

GRAND TRUNK



Half-way Milepost (by Aston Lock)

Photo Margaret English

May/June 2019

www.trentandmerseycanalsociety.org.uk

Chairman's Bit

Hopefully everybody enjoyed the wonderful Easter weather, we certainly did. As I write this (a week later) the weather is back to pouring rain and lashing winds. The top of our boat is covered with garden detritus (green willow leaves and catkins at the stern + pink cherry blossom at the bow). We were planning a short cruise this weekend to turn her round, but the forecast heavy rain and storm winds are giving us second thoughts.



By the time you read this our AGM will be over, but currently the planning for it is looming large in my mind. The 2018 accounts have all been checked, and the Annual Report just needs the final page (on our sales outings) adding. After yet more hours scouring the Charity Commission website for advice, I believe that our new Constitution is ready to be voted on. Provided it is passed at the AGM, then we “just” need to get it approved by the Charity Commission. According to their website this could take as little as 15 days, but is more likely to take several months as they are very slow at the moment for anything non-trivial. My initial email enquiry waited 3 months for their reply. My reply and extra “check” question only took a month, so maybe they are getting faster! Hopefully so, as I would like to get this saga concluded.

Gillian has almost finalised our next season of talks, which will be at Red Bull again, so please do come along and join us there (starting on October 18th).

In the nearer future, Paula is taking our Sales Stand to Lion Salt Works Transport Festival on June 9th. Margaret and I will be taking it to Middlewich Folk & Boat Festival again over the weekend of June 15th-16th, so maybe we will see some of you there.

Editorial

Hello everyone! This issue is hopefully a little earlier than usual as we are preparing for a bucket-list journey to Canada (so the alternative would be rather a lot late!). We are flying to Vancouver, travelling through the Rockies to Toronto by rail and (of course) visiting Niagara Falls and, hopefully, the Welland Canal.

We are also starting to prepare for our cruise to Waltham Abbey to work at the Festival of Water. I have been reading *Adrift* by Helen Babbs, a year-long diary of the trials and tribulations of life aboard nb *Pike*, a continuous cruiser around London's canals and rivers. Helen and partner have to move on every fortnight, hoping they will find a mooring among London's overstretched waterways community. It made me feel much more sympathetic towards the London live-aboards instead of just worrying that we will be unable to moor when we pass through.

I am looking forward to our AGM at Etruria Industrial Museum and will write a report on this next time. Meanwhile, have a glance at the box on the top of page 15– social secretary Gillian has some exciting happenings planned for us, so do try to support her if you can.

If you haven't paid your subscriptions yet, you will find a reminder tucked into this magazine. Please don't forget, as we really don't want to lose you. Should you feel you no longer wish to be a member, please let me know so I can adjust the records- a quick e-mail or phone call is fine.

See you on our return!

***Adrift*, Helen Babbs, Icon Books 2016,
RRP £1699, ISBN 978-184831-920-2**



Joule's Wharf-good news for Stone

In January planning consent was granted for Joule's to build a Brewery Tap and studio theatre at Crown Wharf Stone.

Joule's purchased the 1-acre site from the Canal and River Trust in 2017, after planners refused a previous scheme for retirement flats. The Brewery subsequently agreed terms with Staffordshire County Council to acquire the Old Fire Station for use as a Heritage Centre, which will be provided for a peppercorn rent of £1 a year to Stone Town Council. Stone Town Council will be investing in the fit out and running of the Heritage Centre.

Earlier this month the Brewery also announced it had acquired the 0.1-acre Pooles Yard from Suma development.

Steve Nuttall Managing Director of Joule's Brewery said:

'This project means much more to Joule's than just a new Pub; it is about our heritage. Which is also a part of the story of Stone – the birthplace of the iconic Joule's beer brand and the famous red cross, the 6th oldest beer trademark in the world.'

