

GRAND TRUNK



The pump keeping Bedford Street staircase dry (p.12)

March/April 2020

www.trentandmerseycanalsociety.org.uk

Chairman's Bit

Good News. HMRC have removed our old charity and registered the new one, so we are now officially “a charity recognised for tax purposes by HMRC”, and you should see this new statement in Grand Trunk and on the new Gift-Aid form.

Why is there a new Gift-Aid Declaration form in this issue ?

Because we became a new charity at our AGM on 11th May 2019, we can only claim money from HMRC if we have a Gift-Aid declaration completed since that date. Hence ALL your existing Gift-Aid declarations are no longer valid. Therefore a new form is enclosed for all members to read and hopefully complete.

Note that you can also complete the new form ONLINE at www.trentandmerseycanalsociety.org.uk/gift-aid saving you the cost of postage. Remember that we can claim a “FREE” £2.50 every year on your £10 membership fee (as well as 25% on any extra donations you make) without it costing you anything extra, but do make sure that you pay Income Tax before signing.

Finally, I am delighted to report that CRT have replied to my email asking them to fix broken paddles on the Cheshire Flight, and to list any closed locks on that flight as a “Navigation Restriction” even when the parallel duplicate lock is still available for use. Their reply (on 12th February) said

“The paddle repairs to Locks 41, 50 & 60 on the Trent & Mersey have been done, there are 2 paddles to do Locks 42 & 45 which I am planning in over the forthcoming weeks. As for the lack of notices for navigation closure the works on this stretch, going forward I will ensure that the correct communication is relayed to our customers with the reason for closures, and a time frame for repairs. These are double locks and the remaining locks where work is required are still useable but I'll make sure the restrictions are notified.”



Editorial

Hi everyone!

Welcome to your latest magazine, jam-packed with interesting articles (but not enough from our Southern end) as well as details of our upcoming AGM, treasurer's report, and one of those nice gift-aid forms.

I have to make an apology to the Murrays, whose generous donation to the Society was documented in the last issue. The gentleman to whom the artefacts belonged was not **Ray**, but **Ian** Murray. The family were kind enough to say the change of name was unimportant, but I still felt bad.

Boat traffic past our house has been very quiet recently— I think it is something to do with the weather! Where movement was unavoidable, steerers were solidly encased in waterproofs and huddled down against the wind. Water is running off the fields into the canal and a walk along the towpath entails the wearing of sturdy boots or wellingtons. We still try to manage a canal walk every day as CRT have recently assured us this is beneficial to health—but I'd still rather be boating!

Roger and I should have been working on the Cheshire Locks today, but as more rain fell on the already waterlogged ground, the work party was called off. I had left one set of lock ladders scraped down to bare metal ready for painting today— they should now be a nice shade of rust-red! This also meant no chocolate biscuits or morning coffee from CRT— it's a hard life!

You will see on page 6 that the AGM is being held in Middlewich this year. I don't very often get to walk to this event, and am looking forward to it. Do come along if you can, and don't forget to let Roger or I know so that Social Secretary Gillian can calculate the right amount of food— what a clever lady she is.

Margaret English



Big Lock Photo

(from *The Middlewich Diary*)



Photo: BILL EATON

by Dave Roberts

This photograph, which has been sent to us by Middlewich Diary contributor Bill Eaton, must be one of the oldest, and certainly one of the most interesting, we've ever published.

It was loaned to Bill by the late Frank Smith of Ravenscroft Cottage, who was one of the leading lights of the Middlewich Heritage Society when it started in 1985.

