GRAND TRUNK



The magic Moving milepost

(See p.4/5)

Photo Phil Myott

March/April 2021

www.trentandmerseycanalsociety.org.uk

Chairman's Bit

As you will see on page 17, CRT have agreed with our request that Harecastle Tunnel should not become "all passages by prebooking only" as they originally proposed. Instead from 8-12 it will be "turn up and wait, with guaranteed passage that day" as before, then there is a gap until 2 p.m. to clear any queues, followed by pre-booked boats at fixed times in the afternoon.

Those of you who haven't visited our website for a while will see that some pages look very different next time they visit. The "News and



Events" section of our website was hosted by Google Sites, who are making big changes to their hosting platform this year. These changes would have needed us to do a lot of work just for that section to stay looking <u>roughly</u> the same. So, instead, I have moved this whole section across to the same host (Amber Hosting) as the rest of our website. This does mean that <u>some</u> bookmarks to pages within this section will no longer work, although hopefully most will still be okay (e.g. <u>www.tamcs.org.uk/diary</u> still works).

As part of this move, I reworked all those pages (and most of the rest of the site) to be more mobile-friendly. This has meant changing around 120 pages in total, so there are probably a few mistakes to be found and fixed. Please let me know if you spot any! Also there is now a separate page for every milepost, although 7 mileposts still have no photographs (see www.tamcs.org.uk/mileposts/index for a list). Photographs are also welcome of other mileposts, especially those east of Fradley Junction.

If you wonder why the name of our website seems to have changed in my examples above, don't worry. The proper name of our site is still www.trentandmerseycanalsociety.org.uk (as before) but www.tamcs.org.uk now works everywhere, which saves quite a bit of typing!

Roger Evans

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Editorial

Here we are again! As lockdown continues, I apologise for some of the content of the magazine being only vaguely related to our canal! As we are not allowed to travel (either by boat or car) finding interesting articles is not easy! Grateful thanks to those who have come to my aid with help and suggestions—I hope the end result is readable!



There is a little light at the end of the tunnel, as we will probably be allowed to take short trips from the end of March, and recommence boating on 12th April (as long as the dreaded virus behaves to plan!). We hope to resume our aborted trip to the Montgomery before it gets too busy, fingers crossed. Also, the current plan is for the IWA Festival of Water at Worcester (postponed from 2020) to take place as planned. We will be working to set up the site as usual and my trusty laptop will be recording the experience for your benefit.

While stuck at home, as well as working on our website, chairman Roger has been busy transferring his huge collection of slides (dating from the 70's) to the computer. It is a lengthy and frustrating process, as the equipment has to be carefully cleaned for every slide. We have relived our youth—early family boating holidays on borrowed boats, revisited weddings, and New Year parties (where on earth were we that year?). Carefully worked out which WRG dig was where, and when, and realised what a wonderful life we really have had (that would be a good subject for a film!).

The days are getting longer, we have changed our oil and are ready to cruise. More (and better) news next time!

Please send contributions for the next issue to me, Margaret English, by email 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 2021 edition is 22/04/2021.

In the last edition member John Ledbury asked if anyone could confirm that milepost 91/1 (Shardlow) had been moved.

Stephen Bates came up with a very prompt answer, detailed below.

Milepost Matters

In reply to the article by John Ledbury:

The milepost was indeed moved when the new road bridge was constructed.

By myself, my father and other members of the T&MCS southern section.

The milepost was transported on my dad's boat and stored at Dobson's boat yard for around two years. Cannot remember the exact date.

It was originally sited Aston side of the old bridge which would make it about under the new road crossing. The position can be seen on a 1900's map of the area.

When it was put back, if I remember rightly, there were issues with BW due to the Fibre-way cables which had been laid. I think they chose the present site.

The post was transported to the site by Paul Barber in his working boat *Roydon*.

Steven Bates

Having become intrigued by our moving milepost, I decided to consult the archive (that means sitting on the floor in our loft and going through the old magazines!).

A Google search produced the information that the new A50 bridge was built in 1970.

Picture facing page courtesy of Phil Myott.

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Grand Trunk, July/August 1997, contains an article about a milepost survey with the following information....

'At the time of the survey Milepost 1 (from Shardlow) was not in place, but had been removed by a southern section work party for safe-keeping until the bridge works for the Derby southern by-pass are finished.'

