

# GRAND TRUNK



*Damaged cruiser on the Cheshire Flight  
(see p.6/7)*

**May/June 2022**

[www.trentandmerseycanalsociety.org.uk](http://www.trentandmerseycanalsociety.org.uk)

## Chairman's Bit

Our long-awaited AGM finally took place on 7<sup>th</sup> May. As well as the usual AGM business, the 23 people present patiently listened to me explain the accounts for each of the past 3 years (as our 2 previous attempts at holding an AGM had to be postponed because of Covid-19 regulations). They were rewarded with an excellent buffet lunch, and a very interesting tour of Murgatroyd's Brine Pump. (see pp18-19 for a full report).



Our sales stall will be present at Middlewich Folk and Boat Festival (MFAB) on June 18-19, and also at the IWA Festival of Water, Burton on August 27-29. We would be very pleased if any members would like to help run the stall at Burton, as Margaret and I are also helping to run site services as well as working on the IWA Sales Stall and the Waterway Recovery Group - North-west stall!

Sadly it has proved to be impractical to take our stall to Shardlow Inland Port Festival on September 10-11 as nobody is available to transport the stall there from Burton or return it to Middlewich (let alone actually run the stall).

Our next season of socials meetings has been booked up to the end of the year, with a talk about the Daniel Adamson on October 21st, and talk by Malcolm Bridge on November 18th. However we currently have nobody prepared to arrange our talks from January onwards, so please do contact me if you would like to help, as we want to continue these events if we can possibly do so.

Finally, very early notice that our society Christmas meal has been provisionally booked for December 2nd at Red Bull.

That's quite enough from me, especially as I am typing this after dinner on our boat part-way through a week's cruise to Manchester (well – Waters Meeting on the Bridgewater anyway!) and back.

*Roger Evans*

## Editorial



Hello everybody,

Welcome to another exciting edition (I hope) of *Grand Trunk*. We learn how the problem of a burnt-out boat is dealt with, get up to date on the Cheshire locks and Burslem Port, hear about celebrations at Anderton, cover our long-delayed AGM, and comment on other bits and bobs happening on our 93 mile long canal.

You will notice a plea for help as our stall is taken out of mothballs to attend Middlewich Folk and Boat Festival in June and IWA Festival of Water at Burton on Trent in August. We ought to attend Shardlow's Inland Port Festival in September, but the timing is just wrong for us. If anyone in the South is prepared to take this on, we will get the stall to you somehow and give you our blessing (plus a request for a write-up to go in the magazine).

Following the AGM, we slipped away on our boat for a whole week as we badly needed a break. I am typing this while moored on the Bridgewater Canal near Sale, watched by two cats as they wait for the cyclists and joggers to go home so that they can de-mouse the towpath. We are going for a wander up the Runcorn Arm before returning to our beloved T&M and sending this to the printer. I apologise for the tardiness of this issue; I wanted to include a report on the AGM.

You will notice that there is no picture of the Wedgwood Trophy recipient in this issue. This is because the mystery member was not present at the AGM and the trophy has not yet been presented. We will remedy this in the next issue.

We have a new member who looks after a family of boating bears. Now these bears (as well as being very nicely dressed and polite) are very good at writing articles about their adventures and rarely make a spelling mistake. I hope to persuade them to write for *Grand Trunk*— watch this space!

More news in the next issue,

*Margaret English*

## **Barbara Bridgewater**

*Julie Arnold has been kind enough to let me know that Barbara Bridgewater, a stalwart of TMCS and in particular the shop in rally heydays, has died.*

Barbara was 94, due to be 95 in July – and still regularly reminisced with Julie's Mum (Beryl Arnold) about boating escapades on the T&M and Caldon.

*Julie found an obituary in her Dad's archives about Geoff Bridgewater which includes information about Barbara. I don't think I can do better than reprint this.*

## **Geoff Bridgewater**

Geoff Bridgewater died recently at the age of 80. Geoff – inseparably linked with Barbara – was one of the stalwarts of the society from the late 1970s through into the 1980s, during the chairmanships of Roger Lee and myself. They were part of a lively and energetic main committee drawn from the whole length of the T&M, that was involved in many successful campaigns. In particular that to replace the missing mileposts, one of which they sponsored.

