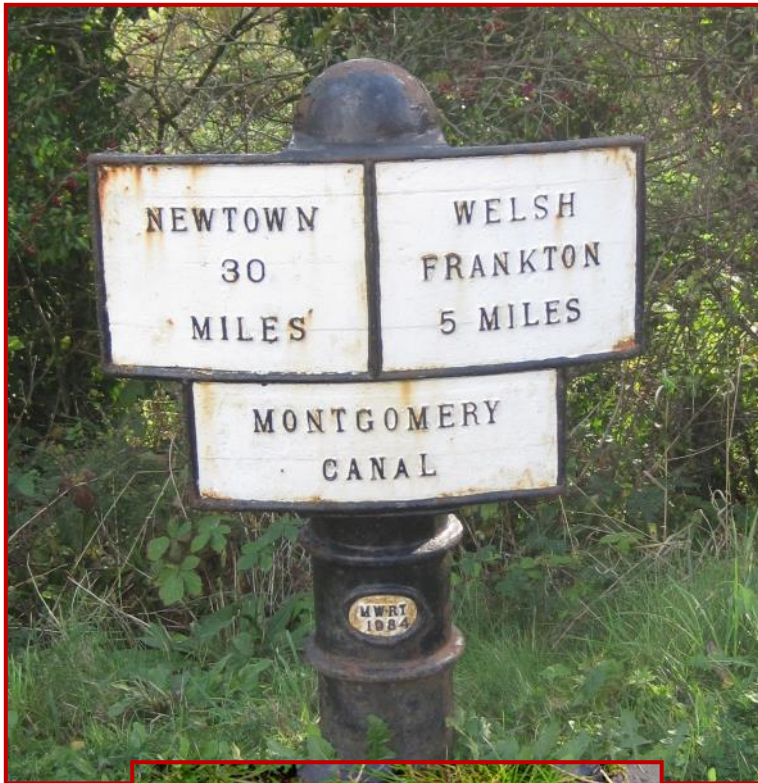
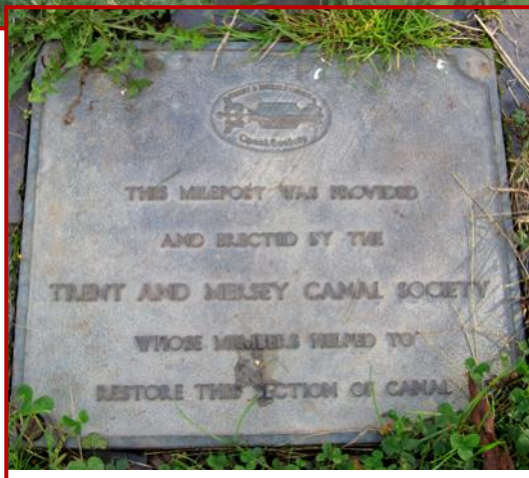


GRAND TRUNK



*Milepost
erected by
T&MCS
on The
Montgomery
Canal*



*Photos by
Margaret
English*

November/December 2021

Chairman's Bit

Sadly I have to start this issue by announcing the death of another very long-standing member Roger Davies-Lee, who was Chairman from 1976-1981. He started our milepost campaign, so I am pleased that we are making very good progress in putting recent photographs of every milepost onto our website. See page 20 for much more about him.



We have another “Our Early Days” article about the Shardlow Crane. Please do contact us if you could help with other articles about our founding, the Harecastle Tunnel campaign, the Anderton Lift campaign, or any other early events that I don’t even know about!

Finally see page 14 for details of our Christmas Meal at Red Bull Public House on Friday 3rd December, including how to book your meal.

Editorial

We finally made it onto the Montgomery (see front cover)! We nearly didn't get back because some of the locks were in extremely poor condition. We were held up for over 4 hours at Quoisley Lock while 2 dedicated CRT workers struggled to get the top gate to open. I felt very sorry for the queue of hire boats waiting to ascend. The lock is now subject to a closure— I hope they all make it back!



With regard to the Christmas meal, let me know as soon as possible if you would like to come along.

It's a bit early to say '**Merry Christmas**', but this is the last edition before then, so I'll say it anyway!



Social evenings recommence

We are restarting meetings
Autumn 2021 at our usual
venue.

7.45pm for 8pm in the
upstairs room.

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

November 19th 2021

More Spot the Locks by Peter Scott. Another miscellany of oddities
from 50 years on the waterways.