So far, so good, what happened next?

January/February 1998 boasted a review of that winter's work parties by the hard-working southern section. Milepost refurbishment, a usual task, had continued and....

'The post which was removed to make way for the Derby southern bypass was put back, and another couple had to be moved. They were at the back of the towpath when they were first put in, but improvements in the form of cutting back the undergrowth and scrub left them isolated in the middle of a now much wider path and right in the way.'

And that's it! All in a day's work.

I did however finally managed to find a picture of the offending milepost!



Trent and Mersey Canal Society - Annual Accounts

		2020 Ad	counts	versus 2019 Ac	counts
Income					
	Bank Interest	Nil		Nil	
(Note 2)	Gift Aid	£281.99		£529.11	
(Note 3)	Grand Trunk Magazine Advertising	£100.00		£160.00	
	Membership Subscriptions	£1,190.00		£1,610.00	
	Donations	£210.05		£203.52	
(Note 4)	Fund Raising	£33.00		£101.50	
(Note 5)	Sale of Goods	£17.00		£202.90	
		======>	£1,832.04	======>	£2,807.03
Expenditu	ire				
	Accountancy	Nil		Nil	
(Note 6)	AGM & Annual Report	Nil		£275.00	
(Note 7)	Grand Trunk Magazine	£1,122.42		£1,404.81	
(Note 8)	Insurance	£398.72		£230.72	
(Note 4)	Meetings (Speaker, Room Hire)	£25.00		£25.00	
, , , , ,	Prizes and Engraving	Nil		£8.99	
(Note 9)	Publicity & Recruitment	£0.59		£128.03	
(Note 5)	Sales (Stock, Postage)	Nil		Nil	
	Subscriptions to other organisations	£71,50		£71.50	
	Sundry Expenses	Nil		Nil	
	, , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , ,	*******	£1,618.23	********	€2,144.05
	Surplus in	2020 (before		Surplus in 2019 (before	
	Campaigns	& Donations)	£213.81	Campaigns & Donations)	£662.98
Campaign	ns and Donations				
(Note 10)	Burslem Port Trust	£4,000.00		Nil	
	Cheshire Locks Campaign	Nil		Nil	
	CONTRACTOR OF THE PARTY OF THE	******	€4,000.00	======>	€0.00
	Final Lo	ss in 2020	£3,786.19	Final Surplus in 2019	£662.98

Notes

- 1) This note does NOT appear in the accounts as there was no expenditure in 2020, but it is noted here as a reminder.

 When Anderton Boat Lift Trust closed down, they left the residue to us. It is ring-fenced for use ONLY at Anderton Lift.

 Total amount ring-fenced for Anderton Boat Lift (ex-Trust)

 £1,601.28

 2019
 £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) Grand Trunk Magazine Advertising was lower in 2020 as only 1 of our 2 advertisers renewed.
- 4) Fund Raising was lower in 2020 as Covid-19 meant that we had no meetings or events after February.
- 5) Sales in 2020 were just a few donated items, as Covid-19 meant that we had no meetings or events after February.

 Total Nominal Value of stock at the end of 2020 £590.00 2019 £590.00
- 6) No AGM was held in 2020 because of Covid-19. We plan to combine it with the 2021 AGM once Covid-19 allows.
- 7) Grand Trunk Expenses were lower in 2020 as we had bought the stamps in 2019 before a price increase.
- 8) Insurance was higher in 2020 as we paid for 2 years: 2020 (£230.72) and 2021 (£168). The cost of the 2021 insurance was much reduced by <u>not</u> insuring the stock (as the insurance excess was approaching total stock value).
- 9) Publicity and Recruitment costs were higher in 2019 because we renewed the web domain names for 5 years.
- 10) Campaigns and Donations None in 2019. Donations in 2020: Burslem Port towards the cost of digging trial pits to asses the cost of disposal of the infill.