Barbara and Geoff were the custodians of the society shop and display stand and the outward and visible public face of T&MCS at both local and national events, from the Lee & Stort and Brentford in the south to Leeds in the north. Apart from the publicity, the shop raised significant funds for the society, mainly at the Bridgewater's expense; which included not only the regular use of their van but also the purchase of a dedicated market stall.

Many will also remember seeing them travelling the T&M and many other waterways aboard their always immaculate Piper boat *Owlet*. Participating in and supporting the society at many rallies and other events.

Geoff was an engineer with his own business and something of a gadget man who could be relied upon to produce an ingenious solution to whatever problem we were faced with. He was outwardly a quiet man – a gentleman in fact - but with a great sense of humour and always great fun to be with. He was often a calming influence on those, like me, who might have gone in where angels fear to tread.



Geoff was one of the people that we have been lucky to meet through the waterways who became a very close and true friend. We will miss him greatly and our thoughts go out to Barbara, Leslie, Simon and Lauren.

**Harry Arnold**  
**Vice-president**  
**March 2007**



***Barbara and Geoff on the stall at Rugeley***

Barbara is on the very-right in this photo, with husband Geoff next to her in the red scarf.

*Picture courtesy of Waterway Images*

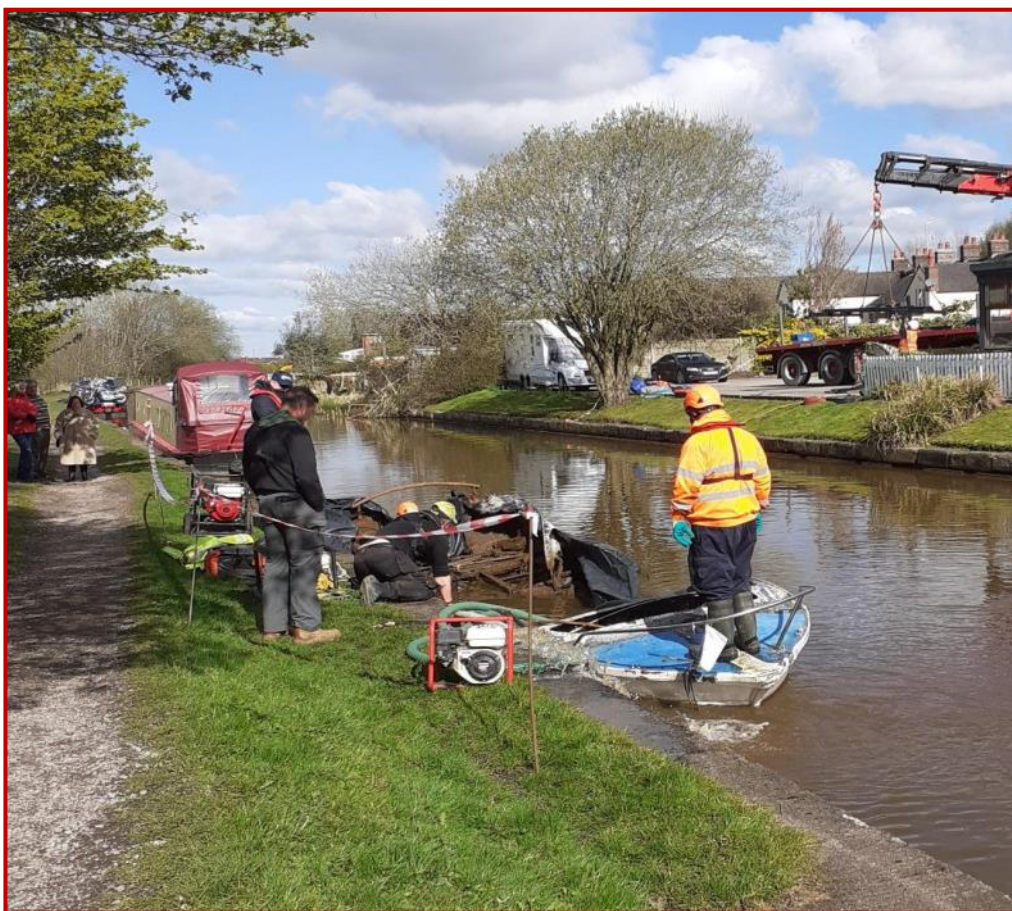
Please send contributions for the next issue to me, Margaret English, by e-mail to [margaretetlm@hotmail.com](mailto:margaretetlm@hotmail.com), by post, or by hand. Remember, this is *your* magazine. Contributions from the South especially welcome!

