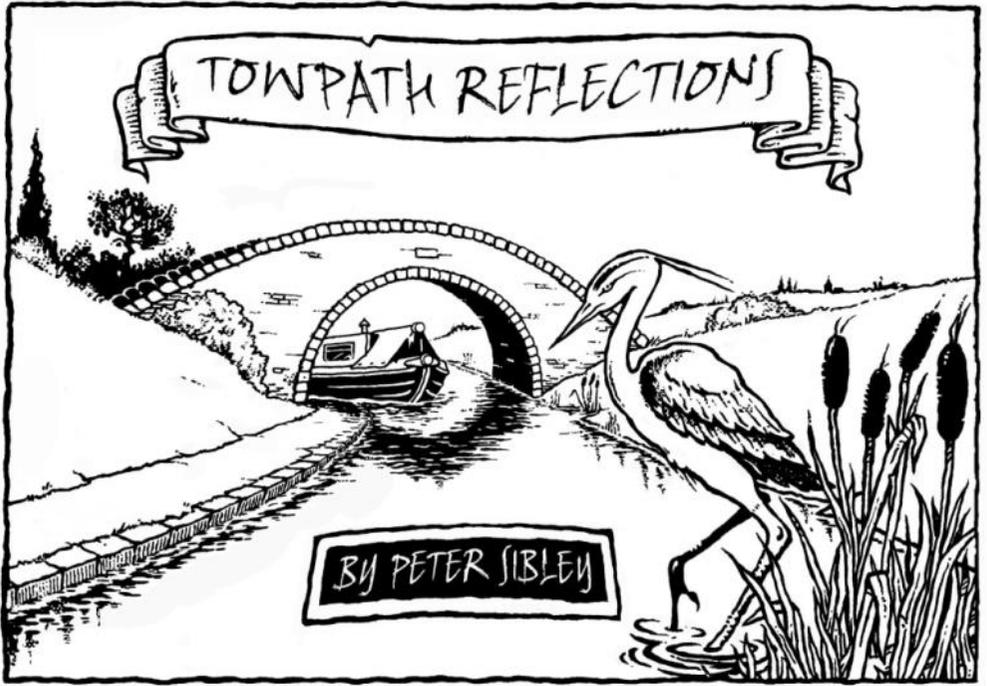
Hello everybody! Here we are on the River Nene, heading homewards. The Festival of Water at St. Neots was great. We all worked very hard, and have been asked to repeat the miracle at Waltham Abbey in 2019. We had heavy rain showers with hail on Saturday afternoon and it poured all day Sunday, but the locals still loved it and learned a lot about their waterway. We were lucky enough to be moored bankside (well, with the help of a little temporary staithe) and had a plank off at the front labelled ‘cat plank only’. This caused some amusement.

Special thanks go to two organisations which we joined-*Friends of the River Nene* and *Great Ouse Boating Association (Goba)*. We would not have been able to moor without them. I am looking forward to returning to the canal system, where we can moor almost anywhere in the towpath– something we narrow-boaters tend to take for granted.

In this issue you will see that the venue for our social meetings has changed (see p.14). We hope to return to Big Lock next season. Also, details of our Christmas Meal are on p.22. This is always an enjoyable occasion with good food and company, quizzes and a free raffle. Please get in touch with me if you would like to attend.

Finally, I thought you would like to see our floating heaven (p.6) instead of a plug for Society merchandise, but don’t forget, we have sweatshirts, t-shirts and baseball caps available (sadly calendars are no longer economic).

Please send contributions for the next issue to me, Margaret English, by e-mail to margaretelm@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 **01/11/2018!**



We left Valerie and Peter (and Henry the tortoise) above Swarkestone Lock.....

Thursday 21st May.

We had a day off from boating today and caught a bus into Derby. At the bus station we enquired about times of buses to Kedleston. Being National Trust members, we thought we'd make use of our passes for the first time this year. The buses were 2 hourly and we had just missed one so we visited the local museum, then had lunch on a bench at the market before making our way back to bus station to catch the Ashborne service.

The bus driver dropped us at Kedleston Smithy. A short walk down the road brought us to the gated Kedleston Hall. A long drive of over $\frac{3}{4}$ mile led up to the house (which is set in Capability Brown type landscaping) at the far side of the lake and accessed over a fine stone bridge. The Hall was built by Lord Curzon, not to live in, but purely as a showplace for his large collection of fine art works. The place was not over busy so we were able to chat to the various room guides. Apparently Kedleston stood in the middle

of fine sweeping views, and Lord Curzon thought nothing of evicting all the villagers and demolishing the village entirely! We made our way back up the long drive stopping on the way for a coffee, sat on a tree stump and rested our legs before catching the bus back to Derby.

