

# GRAND TRUNK



*Working on  
The Middlewich  
Breach*



*See p. 12/13  
Photo Margaret English*

**November/December 2018**

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

This issue will be sad reading, especially for long-standing members.

Firstly this issue contains the very last in a long line of “Towpath Reflections” as Peter and Val Sibley have decided that it is time to stop writing up their cruises. Many thanks to them for writing these articles over such a long period of time, and we all hope that they continue enjoying their cruises.

Then came the sad news that one of our vice-presidents David Wain had died. His obituary is on page 16.



Finally, just as we went to press, we heard that another vice-president Harry Arnold had died in hospital after suffering a huge stroke a couple of weeks earlier. Harry has been very much a part of this society for many years, and it was felt that we should simply announce the news this time, without attempting to rush together an obituary. His funeral is on Tuesday 13th November, so will have also happened by the time you read this. We will publish a proper obituary next issue.

===== \* =====

Now, is there any good news for me to report? Happily there is. CRT have been working hard on the Middlewich Branch, and just yesterday they drained the canal above Wardle Lock to begin brickwork repairs under the bridges on this section. The towpath past the breach is almost complete and they are working on the multi-layer waterproof lining of the bed.

No promises (obviously given the chance of bad weather), but they are hoping to reopen the canal to navigation during the week before Christmas. There will still be work to be completed afterwards, but the canal should stay open for navigation.

Our winter talks season has successfully started at our new venue of Red Bull, and we have good feedback from members about the room. Hopefully see many of you there for our Christmas meal (see page 22).

## HARRY ARNOLD MBE

Past chairman and vice-president Harry Arnold died on 1st November after suffering a stroke. As well as being a legendary waterway photographer, he was a tireless worker, not just for T&MCS but for waterway causes too numerous to mention.

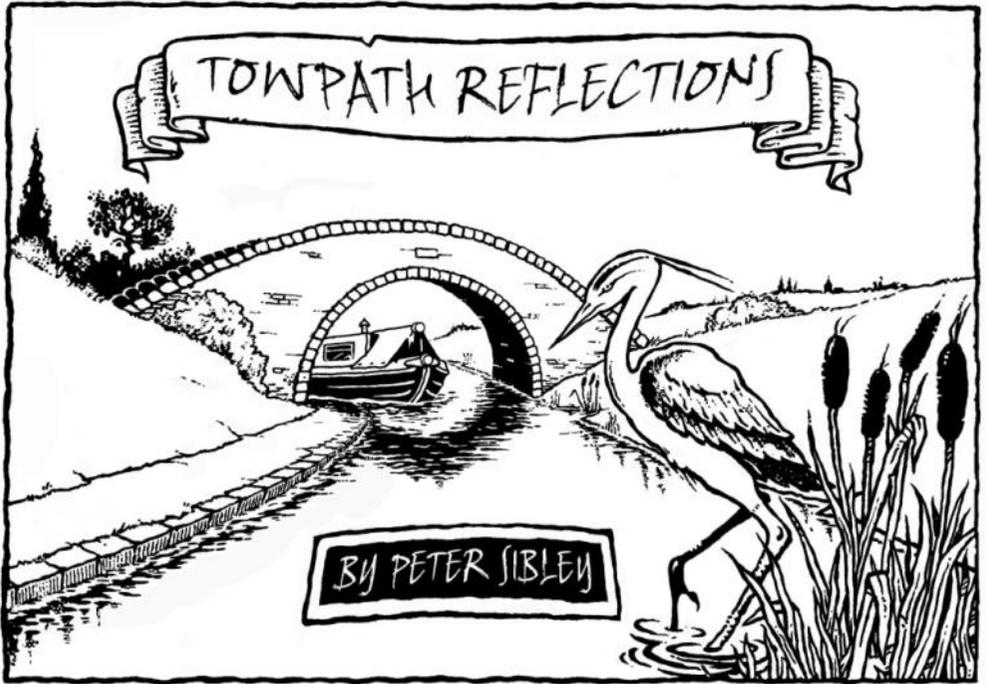
I would have struggled with *Grand Trunk* (which he edited in the past) many times without Harry's unfailing support, offering me pictures from his wonderful archives and keeping me up to date with news from the South. He also let me know when he thought I was getting it wrong! I counted him as a personal friend and, along with countless others, will miss him greatly.