Last date for inclusion in the July/August 2022 edition is **18/06/2022**

*When we called into the Broughton Arms on our journey around The Four Counties Ring at the beginning of April, we were saddened to see a sunken cruiser just opposite. Roving reporter John Lawson came up with the following .....Ed.*

### **Recovery of fire damaged , Sunken Cabin Cruiser**

The glass fibre cruiser had been moored unlicensed opposite the Broughton Arms since late Summer. I never saw anyone on board . In the early hours of 11th October the boat was ravaged by fire. Cheshire Fire Brigade attended but could do nothing to save the vessel and it sank into the mud until it was removed by CRT contractors on 8th April.







*Tense moment as the lifting straps start to cut into the composite hull*

*Lifting cradle positioned and attached to the crane*





*Safely on  
dry land  
and onto  
the trans-  
porter.  
Round of  
applause  
from the  
onlookers*

All photos  
by John  
Lawson

### The Swarkestone Crane

I am about to chase the CRT heritage people regarding their thoughts on the condition of the Swarkestone Crane as it is now almost two months since they told me they were going to investigate and report back. It seems nothing moves very quickly in the CRT world even though the crane is situated right outside the CRT maintenance compound and their employees see it everyday!

*Dave Brewin*



*The crane 16 years ago  
(Creative Commons)*



## **Southern end news, April**

### ***A report from our man in the South, Dave Brewin***

I have recently written to CRT regarding bridge 13.

Bridge 13 is over the main A514 Derby to Swadlincote road and the brick parapets were demolished by a car in January, as I reported previously.

I have raised it with CRT now because the County Council have recently repaired the brickwork but the navigation restriction regarding the old parapets, that still remain clearly visible on the bed of the canal when the water is clear, cause a significant reduction in depth and a hazard to any passing boat that draws more than a couple of feet; this still appears on the CRT stoppage list.

My simple logic is that if the bridge repairs have now been completed with the cost presumably covered by the motorists insurance, then surely CRT should by now have removed the old parapets from the canal bed under the same insurance policy. Of course, the driver may have been uninsured but, either way, the debris needs removing from the canal or they will remain there for the longer term as was the case with the sunken boat on the Swarkestone Lock landing that took CRT two years to remove.

### ***CRT'S ORIGINAL NOTICE***

There has been a bridge strike on the Trent & Mersey Canal, at Bridge 13, Cuttle Bridge.

The team have attended site and while the metal railing have been removed from the canal the remains of the brick pillars are submerged under the bridge and may cause an obstruction.

We are advising boaters to be cautious when travelling under the bridge and proceed very carefully.

The bridge is owned by a third party and so once they have advised us on the necessary repairs we will update the website accordingly.