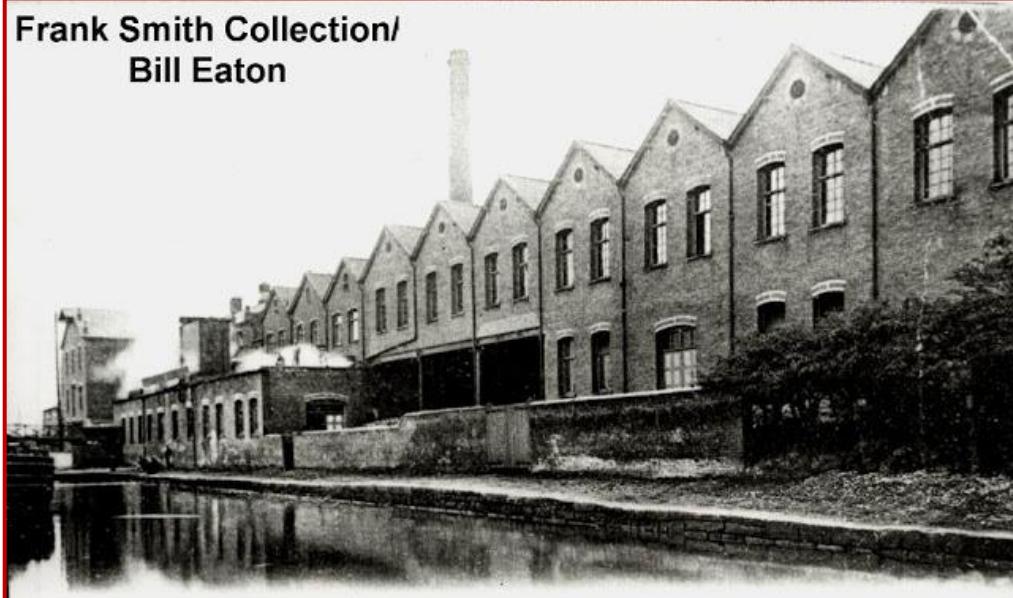
As Bill says, Middlewich's heritage was a passion with Frank and the two of them would spend hours talking about the town's past. Frank was always meticulous in his research, so we can, I think, take it for granted that the description he wrote on the back of the original photograph is correct, and that the image shows the shop which stood where the Big Lock pub and restaurant is now before that building was erected in the last

quarter of the 19th century In fact Frank added a question mark to the title - Big Lock Ca 1875? - indicating that, in his opinion, more research was needed.

It was, and is, but the photograph seems to fit the bill if we're looking for a picture of what stood on the site of the pub in former days. The broad lock itself is in the foreground, and one of its gates can be seen on the left (the boatwoman standing next to it, by the way, appears to be wearing the traditional white head dress, indicating that Queen Victoria was still alive when the photo. was taken. Women on the canals switched to black head dresses as a sign of mourning for the old Queen, and never changed back again)

The steep cobbled alleyway in between the shop and the large building on the right which was, we presume, the condensed milk factory (the Anglo-Swiss Milk Company was certainly in business in 1870) has endured for all these years and now forms a passageway between the Big Lock pub and the smart new town houses which have replaced the factory

**Frank Smith Collection/
Bill Eaton**



The Condensed Milk Factory

With thanks to Dave Roberts and the Middlewich Diary

TRENT AND MERSEY CANAL SOCIETY

NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Members of the Trent and Mersey Canal Society are hereby given notice that the 2020 Annual General Meeting will be held at:

**Middlewich Community Church
34-36 Brooks Lane, Middlewich, Cheshire
CW10 0JG**

**On Saturday 2nd May 2020 at 11.00 am
(Room open from 10.30 for welcome tea/coffee)**

A buffet style meal will be provided after the meeting, when further hot drinks may be purchased.

The visitor's car park will be available for attendees.

The AGM will take place in the minor hall followed by an escorted visit to Murgatroyd's Brine Pump.

The site of the original Murgatroyd's, an open pan works at Middlewich, has long gone. All that remains is the original brine shaft and pump house, the last monument not only of open pan salt working but of the chemical industry in Middlewich. Murgatroyd's Brine Pumps are the only intact, in-situ, wild brine pumps in the UK and the only above-ground remains of Murgatroyd's Salt & Chemical Works. They represent the culmination of over two thousand years of Salt making in Middlewich and the first stages of an emerging Chemical Industry.

