

GRAND TRUNK



September/October 2020

www.trentandmerseycanalsociety.org.uk

Chairman's Bit

We set off round the Four Counties Ring on 4th July as the canals re-opened. I am pleased to say that all went well, although it was sad to see so many of the duplicated locks on the Cheshire Flight closed for repairs. At least CRT agreed with my request that they should be listed on their stoppages site as “navigation restrictions”. Over the past 2 months the number of such restrictions rose to a peak of 8 locks closed, but has started to slowly fall as repairs get under way again.



The other problem on our trip was that Harecastle Tunnel is now only open for pre-booked passages [Currently 5 boats Southbound at 8,10 and 12 + 5 Northbound at 9,11 and 1]. We certainly found it difficult to plan our trip to make sure that we arrived at the tunnel mouth the required 30 minutes before our booked 10 a.m. passage. With so many of the Red Bull Flight down to 1 lock (4 of the 6 in July) it took us around 90 minutes to pass through the last 4 locks with boats queuing in both directions.

In August we booked passages both ways as we spent a week on the Caldon Canal (including scraping through Froghall Tunnel and winding at the terminus of the Leek Arm). Again it proved difficult to reach the Kidsgrove portal for our midday passage, taking over 2 hours for the last 4 locks. Mind you that did include very slowly filling a lock to rescue a trapped family of coots, and then following a boat which only used $\frac{1}{4}$ of a paddle until the lock was nearly full. Heading home was much easier as we simply moored at the Southern portal overnight to be in plenty of time for our booked 9am passage.

P.S. As many of you probably expected, we have decided to postpone our 2020-21 season of talks with Covid-19 causing too many uncertainties.

See page 14.....Ed.

Cover picture: The quiet T&M before post-lockdown summer boating,

Photo, Sandra Lawson

Editorial

Hi everybody,

We had a great time up the Caldon, which was much quieter than the T&M. We explored some country walks at Froghall and Leek, got too hot, then very wet, but never cold!

Our journey back down the Cheshire Flight (to join the August working party) was quite interesting. All went well to Lock 51 where I discovered a boat in the entrance to the lock, clearly on its way up, but in some distress. I was told that they had shut the top gate using their rope, but had chosen the centre rope. The boat had accordingly tipped, jettisoning the entire contents of the roof into a deep pound. A search was in progress. Chairman Roger inadvertently complicated matters by thinking the boat was stuck and running more water down from the lock above! Eventually the beleaguered couple rescued everything except a rake and pulled over so that we could carry on downwards. Fortunately they saw the funny side of the incident.

Down to lock 60, where the boat in front of us had taken the nearside (narrow) lock. We waited politely for the upcoming boat to clear the off-side lock. All seemed to be going well until the nearside boat became stuck and could not exit the lock when the gates were opened. Much flushing of water later the boat had made it just enough to foul the bottom gates, where it stuck fast. We were asked to back up, snatch with our rope and pull and pull *and pull*. We have a powerful engine, but nothing happened. CRT were called and we left. Enquiries from down-coming boats the following day elicited the information that a crane had to be sent for. The lock is now closed pending investigation into the obstruction in the bottom!

On a more sombre note, I was touched (and a little tearful) to hear from Angie Turner that the last of her husband's ashes (much missed past chairman Malcolm Turner) had been scattered in the T&M at Anderton. He is greatly missed.

*Lots of interesting articles this time, thank you to
Everyone who contributed—enjoy!*



FOR HIRE

When I retired in 2016, after nearly fifty years in the rail industry, I suddenly found myself, even allowing for my boating and gardening interests, with a lot of time on my hands that was proving difficult to fill.

Of course, I had given this some thought in the lead up to my retirement and thought that I might fill my spare time with a part time job so long as it was something that I actually enjoyed doing. It was then that I remembered that a long standing boating friend of mine (and fellow T&MCS member) had worked for several years since his retirement doing boat handovers for a local hire boat company.

Suffice it to say that I expressed an interest, went for a brief trial and was quickly taken on to the compliment of the handover team. There are five of us, three of whom are fully paid up members of the silver threads club, myself included, and a couple of engineering apprentices who do the handovers to build up their life experience!

The company in question operates a small fleet of luxury hire boats and the owner, quiet rightly, sets high standards for the quality of his boats (all built in house and retired after 5 seasons use) their presentation/cleanliness, engineering integrity and the quality of the handover.