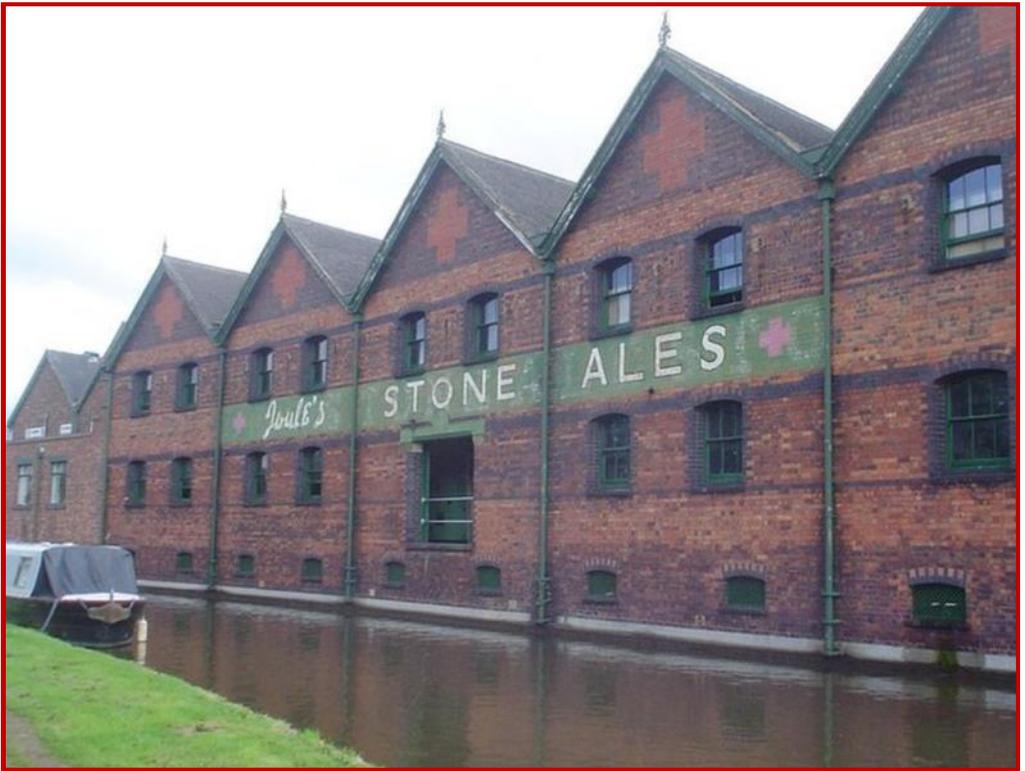
Joule's Managing Director added,

'Our goal is to build something iconic and respectful, celebrating the brand, as well as creating a new legacy for the future. We have been overwhelmed by the support from Stone Town Council, the Canal and River Trust, local businesses- especially *Canal Cruising*, our neighbours, and of course the public, among them many employees of the original Brewery.'

'We ask you today to give us the opportunity to build a new Joule's building, in the shadow of where the original Brewery stood and encircled by the previous Brewery footprint. Our site stands adjacent to the previous Joule's warehouses. We ask for your support to build a new Joule's Brewery Tap and a studio theatre for the 40-year-old Stone Revellers. In addition, a Heritage Centre will be provided free to Stone Town Council and will enable us to the restore Wharfinger's Cottage, all of this on a 1.2-acre site that is just 50 yards from the high street, and to create a suite of canal side buildings that will showcase the canal frontage.'

Rob Kenney Stone Town Councillor,

'This is a landmark day which means planning can commence building on Crown Wharf. It is a tremendously exciting scheme, which has the potential to lift the high street and the whole town. The three elements that make up



Crown Wharf are starting to fall into place; it is tremendous news. The Heritage Centre is a bonus to the whole scheme.'

Jill Hood County Councillor, said.

'I am thrilled that the scheme is now approved. Joule's addressed conservation concerns in the planning meeting, and I am pleased that colleagues have supported Joule's and supported Stone Town Council. There is still much to do but the scheme is approved which is brilliant news for our town – I can't wait.'

Bill Cash MP has supported the proposal throughout.

'I am delighted that the council have granted planning consent for this important development. Town centres are a challenge, and changing rapidly, this development is a part of the changing nature of our town centres and it's right that it has been warmly welcome. I am personally especially hopeful for the Heritage Centre; Stone has a fascinating history that should be shared, this is an opportunity to bring that alive. I wish everyone involved every success and congratulated the steering group for getting to this milestone.'

(from A Little Bit of Stone)

Sad news from Willington.....

The body of a South Derbyshire man has been found in a canal in Willington, police have confirmed.

Emergency services were called out to search for a 31-year-old man from Repton after there were concerns raised about his safety.

Derbyshire police and the fire service were spotted in Willington last night (Friday, March 15) as search efforts got underway.

However, sadly the body of the man was later found at 8pm in the Trent and Mersey Canal.

Derbyshire Police said they are not treating the death as suspicious.