The shaft was hand dug in 1889, one of the last in Cheshire to be excavated by this method as borehole technology took over. The Gantry is of the same date and was used to put the first pumps, then steam driven, into place and was used thereafter to maintain the pump rods going down into the 274ft shaft. This shaft was the first to find the brine stream that fed the salt works in the town and helped to identify the geological fault line through the town. The discovery of the brine stream was also highly significant because of its very high quality and, as a result, other companies realised the potential that Middlewich offered in natural resources and moved into the area.

Existing committee members who retire by rotation do not need to be nominated for re-election. Nomination of any other member for the committee must be in writing and must be proposed and seconded by paid up and voting members of the society. The nomination paper must contain the signed consent of the nominated person.

No motion can be dealt with at the AGM unless such a motion has been included in the formal notice of the meeting. Nominations of persons to the committee and details of any motions to be considered by the AGM must be received by the secretary at her home address by Thursday 16th April 2020, otherwise any motion or nomination cannot be accepted.

Everyone is welcome, **but we do need an idea of numbers** for catering purposes. We also need to know if you have any special dietary needs. Please therefore let Roger and Margaret know before 18th April (by phone or email) if you will be attending the AGM, would like to go on the tour, and your lunch requirements.



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 May/June 2020 edition is **01/05/2020**.

Burslem Port Lottery

Here's a Winning Way to Support Burslem Port!

Potto Lotto is a new weekly online lottery, based in Stoke-on-Trent, set up to help raise money for local charities and good causes. The Burslem Port Trust is a beneficiary of the scheme and has already received over £800 in prize money in the short time it has been involved, at no cost to itself. We would very much like to see the number of supporters nominating Burslem Port increased so that we can gain a handy increase in our "earned" income.

It costs £1 per game to play and winners could win up to £25,000 as part of the weekly draw. 50p of every £1 goes directly to the good causes signed up and players can choose which cause (Burslem Port, of course) receives their donation. 40p goes to prizes and running costs and 10p goes into a community fund.

If you are interested in finding out more and possibly participating in Potto Lotto whilst helping Burslem Port please visit pottolotto.co.uk. Good Luck!

David Dumbelton



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Exciting News for Middlewich Town Wharf

Since the demise of Middlewich Narrow Boats, the historic site above the three locks has stood vacant and slowly deteriorating, to the dismay of boaters and townsfolk alike.

I am delighted to report that the site has been taken over by a narrow boat company from Higher Poynton, who will provide a range of services, as well as helping to preserve this important aspect of Trent & Mersey heritage.

Paul and Samantha Docherty have been operating hire boats from Higher Poynton on the Macclesfield Canal since 2016. They currently have 5 boats, with more in the pipeline. After undertaking repairs to the property they will be operating from Middlewich Wharf and providing extended services.

The famous dry dock is among these, as well as a chandlery, boat brokerage and repairs, and of course, boat hiring. Maggie Finn's tearoom will be re-opening as a canal-side café for casual dining and there will be pump-out services, diesel, coal and gas as well as secure boat moorings.

The Docherty's, who trade as *Floating Holidays*, expect their hire boats to be leaving from and returning to Middlewich from June 1st. You can see details of the boats at: www.floating-holidays.co.uk.



T&MCS
wishes the
venture every
success

Margaret
English

*Floating
Holidays
boats on the
Cheshire
Locks*

Walking the T&M

Date : 5th April 2020 Time :10:30

The idea is to walk the length of the T&M in small chunks, starting at Preston Brook and plan as we go rather than setting dates that might not be manageable.

The first section will be led by Gillian Watson and subsequent sections may be led by a variety of members with specific local knowledge, Gillian and Roger (and Margaret) hope to walk all the sections.

The first group walk.

This is open to members and to non-members of the Trent and Mersey Canal Society.

The walk is about 4.5 miles and the duration will depend on how often we stop to observe and discuss along the way, possibly about 2 hours.

Walkers need to ensure that they are suitably clothed and shod to cope with lovely weather and inclement weather, dry easy waking paths and possible muddy and puddley areas. You may also need to bring something to drink/eat.