Our sympathies and best wishes go to Harry's wife Beryl, Julie and Mike.

There will be a full obituary in the next issue of the magazine.

The news of Harry's death reached us when we were on a train returning to Padua from a day in Verona. I had run away to Italy in order to escape my 70th birthday. Alas there was no escape, but I seem to have survived it. There was plenty of water in Venice— we were paddling in it! I have some pictures of Venetian canals, but they do not seem appropriate for this issue when we have lost not one, but two vice-presidents (see p.16). Perhaps next issue.

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 January/February edition is **01/01/2019!**



*We left Valerie and Peter moored at Rugeley.....*

*Sunday 24th May.*

We left Rugeley shortly after 8am. The weather was overcast with a little wind but feeling colder. We crossed the Trent Aqueduct, rounded the bend heading for Colwich and had gone about a mile when we were flagged down by the owner of a moored narrowboat. He asked if we could give him a tow to Wolsey bridge as the electric to his engine starter had failed and he needed a place close to the main road where an engineer could reach him easily. This we did willingly.

We then carried on to Great Haywood where we decided at the last moment to turn left onto the Staffs and Worcester canal. As we crossed Tixall Wide a fine drizzle in the air started to get heavier and after working through Tixall Lock we decided to pull in to have some lunch. The rain dried up and we decided to carry on again. I turned the starter and nothing happened— we couldn't believe it! There was nothing for it but beg a tow! Valerie walked back to the lock and waylaid an elderly couple who were the next boat to come through in our direction. They agreed to tow us with their little 30 foot narrowboat and suggested they dropped us off at Milford

Wharf moorings where a mechanic they used lived. They gave us his phone number as he wasn't around and they went on their way.

We couldn't get a reply and we were told that he was at the Crick Boat Show. We tried another number found in the Waterways World Annual and got somebody to come out and look at the problem (for which we paid a call out fee). He identified the the cause as bad connections between the battery and the starter motor. He managed to get us started and advised us not to turn off the engine until we got to his premises near Penkridge - 3 hours away. This we did and arrived at the hire base at almost 9pm. We dined late that night!

### ***Monday 25th May.***

There was a join in the main cable connecting a single thick wire to 2 thinner rubber covered wires which were perished. The engineer suggested these were replaced with a single thicker cable, thus doing away with the rather dubious connecting box. He purchased the 3 metres of new cable from a well known chandlers next door for the princely sum of £54. It should have been gold plated! However we eventually got on our way again with a much lighter wallet! We carried on to Coven where we had stopped on our outward journey.

That evening we sat down and worked out the difference in mileage and locks between going up the Trent and Mersey from Great Haywood to Middlewich via the Staffs and Worcester and the Shropshire Union. We found that it was 36 miles more but 4 less locks. going via the Shroppie!

### ***Tuesday 26th May.***

An uneventful day really. We left just before 8am. It was overcast but not too cold. We met no one in the narrows. We turned at Autherly Junction and headed back up the Shroppie to Norbury Junction (below), where we found a spare mooring right next to the facilities block. We decided to spend



the night here. After we had moored the skies cleared completely and we enjoyed a bright sunny evening!

### ***Wednesday 27th May.***

We set off early in bright sunshine to make the most of the good weather as rain and very strong winds were forecast for later.

The beautiful wooded cuttings that the Shroppie is famous for were at their best and more than made up for the extra 36 miles! We stopped at Market Drayton for lunch and bought a new cylinder of gas before continuing. We decided to call it a day below the second lock down the Audlem flight as the weather was breaking. The rain just starting and the wind became very gusty and was rocking the boat.