Both police and fire services attended

A spokesman said: "Officers were called to reports for the safety of a 31-year-old Repton man.

"Officers were deployed in the search for him, however, he was found deceased in the Trent and Mersey Canal, in Willington, just before 8pm on March 15.

From Burton Mail 16/03/2019

A reminder about Willington.....

'Willington is a village located on the banks of the Trent & Mersey Canal in South Derbyshire. The site is well located being just eight miles from Derby and five and a half miles from Burton Upon Trent.

A number of services are available in Willington village, including a supermarket, chemist, pubs, post office and railway station.'



*Text and photo courtesy of CRT
Grand Trunk*

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Burslem Port is going places!.....the report for the T&MCS AGM is included here so all members can read and enjoy it.....Ed

Burslem Port Trust Report

This project, which our Society actively supports, has made a significant stride forward in the last year in its plans to eventually restore the old Burslem Branch Canal in Middleport, Stoke-on-Trent. This happy state of affairs, after so many years of hard work, promises and disappointments, is the result of the very positive results of a research programme that was part-funded by the Society and which reported in 2018.

The immediate impact has been a grant of £45,000 from Stoke-on-Trent Council's Community Investment Fund which, coupled with £5,000 from Canal and River Trust, will result in the building of a towpath along most of the line of the old canal together with the provision of new information and directional boards.

Work on this project, which will be substantially volunteer led, will be starting in Spring 2019 and is expected to take about 18 months. There have already been offers of help from many quarters which has been most encouraging.

This towpath work, which has been named ***Footsteps***, and the approval of the above grants are now leading to serious discussions about further funding for additional projects, albeit with the significant help and support of continuing committed partners such as CRT.

The Trust's Chairman, Roger Savage, recently (April 2019) reported: "Our Company Secretary has produced a paper looking at whether our present structure (as a Company Limited by Guarantee) is still fit for purpose; The Trent and Mersey Canal Society and the IWA North Staffs and South Cheshire are the equivalent of shareholders. We have always been careful to keep both bodies up-to-date with developments, and both bodies have exercised their role very effectively by donating funds as we have needed them. The Burslem Port Trust was set up as a canal restoration organisation, but over the years, things have developed so that we now operate in addition as a regeneration body. As part of our endeavour to broaden the appeal of our project, we are considering involving such groups as Middleport Matters (a

local community group) and the Burslem Regeneration Trust more formally.

Following the recent Trust meeting, some Trustees met with Wardell-Armstrong (locally-based consulting engineering company), to seek advice on what we need to do to make our project “shovel ready” – so that we can take advantage of any unexpected opportunity that might occur for funding. They agreed to draw up a proposal stating what we should do and what this might cost us. This us a significant step forward and will enable us to seek funds for work carried out as the project progresses.”

The Trust now wants to develop its volunteer programme as it can now offer so many interesting and rewarding activities from on-the-ground practical work to managerial work on the Trust committee. Whatever your interest, please contact Steve Wood (steve@burslemport.org.uk 07976 805858) for hands-on work or either Roger Savage (roger.savage@burslemport.org.uk–01785 850967) or David Dumbelton (david.dumbelton@burslemport.org.uk – 01782 641765) for the committee work or for general enquiries. They look forward to hearing from you.

David Dumbelton Burslem Port Representative to the Trent and Mersey Canal Society main committee



The Bakery Buildings alongside the drained canal following the breach in 1860s

Photo from www.thepotteries.org

Three (and two Cats) Go Round The Ring

We were unable to make our annual trip around the Four Counties Ring last year as someone stole the water from the Middlewich Branch! We were therefore determined to set off this year even though we had no spare time and a bent prop.

The trip really started just before we set off, as we had to retrieve *The Lady Beth* from King's Lock chandlery, where she had been fitted with a new fool-proof prop. Not a problem except when we had to turn into the Middlewich Branch as a boat was leaving and the paddles were opened on the lock above. On this occasion the approaching boat (which we treated to a friendly bump) belonged to friends (and T&M members) who were far too polite to shout at us-phew! Chastened by the experience, we abandoned our plan to reverse up the branch in order to be facing the correct way for our trip.

Accordingly, the next morning we reversed **down** the branch, and were doing quite well until we pulled over to let the boat behind past and then met coal boat *Halsall* in the bridge hole. It was a relief to face forwards again apart from the fact that one of the clips on our rear fender had stretched, and it was dragging in the water. We hit on the bright idea of resting the fender on a lock walkway while we shortened the chain- we succeeded on the second attempt after a little swearing.