Friday 22nd May.

It was a grey gloomy day, though a lot warmer than of late. We set off early determined to make a bit of progress as we had received a phone call from our neighbours telling us a hospital appointment had been arranged for the 5th June. We worked through Swarkestone, Weston and Stenson locks. The first 2 are very deep (and hard work!), but the countryside is tranquil.

However, soon after Stenson the dreaded A38 appears on the right hand side and plagues the canal (apart from a small section through Barton) almost up to Alrewas. Fortunately the locks now shrank to half the width and half the depth! There was a gathering of trade boats including a blacksmith, by the park in Burton. We resisted the urge to stop and eventually found a relatively quiet spot behind a Travel Lodge hotel, right opposite Barton Turns Marina.

Saturday 22nd May.

We set off at 8am this morning, another grey day with no wind but remarkably warm. We made our way to Wychnor Lock, as the Trent crosses the canal near here. Advisory water level markers are used here. There was 7 inches or more of green showing, which meant river levels were low, so we carried on through the lock.

We arrived at Cow Bridge, which slopes considerably from one side to the other. The southern side has hardly any head room, so all canal traffic is directed to use the right hand arch. Another boat was approaching from the far side but I was much nearer, so I proceeded to go through the arch. The other boat however showed no signs of slowing down, virtually forcing me to reverse onto the bank. He passed without any thanks, just mumbled 'good morning'! Was he under the impression that he had the right of way as it was a river section and he was coming down? The river only passes through the canal for a very brief length before it passes over a weir and this happens considerably after Cow Bridge. Perhaps I should have given him the benefit of the doubt, but his attitude was abrupt.

Another incident occurred near Armitage where the canal narrows considerably and is also on a bend. I proceeded slowly through this section towards the end boats moored on the towpath side. I was nearly out of the narrow section when a boat coming in the opposite direction forced his way in, causing me to almost collide with moored craft. I received no acknowledgment at all. I was beginning to wonder if I was invisible!

Not risking another confrontation, I sent Valerie on ahead to check whether there was anybody coming through the old Armitage Tunnel narrows— There wasn't! However, when we approached the dog-leg section (with bridge over) near Spode Hall, another boat must have been in exactly the same position on the other side of the dog-leg. Suitable evasive action by both of us prevented a prang— and we both apologised!

The 4th (and thankfully) last incident of the day occurred shortly afterwards when I was almost through another bridge. The lady driver of a boat waiting for me to come through panicked when her boat started to drift towards us. Instead of reversing, she must have pushed the throttle forward and she came straight for us! Only quick action by her partner prevented another near collision. There again there was no apology. We moored for the night at Rugeley and Valerie went to Tesco quite late and returned with some well-reduced bargains.

The Lady Beth

A big thank you to everyone who wished us well with our new boat. In case you're wondering, here she is— give us a wave as we pass!



45 ft. of heaven!

Margaret English

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Couldn't resist this article about feathered rescue on our canal!.....Ed.

From Middlewich Guardian 7th August 18

FIREFIGHTERS responded to an animal rescue call by the RSPCA on Monday, August 6.

One fire engine, from Middlewich, attended the scene in Booth Lane and the animal rescue unit from Lymm.

Shortly after 7pm firefighters were called by the RSPCA who requested assistance with the rescue of an injured seagull on the Trent and Mersey canal.