### ***Thursday 28th May.***

It rained heavily overnight but was brighter this morning but still windy. We set off at 8am and tackled the rest of the Audlem flight stopping briefly for a coffee just before the Shroppie Fly. Valerie bought some tomato plants from a private house that we could plant in the greenhouse as soon as we got back home. We moored just after the Nantwich Aqueduct, a town we never tire of. We spent the night here.

### ***Friday 29th May.***

It was raining heavily this morning so we didn't set off until 10am, when the weather brightened up a bit. We turned at Barbridge Junction onto the Middlewich branch and stopped for lunch near Church Minshull, then we carried on to Middlewich where we moored before Wardle lock at 4-45pm for the night. The wind had picked up again with some very strong gusts!

### ***Saturday 30th May.***

It rained overnight but there was the odd glimpse of sunshine the next morning. We set off at 8-20am but got caught in a heavy downpour whilst working through Wardle Lock. We moored at the Lion Salt Works at Marston for lunch after which we went in and had a free pre-official opening. We went on a conducted tour which lasted well over an hour. This was a fitting end to a very enjoyable holiday. We arrived back home at 5-30pm. We spent 166 hours cruising,

Completed 207 lock operations,

Negotiating 5 tunnels,

And 3 swing bridges.

***And that's it! Thank you for sharing many years of cruising with us!***

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## Middlewich Narrow Boats

Those of you who were concerned about the historic buildings on the former Middlewich Narrowboat site above Middlewich three locks will be delighted to hear that both these and the dry dock are likely to be taken over by Steve Wedgwood of Kings Lock, who has great plans for them.



*Trent & Mersey Canalside Seating  
In Middlewich beside the three locks*

*Photo Margaret English*

## Problem Solved!



In our last magazine we asked if anyone could solve the mystery of the location of this bridge for Mr Philip Dunn, who took the picture in 1990s.

As always, our readers came up trumps! John Snow identified the bridge as being on the Westport Lake side of Longport, now replaced by a new bridge. Life member Anne Chetwyn confirmed it is bridge 127.

The new bridge (see below) does not recommend fish and chips! Thank you to everyone who helped solve the mystery. Mr Dunn has been informed.



*Picture from Google Earth*

## Cheshire Locks Work Parties



There were *two* work parties in October as the previous one had to be cancelled because of rain. This gave the intrepid group the chance to finish off at Hassall Green and then to commence work on lower Pierpoint. These beautiful single locks without road access were definitely in need of some TLC! After a

cold and misty start, the day turned warm and sunny and great progress was made. The bridge and ladder railings were painted a pristine white, bollards and strapping posts were tackled and paddle gear was spruced up.

Two new volunteers did sterling work on the bywash fence and passing boats were worked through the lock while paint was wet.

.....and passing member Brian Holt took these pictures for us (and I didn't even see him!)



*Margaret English*

*(see back cover)*

Grand Trunk



## **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 Lawson**  
**07940 878923 [johnandsandra@uwclub.net](mailto:johnandsandra@uwclub.net)**

*As I'm sure you all know, The Trent & Mersey Canal lost its link with The Shropshire Union Canal in March. Here is are some updates on the situation from CRT.....*

*On 22nd August....*

Work has started on the next phase to repair the breach at Middlewich on the Shropshire Union Canal after a giant 12m deep hole was left in the canal bank in March.



*Diggers at Middlewich breach*

Paddle gates on the locks, which allow water into the canal, had been left open by a member of the public which caused the canal to overflow. This resulted in a section of the 200-year-old embankment being washed away into the river Wheelock below.

We believe the damage will cost around £3 million to repair. The work is being funded by the Trust as well as generous donations from players of People's Postcode Lottery and the local community, which has already given more than £25,000 to an emergency appeal.

