

GRAND TRUNK



January/February 2022

www.trentandmerseycanalsociety.org.uk

Chairman's Bit

Welcome to 2022. We have heard several items of good news about our canal recently. The Cheshire Locks have been given a “Green Flag” award (see page 13); Shardlow has been declared an “Inland Heritage Port” (see page 14); Anderton Lift is celebrating the 20th anniversary of being restored with a series of events (see page 10); and Burton-on-Trent is to host the IWA Festival of Water this year (see page 18).



Hopefully we, as a society, will be able to do more this year. We continue to support the monthly work-parties on the Cheshire locks, and our current season of talks continues until March (although we still need a new volunteer if they are to resume in the Autumn – see Gillian’s plea on page 20). We would like to take our stall to some events this Summer but will need more volunteers to help man it. Probable outings, so far, are Middlewich Folk and Boat Festival (June 18-19) and the IWA Festival of Water at Burton-on-Trent (August 27-29). We also hope to be able to get members together again for an “AGM Day” in May, but we will wait another few weeks (to see if Boris springs another batch of rules) before we go too far ahead with our planning.

This issue contains the final article about canal-side cranes (see page 7). If you could help with other such articles about “Our Early Days” (e.g. our founding, the Harecastle Tunnel campaign, the Anderton Lift campaign, or any other early events) then please do let us know.

Our website now has a (reasonably) recent photograph of every milepost, as well as some older ones (mainly of our mileposts campaign, but with a few even older). We would still love to have more “old” photographs, so please contact me if you can help.

Roger Evans

Editorial

Happy New Year everyone!

Hope you had a wonderful (and Covid free) Christmas.



We started the New Year as usual (actually on 28th December) by setting off on *The Lady Beth* after having annoyed our family for several fun-packed days. We had fuel, water, a fridge packed tightly with provisions, computer for working and watching DVDs, and our wonderful boating cats– what could possibly go wrong?

We set off up the Welsh Canal as usual, it was busier than we expected, but not frustratingly so. First night went as planned, but when we started the engine the next morning, we noticed the domestic batteries were not charging. A very nice man on NB. *Dragonfly*, who understood electrical matters, had a look at the problem for us and diagnosed an alternator fault. He hailed from Suffolk and moored up at Wrenbury while he thought about the phenomenon of Llangollen lift bridges.

We thought we had about 3 day's domestic power left if we were very careful. If we could get to a marina where we could have a night's charging, we might even be able to complete our trip– hope springs eternal! Whixall Moss Marina could oblige, but we had to there by noon the next day. The traffic on the canal made this impossible. We winded just before Grindley Brook Staircase and headed for home. Unable to charge our laptops and managing on only one light throughout the boat, nights were quite long. However, we spent New Year's Eve above Winsford Flash (nice fireworks), consumed small glasses of port at midnight and arrived home the following morning, having just managed to save the contents of the fridge. The cats were most annoyed and refused to leave the boat.

2022 can only get better! I promise to have got over my grumpiness by the first social!

Cover picture: *Winter on the Cheshire Flight*

A new volunteer for the work-party group?