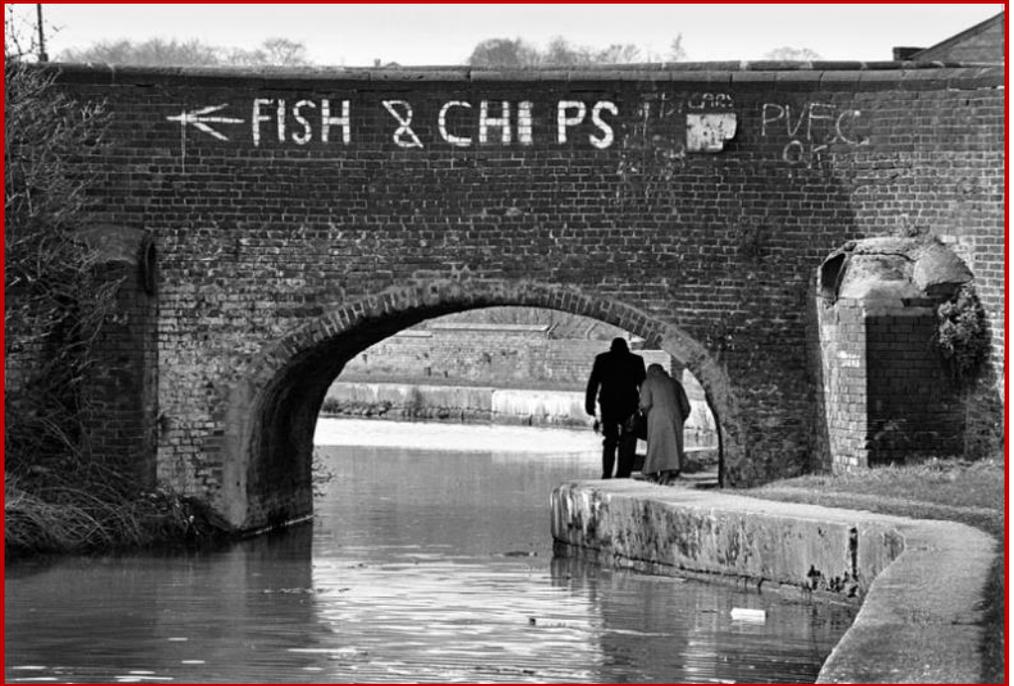
Crews attended the scene and used a water sledge to reach the bird, it was then passed to the care of the RSPCA.

The team were detained at the scene for approximately 10 minutes.



***Can anyone help Mr Dunn identify this bridge?
The following cry for help was received by our chairman!***

‘I have a photograph of a canal bridge in Stoke on Trent. It was taken about 1990 for a feature I did for The Sunday Times.



I am revisiting, and trying to catalogue, many of my old images, and this one has me puzzled. My internet research has drawn a blank. Is it possible that you, or one of your members may be able to identify its location.

All good wishes.
Philip Dunn’

Please let chairman Roger know if you have any ideas– he will pass them on to Mr Dunn.

More trouble in Middlewich.....

At around 3.20am on 18th May firefighters were called to reports of a boat being on fire on Booth Lane in Middlewich. Two fire engines attended - one from Middlewich and one from Holmes Chapel

On arrival crews discovered that the 3m x 6m motor cruiser moored at Kings Lock on the Trent and Mersey Canal was well alight and that no-one was on board.

Firefighters used two hose reel jets and a main jet to extinguish the fire. They pumped water from a nearby source to help fight the fire. Firefighters were in attendance for around an hour and 10 minutes.

The fire is believed to have been started deliberately. Police were at the scene and arrested a 31-year-old man from Middlewich on suspicion of arson with intent to endanger life in relation to this incident.

From Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service

(this article just missed the last magazine!)



Kings Lock Public House

Photo copyright Beer in the Evening



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

Salt Towns Rally

This year, instead of holding an event in Winsford, a moving boat rally was organised, beginning on the Trent and Mersey at Middlewich.



The King's Lock in Middlewich was ready to host the inaugural Salt Towns' Rally with plenty of local talent to celebrate the event. (picture Miles West)

On Friday 17th August at 6 p.m., dignitaries were invited to attend a reception with a jazz ensemble followed by bands who would grace the stage for the rest of the evening.



Damon Horrill, chief executive at Cornerstone Inns, said: “Saturday and Sunday were set to be akin to the festival held at The Lock over the FAB weekend, with a big stage and bar in the grand marquee and a second stage at the water’s edge and all day live entertainment.

“The line-up of artists performing featured many of our talented Weaver Valley Artists, musicians and bands who live in Middlewich, Winsford or Northwich.”

After a weekend of festivities in Middlewich the cavalcade of boats headed for Northwich via The Anderton Lift. A stage was erected in Baron's Quay on Thursday, August 23, where artists and bands on stage entertained boaters and locals from midday until 7pm.

On Friday, August 24, the boats departed for Winsford and The Offcut festival over two arenas.

Damon said: “The idea of the three towns working together on projects such as this have been long discussed given the shared salt mining heritage and waterways linking Middlewich, Winsford, Northwich. Together the towns are known as The Weaver Valley.

“The Salt Town’s Rally sets out to highlight the fantastic waterways that link the three towns whilst campaigning for a boat lift in Winsford to raise boats from the end of the Weaver to the Middlewich branch of the Shropshire Union Canal so as to create the Weaver Valley Ring of water which will become the most popular stretch of water in the country for leisure boaters and tourists.”

“The waterways that brought industrial prosperity to mid Cheshire once before are ready to bring prosperity once again in the new age of leisure tourism on and around the waterways connecting the three towns.”