Meeting arrangements:

Location : Car park of Northwich Antiques and Collectable
6 Runcorn Road
Barnton
Northwich
CW8 4EL



The plan:

The walk will commence at the south portal of Preston Brook Tunnel where there is no public car parking and there are no public toilets on our route.

On arrival at the the car park suggest that all avail themselves of the toilets in the antiques centre, there is a cafe where you can stoke up before or after their walk.

Once we are all assembled we will see how many cars we need and use those to get to the south portal, then those cars will go to park at a house close to the end point of the walk ready to take you back to your cars.

The walk:

Will be on the level except for when we go up hill to traverse Saltersford Tunnel, down hill from there to Barnton where the Canal becomes a wide pool before Barnton Tunnel, there we leave the canal going up hill to the cars.

If you can let Gillian Watson know that you will be coming along that would be helpful, but not essential- gillian.watson@me.com or text 07976 318 356.

Open day on the Caldon

On a cold and windy February day the Bedford Street staircase locks on the Caldon Canal were open to visitors. The locks were drained to enable the top end gate to be renewed. Two other sets of gates were relined and repairs to the 220 year old brickwork will be completed before the locks are re-watered. Repairs have been financed through the postcode lottery to help with the problem of leakage.

An amazing set of temporary stairs had been set up to allow access to the top lock and exit through the bottom. Visitors could enjoy welcome hot drinks and snacks in the visitors' centre, while the Oatcake Boat did a roaring trade from its mooring alongside. CRT stalls were much in evidence and fishing lessons above the locks were in progress.



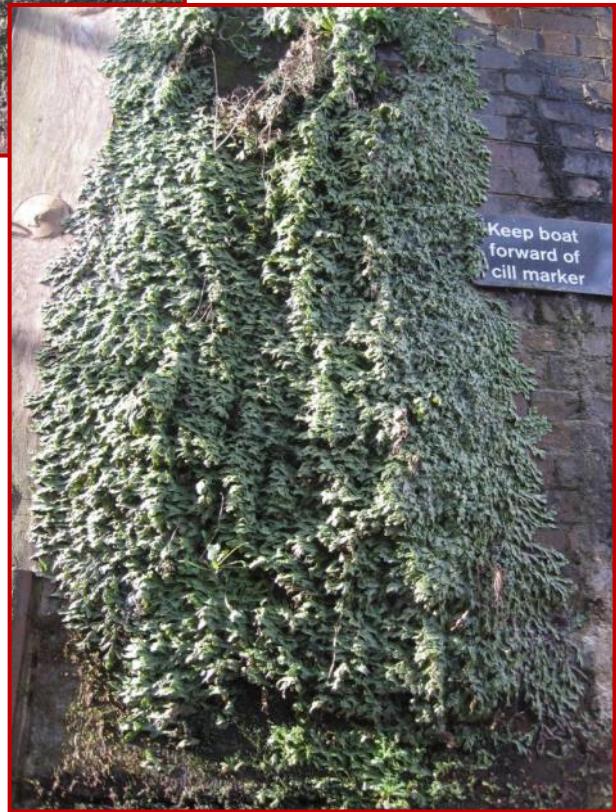
The staircase from the bridge above



A crack in the wall of the lower lock.

It is to be plastered over so that a crack in the plaster will signify the need for further work.

*Foliage growing
On the wall by the
middle gate*



*Photos by Margaret
English*

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***

Plans for the 2020-2021 season are well underway. Social secretary Gillian has some amazing talks lined up, more details later.

There is no charge for attending and no need to be a member. Gillian recommends the food– she eats there before every talk!

Some speakers will bring objects or products to be viewed or bought– we positively encourage interaction!

The room will be open from 7.30pm, talks start at 8.00pm in two forty minute parts with a comfort break (and raffle) between.

Look out for more information in the magazine as it becomes available. See also details of Gillian's new series of society walks on page 11 and the AGM notice on page 6.

For members in the South.....