A typical shift starts with arriving at the marina at 08.00 hrs, finding your allocated boat on the towpath, bringing it into the marina (marina rules prevent the customers from bringing it in themselves) discussing how the boat had behaved during their holiday and then cajoling the customers to vacate in reasonable time, leaving us about 4 hours to get the boat turned around for the next set of customers.

Once the customers have left it's over to the service quay for a pump out, refuel, replacement of any empty gas bottles and then back to the allocated mooring where the work really starts. The first task is to go through the boat from end to end to ensure everything works (we have a thirty or so point checklist to work through) and carry out any repairs as required. If it's something relatively straightforward such as a failed bulb or a broken cabin hook we replace it ourselves, if it's something more serious there is a company engineer on duty. One thing I quickly learnt about cabin hooks is that the holes for screwing them to the bulk head are never in exactly the same place; you would assume they are produced in their thousands from the same patterns but not so it seems. So what should be a two minute job to replace often takes much longer and can involve drilling and tapping new holes

before it can be secured in place; in an emergency they can be attached by one screw only although we try to avoid that if at all possible.

After the check list is completed it's down into the engine hole to check the weed hatch and prop, engine mounts, oil and coolant levels, fill up the greaser and ensure all of the cables and wiring look ok.

Once we are satisfied all is well the cleaners move into the boat and we clean the outside and fill up the water tank. It has to be said that external cleaning isn't our favourite job, especially if it's raining or baking hot, but there is usually a bit of banter flying about between the boats and it's always nice when the customers tell us how smart the boat looks. We also try to touch up any scratches to the paintwork and blacking, hopefully (but not always) allowing enough time for it to dry before the customers arrive!

It's worth at this stage saying a few words about the marina where we are based. It's a nice friendly place but suffers from being very exposed to the elements. There is nothing like being on a sixty foot boat as it is blown sideways down the marina in half a gale, and between lines of expensive private boats, to sharpen up your boat handling skills! Fortunately the six boats in the fleet all moor next to each other so at least if we hit anything it is likely to be one of our own rather than an expensive private boat. It has to be said that the boats are all very responsive to the throttle which, I am told, is due to the owners preference for a large prop coupled to a 3:1 gearbox. So, once you pluck up enough courage to get some revs on (a rapidly learnt skill) you can counter most conditions without colliding with anything.

Of course, dealing with the customers is by far the most rewarding part of the job. As you might expect they come from all walks of life from refuse collectors, train drivers, nuclear submarine captains to Deputy Lord Lieutenants (more of that later) and, almost without exception are nice people. They are always asked at the time of booking if they have had previous boating experience or not. You quickly learn that most are modest about this and say no only for us to find out when they arrive that they did the Four Counties ring a couple of years ago. On the other hand you get a minority who answer yes only to find out their boating experience is limited to a rowing boat on the Norfolk Broads.

It's important to quickly establish their level of experience as that dictates what happens next. They all get a full walk through of the boat from one end to the other and some handy hints regarding battery life, their planned route, the quality of the beer in local pubs and where/where not to moor. If they are experienced it's then just a case of taking them out of the marina pointing

them in the right direction and jumping off with a reminder about their return time. If they are novices though that involves practical tuition until we are happy that at least one crew member can steer the boat in a straight line, pass boats travelling in the opposite direction and safely negotiate a lock. At the marina where we are based there is a lock a few hundred yards to the east direction towards Burton and another a couple of miles to the west towards Fradley. The normal routine for novices therefore is to cruise the two miles to the west where a decision has to be made; are they competent enough for me to supervise them working through the lock and leave them to it or do we need to wind (fortunately the winding hole is just before the lock) and cruise back to the marina before winding again and heading back to the lock.

Of course, some customers pick up steering very quickly, whilst others need more time. The trick is to provide plenty of verbal feedback /encouragement and intervene as little as possible but always be ready to grab the tiller before the front of the boat disappears into an overhanging tree! I get the timing right most times!

Inevitably there have been a few memorable moments, and three of them are recounted below.