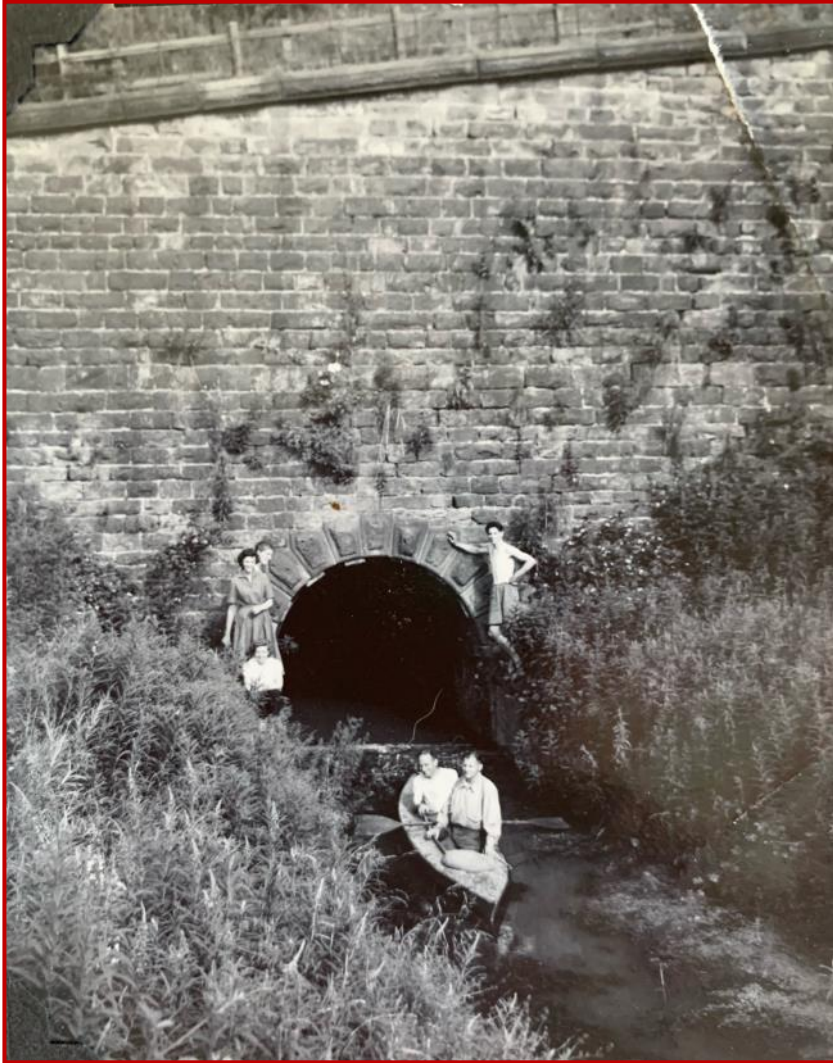
Photo by John Lawson

Two canal tunnel portals

Adrian Padfield (new life member) writes:

A friend, Mrs Anne Cox (nee Weaving), sent me these for identification. The first shows her father & brothers in the late '40s.

They were taken by her father, Clive, who was senior metallurgist at the Austin works, Longbridge. He was most interested in the Potteries canals.





The original print is dated 30.12.52. Mrs Cox says *'We used to go on barges every Sat. through tunnels'*

She was 5 years old at the time and says she-

'wasn't too pleased being made to stand next to this rather odorous man on the barge'..!

Euan Corrie writes:

The first picture is, I think, the western portal of Butterley Tunnel on the Cromford Canal. No doubt Hugh Potter will be able to give more detail — I am not so familiar with that location which he has researched thoroughly.

The second view shows the electric tug having emerged from the southern end of Telford's 'New' Harecastle Tunnel at Chatterley. It is a little unusual in that it was taken from the island between the Brindley and Telford canals at the tunnel entrance with the towing path leading to the Telford Tunnel on

the far side of the canal. The fan house which provided ventilation through the tunnel was built immediately across this portal (at the far end of the wooden fendering) in 1954 after the tugs had been withdrawn and boatmen had started to be seriously affected by the fumes from their diesel engines whilst working through the tunnel under their own power.

The original Brindley Tunnel entrance is off the picture to the left.

Mark Higginson writes:

The first photo is the west portal of the 3,083 yd Butterley Tunnel on the Cromford Canal. At this end the tunnel was extended in the late 19th century to accommodate the embankment of the Midland Railway's extension from Ripley to Butterley. Both embankment and canal portal were subsequently obliterated by construction of the A38 dual carriageway (Ripley Bypass), completed in 1977, although a culvert was provided for access to and drainage from the long-disused tunnel. An online search under 'Butterley Tunnel' will produce many interesting views of the partially collapsed tunnel interior; it was last used in 1900 due to ongoing damage caused by mining subsidence.

The second photo is the south end of Telford's Harecastle Tunnel on the Trent & Mersey, pictured before electric traction was discontinued and the present fan-house built immediately in front of the portal.

Hugh Potter writes:

The first image shows the western portal of Butterley Tunnel on the Cromford Canal. This is not the original portal but the one put in after the tunnel was extended to accommodate a Midland Railway line crossing it in 1890. The stop planks were part of a later attempt to force water fed into the tunnel from Butterley Reservoir (above the tunnel) through to the eastern end where it was used for the Butterley Co's Codnor Park furnaces. Since the photograph, the tunnel has been extended yet again, this time to accommodate the A38 trunk road and now is nothing more than a concrete culvert.

There have been several attempts to explore the tunnel after it collapsed and became impassible in 1900, some more successful than others. It would be interesting to know if this canoe actually ventured inside or whether this was the end of its journey along the open section of canal.