We proceeded up the Cheshire Flight without incident until lock 60, where we came upon a single-hander who had sailed happily into the towpath-side lock after finding the gates open, only to discover that all the paddles were padlocked- but there was no warning notice. Down the ladder he went again to reverse out, and let us use the offside lock while he recovered. Stricken with guilt, Roger stayed behind and worked him through.

After all this excitement, we recovered in The Broughton Arms at Rode Heath (and spent a little too long there). We worked up the Lawton Flight just as dusk fell, and went early to bed- only to be woken at 4am when Pearl (senior cat) fell in. She shot through the cat flap as we panicked and insisted on drying herself off on the bed.

Moving on the next morning, we discovered that locks 45 and 42 each had both paddles at one end of one lock out of action, but no stoppage notice had been issued.

As always, I steered through Harecastle Tunnel without touching the sides and enjoyed a cup of coffee before reaching Etruria Junction. We were disappointed to note that Shirley's Bone Mill was covered in scaffolding (as



Lift Bridge into Festival Park

our AGM is there soon) but didn't want it to fall down. We ignored the temptation to stop at Festival Park and slake our thirst.

Past the cemetery we sailed, imagining coffins arriving by boat in earlier days, and arrived at the forbidding Stoke Locks (now a single concrete monstrosity) with its huge cill and lock-side house where the inhabitants clearly prefer cars to boats. We passed the shooting gallery with attendant boats and sailed into the countryside. Walkers thinned out and alongside the canal, brand new warehouses stood shyly waiting to be filled with goods. The mileposts here really need attention! We moored up at the site of Meaford power station, where the cats complained there were too many bike monsters.

The Meaford flight was as enjoyable as always, especially as the steps to the second lock are once again usable instead of walking down the road. At the bottom lock we came across a group of schoolchildren waiting for our water, as they were constructing a water wheel in the bywash.

At the first Stone Lock we met a single-hander who had slept in and needed to get to Great Haywood by 4.30pm. We worked him through every lock to Sandon, and he tried to repay us with cans of lager; we refused his kind offer - if it had been cider now....



At bridge 82 the bridge and towpath were both closed for work on the bridge, which certainly needed it, and at Hoo Mill Lock the walkway across the top gate was in danger of falling off. Here, the canal changes character, becoming wide, bendy and remote, arguably with a feel of the midlands about it.

We regretfully left our favourite waterway at Great Haywood (no sign of the single-hander), turned onto the Staffs and Worcs., and headed for Pearl's favourite mooring (opposite Stafford Boat Club) where there are many mice to be found.

We awoke to a very cold day, but did not light the fire as it was March. Heading for Penkridge, we saw more boats moving- mostly the other way: Had someone told them the dreaded trio were on the rampage? We actually found a mooring in the town and went to the market, delighted to find that it was still thriving- although the fish and chip shop we had hoped would provide lunch was gone. We made do with beans on toast (sigh). *The Lady Beth* moved up through the locks to Gailey, disappointed to find the Round House shut. There were an incredible number of moored boats to crawl past above Gailey.

At Calf Heath we met a hire-boat on a tight corner and discovered that the edge of the canal was very shallow. Escaping without holing our bottom, we moored for the night just beyond Laches Bridge only to notice an unattended fire in what looked like an industrial estate on the other side of the cut. We dialled 999 and discovered how hard it was to give road directions from a narrow boat. By the time the fire brigade arrived, the fire was out.

Not used to such excitement we retired exhausted, only to be woken at 5.30

a.m. by the smoke alarm. John had eventually admitted defeat and lit the fire, only to find the fire cement had failed-again! We set off through Pendleford Rockin' (thankfully deserted) and commenced our final leg down the Shrop-pie.



The Lady Beth safely navigates Atherley Junction

The sun came out (at last) the banks were bedecked with wild primroses and a kingfisher sat on a branch and watched us go past. We worked down Audlem Flight without losing any cats (older readers may remember this hasn't always been the case!), and treated ourselves to a last night meal in the pub.

We discovered that the fire behaved much better if we attached our overlarge chimney and returned home without further incident, determined to escape again as soon as possible.

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 July/August edition is **01/07/2019!**

Due to popular demand.....

For the coming season , all events will continue to 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*

Gillian is busily planning some splendid talks for next season. For your diary, here are the dates to note– see you there!