The first involves a brand new fifty footer and its first trip out with a crew of Japanese customers, Mum, Dad and twelve year old daughter. It's fair to say the Mum and Dads' command of English was patchy to say the least (although better than my knowledge of Japanese) so 12 year old daughter said she would be translating for me. I remember vividly my explanation/practical demonstration of the weed hatch with the daughter relaying my commentary to her parents in a stream of (to me at least) unintelligible gobbledygook. How I hoped she was accurately relaying what I had said! When we got out on to the water things got even worse, Mum and Dad were both absolutely hopeless at steering. Despite travelling to and from the lock several times we were still weaving a very haphazard course up the canal and a look of horror crossed their faces each time a boat approached from the opposite direction. I was rapidly running out of both time and ideas. In desperation I suggested that 12 year old daughter, under strict parental supervision of course, might take the tiller and, to my intense relief, she took to it straight away. I did though view the boat with some concern when it was returned the following week but it displayed no more than the usual scratches for a group of first timers.

The second involves "the beast from the East", remember that? It was the first weekend of the season with just the one boat out to which I was allocat-

ed. It was being hired by a lovely couple who had travelled down from Scotland for their first ever experience of a canal holiday. I will always remember them stepping out of their car on arrival into an easterly gale with horizontal snow and a midday temperature of minus two; It was particularly memorable because they were both wearing shorts!

It was also complicated because the Alrewas Trent was running particularly high so the owner asked me if I would stay with them across the river and get them safely moored up at Alrewas. I vividly recall the trip up to Alrewas, it was so cold that the customers were shivering so much they could hardly hold the tiller. Fortunately the gale force wind was behind us so it didn't impact too much on the steering and, despite the intense cold, they both picked it up pretty quickly. Whilst we were heading to Alrewas the customers reminded me it was my fault we were out in this awful weather. Apparently they had both attended the company open day the previous October and I had talked them out of spending a considerable amount of money on a brand new boat until they had hired one out! After what seemed like an age Alrewas Lock hove into sight. The customers noticed someone emptying the lock and said "well at least we aren't the only idiots out in this". I pointed out to them that the idiot emptying the lock was the company owner who was giving me a lift back to the marina.

The final story involves two couples who had hired a boat. Whilst one couple would be arriving at the normal 1pm start time their friends were travelling up from a naval reunion in London and wouldn't be arriving until about 5.30. I was therefore asked to take the first couple through the boat in the usual way and then give them the full novice handover, returning them to the marina to await the arrival of their friends. As I had travelled to the marina in my own boat that weekend the extended wait was no problem at all. Whilst I was out with the first couple I engaged them in my now well practised conversation about our respective careers. Although now retired from full time employment, the gentleman told me he was the "Deputy Lord Lieutenant of Staffordshire". That's interesting I replied I have met your boss. What he replied, the Queen? I quickly explained that I meant the Lord Lieutenant himself, the patron of our society.

At the time of writing this article (early May) the hire boat industry is on hold with the rest of the country as a result of the lockdown and I haven't done a single shift this year. Let's hope that by the time you read it that some semblance of normality has returned and we are once again able to go boating and that the waterway industries that are so badly affected are still with us.

Dave Brewin

Happy Days!

(part 2)

Continuing our cruise during the spring of 1988 we left Ellesmere Port and headed for Chester, but sad to say the canal was full of rubbish and there were masses of weeds floating about which made the going difficult. Eventually we moored at Tower Wharf Basin in Chester from where a horse-drawn trip-boat ran. The name of the horse was Betelgeuse – obviously he was a real star! We visited the historic town including the Toy Museum where Terry had a “blast from the past” when he saw Muffin the Mule on display. We stocked up on provisions – we didn’t have a fridge on board at that time – and continued our cruise.

Whilst working through Beeston Locks with their round lock lobbies we learned that with a previous owner *NB Emily* had been stuck on the cill in the iron lock. Oh dear! *NB Emily* is a 43ft Dartline boat and the manager at the Dartline base by the staircase locks at Bunbury told us she was originally built for a doctor and that there had been about a dozen built in that style around 1974.

As we had plenty of time we decided to continue beyond the Middlewich Branch and cruise a small section of the Llangollen Canal for the first time. We worked our way up the four Hurleston Locks and under the three lift bridges at Wrenbury. It was tight, but we managed to turn *NB Emily* and moor before Marbury Lock and the next morning walked into Marbury – another of those “Best Kept” award villages. It was a small but attractive place and had an interesting church; the chancel of which is dedicated to the Earl of Bridgewater, so providing a link with the canal.