December 3rd 2021

Christmas Meal

*See page 14 for the menu. Let Margaret know as soon as possible if
you would like to attend, and what your menu choices are. It sounds
like a wonderful night!*

January 21st 2022

The changing scene and history of the Shropshire Union Canal by Ian
Wilson

February 18th 2022

Warrington Transporter Bridge by Margaret Ingham, chairman of *The
Friends of Warrington Transporter Bridge*.

March 18th 2022

Ampère in Ireland by Malcolm Bridge. An illustrated talk on the Irish
waterways.

Canal Wharf Side Cranes Part 2

Crane No2 Shardlow

Continuing with my memoirs and involvement with the Trent and Mersey canal-side cranes.

I now turn to the Shardlow crane.

Our story with this starts in 1989 when we used to moor our first boat *Alzark No1* in Dobson's Basin.

We used to overlook the crane and at this time it was looking in a much unloved state.



Shardlow Crane 1964

(Photo credit unknown)

My father made enquiries with the then British Waterways Board to see if we could paint this up as a work party project for the canal society.

Waterways said that they did not own the canal crane and had no idea at the time who was responsible for it.

After making contact with the warehouse owners at the time they put us in touch with Jeff Clifton.

Jeff said that the crane was originally owned by F.E. Stevens Ltd until they went into liquidation.

This was around the time when Shardlow was being declared a conservation area.

Jeff said they had a canal side meeting with Bernard De Stevens and it was agreed that he would take custodianship of it to ensure that it

stayed on site in Shardlow; this was around 1974.

He was only too pleased that the society wished to tidy it up. And gave us his full backing.

The Shardlow crane was erected on site in 1870 for use by Zachariah Smith who had a brewery bottling store in the adjacent canal arm.

It is believed that the crane was made in Birmingham by JW Youngs who had their premises on Ryland Street.

One of the first work parties on it was clearing back the undergrowth to reveal the sandstone slabs.



Over a number of weekend work parties the crane was repainted and some repairs carried out to the middle section of the wooden jib that was suffering from wet rot. It was agreed at the time that this did not compose a safety hazard.

Unfortunately I do not have in my photo archives any photos of the work parties or the official unveiling of the plaque.

Shardlow Crane 2005

Over the years the society carried out routine work party inspections on all the cranes under their custodianship. In 2005 it was found that the Shardlow one as well as needing a repaint now required a little bit more work. A structural crack had developed in the towpath canal-side cast iron casting due to frost damage and the middle section of the wooden jib was now at risk of structural failure.



After talks with British Waterways it decided that the wooden jib would be removed with a view to replacing and if possible the cast iron side would be removed for repair to the crack.

Cast iron side showing
damaged casting
2006

Section of jib with wet
rot– we could drive a
screwdriver straight
through it!

Due to the bolts holding the crane together having not been undone since we think in the 1930s (when it was thought that the jib was replaced?) we had to spend a number of Sunday mornings coating them with a mixture of easing oil and diesel and a lot of heat via a gas torch to get them to move.





Once free the tie bars were removed and the jib lowered to the ground which surprisingly went without any problems.

Jib when lowered to the ground

When we came to cut off the top collar the wood in there was as good as the day that it was put up.

Anyone fancy counting the tree rings to find the age when felled?

The damaged casting side was loaded on to my dad's boat *Alzark no2* for transportation to Mick Clamps the Blacksmith based on the top of Snarestone Tunnel on the Moira Cut for repairs.



I remember the job we had taking it from the towpath up the old horse path to Mick's place on a hand truck, *Alzark's* cabin top still had the small dent in from this little carrying trip.

The return journey for the casting when fixed was by van.

Shardlow Crane Part 2 2012-2014

By the time the side castings were put back together, my father's battle with cancer had taken a turn for the worst and the crane jib replacement project was taken on by the Waterway Recovery Group and members of the Erewash Canal Preservation Society under the leadership of John Baylis.

A jib was sourced and purchased; this was transported to site by the historic narrow boat *Bath*.



When the jib was reattached it was found that the jib was slightly longer than the original one so the two tie bars required extending this was completed by the fitting of two plates on each of the bars.

The official unveiling of the repairs took place on the 24th October 2014.

Alan did get to see it back up on his last visit to Shardlow November 2014

Stephen Bates

The letter below was sent by a stalwart of our Southern Section.....