18/10/2019	TALK
15/11/2019	TALK
06/12/2019	Dinner
17/01/2020	TALK
21/02/2020	TALK
20/03/2020	TALK

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

These boots were made for walking!

A brand new activity for next season.

Social secretary Gillian is organising a series of walks along the line of our canal, starting at Preston Brook. These will take place on *the Sunday morning following each T&MCS Social*. They will last about 2.5 hours (car shuttling will be arranged) and include stops to look at items of interest.



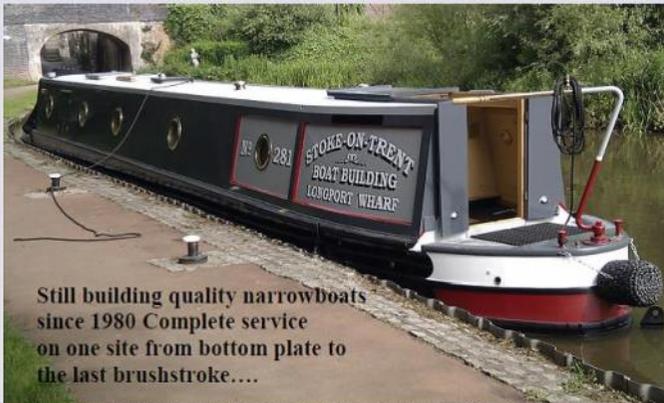
We tried out the first walk last Sunday and thoroughly enjoyed it, so they come highly recommended. This is a stretch of canal we had rarely seen from the bank, and it was amazing what we noticed! Full details in the next magazine.

(photo Saltersford Tunnel North Portal)

Watch this space and come along!

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RIVER WEAVER NAVIGATION SOCIETY PRESS RELEASE

THE SALT TOWNS RALLY & WEAVER CRUISE FRIDAY SEPTEMBER 13th - SUNDAY SEPTEMBER 22nd 2019

The River Weaver Navigation Society is offering a fascinating 10 days, "Enhanced Cruising Rally," with additional activities each day to add to your cruising enjoyment.

The start date and location will be on Friday evening 13th September in Winsford Basin, with various activities available each day until Sunday 22nd September where programmed cruise activities will end at Middlewich.



The planned range of functions will include the complete 20 mile river cruise, a flotilla float past, two evening receptions at Winsford and Middlewich, a Mikron Show, a navigational restriction "protest" cruise to Weston Point, special music entertainment on four evenings including waterside music in Northwich, optional party dining on several evenings, and conducted tours of both the Anderton Boat Lift and the Lion Salt works, together with a talk on the history of the local waterways. Some optional activities will incur extra charges.

If you wish to learn more of the Weaver and Trent and Mersey Canal history and enjoy the unique attractions of the Salt Towns, Winsford, Northwich and Middlewich, with congenial cruising companions - **please initially contact Bob Osborne on 01606 553433 bob.osborne@hotmail.co.uk** to express your interest and find out more.

For each craft wishing to participate on this venture, or part of it, there will be an administration fee of £10.00, which will also include membership of the River Weaver Navigation Society until December 2020.

" COME AND JOIN US FOR ENHANCED CRUISING." YOU WILL ENJOY YOURSELVES.

The Trent & Mersey Canal Society supports this event

And for our friends further South.....

IWA Lichfield Events

Saturday & Sunday 18-19th May 2019

Brownhills Canal Festival

We will be taking a gazebo containing our Branch stand with sales items and information displays about IWA to support this local canal festival and boat rally. But we will need help from members on the stand, so if you can spare a few hours on either day, or on Friday afternoon for the set-up, please contact Helen Whitehouse at helen.whitehouse@waterways.org.uk or on 01543 491161 as soon as possible.

Sunday 28th July 2018

‘Lock Wind’ at Barton Turn Lock.

Our annual fundraising and social event on the Trent & Mersey Canal, from 10 am to 4 pm. Help from experienced lock users will be appreciated to assist boaters through this very busy lock, talk to them about IWA and hopefully receive lots of donations. We also need help with the sales stand and several volunteers to bake us some home-made cakes, which always sell well. We will have a small gazebo beside the lock with refreshments available, and a barbecue at 4 pm outside the pub for those taking part. If you can assist on site, even if only for a couple of hours, or with baking, please contact Helen Whitehouse as soon as possible at helen.whitehouse@waterways.org.uk or on 01543 491161

Wednesday 18th September 2019

“A Narrowboat on the Trent”. An illustrated talk by John Lower. Following his well-received talk on the Chesterfield Canal, John returns to tell us about how we go about accessing it, based on his personal experience of 40 years boating on the River Trent. 7.15 for 7.30 pm at Martin Heath Hall, Christchurch Lane (off Walsall Road), Lichfield, WS13 8AY.