The second photo is undoubtedly Harecastle Tunnel, as far as I know the only tunnel in the UK to have electric towage.

Canal Wharf Side Cranes

Part 3

This time in the crane story we look at the at Swarkstone and Wychnor Cranes.

Crane No3 Swarkstone

The Society became interested in the restoration of the Swarkstone crane (at the time just a rusty mess) during a conversation with members from Swarkstone Boat Club. It was rumoured that British Waterways Board still had the tie bar supports and top jib casting in storage in the canal side warehouse. They had been placed there when the jib was removed from the wharf side crane beside the toll house, where the canal used to branch off to drop down to join the River Trent.

Permission was sought from BWB to investigate.

When we got to look inside the warehouse, BWB were using it to store all sorts of canal bits.



***One of the first work party's painting up
and clearing the base***

After looking under old stop planks and paddles of all sizes, the tie bars and top casting were discovered there. We were lucky they had not gone for scrap.

Very quickly a plan was put together to see if the society could reinstate the jib.

We were very lucky with this crane as the original plans for it are still in existence.

These were tracked down by Geoff Williamson to the waterways archives which at the time were at Glouster Docks. From these we found out the height and dimensions of the wooden jib.



**Copy of the original drawings
on the wall in my boatman's
cabin on *England***

An 18 foot length of pitch pine was ordered from a timber merchant in Derby for the jib.

BWB kindly let us use and store this in their warehouse at Swarkstone.

A few weekends were spent shaping the ends and sides of this the old fashioned way, with the adze so it would fit and look right.

When we reassembled the crane jib and tie bars, we reused the pulley wheel from the Horninglow crane which we could not refit, and a hook and lifting chain from Donisthorpe Colliery' to replace some of the missing items.



*T&M Canal Society and Swarkstone Boat Club members
refitting the new jib.*

The crane was officially unveiled on 15th May 1994 by Marjorie Crossley.

Crane No 4 Wychnor

Restoration of the Wychnor lock side crane came about following a conversation with the British Waterways river section inspector who was living in the lock cottage at that time.

The crane, which is sited next to the small transhipment shed, was looking in a very poor state. After finding out that Waterways owned it we asked if we could repaint it.

The inspector said that if we would help him BWB would provide the paint for this.

A weekend work party was arranged with him, and the crane was repainted along with the bridge iron work, tow rope guards and roller. The roller is now missing but if you look the iron guards are still there.



*Wychnor Crane
In
2001*

Foot note: on recent visits to all four of these cranes, all are now in need of action again from repainting to jib repairs, If nothing is done these will again be at risk of being lost!

Steve Bates

Anderton Boat Lift celebrates 20th restoration anniversary

Early this year sees the 20th anniversary of the restoration of the Anderton Boat Lift. Canal & River Trust are promising a year of events to mark the occasion including winter works open days, a steam fair weekend and 10k run in May, as well as dozens of behind-the-scenes tours and family fun activity days.

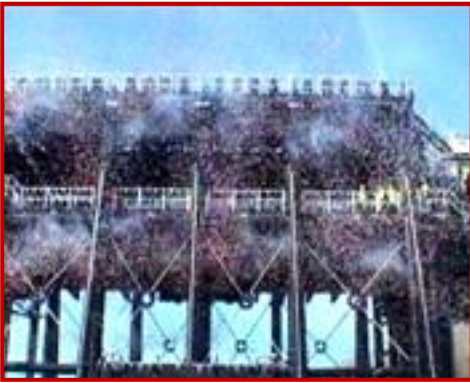
Two Open Days

The anniversary year opens with two winter works public Open Days on the weekend of 26th and 27th February 2022, when trust engineers will shine a light on the constant challenge of keeping the lift in good working order. Visitors will be given unique access and insight into the lift's complex mechanism and be able to see work in progress as the gate seals are replaced on one of the caissons—the giant tanks which transport boats up and down the lift. Originally constructed in 1875 to connect the Trent & Mersey Canal with the Weaver Navigation 50 feet below, the lift operated for more than 100 years before it was closed down in 1983 due to safety concerns caused by extensive corrosion.



More than £7 million was raised to fund a major restoration in 2000 and it started operating again on 26th March 2002 to great fanfare, followed by an official opening of the lift and new visitor centre by HRH The Prince of Wales on 28th April 2003. The 20th anniversary of that first boat passage will be marked on Saturday 26th March 2022 with public celebrations on site, and regular boat trips will start again for the next summer season on 1st April.