I don't want for a minute to see *Grand Trunk* as a vehicle for constantly criticising CRT for their, in my view, poor maintenance/ skewed priorities as they relate to our canal but members may share some of my views about the poor state of maintenance of our canal, where even quick and cheap fixes to certain problems, such as overhanging vegetation, seem to take forever to be attended to.

I fully recognise that the current model for managing our waterways makes it difficult for CRT to strike the right balance between maintaining the waterways for navigation and encouraging non boaters to take an active interest in and make contributions to the waterway environment. But, when I see the deterioration of the infrastructure year on year, such as at Stretton where encroaching reed growth reduces an otherwise wide stretch of canal to a single boat width and prevents boats mooring outside the once popular Mill House pub, surely the time has come for our Society to take a more proactive role in engaging with CRT to get these issues resolved?

Below is part of an email chain of correspondence I have had with CRT following a couple of fairly recent cruises (not all of my comments relate to the T&M) which you may wish to include some or all of in a future issue of *Grand Trunk*.

Having just returned from a cruise from Swarkestone to Great Haywood I would like to draw your attention to the following list of concerns, many of which I mentioned in an email last year.

Sunken boat on the lock landing at Swarkestone. Exactly twelve months ago CRT assured me its removal was a priority. It is still there ; its presence only revealed to the unsuspecting boater by a very small sign attached to the boat that you can't read until you are within a few feet of it.

Stenson Lock. When the approaching the lock from downstream and the lock is full the bottom gates give a very good impression of Niagara Falls, such is the volume of water escaping. Only one of the bottom gate paddles works and the other is almost impossibly stiff to raise.

You will note that, to date, I have not received a reply from CRT West Midlands to which the majority of my comments are directed. I will let you see it when/ if it arrives.

Dave Brewin
(received early October)

The Port of Burslem hosts a special Heritage Open Days event.

The Burslem Port Trust ran a special launch event, 'The People's Port of Burslem' as part of Heritage Open Days on Sunday 19th September.

The Trust and local residents joined together for a celebratory unveiling of the new interpretative artworks created by 'We are Culla' accompanied by musical performances by 'Burslem Bakers Choir' and 'Bread Band'. There were also free drop-in screen-printing workshops with 'We are Culla' and bread tasting in celebration of the nearby Co-op bakery, which originally flanked the canal in its heyday.

The Trust hoped to increase awareness of the Burslem Branch Canal, with the eventual aim of restoration and new waterside facilities to deliver sustainable leisure, tourism and thus employment.

Members of the Burslem Port Trust were on hand to guide visitors around the site and to answer any questions about the potential re-establishment of the canal.



The Trust also plans to lay a path along the Burslem Branch Canal route from the Trent and Mersey intersection starting in October 2021. This project has been generously supported by Stoke-on-Trent City Council and Canal and River Trust. Volunteers are needed to help with path laying for the 'Footsteps' project, so please visit the Burslem Port Trust website to get involved, or for any further information. <https://www.burslemport.org.uk/>

Tom Edwards of We are Culla said: "We're excited to reveal a piece we've

been working on to promote Burslem and the branch canal. It's an impression of how the branch canal and surrounding areas would have looked in the 1960s. We've also created some new artwork for Burslem Port Trust to use in promoting the project and everyone who attends the event on the 19th will get a souvenir copy printed using traditional methods on site, on the day!"

Greg Stephens of the Boat Band said: "Boat Band can't wait to perform with our new Burslem Bakers Choir and Bread Band! It's been a pleasure to work with the local community of Burslem to create outdoor music, performances, to increase awareness of the Burslem Branch Canal. We encourage all of the community to take part, with or without musical experience, but with bags of enthusiasm."



We are Culla

We are Culla are a full-time creative agency and they are immersed in colour on a daily basis in creating works such as bespoke printing, screen printing, murals and other commissions.

They are located at 51-53 Piccadilly, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire ST1 1HR

Website: <https://www.weareculla.com/>

Email: info@weareculla.com

Tel: 01782 879988

More good news from Burslem Port

We are pleased to report that the Footsteps project is now underway, funded by the City of Stoke-on-Trent Community Infrastructure Fund and the Canal & River Trust. Work to lay a footpath along the line of the former towpath to the Burslem Arm Canal got underway on Monday 18th October. We are very grateful to Potteries Waste Ltd for their help in bringing this about.