Contractors, on behalf of the Canal & River Trust, have been working over the last few months installing dams either side of the breach, removing dangerous trees and rescuing stranded boats (*including ours..Ed!*). Since then a temporary access road and construction site compound have been

established next to the breach and an access route along the canal bed has now been constructed to allow the physical repair work to begin.

Around 4,000 tonnes of material was lost that will need to be replaced to repair the embankment. The canal repairs will include a flexible PVC membrane and a fibre reinforced lining. We are working hard to re-open the canal as quickly as possible with a target to re-open at Christmas.

### **Complex designs**

Andy Johnson, senior project manager at the Canal & River Trust said: “A great deal of work has been completed to get to the point where we can actually start to repair this huge hole. Behind the scenes, specialists have been ensuring the ecology, heritage and environment around the breach is safeguarded and engineers have been working on the complex design plan required to repair the canal.

I’d like to thank everyone over the last few months for their support and kind donations to help us with the repairs. This has really demonstrated the love that people have for the canal which plays an important part in people’s everyday life.”

### ***On 11th October.....***

Since our last update, and with the dry weather over the summer, good progress has been made in the breach area.

We’ve rebuilt the collapsed embankment up to a level roughly equal to the level of the bed of the new section of canal. We’re currently constructing the new canal walls either side of the canal. We will follow that by completing the embankment to bring it up to towpath level. We’ll then reline the canal to make it waterproof.

Some of the future works need reasonable weather to be completed, but we are currently still on for opening the canal again for Christmas.

### ***Could the Four Counties be operational again by Christmas?***

*The breach has also caused low water on the T&M through Middlewich and, as, the canal below the breach has been kept with a few inches of water, it has silted up and is growing some very nice weeds!*

## *Change of Venue for 2018/2019 season Talks*

For the coming season , all events will be held in the upstairs room at:

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



*Talks are 7.30 for 8.00pm  
(Get a drink and come on  
upstairs!)*

*For further information  
contact: Gillian Watson  
01606 835 606*

<u>Date</u>	<u>Subject</u>	<u>Speaker</u>
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!

See p.22 for details of our Christmas meal to be held on 7th December in the same upstairs room at Red Bull. It promises to be a great evening, but places are limited so get your order in to Margaret as soon as you can!

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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

## David Wain

*We were saddened to learn of the death of David Wain, one of our vice-presidents. He had devoted many years to waterway causes and will be sadly missed.*

David Wain lived in Chester where he was born in 1927. He was educated at the King's School. Prior to serving in the Royal Air Force (1945-49), he worked in the family business which he took over as chairman and managing director upon his father's death in 1956. The Firm- 'Inland Cruising Association Ltd' (later Inland Hire Cruisers Ltd) was one of the first to hire out holiday craft on Britain's canals, beginning in 1935.

From 1954 to 1963, David was a committee member of IWA's North West Branch. He served for 7 years as Hon. National Secretary (1962-1969) and from 1969 to 1974 as national chairman of Pleasure Craft Operators, the national trade association for the inland waterways tourism industry.

In 1968, he was appointed a council member of the Government's newly created, under the 1968 Transport Act, advisory body on Inland Waterways, the Inland Waterways Amenity Advisory Council, and was appointed chairman of the Council in 1977, a post which he held to his retirement in 1992.

In 1974 he created a Canal Museum at Llangollen in North Wales, which received the British Tourist Authority's top award for that year's outstanding Tourist Development in Great Britain. He was appointed an OBE in 1983 for his services in the development of tourism and recreation on Britain's inland waterways.

In 1992 he became an IWA vice president. David was also a vice-president of the British Canoe Club, Vice President of the Trent and Mersey Canal Society, Vice President of the Shropshire Union Canal Society, a trustee of the Anderton Boat Lift Trust and the Boat Museum at Ellesmere Port.

Previously he served as a trustee for the Rainbow Boats Trust for the Disabled (1979-1997) and The Waterways Trust (1999-2003), as President of the British Canoe Club (1975-1990), and as chairman of the National Waterways Museum (1994-2001).