It was time to start heading back to Anderton Marina but Terry had a bad start to the day when in order to light the gas stove to boil the kettle for early morning tea and coffee he opened the kitchen matchbox upside down and spent the next ten minutes picking them all up.

Shortly after we turned into the Middlewich branch disaster struck when the throttle cable broke. We were able to proceed firstly by rigging a jury throttle lever – a lump of wood behind the link arm – and later by hand operation of the broken inner cable undertaken by Terry. The net result was that Annette and her Mum had to deal with all lock operations, and their

wailing was heard up and down the canal! However the good lock-wheeling was rewarded with a very tasty meal at the Big Lock Public House in Middlewich in the evening.

The next day we arrived at our mooring at Anderton Marina at lunchtime; the command “finished with engines” was heard and the supernumerary crew of Annette’s Mum and Dad were declared redundant. There was much discontent that our first two week holiday on *NB Emily* was now over, but the four of us had plenty more holidays aboard *NB Emily* over the next 17 years with articles about many of them appearing in Grand Trunk.



***NB Emily
At Wren-
bury Lift
Bridge,
Llangollen
Canal***

***NB Emily
Descends
Hurleston
Locks***

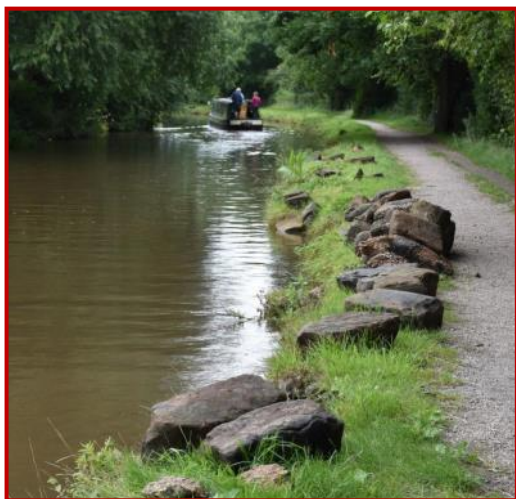


***Annette &
Terry
NB Emily and
Steamboat
Sidney***

I am grateful to IWA Lichfield for the following report.....Ed.

Towpath Improvements in Rugeley

The towpath of the Trent & Mersey Canal through Rugeley and Brereton has been particularly busy with people getting fresh air and exercise during the Covid-19 lockdown.



Work started earlier this year on resurfacing the towpath from the Rugeley Bypass bridge 62A at Brereton to the centre of Rugeley, using funds accumulated by the Council from several building developments over the years. The work had reached beyond Mossley Bridge 65 before lockdown, and the new 2.5 metres wide surface proved ideal for 2 metre socially distanced walks.

When work resumed and was completed up to Leathermill Lane Bridge 66, a short gap was left under the concrete railway bridge where the bank was collapsing, but this has now (July) been piled and the towpath surface finished off.



At the same time the long awaited access improvements to the ramp alongside Leathermill Lane Bridge have just been completed, with a more gently sloped ramp for disabled access. The awkward steps at the top have been removed, an attractively curved brick retaining wall built and the extended ramp has been tarmac surfaced. The bridge abutment wall that was partly demolished by vehicle impact some years ago has finally been rebuilt, and it looks like it will have railings on top which will open up a view of the canal.



IWA has been campaigning for many years for this work to be done, and for the moorings north of Leathermill Lane to be reinstated. The good news is that contactors are now on site, have recovered all the collapsed sandstone wash wall blocks, and are about to start piling the bank right through to Station Road Bridge 67. This will then enable the mooring rings to be repaired and the towpath resurfaced. IWA's volunteer work parties here in 2010 and 2011 repaired the then worst of the towpath wash holes with concrete filled sandbags, but it soon became clear that piling was needed to stop the rapid deterioration as boats used ever more engine power to try to get into the bank at what was then the main mooring area. It has since taken 8 years to get this work started.

Meanwhile, the piled bank south of Leathermill Lane has become the mooring of choice for passing boaters visiting Tesco and Morrisons, but the towpath there is very narrow and when this and other associated work on a cycle path is complete, cyclists will be encouraged to use Love Lane parallel to this part of the canal. Rugeley has some way to go before it will be as canal friendly a town as say Stone, but at least progress is now being made, and IWA will continue campaigning for improvements and for better boater facilities.

Phil Sharpe

Cheshire Locks Work Parties are back!

Locks 65 , Wheelock (T & M)

The Plan!