IWA Lichfield April Talk

Wednesday 15th April 2020

"The Purton Hulks and Gloucester & Sharpness Canal".

An illustrated talk by David Moore. The Purton Hulks are the remains of historic sailing barges, trows and other vessels of the Severn Estuary lying alongside the Gloucester & Sharpness Canal. This talk explores their history, archaeology and the photographic appeal of their fading craftsmanship.

7.15 for 7.30 pm at Martin Heath Hall, Christchurch Lane (off Walsall Road), Lichfield, WS13 8AY.

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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 John.Lawson@waterways.org.uk

Thursday 16th January 2020 Our first work party of the New Year, and nine volunteers attended on a dry, overcast morning to complete work on Lock 66 (Wheelock Lower) by finishing the painting of the top gates . The majority of the team moved up to concentrate on preparing Lock 65, scraping paddle gear, balance beams and fittings, strapping posts and bridge rails. We did manage to apply some paint to the metalwork before rain halted proceedings (as forecast) at lunchtime. An early finish but a worthwhile day, nevertheless.



**Painting
Top Balance
Beam on Lock
65**
Photo Jane Har
greaves

February's work party was cancelled owing to bad weather.

STOP PRESS !!!!.....Next season's talks!

- 16/10/2020 A Canal & River Trust update by Liam Cooper
- 20/11/2020 Spot the Locks take 2 by Peter Scott
- 15/01/2021 The changing scene and history of the Shropshire union canal by Ian Wilson
- 19/02/2021 Warrington Transporter Bridge by Margaret Ingham
- 19/03/2021 Ampere in Ireland by Malcolm Bridge

More details later!

Bedford street Locks, Levels and Legacy

Fortified by oatcakes and hot chocolate on the Bedford Locks open day, we decided to enrol on a 2 hour walk around the Etruria canals led by Andy Perkin of the Potteries Heritage Society. The walk started opposite the statue of James Brindley with a brief history lesson. Andy explained how the potteries needed The Trent & Mersey Canal, 93 miles long with 76 locks and 3 tunnels including Harecastle. This was the first long tunnel on the fledgling canal system, but Brindley had formerly worked on the Duke of Bridgewater's underground tunnels bringing coal to the Bridgwater Canal from the mines by extremely narrow boats known as starvationers. He therefore made the tunnel only wide enough for boats 7-foot-wide and 70 foot long. This became the norm for narrow boats and the narrow canals of the midlands.

We then moved on to lock 40, the summit lock. This has been built up several times due to subsidence and is now one of the deepest locks in the country. Examination of the wall by the tail-bridge shows evidence of steps from an earlier level which are covered by concrete. The lock is now so deep that best practice is to fill the next lock before emptying this one to save water. The maintenance yard alongside predates completion of the locks.

Lock 39 also shows evidence of subsidence as the steps up to it on the towpath side reach the lock-side, but those on the other stop short at an earlier level (see picture). Narrowboats Lindsey and Keppel have their moorings here. Andy took the opportunity to explain that they could carry 46 tons and 30 tons of cargo respectively, making canal transport economical (*seems a bit high to me – but you get the idea!.....ED.*)

Lock 38 prompted an explanation about spill weirs, water wastage and the need for reservoirs to keep the canal in water. One of the main reasons for the construction of the Caldon Canal was that it gave access to water supplies in the hills.

On our walk past some remaining bottle ovens we learnt that the canal-side ovens are calcining ovens because flint was needed by the pottery trade and this arrived by boat. The corner we were passing turned in steps rather than a curve- this was because there was originally a wharf here and loading boats needed a flat side to moor against.