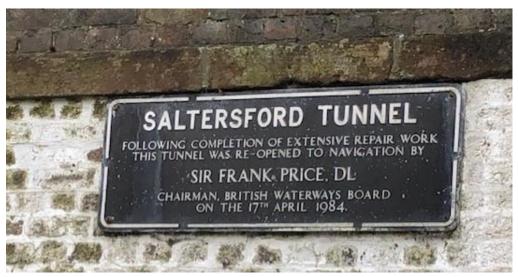
Bank Balance at the end of year £10,692.50 2019 £14,478.69

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Saltersford Tunnel

"Were you be paying attention when you read the last issue?

This plaque, which was mentioned in the last issue of Grand Trunk, but not shown, has perpetuated a deceit for the last 36 years. It was installed for an unveiling, as stated, but Sir Frank Price, the Chairman of British Waterways at that time, was unwell on the day in question and the opening ceremony never occurred.



As can be seen, the plaque was never removed, so now it's iconic and let's hope it will continue to remain undisturbed.

Incidentally, the remedial work took place at the far end of the tunnel, and it resulted in a reduction in the size of the bore just before the exit. Most regrettable.

If you have a wider beam boat venturing north on the T&M from the Anderton Boat Lift, to the Bridgewater Canal, beware!"

John Tackley

Loss of a landmark

Passing through Rugelely on the T&M, boaters could hardly fail to notice the tall chimney which stood as a memorial to the town's industrial past.

This huge 183-metre high chimney at Rugeley Power Station came tumbling down after a massive explosion.

The disused chimney was demolished just after 8.30am on January 24 to make way for new development in the area.



Spectators have travelled to the site in recent years to watch as other parts of the power station have been demolished, but this time due to lockdown they were told to stay away, as police reminded people to heed the current Government Covid-19 restrictions.

As a result, people were advised to watch the demolition via a live feed online.

Hundreds of new homes, a new school and employment space will take the place of the coal-fired power plant which has been closed since 2016.

The demolition exclusion zone extended onto the A51, so a road closure and diversion were in place.

From Birminham Live

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What a waterway puzzle!

Having seen Angela's "Canal Jigsaw" article in the last edition of Grand Trunk it reminded me (Annette) of a jigsaw I was given as a child about 55 years ago. The original box is now held together with Sellotape but still contains all the pieces of the puzzle as recently checked out whilst staying at home during Lockdown 3.



The puzzle is called "Entering the Lock" and was produced by Good Companion Jigsaws who were most active from the 1930s until 1969 and issued 400-piece jigsaws like the one illustrated during the 1950s and 1960s. It shows an idyllic scene of a very clean canal, picturesque thatched cottages, beautiful gardens and a young lady steering the working butty "Lettie" into a lock.

The puzzle is that there's no sign of a motor boat or a horse so how is the butty going to make it to the lock entrance? We can only assume that the man on the

bow with the boat pole must have eaten at least 3 Weetabix for breakfast and that he trained in his youth working on the gondolas in Venice!

Annette & Terry NB Emily and Steamboat Sidney

Good news or bad?

The sad tale of Price-Kensington

It appears that work has commenced on the Price & Kensington factory site at Longport. As some of you will be aware, the old pottery has stood derelict and partly fire ravaged for some years and has become a dumping ground for old tyres etc. Stoke City Council have been pressing the owners to clean up the site for some time. The factory stands on the bend just before Bridge 126 and the iconic bottle kiln is noticeable as the T & M loops through Longport.



Price & Kensington, with along Spode factory in Stoke is the earliest surviving example of a proofed construction in the pottery industry. Situated by the canal bridge on Newcastle Street. This is the main road from Burslem to Newcastle. As did many pottery factories. backs onto the Trent and Mersey canal.

The grade-II listed building is also listed on Historic England's heritage at risk register- it was built in the late 18th century and has fallen victim to arsonists and thieves in recent years.

In October 2019 Stoke on Trent Live reported that-'the owner of a crumbling former potbank has been taken to court after concerns were raised over the structure of the historic building.'

In the following month BBC stated that-

A grade II listed former teapot factory has been partially demolished, despite protests from campaigners.

Parts of the former Price and Kensington works in Longport, Stoke-on-Trent, were reduced to rubble after surveys showed they were at risk of collapsing.

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The building has been on Heritage England's At Risk register.

Campaigners have previously called on the government to step in to protect the site.

A picket line was set up outside of the building on Saturday and one campaigner said the people of Stoke-on-Trent were "losing our heritage right in front of our very eyes".