The opening of the lift
Photo, Narrowboat World



This photo by Narrowboat-World, shows the work restoring the structure

Attracts thousands of visitors

Ani Sutton, Destinations and Attractions Manager with the trust, enthused: “Anderton Boat Lift is truly one of the ‘wonders of the waterways’ and it is brilliant to be marking the 20th anniversary of its restoration and opening as a visitor attraction. Each year the lift attracts thousands of visitors to the area to marvel at the incredible structure and enjoy a trip aboard the Edwin Clark boat, named after the lift’s designer.

“For 20 years, this Scheduled Monument has served us well. As people visit us over the anniversary year we hope to share with them news of a major multi-million pound refurbishment which is due to take place in the next two years, as the black iron structure needs repainting, the control system upgrading and the hydraulic ram cylinders, which support the two caissons, potentially need remedial work.

“We are still awaiting specialist engineering reports. These will help the Trust to assess exactly what needs to be done, in the least obtrusive way. However the long term plan is to start a major upgrade and repair programme, probably in 2023, to ensure the lift continues to be in good condition to welcome boaters and visitors for many decades to come.”

History of the Anderton Boat Lift

1875. Anderton Boat Lift was opened in 1875 to connect the Trent & Mersey Canal, and routes to the Potteries, with the Weaver Navigation, which links into the Mersey and the Port of Liverpool. It replaced the need for extensive warehousing, three double inclined planes and four salt chutes at Anderton Basin and provided easy passage from one waterway to another without the need to transfer goods between boats.

Hydraulic engineer Edwin Clark was commissioned to design the lift and he created an impressive cast iron frame, encasing two counter balanced caissons, each propelled from below by a giant hydraulic ram or cylinder. However the use of salty river water as a hydraulic fluid caused major corrosion problems and in the 1880s and 90s the lift was out of action on a number of occasions for repairs.

1908. Eventually the Weaver Navigation Trustees decided to replace the hydraulic rams with electric motors and a system of counter weights and overhead pulleys that would allow the caissons to operate independently of one another. Construction work was carried out around the busy boat lift and the new superstructure eventually opened in 1908, with the loss of only 49 operating days.

The Boat Lift then continued to operate successfully for another six decades, with the aid of regular repairs and replacement of the wire ropes. Commercial traffic on the waterways declined during the 1950s and 60s, and in 1983 extensive corrosion was uncovered during repainting. The lift was declared structurally unsound and closed.

2002

After consultation with English Heritage, it was decided to restore Anderton Boat Lift to hydraulic operation again, using specialist hydraulic oil. The counterweights were removed and rearranged in the grounds as a maze for visitors to enjoy. The restoration took two years to complete and Anderton Boat Lift re-opened as a visitor attraction on Tuesday 26th March 2002, complete with a new glass-topped trip boat, the Edwin Clark, to offer sight-seeing trips through the lift and along the river.

PUBLISHED: SATURDAY, 18 DECEMBER 2021 (Narrowboat World)

I am grateful to Life member Alf Overton for bringing this article to my attention.....Ed

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Photo facing page by Sandra Lawson

Proudly flying the Green Flag

Congratulations to The Shropshire Union Canal-

All the Shropshire Union Canal in Cheshire now proudly flies a Green Flag after 22 miles from the National Waterways Museum in Ellesmere Port to Barbridge was added to the existing Green Flag length between Middlewich and Audlem.

AND

A new 17-mile section of the Trent & Mersey Canal between Middlewich and Red Bull at Kidsgrove has also been recognised for its high standards.

Congratulation to T&MCS, IWA, and especially Cheshire Locks work party organiser John Lawson for working so hard to gain this coveted award.



Shardlow awarded Heritage Inland Port status

We were very happy to hear that, following the successful September rally at Shardlow, the village at the end of our canal has been awarded Inland Port status. I don't think I can do better than reproduce IWA's comments on the award.....Ed.

Trent & Mersey Village achieves Heritage Inland Port recognition.



Published 21 December 2021

We are delighted to hear that Shardlow has been awarded Inland Heritage Port status. IWA supported an application to the Maritime Heritage Trust earlier this year.



Shardlow, close to where the Trent & Mersey Canal joins the River Trent, is thought to be England's earliest most complete surviving example of an inland canal port. The village sprung up around James Brindley's canal after it was completed in 1777, as part of his linking of the Trent and Mersey rivers by canal.