### ***REPLY ON 25/4/22***

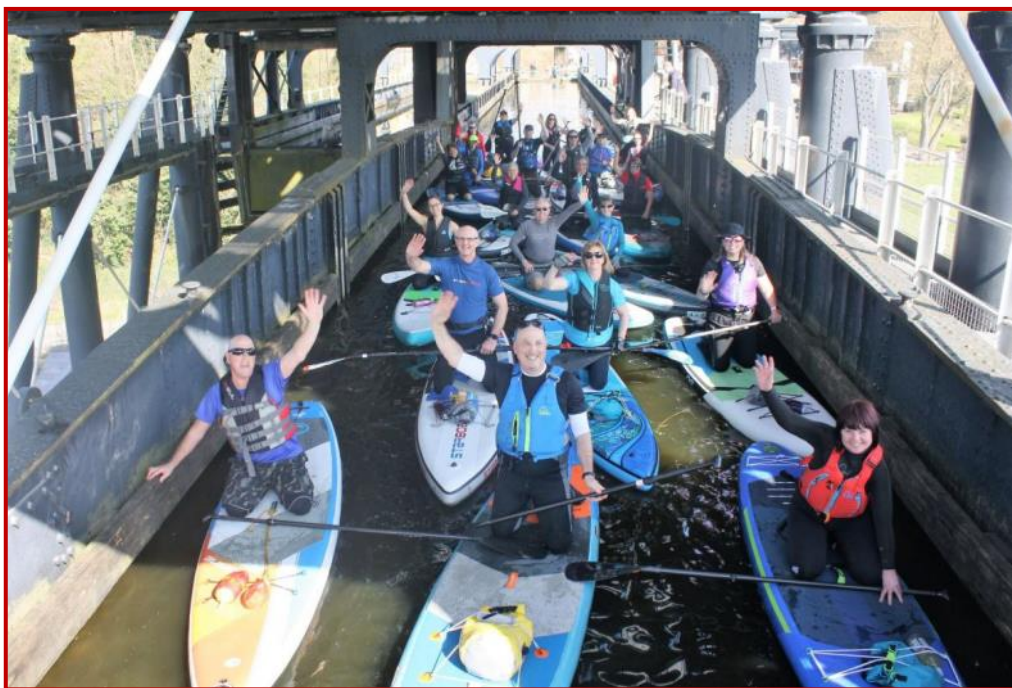
***The works have been completed and the debris has been cleared.***

***Well done Dave!***

## **Paddle boaters at Anderton**

More than 40 members from a local club made history as the first paddle boarders to go through Anderton Boat Lift in Northwich.

To mark the 20th anniversary since the lift's restoration, members of the Mid Cheshire Stand Up Paddle Board took to the water and created a 'spectacle' along the River Weaver, paddling together alongside the spectacular 'Cathedral of the Canals'.



The Canal and River Trust hosted a range of special attractions at the lift visitor centre on March 26, including a Memories Exhibition, the unveiling of a community patchwork quilt of the River Weaver Navigation, Lego building and Walking the Lift tours. The Memories Exhibition featured a new film, as well as photos and artefacts telling the story of the last 20 years.

The new patchwork quilt depicting the River Weaver was created by sewing experts from local quilting group, the Cosmic Chicks. Six panels illustrate the navigation in fact and fantasy from Winsford to Frodsham (see p. 12).

Carly Graham, visitor centre manager, said: “Many people have been involved in the restoration and the operation of the lift over the last two decades. We wanted to capture that in a special memories exhibition which celebrated the incredible £7 million restoration 20 years ago and the role of the boat lift since.”

The anniversary year is due to feature a host of special events including a weekend Steam Festival on May 7 and 8, and a 10k charity run on Sunday, May 15.



For more information, visit [canalrivertrust.org.uk/places-to-visit/anderton-boat-lift-visitor-centre](https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/places-to-visit/anderton-boat-lift-visitor-centre).

*From Northwich Guardian April 3rd  
Photos: Canal & River Trust/Lynn Pegler*





## The Anderton quilt-

The whole  
thing + 2  
close-ups

*Pics, M.  
English*



### Anderton Boat Lift Summer Operating Times 2022

From Friday 1 April until Monday 31 October 2022, the Lift will be operating 7 days a week.

Friday to Wednesday – 9:30am till 4:30pm

Thursday – 10:45am till 4:30pm, to allow for weekly inspections

**Please note**, we will be carrying out monthly routine inspections on the Lift every first Thursday of the month. The Queen's Jubilee, Thursday 2 June will be open as normal, and inspections will be carried out on Thursday 9 June 2022 instead.