David died on 17th September 2018, he was 91 years old.

*I remember David as one of the nicest people I have ever spoken to on the phone and am grateful to IWA for producing this comprehensive obituary which I have been able to borrow. Our thoughts are with his family at this sad time.....Ed.*

**Welcome!**

**A belated welcome to  
Mr and Mrs Thurstan  
Of Blackburn**

**Who joined the Society in 2016  
apologies for the huge delay!**

**Please don't fall out with us!**

**Welcome!**

**A warm welcome to  
Mr Andrew Saczek  
Of Accrington, Lancashire**



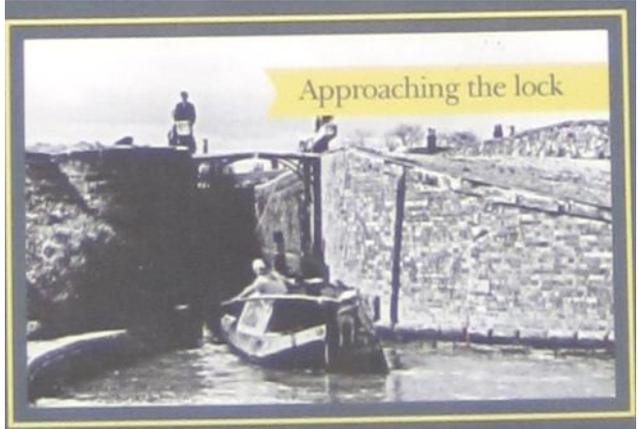
**Hope you enjoy being a member of the society**

*An information board has been erected beside the Middlewich Three.....*

### **Exploring Middlewich**

The salt deposits under Middlewich were laid down in the Jurassic Period 220 million years ago. This salt has been exploited by man for nearly 2000 years and is still a crucial part of the town's economy. Industrial salt production was introduced by the Romans but it was during the industrial revolution when the production and trade of salt really took off.

Salt was produced through the extraction and evaporation of brine. Brine is formed by ground water percolating through to the salt rock-head, producing a concentrated form of salt water. The brine (which is very pure in Middlewich and eight times saltier than sea-water) is heated to evaporate the water leaving salt crystal behind.



The opening of the Trent and Mersey Canal in 1777 had a massive impact on the transportation of Middlewich salt as it meant salt could be shipped via Northwich to Liverpool for export. The local surface geology comprised glacial till or boulder clay which was ideal for lining the canal. Local sandstone was used to construct the infrastructure of the canal.

Middlewich became a thriving hub of commerce and industry with several canal company offices and numerous canal carrying companies. Though Middlewich exports were varied, the most frequent were salt and cheese. Henry Seddon & Sons were a major salt carrier at the turn of the twentieth century. They operated two steam packets which were built at Yarwood's in Northwich to transport salt, transhipped from narrowboats at Anderton, the Weaver flats took the salt to Liverpool and Birkenhead for export.

### ***Memories of the canal, Lilian Wakefield***

“We had to do jobs when we were old enough on the boats, like steering the

boats into the lock, you'd have 22 tonne of flour on and steering when I would only be nine, or younger than that in some cases. It's a nice life it was, but you missed out on the education.

We'd carry soda ash going down the Anderton Boat Lift and across to ICI and back again. We stopped there all the time doing that and used to go home sometimes at the weekend. Even the dog came with us. I can remember the stables at the bottom of the lift, at the bottom end down by the bank. The Mersey Weaver stables were along the side, and behind it was a little brook, and we used to have some lovely watercress from there. There was my Grandad's horse, Kip, and our horse was Jay. At weekends, probably if my grandad was there, he'd stay and look after the boats and feed the horses. But there was always someone to look after the horse, give it its corn and that."

But when the war was on you had to be careful with your lights and everything, and many a time we'd be on the bridge at Anderton Lift there, where something had happened across at ICI, something had exploded, and all big flames went up, you know.

