

GRAND TRUNK



Barnton Slippage at Soot Hill

See pp. 12/13

May/June 2021

www.trentandmerseycanalsociety.org.uk

Chairman's Bit

As you can read on page 14, our canal has finally been reopened at Soot Hill near Anderton. We can personally report that passage both ways was easy, having just been though (and back) on a return cruise to Worsley. There are signs asking you to proceed at tick-over, a buoyed channel, and two CRT staff to explain why you need to be careful. The landslip is quite spectacular! Let us hope that the earth doesn't move again, or there could be a renewed closure!



On our return trip we were delayed deep within Barnton Tunnel. We were about half-way through when another boat came in towards us. Despite much honking (from both boats) we eventually stopped "bow to bow". Apparently, they hadn't seen that we were already in the tunnel! They were surprised to find that they couldn't pass us inside the tunnel, and horrified to realise that they would have to reverse back out (as we were already $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way through). Ten minutes later (and in the open air) we politely said "Thank you", they were full of apologies, and we parted without any hard feelings.

Cheshire Lock working parties resumed in April, unfortunately without one stalwart (see page 17). It was great to be at work again, enjoying the open air, the sunshine and chatting to fellow workers (at the regulation Covid-19 distance of course!).

Sorry that there is no news yet about our Winter Season of talks for 2021-22. Gillian Watson plans to contact Red Bull Public House once it has fully reopened, to discuss potential plans with the landlord (always subject to Boris changing the rules again of course). Hopefully there will be more news in the next issue, including dates and topics.

Don't forget that we still need a new Social Secretary to organise future talks seasons (see page 18).

Editorial

Welcome to Spring everyone! We are finally allowed to not only cruise, but stay out overnight. We started by attending the first Cheshire Locks Work Party by boat, and taking a short trip up the Macclesfield Canal (which is, of course, closed further up).



We returned home for a few days and booked our long-awaited passage down the Montgomery Canal. The culvert problems at Hurleston meant that once again we were thwarted.

Plan B was a trip around The Four Counties Ring, except that Stanthorne Lock on the Middlewich Branch had to be closed for emergency repairs. We consider this our own special lock, which has been woefully neglected of late. As you can see on page 14, we decided to investigate the Soot Hill landslide, and headed for The Bridgewater Canal.

We had to reverse down to Wardle Lock (as we had been neatly positioned ready to tackle Hurleston), which we accomplished in a zigzag fashion (good job there were no fishermen). On navigating the Bridgewater we were met by astonished cries of '*have you really come from Middlewich?*'.

We enjoyed boating to the work party so much that we intend to repeat the process next month, hopefully carrying on to complete the ring– I'll keep you posted.

If you haven't paid your subs this year, you will find a reminder with this magazine. I do realise that in the current (covid) situation some members may wish to resign, (although I hope not) but please let me know so that I can keep our records up to date.

Margaret English

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 2021 edition is **18/06/2021**.

The Derby Canal

The Derby Canal ran 14 miles (23 km) from the Trent and Mersey Canal at Swarkestone to Derby and Little Eaton, and to the Erewash Canal at Sandiacre, in Derbyshire. The canal was authorised by an Act of Parliament in 1793 and was fully completed in 1796. It featured a level crossing of the River Derwent in the centre of Derby. An early tramroad, known as the Little Eaton Gangway, linked Little Eaton to coal mines at Denby. The canal's main cargo was coal, and it was relatively successful until the arrival of the railways in 1840. It gradually declined, with the gangway closing in 1908 and the Little Eaton Branch in 1935. Early attempts at restoration were thwarted by the closure of the whole canal in 1964.

The canal today

From Swarkestone the line of the canal can be followed into Derby as far as Wilmorton although the only recognisable canal features are the chambers of Fullen's and Shelton Locks and the bridges under Chellaston Road (pictured) and London Road. Route 6 of the National Cycle Network (NCN 6) follows this part of the canal.

Although traces of the canal through Derby city centre remained until the late twentieth century (the ice factory on what was the Cockpit island drew its water from the canal), it has all been covered by development, mainly the inner ring road and Pride Parkway. New building at Pride Park has obliterated all traces of the canal in that area.

The weir built across the river to form the Derwent Basin still exists behind the Council House, downstream of the Exeter Bridge, and the timber causeway on trestles, which was used as the towpath, remained until 1959. The Holmes Aqueduct was removed in 1971, and after a period in storage at a council depot, was sold for scrap.