**Please be advised**, passages on Tuesday 12 July 2022 have been suspended, subject to change. Confirmed notice will be provided nearer the time.

**It is important** that all boats travelling through the Lift have the correct license, a valid Boat Safety Certificate and insurance. Please make sure your details are up to date prior to booking as these will be checked during the booking sequence.

**All passages must be booked in advance**, we will not be able to take bookings onsite. Bookings can be made via your online account. Alternatively, you can call and book with our team by calling 0303 0404040 between Monday to Friday, 8.30am till 5pm and Saturday & Sunday, 10am till 2pm.

Next available slot on the day is free of charge, however this passage is subject to availability, otherwise, charges of passage do apply.

**Please ensure** that you arrive at the holding area 30 minutes before the scheduled passage.

This window gives our staff an opportunity to visually check the boat for any potential issues, and more importantly, allows time for the safety briefing to be delivered and to answer any questions that might arise.

**You will be charged** the full amount should you fail to turn up for your booked passage. Failing to turn up has an adverse impact on the efficiency of the Lift and our limited operational staff.

## IWA Festival of Water

*on the Trent & Mersey Canal in Burton Upon Trent for a bank holiday weekend of fun for all who love spending time by the water.*

**A full programme of music and dance will take place.**

**BOOKINGS**-now open for boat and campsite bookings.

The following stallholders and catering providers have already booked in:

### **Food and Drink**

Real Ale Bar JW Catering – Burgers, sausages, bacon and chips, etc.  
Freeman Catering – Pork and beef carvery / tropical slushes Anil Kholi – Indian street food La Fiamma – Wood fired pizzas Platinum Pancakes – Sweet and savoury pancakes The Retro Coffee Company – Tea, coffee, cakes, crepes and waffles. Ricky Dhillon Ice cream Van

### **Exhibitors, Traders and Charities**

**Ashby Canal Association** – Information about the Ashby Canal and the society. **Benebery Products** – Hand drawn laser engraving with crafting table for make your own ornaments. **Boaters Christian Fellowship** – Information about the fellowship. **Dallow Lock Crafts** – Wooden toys and jig-saws. **Ebinka Craft** – Handmade products from fabric, wool, wood and card. **Out of my Shell** – Seaside crafts and hair braiding. **Pansy Power Craft** – Homemade sewn and crocheted goods. **The Pod Floating Studio** – Handmade canal inspired fused glass made aboard narrowboat *The Pod*. **Sew Singular** – Bags, aprons, journals and cards, etc. **Simon Bonsai** – Bonsai trees & accessories. **Sugarfoot** – Roses and Castles crafts. **Trent and Mersey Canal Society** – Promotion of the Canal Society, second-hand books and bric-a-brac. **Wallflower Gifts** – Novelty Mugs, wall plaques and other gifts. **Willow Boats Ltd** – Beautifully hand painted boats using modern materials. **Vimart Signwriting** – Traditional signwriting beautifully designed and carefully applied. **Waterways Recovery Group North West** – Hundreds of second-hand books and bric-a-brac. **Woofs Treats** – Defra approved dog treats and gifts for dog lovers.

*Lots more to come*

***Help desperately needed on the T&M stall over the festival weekend, All offers welcome, however small. Email Roger or Margaret– we'd love to see you!***



## **Woman dies in Stoke-on-Trent canal**

Sadly nothing could be done to save her

A woman has died after being discovered in a Stoke-on-Trent canal. The woman - who has not been named - was pronounced dead at the scene.

**Firefighters**, **police** and **paramedics** were scrambled to the incident on Grange Bridge, over the Trent and Mersey Canal, at around 10am this morning. Three fire engines, an ambulance and a police car were seen parked in nearby Forge Lane, in **Etruria**.

Sadly nothing could be done to save the woman. A West Midlands Ambulance Service spokesman said: "We were called at 9:59am to reports of a patient in the water at Grange Bridge, in Burslem. We sent one ambulance and two paramedic officers to the scene.