Refurbish Heritage metal rails around the by wash on Lock 65.

Achievements



Twelve sections of the rails scraped to bare metal and two coats of white Hammerite paint applied. The mixed hedge around the by wash trimmed back and the concrete apron cleared of all moss and vegetation. All three lock ladders prepared and painted. Towpath side vegetation trimmed along the hedge and strapping posts. Area cleared of litter.



Photos John Lawson



Next work party is scheduled for Thursday 17th September.

Intention is to complete work on the remaining nine sections of railings and commence preparation for painting on the lock gates, bridge rails and paddle gear of the adjacent Lock 65.

Contact details

John.lawson@waterways.org.uk

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**ALL SOCIAL MEETINGS CANCELLED FOR 2020-21
SEASON!**



CANCELLED

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

Above is a picture of our usual meeting venue, don't forget where it is! Unfortunately, because of the restrictions on meetings and social distancing rules, it has been decided that there will be **no** social season this year. Speakers have been asked to defer their interesting talks until 2021-22.

We want you all to be safe!



For further information contact: Gillian Watson 01606 835 606



Join Us on a Canal Work Party

We are back!

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

Thank you to IWA Lichfield for permission to use the following.....Ed

The Transformation of Brindley Bank

Brindley Bank is an historic area on the Trent and Mersey Canal at the northern end of Rugeley. The James Brindley aqueduct is next to an area of open ground which was once used to offload coal for the nearby Brindley Bank Pumping Station.

Steps, known as the 'Bloody Steps', lead to a footpath which takes you to the Wolseley Road. The steps earned their nickname as in times gone by a young woman, Christina Collins, was murdered on the canal, and her body was taken up the steps. The original steps being sandstone, when it rained they turned red and the story was that was because of Christina's blood dripping onto them.



By 2010 the whole area was completely overgrown and neglected. The path was virtually impassible and Brindley Bank was pretty much a 'no go' area.

IWA Lichfield Branch decided to do something about it, and in 2011 we started with the first of numerous work parties taking place to clear the undergrowth, rubbish and twisted metal.

We had lots of help - from CRT/the Police/Rugeley Lions Councillors and local residents. Apart from general mowing/strimming/tidying up/litter picking, in 2011 we painted the railings on the river bridge, in 2012 we installed new mooring rings along the towpath, in 2013 we relaid the path from Wolseley Road to the steps and through to the aqueduct.



In 2014-2015 the path all along Brindley Bank up to the bypass bridge was relaid with stone chippings and hammered down to provide a hard surface. The area is now much more welcoming for locals and visitors alike. Since the major works have been completed we have regular work parties to keep the area looking good.

Margaret Beardsmore

***Before (prev. page)
And During.***

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Problems in the South

I have just returned from a post lockdown cruise of the southern end of the T&M and I am very concerned about the state I find the canal in.

Stenson Lock.

The bottom gates have a large gap in the mitre join resulting in significant water loss making filling the lock extremely slow and even then requiring significant effort to open the top gates as it is impossible to make a proper level in the lock. This problem is compounded by the ridiculous baffles installed on the top gate paddles which continually clog up with weed.

When I opened these paddles on Wednesday they admitted no water whatsoever into the lock. If there are still safety concerns about the inrush of water from these paddles I suggest you remove the baffles and replace them with the hinged flaps that were previously fitted and worked well in diverting the water flow away from the bow of the boat.

Swarkestone Lock.

Comments as for Stenson Lock plus the sunken boat on the lock landing needs removing. It is now almost completely submerged and therefore invisible to boaters mooring up to use the lock. I have to say that CRT have created this problem by moving the boat on to the lock landing when it was obvious it was in imminent danger of sinking.

Bagnall Lock at Alrewas.

The bottom gates still will not remain closed. At one time this longstanding problem was solved by installing rods on the gates so they could be held shut whilst starting to fill the lock.

Towpath approx. 50 yards below Tatenhill Lock.

There is a large bush across the towpath blocking most of it. Walkers have attempted to walk around it causing the towpath edge to erode so that passage on the towpath is now difficult.

I am sorry to be so negative about the state on my local canal and I would like to have something positive to say; I can honestly say I have never known it to be in such poor condition. Also, at the time of writing, Derwent Mouth Lock is closed for several days although I accept this may be due to damage caused by a boater rather than the poor condition of the lock.