The remains of the towpath are visible at a bridge under the railway immediately north of Derby railway station. An unused span of the railway bridge over Old Nottingham Road once crossed the canal. Steel girders set into the kerb edge of Old Nottingham Road near its junction with Stores Road are the remains of a bridge over the Little Eaton line. The Little Eaton line and the

gangway have also disappeared, apart from the Wharf Building at Little Eaton, in the present day trading estate, and a couple of bridges. The clock house is a grade II listed structure, built for the canal's agent at the junction between the canal and the Little Eaton gangway. It is an L-shaped building, constructed of red bricks with a tiled roof in about 1795.

The A52 Brian Clough Way was built upon the canal between the Pentagon and Spondon. From Spondon the line can be traced to Sandiacre. NCN 6 uses the canal route between Borrowash and Breaston. One of the few original bridges is situated between the A6005 Derby Road and the railway at Borrowash. It is constructed of red brick with stone dressings, and is grade II listed.

The lock-keepers cottage at Sandiacre Lock also dates from around the time of the opening of the canal, and although it has additional windows added in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, most of it is original.



*The former canal
at Shelton Lock
Now a cycleway*

From Derbyshire Live archive

More about the Derby Canal on pages 20-22. Can any of our Southern members provide more information?

A swimming squirrel and a cost-cutting cow on the T&M

It was good to see part of the Trent and Mersey Canal featured on the television programme “Great Canal Journeys” last March with Giles Brandreth and Sheila Hancock cruising through Staffordshire. During the programme we saw some old haunts that we had visited and cruised by while we were moored in Cheshire during the eighties and nineties.

During 1993 our two-week holiday saw us cruise from Anderton to Coventry and as we left Stoke on Trent we saw our first-ever swimming squirrel. They aren't the greatest swimmers but do so when necessary and do the “doggy paddle” stroke and use their tail as a rudder. The squirrel was originally going along the towpath but as we were passing it a lad appeared on a bike charging down the path. The poor squirrel took off along the towpath as there was no other direction for it to go. As the lad on the bike got closer, in desperation, the squirrel took a flying leap from the bank and landed half way across the canal. It then quickly swam to safety on the opposite bank.



Continuing south we spent a night moored below Colwich lock and the following morning we awoke to find a cow munching its way along the towpath next to a British Waterways maintenance boat. We wondered whether it was one of the ways BW were trying to make savings on their expenditure by reducing the use of grass-mowing teams working their way along the towpath!

The swimming squirrel was too fast to catch on camera but we did get a photo of the towpath-trimming cow.

Annette and Terry
NB Emily and Steamboat Sidney
Kennet & Avon Canal

The Leopard Public House

Plans have been unveiled to reopen Stoke-on-Trent's 'most haunted pub' with part of the building being turned into luxury apartments. It is said to be the place where Josiah Wedgwood and James Brindley met to discuss the Trent and Mersey Canal in 1765. The Leopard dates from 1745, but the scale of the task is huge as the Burslem boozer has fallen into disrepair.

Hidden corridors and rooms were discovered behind a boarded up panel at what was thought to be a cupboard, which opened up a whole new door to the paranormal.



The Leopard in 1903

There have been sightings of shadowy figures, doors slamming, glasses thrown and the last orders bell ringing on its own.

One of the bar staff also reported hearing unseen children singing the nursery rhyme, 'ring o' ring o' roses'.

The top floor has a very eerie feel, with people reporting they'd been locked in or out of rooms, and the ghost of a small child kneeling down was caught on camera in one part of the building.

The Leopard was snapped up by Daneets Developments after it was placed on the market for £220,000.

A recent application by community group Our Burslem - which was approved by Stoke-on-Trent City Council on February 17 - means that the building is now an 'Asset of Community Value'.

From Stoke on Trent Live, February 2021

Plastic soup, litter and deprivation of the canals

This is an article which I have written based on my own experiences of cruising on the canals over some 40 years. I stipulate that these are only my views and not that of any other organisation or body of volunteers, although I suspect they might have some similar views to my own.



I would further state that whilst in this document, I lay the blame at the feet of certain groups of individuals, it should be noted that, as with any 'association', I refer only to the minority of people within these groups as being to blame. I do find that the majority do follow an instinct to preserve the balance of nature and commerce. My comments are backed by photographs and personal experiences of abusive behaviour, during my time on the canals.

History

Many who may read this will be aware of our industrial history and the reasons behind the canal infrastructure. There have been many more, better than myself, who have given a literary explanation of the reasons why the canals came into being. However, we need to look back at the early years of the canals to understand why some now treat the canals with such disrespect and ambivalence.

Once the canals were built to bring raw materials to factories and warehouses and then return completed goods to market, a community was born of boatmen and their families, and likewise of factory workers and their families, all either on, or close by the canals. Towns and cities then grew with the new infrastructure, to add to our existing centres of commerce.