The site includes a bottle kiln, which were once common across Stoke

The city has a long association with the ceramics industry, with tens of thou-



sands of people at one time employed in the sector in the city.

However, Stoke-on-Trent City Council said the derelict factory was at risk of collapse and there was a "danger to the public".

Councillor Daniel Jellyman, in charge of regeneration and heritage, said the local authority was "committed to protecting our city's heritage" and it was with "deep sadness" the decision to demolish part of the factory had been made.

He said a four-year search for a developer to regenerate the site had failed. The work is being carried out under the 1984 Building Act and the city council said it would be "seeking to recover all reasonable costs associated with the demolition work" from the site's owner.

The Society will be keeping a close eye on developments!

Storm Christoph

In January, during lockdown number 3 (and you thought things couldn't get any worse!), storm Christoph decided to visit the UK, and caused considerable disruption to the canal system. Here are just a few of the problems it caused:

At the southern end of the canal, a planned winter stoppage had to be delayed. A bridge over the balance beams was to be installed at Lock 1, Derwentmouth Lock. However, the storm caused flooding at bridge 17 (Deepdale). Unfortunately, due to the amount of flooding, work to repair voids under the towpath at Bridge 17 has been severely disrupted, so the work on Lock 1 has had to be delayed until March.

Further North, an oil pollution incident in the canal on the Cheshire Flight could not be cleared because of the volume of water coming down the flight.

Even further North, because of Storm Christoph, the canal navigation and towpath had to be closed between Bridge 200, Soot Hill and Bridge 201 due to a landslide from the offside embankment. The offside land is owned by a third party and canal navigation has been blocked by fallen soil and vegetation with additional risk to the towpath and the gas main above.

CRT contractors have managed to create a narrow channel to ensure water can feed through the site, however surveys will need to be carried out to assess the current risk which will guide efforts to remove the remaining material without causing further damage.

Unfortunately, this means the canal and towpath will be closed here for some time.

There were also a large number of fallen trees, which were dealt with as soon as possible- and that's just the T&M!

The Shrophire Union Canal was breached by Wharton's Lock and had a collapsed culvert near Coole Pilate, and there were flooding problems throughout the system.

Facing Page: Landslip near Soot Hill Photo courtesy Daniel Hutchinson

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March/April 2021

ALL SOCIAL MEETINGS CANCELLED FOR 2020-21 SEASON!



CANCELLED

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

WANTED Social Secretary

Our current incumbent, Gillian Watson, has been in post for 9 years and feels that a fresh approach is needed. She will not, therefore organise any more talks (although the ones cancelled by the pandemic have merely been postponed!).

Gillian has worked extremely hard over the years, soldiering on through venue changes and unavoidable cancellations. She searched tirelessly for new and exciting speakers, and will be greatly missed.

Duties consist of organising a venue and series of talks (normally held on 3rd Friday of each calendar month) between October and April.

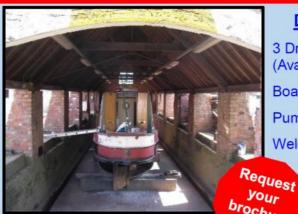
In recent years Gillian has also arranged a Christmas Meal at the beginning of December, liaising with the relevant landlord.

The post includes a seat on the Society Committee. The committee *nor-mally* meet bi-monthly at a member's home to discuss Society matters. Attendance would not be obligatory however.

Expressions of interest to Roger or Margaret please. Gillian is happy to help the successful applicant to find their feet.

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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 Decem-

ber) 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.

Contact: John Lawson 07940 878923 John.Lawson@waterways.org.uk

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Harecastle Tunnel, Opening Times

Following the discussions and suggestions made at a Zoom meeting with CRT in response to the original plan to restrict tunnel passage and insist on booking only.......

Tunnel opening times, Monday to Sunday

8am – 5pm from 1st March to 30th October

Non booked passages can arrive at the tunnel between 8am and 12 noon, boats arriving after 12 noon will not be guaranteed a passage unless previously booked

(passage may be granted if other boats are booked and slots available)

Bookable passage slots will be available to be pre-booked for the following times (Monday to Sunday)

2pm – Southbound

3pm - Northbound

4pm - Southbound

Bookable passages will need to be booked up to 24 hours prior (reduced from 48 hours)

Bookable passages will be booked online via https://licensing.canalrivertrust.org.uk

Tunnel enquiries will be via eventsnorthstaffs@canalrivertrust.org.uk
Tunnel enquiries phone number 07710 175258 (manned 8am – 4pm daily).
Please Note – the above is for Harecastle Tunnel enquiries only, all other enquiries should be directed to the regional customer service enquiries teams.