The events in Middlewich, Northwich and Winsford were all free to attend.

STOP PRESS!

Change of Venue for 2018/2019 season Talks

Owing to an oversight when the Big Lock pub in Middlewich changed hands, our meeting room is no longer available for talks. For the coming season therefore, **all events will be held in the upstairs room at:**

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



For further information contact: Gillian Watson 01606 835 606

<u>Date</u>	<u>Subject</u>	<u>Speaker</u>
21/09/2018	RNLI	Mark Thomas
19/10/2018	The Uttoxeter Canal	Steve Wood
16/11/2018	Braunston canal age transport hub	John Pomfret
18/01/2019	Murgatroyd's Brine Pump Middlewich	Mike Walton
15/02/2019	The Darjeeling Himalayan Railway	Patrick Marks
15/03/2019	The Wooden Canal Boat Society Story	Chris Leah

Please do come along, support the Society and have a great evening. The usual raffle will take place, society goods will be available, and all talks are absolutely free!

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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

Lime down the Loire

Earlier this year we spent a couple of nights in the town of Montjean sur Loire which is on the south bank of the river Loire between the large towns of Angers and Nantes. The river is navigable here and while we were there the flow was very fast. There is a suspension bridge which carries the main road over the river - two earlier bridges were destroyed in World War 2 and the current bridge was opened in 1948. The river rises rapidly during floods and next to the bridge was a board showing flood levels over the years and the highest records a level of 6.8 metres in 1910 which is practically at the level of the road itself.



Lime Kiln

The town of Montjean has a rich industrial history and was once an important port on the river. The reason for this was that there was coal and lime there. The coal was mined to bake the lime that was extracted from quarries nearby in the many lime furnaces that were beside the river. The lime kilns were massive and were about 10 metres tall and about 5.6 metres in diameter. In 1891 23 lime kilns were operating there. The last kiln closed in 1962. It was discovered that, by putting baked lime on the acid soil of the fields in the Anjou and Brittany regions, rye, wheat and vegetables could be grown. Boats were built at Montjean and then loaded with the lime it had baked on a large scale. These boats travelled down the River Loire to Nantes to join the Canal de Nantes à Brest. The boats were able to fit through the locks on the canal and carried around 100 to 120 tonnes of lime per boat. Before 1914 statistics show that about 320 boats loaded with lime were leaving Montjean each year heading along the Loire for Nantes and travelling on to other parts of Brittany.

*Annette & Terry
NB Emily and Steamboat Sidney
Kennet & Avon Canal*

No new members to report this issue!

A subscription to the society would

Make a lovely Christmas present!

Contact Margaret to arrange.



Poppies at Middleport

Ceramic Poppies in the commemorative sculpture 'Weeping Window' are currently on display at Middleport Pottery by the banks of the Trent & Mersey Canal in Stoke-on-Trent until 16 September. Boaters passing on the canal and walkers on the towpath opposite have an ideal view of them, in effect streaming from the top of the bottle kiln.

The iconic work by artist Paul Cummins and designer Tom Piper is from the installation 'Blood Swept Lands and Seas of Red', which created such huge public interest at the Tower of London in 2014. It is presented by 14-18 NOW, the UK's First World War centenary arts programme, Stoke-on-Trent City Council and UK Historic Building Preservation Trust.

Over four million people have already seen the poppy sculpture as it has toured around the country, adorning buildings such as Carlisle Castle, Liverpool St George's Hall, Hull Maritime Museum and St Magnus Cathedral in Orkney. Middleport Pottery, is one of the final stops in a four-year tour before the poppies become part of the Imperial War Museum's collection.

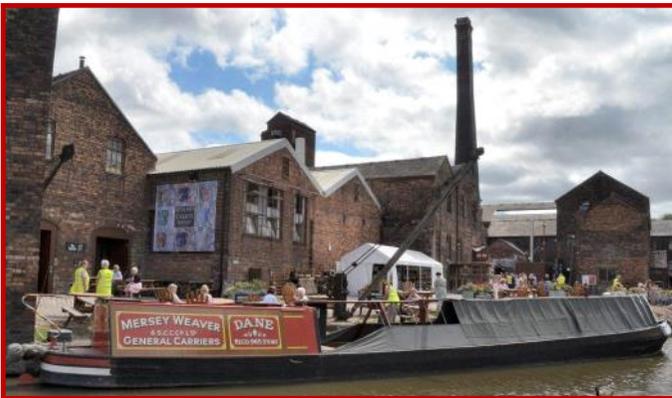


It is an appropriate venue for its finale as Stoke companies Potclays provided the clay for the ceramic poppies and Johnson Tiles produced hundreds of thousands of the symbolic flowers for the original installation which numbered 888,246 poppies. One for every British or Colonial life killed at the Front during the First World War. It is understood that Potclays used canal water to make the clay.