The canals were for working men and their families on the move, so naturally they would use the canal and its resources to support their lifestyle. This would mean that they would dispose of their waste, including human waste, into the canals as well as clothes washing water. Generally anything that could not be burnt in their stoves, would end up either at the side of the canal or in it. Some of these activities continue today, (more about this later), but as one example, today our narrowboat users wash dishes in fresh water and

then empty the dirty water directly into the canal (thankfully we don't do the same with human waste these days)!

As for the factory workers, they would have better sanitation, but more often than not, their factories would dispense all forms of toxic waste into the canals as an easy way to get rid of unwanted liquids.

So, as you can see, the canals being used as a dumping ground, is not a new thing, but we have given up some of the more damaging issues such as water and land pollution from factories and the boating community and replaced them with newer issues, which one could also argue are more unsightly given the new recreational uses of the canals today.

Pastimes

Today we find a more diverse canal system, much reduced from its heyday of the industrial revolution. Some 2200 miles of navigation, all of which is either for recreational use, or in the support of recreational use.

There are over 2 million fresh-water anglers in the UK and many of them use the canals. A fleet of over a staggering 33,000 narrowboats use the UK canal system and over 25% of these are used as permanent homes.

Counting the other towpath users such as dog walkers, walking clubs, bike riders and joggers the canal system is used by millions every year.

Employment

With the list of people who use the canals in one form or another comes employment, from tourism and supplies, on the canal side, in shops, cafes, fishing shops and boatyards, not to mention the ancillary business in banking and general supplies in the local towns and cities which the canals pass through.

Statement

It never seems to astound me, how much litter there is in the canal system. We need to remember the outcry of 'Blue Planet II' with the story of the plastic soup and general waste, that it mobilised a new world into saving the oceans and the animals and people that live, work and use the seas.

So if we take this to its natural conclusion, we need to understand, that whatever we put in to our canals today, will at some point make its way to the open waters of our river systems and then ultimately to the sea. Our own

coasts are already experiencing the problems with micro plastics, so we need to find a way to stop the canal waste making its way out to sea, so lets us look at some of the issues.

Sources of litter

1) ***Accidental*** It would be unfair to state that all litter is deliberate, however there are instances where litter, regardless of its origin, accidentally ends up in the canal system. There are a few examples I can give, the first and the saddest of these is the unending number of footballs in the canal. These could be cherished items, which inadvertently went in to the canal via an innocent game of football. It is noticeable that in the North Yorkshire canals it is more likely to be rugby balls, but the theme is the same. With many schools and playing fields backing on to canals, it's not surprising that once in the canal the balls are lost. One 2 week holiday I remember counting well over 100 footballs of one description or another.

2) The next is ***wind blown*** from, gardens, boats and businesses, it is fair to say more care to secure the litter could be taken and some businesses don't seem to take any care at all, in fact they could easily be prosecuted as the items are easily identified as coming from certain sources.

3) The other less common (but it nevertheless happens), is ***litter***, properly disposed of, where the elements and nature, wreck the best laid plans to collect the rubbish. One comes to mind, when we were recently in Coventry Basin. The bins, which once upon a time would have a galvanised collection bin in side, now have plastic bags, the design of which means that when there are gusts of wind, the bags are turned inside out and all contents scattered. On the same theme, I have seen many a scavenger, mainly seagulls and crows, pick at the contents of the bins to get at scraps, only to discard boxes and the like on to the ground, which in turn makes it way to the canalside.

Business

The days of over pollution from businesses have gone, heavy metal and slurry from factorys have been rectified in legislation, however there are still cases, where as above, I have seen little care taken over what ends up in the canal. I would say, on the whole, it's not deliberate, merely careless. We still see factory yards being cleaned down and waste pipes going into the canal, we also see damaged factories with little care of how repairs are undertaken, For example, glass windows broken by vandals, then repaired and the broken glass left to pollute the canal.

To be continued.....

A New Provisions Stop

Half –way up the Cheshire Flight, the editor realised she had omitted to re-fresh the coffee supply on *The Lady Beth*, a crime punishable by keel-hauling.

Salvation came in the form of a brand new **Lidl** store which has been built beside the top lock of the flight, with access straight from the towpath (next to the pub). Chairman Roger was despatched (clutching mask and credit card) while our long-suffering craft rose in the lock. He was back with the vital jar before the top gate was open, and the day was saved.



Member John Tackley feels very strongly about the problems at Soot Hill. He has written the report below, which is published without alteration.

BARNTON STOPPAGE

On Thursday 21 January a short section of embankment slid into the Trent and Mersey Canal at Barnton by Bridge 200, rendering the canal unnavigable, though not blocked completely.