For those who couldn't attend on the night, the rationale behind retaining the afternoon bookings is after some analysis of tunnel passages we recognise there are periods that we have staff members located at the tunnel when passages are not required, this is a resource that we could re-deploy elsewhere for the greater benefit of all our customers. Please feel assured, should afternoon passages be required we will be on site to facilitate these bookable passages.

Any questions, please feel free to contact: Smon.martin@canalrivertrust.org.uk Or the team at eventsnorthstaffs@canalrivertrust.org.uk

Kidsgrove Station

Those of you who attended the AGM held in Kidsgrove will remember the walk around the town led by Jon Honeysett and the visit to Kidsgrove station, then awaiting improvements. Jon was very keen to point out that the station and canal together formed an exciting transport hub.

The article below was posted in October 2019 on Stoke on Trent Live

Tests to look for underground mine shafts are due to take place at a North Staffordshire railway station as part of a multi-million revamp that will include a new footbridge and car park.

Work on a new footbridge, complete with lifts, at Kidsgrove Station stalled earlier this year after Network Rail's builders discovered the poor ground conditions at the site.

A six-week long investigation is now underway to look for mineshafts and assess any work that needs to be done before the £5 million project, which will also include improvements to the car park, can resume.

Deborah Fairweather, Network Rail sponsor, said: "We understand the frustration to station users at Kidsgrove who were looking forward to these much -needed improvements as part of Britain's Railway Upgrade Plan.

"We are working hard to restore this project and get it delivered, and these specialist surveys are the next step of that process.

"We are working closely with the station operator, East Midlands Railway, to ensure our work brings as little disruption as possible to passengers at the station."

The 'access for all' project will see lifts built at either side of platforms one, two, three and four, with the new footbridge linking the platforms.

Network Rail says trains will continue as normal but the station will look and feel different for passengers.

Neil Grabham, customer services director for East Midlands Railway, said: "We know our passengers and the local community are keenly awaiting the improvements at Kidsgrove and it is good news the project is again moving forward."

I am grateful to member 'Good Moaning' (name supplied) for bringing the following note in this January's RAIL magazine to my attention.....Ed

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Kidsgrove Station Works to Resume

Stabilisation of mineshafts under Kidsgrove Station started on January 18th. When the mineworks are complete, Network Rail will install new lifts and a footbridge to provide step-free access to all four platforms.



Presumably the mineshafts also run beneath our canal!

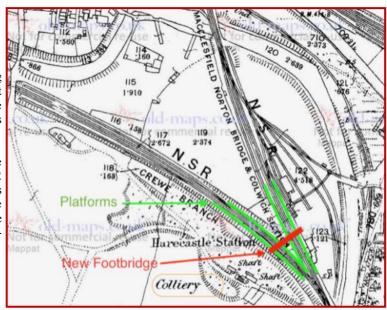
Below Mr Moaning has made a small map showing the colliery, clearly under the station.

Mr Moaning's comment-

"I am wondering why the planners at Network Rail were unaware of this potential problem?

And now they are planning to run HS2 across the salt beds of the Cheshire plain - which are notoriously unstable...

One has to smile! "



Lockage Ranking 2020

We all know that 2020 was not a usual year! There was a full stop on boating activity in March, followed by restricted travel as life got easier. Thenwow! Unable to go abroad or find accommodation in the UK, lots of folk discovered what we knew all along- the wonderful benefits of boating.

CRT have just published their lockage chart for 2020 (a bit of a false picture as all locks are not included). The Trent & Mersey Canal features no fewer than 10 times in the top 50 most used locks. Here are the details:

No.3	Lock 20	Woodend	4450
No.18	Lock 11	Wychnor	3474
No.20	Lock 21	Colwich	3347
No.22	Lock 27	Star	3215
No 23	Lock 12	Alrewas	3213
No.25	Lock 35	Trentham	2945
No.28	Lock 75	Big Lock	2798
No.29	Lock 37	Cockshutes	2765
No. 39	Lock 42	Limekiln	2199
No.41	Lock 6	Stenson	2002



Our much-loved waterway can be a very busy place!