Local IWA members supported the scheme, led by a local resident, for Shardlow to receive Heritage Inland Port status from the Maritime Heritage Trust. The Trust has already designated a number of Heritage Harbours around the coast. Recently, Chester became the first place on the inland waterways to become a Heritage Inland Port.

We are campaigning for increased heritage protection on the waterways. The Shardlow Inland Port Steering Group will organise an annual festival and campaign for repairs to some of the village's historic canal-side buildings by encouraging investment through funding and grants. We hope that this, along with its conservation status and listed buildings designations, will help protect Shardlow's unique heritage.



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

November Work Party Report



I ended my October report wondering (rather optimistically), as to whether we would have dry weather in November for our last scheduled Work Party of the year to complete the painting of the remaining wooden surfaces on Lock 45. The day dawned cloudy but dry, preceded by a dry night and temperatures above the required minimum for our Sadolin paint. Could not have hoped for a better day, this was mid-November after all.

An excellent turn out of seven volunteers set to work painting the balance beams on the top and tail gates on both lock chambers, complete the strapping posts and had time to finish preparing and painting the remaining metalwork on the rails, bridge edges, paddle gear, ladders and gate fittings.

A rewarding day and a job well done.

John Lawson



FESTIVAL OF WATER 2022

IWA have just announced the venue for this year's festival of water.

The original front runners were Milton Keynes and Chester. The park which last hosted the event in Milton Keynes now has mature trees and is no longer suitable. The Chester site had no such problems, but land ownership was split between two parties, making negotiation difficult.

To our surprise and delight, the surprise choice was ***Burton-on-Trent***, on our very own canal!

This is the third time Burton has hosted the festival, earlier dates being 2004 and 2011. Shobnall Fields is a lovely site within easy reach of the town centre, with plenty of depth for moored boats. The somewhat jaded T&M stall was taken out of storage for the occasion in 2011, and we even had a place inside a marquee. The stall was manned by myself, the much-missed John Morin, and dedicated volunteers from our Southern section. Following this excursion, the decision was taken to update the stall and attend other events. As they say, 'the rest is history'.

We were moored on the offside beside a blackberry bush which our boating cats considered their private property. They often emerged from the bush just as we left for site in the morning and slipped into our beloved boat for a day's sleep. I was delighted to notice that on the IWA website the announcement of the festival is accompanied by a picture of the previous event. The slightly tatty boat on the right-hand-side (with mushrooms in need of a polish) was our first narrowboat.

It was at Burton that I found the time to attend classes on painting roses (I never got as far as castles). Our flower boxes and coal hod demonstrate the success (or otherwise) of my studying.

The other thing I remember is the aroma of brewing which hovers over the whole town (to which local residents are impervious) and the friendliness of Burton folk.

Chairman Roger and I will be there, as we are part of the setting-up team. our stall will emerge sleepily from hibernation in our loft and join in the fun. **All offers of help will be gratefully received.** See you there!

Margaret English
Grand Trunk



IWA Waterways Festival 2004



*IWA Festival 20011
Burton Mayor and party inspecting the site
On a brewer's dray*



Social evenings **continue**

We are continuing our planned programme of meetings at our usual venue in 2022.

7.45pm for 8pm in the upstairs room.

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

Gillian's plea

I have been arranging the talks for TMCS since 2011.

The talks had become a bit lack lustre and I brought some enthusiasm and interest to this role with a result that attendance grew through the diverse speakers and topics I ferreted out.

My interest and enthusiasm has waned, I have run out of ideas and "friends" to approach and we need someone new in this role. It doesn't even need to be a current TMCS member.

If you know of someone who would bring new blood, a new outlook, is innovative and who would welcome the challenge then please approach them or pass them this article to read - the worst that can happen is that they say no and maybe it will be just the opportunity they would welcome to get them out of a rut!

Please give this some thought.
Gillian Watson

Talks for 2022

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.

The committee have discussed the possibility of cancelling the rest of the season in the light of the current escalation of Covid infections. It was decided to continue with the present programme for the moment. However, there is always the possibility of government instructions to desist.

Please therefore check the website, or ring up before travelling.



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 March/ April 2022 edition is **18/02/2022**

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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 life member

**Mr Adrian Padfield
of
Cheltenham**

**Wecome aboard! We hope you enjoy being a
Member of the society.**