Once the path is complete, we will be working on finalising a new Master-plan to guide us towards the restoration of the waterway itself. The work is being undertaken by *Naturescaping*, who specialise in ecologically friendly schemes. They will be joined at the end of the month by a party from the Waterway Recovery Group, a branch of the Inland Waterway Association which has supported our scheme from the outset.

Meanwhile, another project funded by the Architectural Heritage Fund has begun work to examine a future use for the site of the extant Shropshire Union Canal Company wharf and warehouse. With many new houses being built in Middleport, we are hoping that this will become a centre for community activities.

Work has now begun to demolish the buildings on the former Co-operative Warehouse site. Eden Valley Properties have had plans approved to erect about 150 new homes alongside the former canal arm. Building is planned to begin in the new year.

We are hoping to restart working parties in November. Having got the site into good shape for the Heritage Open Day, it is important to keep on top of it over the winter. Dave Broome has agreed to take on the task of leading the group, which will take place on Fridays. If you can help, please contact Dave – dave.broome45@gmail.com

Another way you can help is by buying tickets for Potto Lotto. This scheme is run by the City of Stoke-on-Trent and gives us a small but regular income. You can join at www.pottolotto.co.uk. Don't forget to nominate Burslem Port as the society you wish to support.

Many thanks for your continuing interest

Roger Savage.

Chairman, Burslem Port Trust (from BPT Newsletter, October 2021)

Westbridge Park Consultation Stone

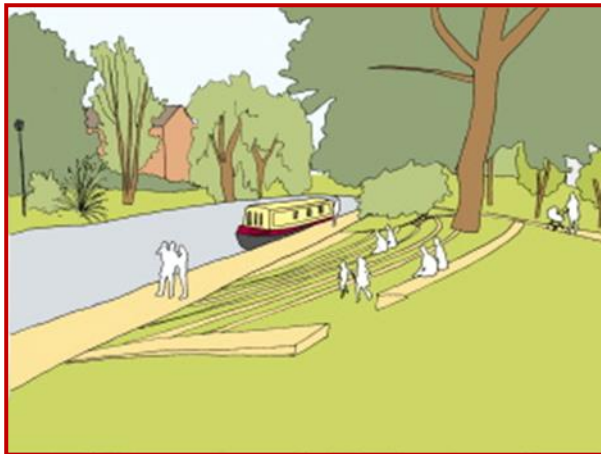
Work on the £1.5 million transformation of Westbridge Park is to go ahead next year.

And we want residents, businesses and organisations from in and around Stone to let us know what they think about the new masterplan for the park.

As well as fantastic new facilities for children and young people, there will be picnic and seating areas, toilets, enhanced pathways and landscaping - with key space for local events and existing football provision incorporated in the design. And this new masterplan has also been designed to make the park safe and secure.

The canal towpath access would be improved for pedestrians and cyclists, through enhanced connections into Westbridge Park. New signage will be installed to enhance connectivity to the Town Centre and Crown Meadow with increase seating where people can gather to enjoy the views and activities of the canal.

Located alongside the canal to provide a wonderful view the equipment will encourage a full body workout and provide for a range of abilities and ages including callisthenics opportunities.



T&MCS Christmas Meal on 3rd December 2021

HERE IT IS AT LAST FOLKS!

RED BULL HOTEL

CHRISTMAS FAYRE MENU 2021. £19.95

TO BEGIN

PARSNIP AND APPLE SOUP
SERVED WITH A BREAD ROLL AND BUTTER (v)

OR

DUCK AND ORANGE PATE
WITH BRIOCHE

OR

BUTTERY GARLIC MUSHROOMS
TOPPED WITH A STILTON AND HERBY CRUMBLE (v)

OR

CHILLED MELON AND BLACK CHERRIES IN KIRSCH (gf)(vg)(v)

TO FOLLOW

TRADITIONAL ROAST TURKEY WITH ALL THE TRIMMINGS
OR

ROAST 28 DAY MATURED BEEF
IN A CHASSUER SAUCE (gf)

OR

BAKED SALMON FILLET
IN A TARRAGON BUTTER SAUCE (gf)

OR

HONEY AND MUSTARD CHICKEN BREAST (gf)

OR

VEGETABLE WELLINGTON
SERVED ON A RICH TOMATO FONDUE (v)

TO FINISH

CHRISTMAS PUDDING
WITH BRANDY SAUCE (v)

OR
SYRUP SPONGE
SERVED WITH CUSTARD (v)
OR
ORANGE AND CHOCOLATE TRIFLE (v)
OR
VANILLA CHEESECAKE (gf)(vg)(v)

WITH

COFFEE AND MINCE PIE

Special arrangement for T&MCS members only.