In addition, Number 4 on the list is Wardle Lock (lock 1 on the Middlewich Branch of the Shropshire Union Canal) where boaters leave the T&M to navigate the Four Counties Ring (4284 lockages).

Woodend Lock (Johnnu Essex, Wikipedia Commons)

Winter Woes

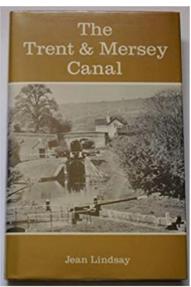
This winter has taken a heavy toll on membership. Quite a few of our older stalwarts have unfortunately died, including Albert Southam and William Rowley (aged 88). Rachel James (William Rowley's daughter) gave me the following information:

'Dad's interest in the waterways began in the 1970's when along with my mother he attended an evening class at my school in Birmingham about the history of the canal network. This lead to holidays and in the early 1980's employment with British Waterways. Initially he was assistant manager at the Northwich repair yard and later a move to Gloucester. One of his first jobs at Northwich was the Anderson Boat Lift which broke down in his first week! Mum and Dad lived in Barnton, whenever family or friends visited there was always a walk to the boat lift at some point. Many of the grand-children have very fond memories of these walks and Grandad's detailed descriptions of how it worked. It is poignant that there is an article in your January/February Grand Trunk about this magnificent structure. I'm sure Dad would have been very interested to follow the progress of this latest story.'

In addition, two members, Mrs Marie Jackson and Dr. Jean Lindsay (author of *The Trent and Mersey Canal*), have been admitted to care homes and are sadly no longer able to maintain their interest in canals, or read *Grand Trunk*.

Finally one of our Cheshire Locks volunteers (not a member!), Paul Taylor, contracted Covid in hospital and died.

Our sympathy goes out to all the families of those no longer able to be with us and we can only hope for a return to group activities in 2021 and lots of new members.



Margaret English

A Swan Story



This swan had a lucky escape from a busy road in Middlewich on 8th February.

Police officers spotted the swan darting between traffic on Booth Lane as it exits the town, after the bird had left the Trent & Mersey Canal. They were concerned over its safety.

Cars slowed down and steered round the swan as it crossed the road in between vehicles.

A spokesman for Middlewich Police said: "We managed to guide the swan back to the water safely and reunite him with his family."

Middlewich Guardian 8/02/2021

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TRENT AND MERSEY CANAL SOCIETY

a charity recognised for tax purposes by HMRC

Registered Office: 10 Long Lane, Middlewich, CW10 0BL

Telephone: 01606 834471

www.trentandmerseycanalsociety.org.uk (or) www.tamcs.org.uk

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ST4 8DY

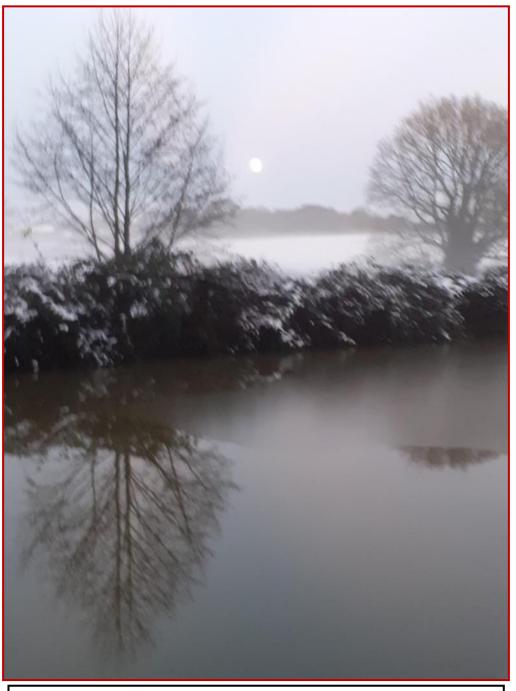
Tel: 01782-641765, Email:david.dumbelton@gmail.com



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

Bringing Boats Back to Burslem

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Winter on the Cheshire Flight (John Lawson)

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