Local volunteers and staff of the Canal & River Trust (CRT) have created a safe viewing area, with appropriate fencing, for visitors to see the display from the towpath. The towpath can be accessed from Longport Wharf, Bridge 126, or from footbridge No.125 at the southern end. During our visit CRT volunteers were most helpful in supervising and there were refreshments provided from two floating traders' boats moored nearby.

Cllr Abi Brown, deputy leader of Stoke-on-Trent City Council and chair of Poppies: Weeping Window steering group said: "Poppies: Weeping Window at Middleport Pottery could only uniquely be of this city where we make art from dirt. And that could only be possible with the extensive canal system in Stoke-on-Trent. It's how it all began. It's significant for it to come full circle and for the Canal & River Trust to play such a key role in helping visitors to have such a wonderful canal-side experience of the artwork."

*Harry Arnold
Article from Towpath Talk*



***NB Dane
At the pottery
Pictures
Waterway
Images***

FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS AT FRADLEY JUNCTION

Along with the well-known historic Swan Inn one of the longest established business at the Trent & Mersey Canal's Fradley Junction is the Kingfisher Holiday Park. Once a simple caravan park it has been expanded and developed by owner Jim Collins and his family into a major leisure development which is acquiring not only a regional tourist but a national reputation.

Over the years further land has been added and all the caravans are now of the modern specifications. The park both sells caravans to private owners and lets them as holiday accommodation and there is a current planning application in for 33 further pitches within the Park. Linked to this and other developments is the opening of a new road giving direct access to the Park from the main Fradley lane, in effect safely bypassing the single route along the canalside.

Adjacent to the popular restaurant is an indoor heated swimming pool, in a modern-style building. A unique facility for this historic waterway location. For sporting enthusiasts there is crown green bowling and a tennis court and – if you are an angler – it has the fishing rights to Pool within the Fradley Reserve. Apart from the natural attractions of the walks around the reserve – particularly for children – there is an on-site outdoor play area and indoor games room keep them.

With the fairly recent final demise of the marine business at Fradley, Jim Collins acquired the lease of the boatyard building next to the Swan Inn, containing the shop, from the Canal & River Trust (CRT). Along with the land and the dry-dock opposite and the mooring rights on the towpath side up to Middle Lock. In a new investment development these building have been purchased from CRT and are now part of the Kingfisher Holiday Park's operation.

The dry-dock – which has already been considerably renovated – will continue in use under the supervision of experienced operator Kevin Dickenson. Perhaps the most interesting proposal is that for the building next to the Swan Inn. Design discussions are in hand with architects and other involved

parties to convert it into a holiday let, which will have a stunning view of the Junction and the Coventry canal opposite. No decision will be made about retaining the shop until the design is finalised.



Kingfisher Holiday Park owner Jim Collins, with a member of his staff, on the on the café terrace. Fradley Junction and the dry dock in the background.

Plans are under discussion to convert the original boatyard building and shop, next to the Swan Inn, into a holiday



Thanks to Harry Arnold and Waterway Images for this article and pictures



Christmas Meal

Red Bull Public House

Friday 7th December

7.00 for 7.30pm



Price £18.95 per person

Chef's soup (v) (gf)

Creamy garlic mushrooms topped with Stilton crumble (v)

Duck pate with Cumberland dressing toast

Roast turkey with all the trimmings

Roast Beef in a rich Diane sauce

Salmon fillet on julienne of vegetables topped with a dill hollandaise

Vegetable roulade with a rich tomato sauce (v)

Cheese and biscuits

Christmas Pudding with brandy sauce

Crepes filled with boozy mincemeat topped with Drambuie cream

There will be the usual quizzes and a FREE raffle.

A GREAT WAY TO START ADVENT

Why not come along and enjoy the atmosphere?

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. Special dietary requirements can be catered for.

01606 834471

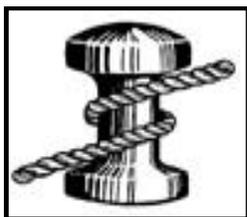
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Bringing Boats Back to Burslem

Cheshire Locks Work Parties

In July, the rails around lock 57 (Hassall Green) were rubbed down and painted and weather-proofing was carried out.

On a blisteringly hot day in August all rails were completed, to the delight of the resident boaters!

Before...



And after!

Photos John Lawson