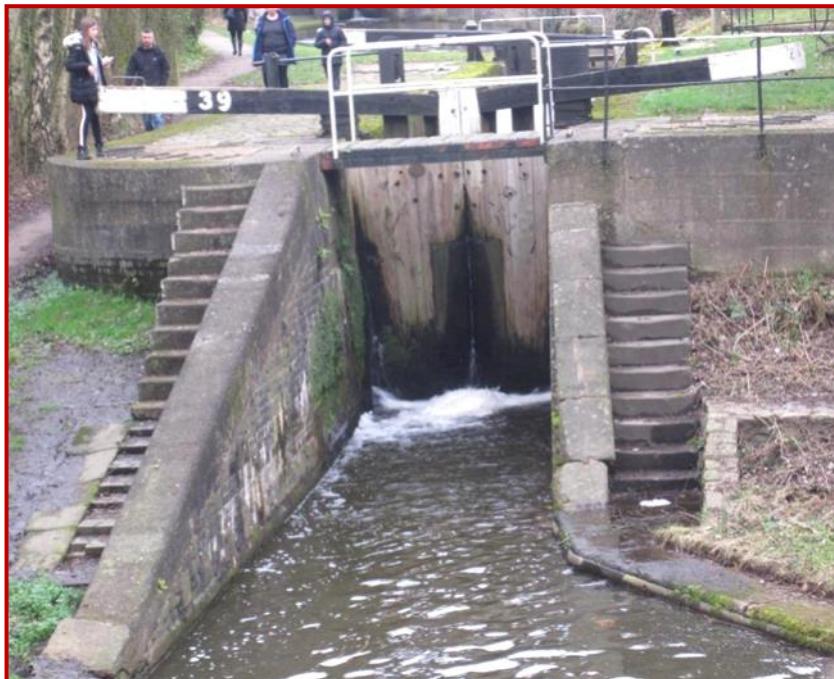
We now walked through Hanley Cemetery (opened 1860) to re-join the

Caldon Canal. The cemetery was badly needed because the canal brought industry, which brought people. The cemetery is much larger than it appears from the canal and is the last resting place of Jesse Shirley of bone mill fame.

The Caldon Canal is 17 miles long and has 17 locks. Brindley died while it was still at the surveying stage (aged 56) and the canal was built by Hugh Henshall. Had Brindley built it, evidence suggests it would have avoided the Churnet Valley. Planet Lock, where we re-joined the towpath, was a late arrival, built in 1910 because of subsidence. It only has a 4-foot rise and is built on the site of Hanley Wharf.

We returned to the staircase and learned that there are only 5 double staircases left in our canal system because of their tremendous water wastage. The walk had been so interesting that I did not realise my teeth were chattering until we returned to the car!

Margaret English



Lock 39 showing evidence of subsidence

Trent and Mersey Canal Society - Annual Accounts

	2019 Accounts	versus	2018 Accounts
Income			
(Note 2) Bank Interest	Nil		Nil
Gift Aid	£529.11		£238.13
Grand Trunk Magazine Advertising	£160.00		£160.00
Membership Subscriptions	£1,610.00		£1,520.00
(Note 3) Donations	£203.52		£80.80
(Note 4) Fund Raising	£101.50		£53.00
(Note 5) Sale of Goods	£202.90		£255.40
	=====> £2,807.03		=====> £2,307.33
Expenditure			
Accountancy	Nil		Nil
(Note 6) AGM & Annual Report	£275.00		£90.00
(Note 7) Grand Trunk Magazine	£1,404.81		£766.60
(Note 8) Insurance	£230.72		Nil
(Note 4) Meetings (Speaker, Room Hire)	£25.00		£100.50
Prizes and Engraving	£8.99		Nil
(Note 9) Publicity & Recruitment	£128.03		£87.70
(Note 5) Sales (Stock, Postage)	Nil		£108.66
Subscriptions to other organisations	£71.50		£71.50
Sundry Expenses	Nil		Nil
	=====> £2,144.05		=====> £1,204.96
Surplus in 2019 (before Campaigns & Donations)		Surplus in 2018 (before Campaigns & Donations)	£1,102.37
Campaigns and Donations			
(Note 10) Burslem Port Trust	Nil		£500.00
Canal & River Trust	Nil		£500.00
Cheshire Looks Campaign	Nil		Nil
Etruria Boat Group	Nil		Nil
IWA Chester	Nil		Nil
	=====> £0.00		=====> £1,000.00
Final Surplus in 2019		Final Surplus in 2018	£102.37