As we have a maintenance yard at Swarkestone one of our members took up the condition of Stenson Lock directly with the local supervisor. To be honest we felt sorry for him when he explained he had a team of three and a single work boat to cover over 60 miles of canal and they were currently on a job in Leicester. He was fully aware of the issues but held out little hope of any quick solutions.

Frustration with the broad locks.

Due to health and safety concerns all top gate paddles have been fitted with baffles that clog up with weed and other floating rubbish on a daily basis preventing most if not all inflow even with the paddles fully open. I understand the concerns about inexperienced boaters sinking their boats if they get

too far forward in the lock but the original solution of a hinged flap above the hole in the gate seemed to work well and did not get clogged up. So, with effectively only the ground paddles working and a huge gap in the bottom gates, lock operation is long winded and requires significant force to open the top gates. We had to moor up yesterday, having descended the lock, to help a fit middle age couple who were ascending as they knew they were unable to force open the top gates. The potential H&S concerns regarding someone injuring themselves trying to open the lock must almost outweigh those of flooding the boat if the lock is not operated in a safe manner.

Dave Brewin



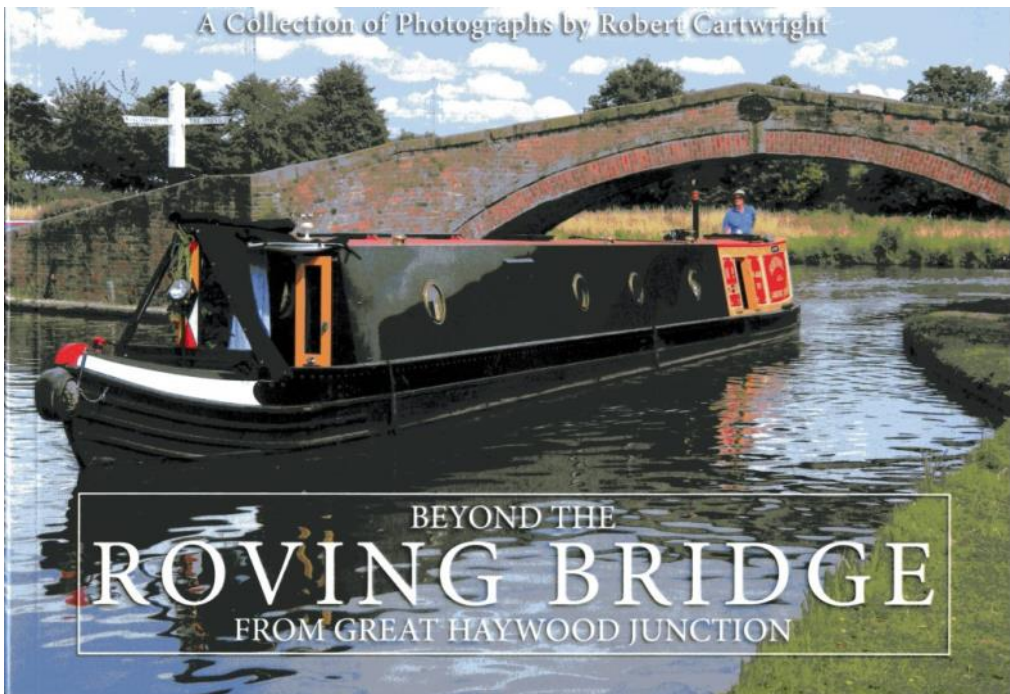
Stenson Lock with hinged flaps,

picture courtesy of *Trip Advisor*

CRT Response to Dave

Stenson Lock – we're aware of the challenges caused by the baffles, which were installed as a temporary fix some time ago, but regularly block with weed and debris. Swarkestone Lock – the above also applies here. Bagnall Lock – the props were removed when damaged and rendered unusable by a boat collision. A solution is sought.

Tatenhill Towpath – the bush has been cut back



BEYOND THE ROVING BRIDGE

FROM GREAT HAYWOOD JUNCTION

'Beyond the Roving Bridge from Great Haywood Junction', is a kaleidoscope of photographs by Robert Cartwright of Stafford. In the introduction to his book Robert comments that the title might give the impression that the scope of his photography was far and wide but points out that it was the Trent and Mersey that was his principal area of activity with fewer visits being made to the Staffs and Worcester and the Shropshire Union - all being within easy travelling from his base in Stafford.