Picture facing page by Mike Peel

Nearly bad news for Easter cruising on T&M!

On 9th April CRT advised that there was a problem with Lock 14– Common Lock.

The top end gate had come out of its cup, and was likely to need a gantry to reposition it. On the following day CRT tried to reinstall the gate manually but unfortunately this was not possible. A gantry was ordered for the following morning so that a second attempt to refit the gate could be made.

Fortunately the gate was put back in its cup on Thursday 11th April, water levels were raised again and were back to normal by 3pm, boaters were asked to proceed with caution but an Easter stoppage at Fradley was avoided-phew!

For those of you who aren't sure, Common Lock No 14 is below Fradley Junction between Bagnall Winding Hole (1 mile and ½ furlongs and 1 lock to the east) and Fradley Junction (Junction of Coventry Canal (Detached Portion) and Trent and Mersey Canal) (1 mile and 3 locks to the west). It has a rise of 4ft 6ins



Picture copyright R. Matthews.

Sculptures at Mercia Marina

A chainsaw artist who cuts logs into amazing sculptures has been turning heads at Mercia Marina in Willington. Alastair Farston, 46, creates the artistic sculptures out of huge chunks of timber.



Mercia Marina now has three pieces of his art on display, including a huge castle with a dragon which Alastair created from an entire tree. There are also two benches on a pathway, each with ornate illustrations of the nearby canals and flowers carved into them.

Alastair, from Belper in Derbyshire, said: "I've always loved creating beautiful things, they just make people smile. "Working at the marina is great because its a beautiful place and the people are really friendly.

When asked how he gets his ideas for his work, the artist said: "To be honest I'm not really sure. I like it when I get

restrictions on it because otherwise I'd just spend ages thinking of all the things it could be.

"The dragon was originally supposed to be Poseidon or Neptune because of the canals, but when I came and looked at it, the tree was quite hollow so I had to work out how to shave as little timber off it as possible to maintain its strength, that's how I came up with the round tower."

The father of two also spoke of how supportive his family, and especially his children Hazel, three, and eight-month-old Ivy, are of his work: "My daughter Hazel gets all excited, I carved a spider in Birmingham and she told me I needed to start carving some flies for the spider to eat!"

General manager of the marina Robert Neff said that the timber works have turned heads: "It helps the marina's reputation when people come and see something interesting and nice.

"The community think it's wonderful; they're all surprised and delighted to see it.

"Its a simple thing that brings joy to people's lives, its a good thing to do."

Bill and Jac Jeffries, who both live in the residential area at Mercia Marina, said: "They're absolutely great, they add to the attraction of the marina."

The carvings take Alastair around two weeks each to finish and require specialist tools to get right.

from *Derbyshire Live*.

Mercia Marina is on the Trent and Mersey Canal near Willington is the largest inland marina in Europe, 74 acres of countryside, walks, wildlife and a boardwalk of boutique retailers, farm shop, a two storey bar and restaurant overlooking the marina. come true?

April Cheshire Locks Work Party

Quite a few regulars were on holiday; one was seeing his horse win at Ripon races!



*Pictures
and report
by John
Lawson*

So four volunteers along with CRT Ashleigh continued preparation and painting on the towpath side chamber of Lock 50.





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

Just missed the last issue.....

Vegetation Cutback on T&M

This work was a continuation of the cut back carried out in October 2017, extending from Wheelock (Bridge 154) towards Middlewich, and finishing just before Bridge 166 including extensive cut back to the very overgrown hedgerow alongside Rumps Lock (Lock 70). Some of our regular Monthly Work party volunteers joined CRT staff and volunteers to carry out the cut back of overhanging trees and bushes on board the CRT workboat. The long-suffering volunteers had to grab the vegetation lopped down and thrown in the general direction of the boat, and cut it up into manageable pieces– a wet and dirty job! The work was completed in three days commencing on Monday 18th February.

John Lawson



More pictures (by John Lawson) on back cover.

TRENT AND MERSEY CANAL SOCIETY

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*The Trent & Mersey Canal Society is proud to
support Burslem Port*

Bringing Boats Back to Burslem



*Vegetation clearance
At Rumps Lock*