Notes

- | | | | |
|---|-----------|------|-----------|
| 1) Ring-fenced for Anderton Boat Lift (ex-Trust) | £1,601.28 | 2018 | £1,601.28 |
| 2) Gift Aid was higher in 2019 because we claimed 2 years (2018 and 2019) as part of change to new constitution. | | | |
| 3) Donations were higher in 2019 (including £90 from members at AGM + £25 from bank to apologise for mistake). | | | |
| 4) Fund Raising was higher in 2019 (and Meetings Expenditure lower) as we no longer pay for room hire. Income from raffles at our meetings is now therefore shown separately (rather than partially off-setting room hire costs). | | | |
| 5) Sales were down in 2019 by around £50. Clothing sales minimal. Donated goods are now over 50% of sales. Costs were zero (down £100) as we bought no stock, and were never invoiced for the stand at Middlewich. | | | |
| Total Nominal Value of stock at the end of 2019 | £590.00 | 2018 | £635.00 |
| 6) AGM Expenses were higher in 2019 as we had to pay for the venue. | | | |
| 7) Grand Trunk Expenses were higher in 2019 as we bought a full year's supply of stamps before a price increase. In 2018 we didn't have to buy any stamps (as we had bought before a 2017 price increase). | | | |
| 8) Insurance is now paid in the year insured, so the insurance for 2019 was paid in 2019. Insurance is shown as zero in 2018 as the insurance for 2018 was paid in 2017 as was then the practice. | | | |
| 9) Publicity and Recruitment costs were higher in 2019 as we renewed the web domain names for 5 years rather 2 years | | | |
| 10) Campaigns and Donations - None in 2019.
Donations in 2018: Burslem Port (towards a research study) + CRT (towards repair of Middlewich Breach). | | | |

Bank Balance at the end of year

£14,478.69

2018

£13,815.71

The Anderton Boat Lift

A Victorian engineering masterpiece – impresses at Open Weekend

The Canal & River Trust charity's Open Weekend at the Anderton Boat Lift, near Northwich, Cheshire attracted over 2000 visitors to a fun-packed family day of free activities on Saturday (8 February). Due to Storm Ciara, the Open Day on Sunday was postponed.



On Saturday, free angling and canoe sessions were available for families as well as the chance for children to try out arts and crafts, including creating a model of the lift in lego. Scheduled repairs to the lift meant that visitors also had a rare opportunity of stepping down into the chamber beneath the lift to see the lift from an entirely different perspective as well as taking a trip up to the top of the spectacular 50ft lift. Such was the interest of this

special Open event, that a crew from BBC North-West Tonight also filmed during the day.

Peter Bishop from Birmingham made a special trip to visit the lift and said: "We've got a lot of canals in Birmingham but nothing like this amazing structure. I admire the on-going work of the Canal & River Trust in keeping this Lift in working order."



David Thorne, Canal & River Trust's Senior Project Manager, responsible for the repairs to the lift, said: "It is a privilege to work on something put together by people with such ingenuity and technical expertise. In the day, the Lift's Victorian engineers were using cutting-edge technology and their achievement – the world's first successful boat lift – speaks for itself, even now."

Graham Wood, Duty Manager, Anderton Boat Lift, said: "We are delighted that the players of People's Postcode Lottery have made this Open Weekend possible and pleased that so many people were able to make it along to see this engineering marvel. This was also made possible thanks to the hard work of our many dedicated volunteers and staff."

The Anderton Boat Lift re-opens, following the repairs, on March 13. In 2019, the site won the 'Experience of the Year' Award at Marketing Cheshire's prestigious Annual Tourism Awards.

Press release

For further information, contact:

Fiona Young, Anderton Boat Lift on 01244 851867 or at f.young@marketingcheshire.co.uk



Photo Commons

TRENT AND MERSEY CANAL SOCIETY

a charity recognised for tax purposes by HMRC

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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



Navigating through lock 38 in Stoke in Storm Ciara!

Photo Norman English