The only attention this stoppage has received in the last nine weeks is for very substantial solid fencing to be installed across the towpath on each side of the breach and similar treatment to the stepped approaches to the (foot)bridge itself - and a 50m. long large diameter flexible plastic pipe has been draped across the top of the slippage spoil, which serves no purpose at all, as there is no blockage to water flow.



No attempt has been made to dredge the spoil now deposited in the navigation channel, or remove the small trees that were also deposited in the channel when the slippage occurred, though this would be a simple, two/three day operation, requiring only basic plant. CRT are prevaricating on clearing this stoppage, because they claim that the offside bank is not in

their ownership, but as the navigation channel is about 20m. wide at this point then any rectification work they consider necessary can easily be completed by reducing the navigation channel width and using their land to consolidate the base of the slippage.

The Trent and Mersey Canal is the prime North/South navigation in England and carries many holidaymakers to key destinations, Llangollen, the Midlands, Thames and the Severn, with the Anderton Boat Lift, with access to the River Weaver only one mile away. The fault in this major artery to the UK's inland waterways system needs INSTANT attention. Its neglect is a major restraint to the reopening of our tourist boating industry, which has suffered so catastrophically last year, and needs every encouragement. Many companies dependent upon this industry face bankruptcy, yet CRT take no action. Act with decision. Act Now. Help them

CRT Update

Update on 06/04/2021:

Starting tomorrow, our contractors will be onsite between Bridge 200, Soot Hill and Bridge 201 on the Trent & Mersey Canal to undertake works that will help us to explore ways in which we can safely allow boat movement through the affected area without destabilising the embankment, slipped material within the canal or the above gas main.

A further update will be provided by Tuesday 20 April.



Great News

On Wednesday 21st April , after removal of all debris which could be taken without risking a further landslide, passage past the slippage was permitted.



CRT are monitoring the situation carefully, the navigable channel is marked by large yellow buoys (which look remarkably like ducks!) and passing at tick over speed is essential.

The Lady Beth slipped past with cameras at the ready and headed for the Bridgewater Canal,

Margaret English





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

WE ARE BACK!

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.

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



Paul Taylor

Sad to report that we lost one of our most stalwart Cheshire Locks Work Party volunteers, Paul Taylor of Mow Cop, who passed away in hospital on 31st January from Covid Pneumonia at the age of 66, having previously been diagnosed with a brain tumour.

Paul was an enthusiastic member of our group and, as a much-valued colleague and friend will be greatly missed.

John Lawson

April Work Party

7 intrepid (socially distanced) volunteers set to work to tidy up twin lock 44 on a beautiful spring day, As you can see, they made quite a difference!





**ALL SOCIAL MEET-
INGS CANCELLED
FOR 2020-21 SEA-
SON!**

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

CANCELLED

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 *normally* 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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The Derby Canal

Hard to imagine, but at one time Derby was at one end of a canal that ran 13 miles from the Trent and Mersey Canal at Swarkestone through to a substantial part of the town.

It utilised the route which has now been superseded by the A52 and ran alongside the old Nottingham Road and under Derwent Street.

Derby Canal was authorised by an Act of Parliament in 1793 and was fully completed in 1796.

It featured a level crossing of the River Derwent in the centre of Derby. The canal's main cargo was coal, and it was relatively successful until the arrival of the railways in 1840.

Early attempts at restoration were thwarted by the closure of the whole canal in 1964, after which it remained largely derelict.

The canal ran at the rear of Nottingham Road cemetery, past Mason's Paintworks, the lace factory and under a small bridge at Chequers Lane and then past a row of terraced housing on Nottingham Road.

There was a right branch along Stores Road, in front of Aitons, over to the nine arched Great Northern Railway viaduct, towards Little Eaton and beyond. Past the branch at Nottingham Road/Stores Road, it continued under the railway, and on to the Derby Fruit Market, passing under Pegg's Bridge at Erasmus Street.

At this point, it carried on to Phoenix Lock at St Mary's Bridge where it met the River Derwent.

At the other side of the river, the canal started again. Past the old bus station, where there was another lock, the canal then went along Siddalls Road, passing Bass's Rec, and when it reached Bob Storer's scrapyard it branched both left and right, left towards the Locomotive Works, and right, under Siddalls Road.

Since 1994, there has been an active campaign for restoration spearheaded by the Derby and Sandiacre Canal Trust.

These amazing photographs show a very different side of Derby that many people will not remember.





***Derby Canal
volunteers at work***

***Boy fishing in
Derby Canal in 1939***

*All pictures from
Daily Telegraph Archive*



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



***Sunset on the
Cheshire Flight***

*Photo Sandra
Lawson*



***Brand new
railway
bridge
Over the
T&M near
Northwich***

*Photo M.
English*

Last, but definitely not least!

A huge welcome to new member:

Sarah Clarke of Church Lawton