If you have a condition which prevents you from eating sweet things, crackers and cheese can be provided if ordered in advance.

There will be a quiz with the usual chocolate Santa prizes.

If you would like to come to our wonderful Christmas meal, then let Margaret know by phone, email or pigeon post (with your choice of meal) by Friday 26th November.

Friday 3rd December

7.30 for 8.00pm



Scarecastle Tunnel

On 27th-30th October, CRT arranged free boat trips from Tunstall, through Harecastle Tunnel to Kidsgrove in honour of Halloween. Did anyone see the Boggart I wonder, or did the passengers just get cold and wet? I would be very interested to hear the comments of anyone who attended.

My thanks to Angela Marks, who alerted me to this interesting happening.....Ed



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

September Work Party report

A dry, pleasant day for our four volunteers (several members of our regular group had other commitments on the day). However, excellent progress was made and we were finally able to complete all the remaining painting tasks on Lock 44 (bumper plates on both top gates, white metal edging strips on the front edges of the top gates, black paddle gear on the towpath side lock and a further coat of Hammerite for the ground paddle gear).

October Work Party Report



in spite of an early weather forecast on the Tuesday for very inclement conditions for the scheduled work party, the met. Office did a U-turn the next day to forecast clear, sunny conditions and so it proved. Four volunteers continued working on Lock 45, making considerable progress painting the metalwork - paddle gear, rails, beam end collars, gate fittings. Overnight rain had left the wooden beams too damp to paint so we may be fortunate in November and complete the job.

John Lawson

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 January/February 2022 edition is **18/12/2021**.

Report on Meeting at Anderton on 6th October

It is now 19 years since the Anderton Boat Lift was restored and problems are arising that need attention if its continued usage is to be ensured for the foreseeable future.

The Trent and Mersey Canal Society spearheaded the lift's restoration, subsequent to its closure in 1983, and this decision resulted in the resignation of Peter Smith, the Chair of our Society at that time, **SO** that he could devote his **WHOLE EFFORT** to chair the newly formed ***Friends of the Anderton Boat Lift***, as he declared that this venture alone needed his full attention to raise funds for its restoration- as indeed it did.

Our Society is rightly proud of the tremendous effort expended, spread over 20+ years, including maintaining and **DAILY** manning a temporary visitor centre at the lift site for several years prior to its reopening. We also cruised by water, with great publicity, to Westminster with the restoration petition and presented it at no. 10 Downing St., as depicted on the enormous mural at Anderton commissioned and donated by the Boat Lift Trustees, to the lift, prior to the closure of the Trust. Rallies were held and many activities were promoted - including visits to the Boat Lifts in Belgium and France, all in order to raise funds for the Anderton Boat Lift preservation.

It is therefore most encouraging to learn that Canal and River Trust are mounting an, "Engineering the Future Campaign," to attend to the details of the lift that require renovation and to expand its features and capabilities vastly to ensure that its tourist status and youth opportunities will be improved. Particular emphasis will be placed on encouraging young persons to explore the possibilities of embracing a scientific/technological career by highlighting the development of the engineering skills that have been necessary to ensure the continuing operation of a lift; to conform to ever more stringent safety requirements than those observed in Victorian times. Our Chairman, Roger Evans, was invited to an inaugural meeting, promoted by Canal and River Trust to announce this new venture, and suggested I attended as the Society's representative because of my considerable involvement in the previous appeal. I was most happy to do so and I report as follows:

Richard Parry, CRT's CEO, was present to welcome all the guests and we were invited to participate in a descent on the lift in the, "Edwin Clark," after which a buffet was served under cover of a gazebo adjacent to the lift base.

Various speeches were made by Canal and River Trust personnel and associates highlighting this new initiative, but stating that considerable disruption will occur whilst the refurbishment of the lift is undertaken.

We were initially addressed by Prof. Nigel Weatherill, who has just been appointed by CRT as Chair to the Canal and River Trust's North West Advisory Board and will no doubt be responsible for finally determining the new detail proposals, yet to be agreed, to further promote and expand the activities available at Anderton.

This is such a welcome new initiative, as the Anderton Lift is capable of offering so much more than is currently available, but the original restrictions imposed on the site when planning permission was first granted, coupled with monetary restraints that have had to be imposed has meant that many suggestions for expansion emanating from our Society, the River Weaver Navigation Society and others have previously been stillborn.