We'd be travelling and you'd go in a tunnel, wouldn't know if there was an air raid on if it started. You could come out at the other end and there'd be a raid on! Well, where could you go and shelter? You couldn't get one. So I suppose the only other thing, they had to hurry up and put the lights out at the front end, you know. Of course you knew where some shelters were on your route"

### ***Memories of the canal- Ken Wakefield***

"During the war we carried shells and that, main one was Fellows and Mortons, Birmingham. They were empty shells as far as I know, not loaded shells for guns, you know. But they carried a lot of copper, square lumps of copper, before it gets melted down you know, and what they called spelter and aluminium"

Dangerous times for boating families who were essential to the wartime supply network often loading at docks which were targeted by German bombing raids, working at night with no lights, often without shelter during raids and carrying army and industrial supplies. These people have never been officially recognised for their part in the war.

## Winter Stoppages, Trent & Mersey Canal

***Barton Turns Lock 10, Barton-under-Needwood***, Trent & Mersey Canal  
2nd January 2019 at 08:00 to 1st February at 16.00 inclusive

***Bridge 196, Marbury Hall Safety Gates***, Trent and Mersey Canal  
7th January 2019 at 08:00 to 1st February 2019 at 16:00 inclusive

***Lock 16, Keepers Lock, Fradley***, Trent & Mersey Canal  
From 3rd January 2019 at 08:00 to 12th February 2019 at 16:00 inclusive

***Bridges 204 and 206 Little Leigh***, Trent and Mersey Canal  
From 2nd January 2019 at 08:00 to 15th March 2019 at 16:00 inclusive

***Lock 73, Middlewich Flight***, Trent and Mersey Canal  
From 2nd January 2019 at 08:00 to 15th February 2019 at 16:00 inclusive

***Lock 3, Aston Lock, near Aston on Trent***, Trent and Mersey Canal  
From 7th January 2019 at 08:00 to 24th February 2019 at 16:00 inclusive

***Lock 33, Meaford Road Lock***, Trent and Mersey Canal  
From 7th January 2019 at 08:00 to 31st January 2019 at 16:00 inclusive

***Lock 5, Swarkestone Lock***, Trent and Mersey Canal  
From 10th February 2019 at 08:00 to 15th March 2019 at 16:00 inclusive

***Lock 18 Middle Lock, Fradley***, Trent & Mersey Canal  
From 13th February 2019 at 08:00 to 12th March 2019 at 16:00 inclusive

***Lock 8, Branston Lock, Burton-on-Trent***, Trent & Mersey Canal  
From 13th February 2019 at 08:00 to 12th March 2019 at 16:00 inclusive

***Bridge 82, Salt Bridge***, Trent and Mersey Canal  
From 11th February 2019 at 08:00 to 15th March 2019 at 16:00 inclusive

***Lock 26, Aston Lock***, Trent and Mersey Canal

From 25th February 2019 at 08:00 to 15th March 2019 at 16:00 inclusive

***Lock 35, Trentham Lock*** Trent and Mersey Canal

From 25th February 2019 at 08:00 to 15th March 2019 at 16:00 inclusive

***Sandon Lock 25, Sandon***, Trent & Mersey Canal

From 11th March 2019 at 08:00 to 15th March 2019 at 16:00 inclusive

### **Harecastle Tunnel**

Harecastle Tunnel will be open on Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays only during November and December.



***Passage is by appointment only— telephone 03030 404040 giving at least 48 hours notice.***

*Picture Wikipedia*

***Middlewich Breach, Middlewich Branch, Shropshire Union Canal***

The canal is scheduled to open 21st December 2018, although repairs will not be completed.

***The Trent & Mersey Canal will form part of the Four Counties Ring once more!***



## 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

margaretetlm@hotmail.com

# 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*

*Cheshire Locks Work Party working boats through Pierpoint Lock  
(while the paint is wet)*



*But aren't they a messy lot!*

*Photos by Brian Holt*