It was Great Haywood Junction, alongside Brindley's graceful Roving Bridge that was one of the first locations that sparked Robert's interest in canal photography in the 1970s. On an early visit he became friends with Nigel and Jennifer Jackson, the crew of Malcolm Braine's trip boat Cactus who took passengers on short cruises along the T & M. Through their friendship it soon became clear to Robert that 'the cut' generated a very friendly atmosphere and that it offered many opportunities for photography.

Robert's book highlights the Trent and Mersey from Colwich, through the Haywoods, Salt and Weston, passing by the Marina at Aston to reach the pound above Lime Kiln Lock in Stone. The Staffs and Worcester is followed

from Haywood Junction through to Penkridge and The 'Shroppie' from the High Bridge at Woodseaves, with its centrally mounted telegraph pole. through Norbury Junction to Gnosall.

The book is of A5 format and contains 50 photographs and is priced at £9.99. Copies may be obtained from the Canal Farm Shop at Great Haywood a popular mooring for stocking up on supplies, but for boaters who may not be planning to pass through the area the book may be obtained by Mail Order. It is also available from Waterstones in Stafford.

Robert, a supporter of the Staffordshire Branch of the Council for the Preservation of Rural England (CPRE). is donating £3 from the sale of each book to their registered charity 219443. Payment may be made by credit/debit card or by PayPal by employing the link -

<https://cpre-staffordshire.onlineweb.shop/>

In case of difficulty please contact Robert on 01785 -254283
or robertandrew.cartwright@virgin.net



BEYOND THE ROVING BRIDGE FROM GREAT HAYWOOD JUNCTION

A review by Margaret English

Do you love or have fond memories of our wonderful narrow canals? Or perhaps regret not grabbing a fleeting photogenic moment as you cruised along? If so, you will be interested in this unusual little book. There are textbooks which give the details of the birth and development of canals, and cruising guides like Pearson's which will include some pictures along with witty comments, but Cartwright's book is in a genre of its own.

The book is A5 size and 120 pages long, so fits neatly on the bookshelf. It begins with a brief explanation of how Cartwright came to be quite so good at representing his beloved Staffordshire in pictures, then an introduction about how canal photography became a passion.

Now that the reader's appetite has been whetted, the first half of the book captures the glorious Trent & Mersey through Colwich Lock to Stone in all seasons. Captions are on the facing page (the back of the preceding picture), usually descriptive but sometimes with a brief factual explanation, as to why a structure looks the way it does (a good example is the Iron Bridge at Great Haywood on page 22). The facing page is otherwise blank, leaving the viewer to interpret the picture in his own way. Thoughts could always be jotted down under the title, although it would be a great shame to write in such a beautiful book!

The remaining two sections of the book cover The Staffs and Worcester Canal from great Haywood Junction to Penkridge and The Shropshire Union Canal from Woodseaves to Gnosall. The pictures somehow manage to capture the different personalities of each waterway, as well as exhibiting some light-hearted humour. For example, on page 83 there is a beautiful picture of a boatman's traditional water barrel, but no mention is made of the large green frog (complete with neckerchief) which is cuddling it!

The pictures are undated, giving the reader a feeling of timelessness. I tried to spot small changes which might date a photograph, but my only success was in recognising the steerer of the tar boat *Spey* – he looks a little older now!

If you like lots of factual information with your pictures, then this book is not for you, but as a memento or present (perhaps to encourage new waterways enthusiasts) Robert Cartwright's little book is hard to beat. It is exactly what it claims to be on the front cover- a collection of photographs; the compiler should be congratulated on the quality and sensitivity of these.

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

Bringing Boats Back to Burslem

The Great Cover Up

Last July when it was announced that face coverings were to be worn in shops and where the 2-metre social distancing rule couldn't be maintained I decided to find a needle and thread and some material and try to make my own coverings rather than buy disposable ones.

The first one I made was for Terry for which I used an old pair of black shorts which when worn with his black jacket and navy-blue hat made him look like a bank robber – not the best result!

I then made one for myself using a TMCS headscarf which I folded over to make the necessary layers of material. As you can see from the photo I'm not in the words of Ray Davies of The Kinks "a dedicated follower of fashion" nor a contender for the Great British Sewing Bee programme. But hopefully they will keep us safe!

Annette & Terry

NB Emily and Steamboat Sidney

Kennet & Avon Canal



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!

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