Those of our members who have visited Anderton would have possibly wished to visit the Lion Salt Works, transited Barnton Tunnel or cruised to the Weaver Hall Museum, all of which are easily accessible by cruises lasting between one and two hours.

Added to this is the great beauty of both waterways, in either direction, which should be available for various cruises of exploration and also the need for a charter facility available for special occasions - and small craft available for family hire.

There are many other activities that we can add to this list, but this could well be the subject of another article when this new initiative gathers momentum.

A corollary to all this will be that to effectively provide even the extra facilities mentioned above will need much greater staffing levels and, although all the activities mentioned above will be profitable if efficiently managed, some voluntary input will undoubtedly be welcome.

So, all you members within the vicinity of Anderton - would you be interested in being involved, and, if so, in what capacity??

Watch this space for further developments

John Tackley

Obituary

Roger Davies-Lee. Chairman 1976 to 1981

Roger joined the Society in 1975 and followed me as Chairman in 1976. At this time the Society was still campaigning for the reopening of Harecastle Tunnel as well as planning for the Bicentenary of the Trent and Mersey Canal.

Roger was someone who you could not say 'NO' to, as well as someone who seemed capable of opening doors to access support for whatever project the Society was involved in. Naturally, with the history of Josiah Wedgwood sponsoring the Canal Act, it was not surprising that the suggestion for the bicentenary should involve the Wedgwood Company.

Before we knew it we had the support of the Chairman and senior officers of Wedgwood, who met with a team led by Roger to plan the bicentenary rally to be held at Wedgwood. Roger didn't do things by half, and we put on a three-day event with thousands of visitors every day, one of the biggest canal rallies of the time. The memorabilia produced for the event is still highly valued to this day. None of this would have happened without Roger's drive and enthusiasm.

During the five years that he was Chairman he kept us all busy. His work as a fireman meant that it was not unusual for him to ring at some very strange times to discuss an idea or progress on a specific project. It also gave him the chance to develop contacts with many waterway organisations and local authorities to the advantage of the canals.

He was particularly keen to develop the relationship between the Canal Society and British Waterways, which is now Canal and River Trust. He would regularly organise meetings with Brian Haskins, Area Engineer at Northwich as well as with local engineers like Bill Sutton at Fradley. One such meeting led to the Society having *N.B. Kangaroo* on permanent loan from BW for canal maintenance, a first for any canal society.

Roger was a born leader and as a result the Society was involved in many projects ranging from support for Shardlow port as a conservation area, to fighting for the restoration of Anderton Boat Lift, rescuing historical structures such as old canal-side cranes or buildings and the reinstatement of the mileposts along the canal, a campaign he started almost before the Bicentenary rally was over!

After his time as Chairman his life took him in many varied directions but at heart, he still loved the canals and especially the Trent and Mersey. Following on from serious surgery several years ago, his mobility was reduced but not his enthusiasm. When I last saw him a year or so ago, he was talking about planning a cruise of the whole of the T&M to celebrate 250 years since its completion. As usual Roger had the idea but wanted me to organise it!

Sadly, his health caught up with him and he was admitted to hospital with what was subsequently diagnosed as Covid 19. He passed away after only a short time in hospital.

Roger could not keep away from the canal and his final wish was that he be buried alongside the Trent and Mersey Canal in Alrewas. Those of us who knew and spent time with him will miss him but remember a man who had the canal in his heart.

On behalf of all of us I send heartfelt condolences to his family.
Malcolm Gray (with help from Beryl Arnold and Chris Skelthorne)
Vice President T&MCS .



At the beginning of 2019 I had several long and interesting conversations with Roger after I phoned him (with some trepidation) to ask if he would be prepared to write an obituary for Harry Arnold. What an informed and very pleasant man he was. He obligingly put together his reminiscences about Harry, and the obituary was featured in the January/February 2019 magazine.

I am very grateful to Malcolm (and Beryl and Chris) for doing the same for Roger, and would like to join with them in sending thoughts and sympathy to Roger's family.

Picture lifted from front cover of Grand Trunk, January 1981

Margaret English, Editor

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

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

Bringing Boats Back to Burslem

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.

Welcome to new member

**John Bradnam
of
Tunstall, Stoke On Trent**



We hope you enjoy being a member of the society.