*From Cheshire Live 06/05/22*



***On 7/5/22 CRT advised care when using lock 74 (bottom of the Middlewich Three), owing to a damaged bumper board.***

Not so much damaged as adrift!

*Photo Roger Evans*



## **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**

### **LOOK OUT FOR THE HIGH-VIS VOLUNTEERS!**

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](mailto:John.Lawson@waterways.org.uk)**

## Cheshire locks report April

See attached photo taken by John Brighthouse at the April Cheshire Locks Work Party



6 volunteers attended and given good weather did an excellent job in completing the painting on Lock 46.



Following my Covid isolation, the numbers were painted the following week to finish the sequence of locks that have occupied our efforts over the past year.

*John Lawson*



## T&MCS AGM 7th May 2022

It finally happened— after 3 years we had an AGM! 23 members attended, including several who had travelled by boat, and some very welcome Southern members. Three year's accounts were explained to everyone's satisfaction and the committee was re-elected unanimously. New member Sara Honeysett offered to join the committee to help find a solution to the social meetings problem.

This year's stall outings were outlined and the Wedgwood Trophy was displayed. The recipient was not present, so more about this later.



After a delicious buffet lunch had been consumed, we all set off in a crocodile to walk the short distance to Middlewich's hidden treasure, Murgatroyd's brine pump.

In 1889 George Murgatroyd began sinking a brine shaft between the canal and railway and discovered salt beds under Middlewich. Murgatroyd himself died of an overdose of Belladonna in 1894, but his works passed to Brunner Mond and continued in operation until 1977 (when the process of wild brine pumping became illegal).

The pumps are the only complete wild brine pumps (in their original position) in the UK and it was a great privilege to be shown round them. Originally in very poor condition, the site has been lovingly restored, with plenty of information boards, archive film footage and historic artefacts.

The sun shone, the development of the site was well-presented, and a good time was had by all. For more information visit: [heritage@middlewich.org.uk](mailto:heritage@middlewich.org.uk).— *where to next year, I wonder?*



*Open day  
poster on  
gate*



*The  
famous  
pump itself*

*Facing page: AGM Audience:*

*Photos by David Clegg*



*See you in the Autumn!  
But see below!*

## **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  
ST7 3AJ**

## **Gillian steps down**

I announced more than 2 years ago that I wanted to give up arranging talks and as time has gone on there has been no offer of a replacement.

I have arranged the talks for this season and for October and November of the 2022-23 season and this is where I stop, if I keep doing a bit more and a bit more then .....

*So now we really do need someone to take over.*



Regards  
Gillian Watson

## **Burslem Port**

The Trust responsible for taking forward the plans for the redevelopment of the old Burslem Arm in Middleport is currently facing a major problem, frequently experienced by many voluntary organisations, namely a shortage of volunteers - in this case the shortage of people to manage and plan the future of the project. This is despite many years of stable management and currently the possibility of making real progress with the scheme. The remaining Trustees are now determining whether a possible merger with another like-minded local organisation might be possible and discussions are currently in hand, being managed in part by our retained consultants, MDY. A recent meeting was held with 15 representatives of local bodies and a further meeting is currently being arranged to determine if help is likely to come from a combined effort.

This worrying situation is occurring at a time when, perversely, the possibilities for practical physical progress are the best for many years - with the restoration of the old wharf and warehouse being a major feature of interest. In addition, our own on-the-ground volunteers are enthusiastically maintaining the site following the successful completion of the main part of the footpath through the site and a local community gathering under the Burslem Connects name was held which showed continued community support for the restoration project.

The continued help from our consultants should be acknowledged for they have substantially increased the Trust's own capacity and expertise and are proactive in progressing the project, but their contract with the Trust ends soon as the funding from a City Council body expires in the summer, adding further to the Trust's concerns.

Never-the-less, the remaining Trustees are working hard trying to save the project, which was first started some 25 years ago when this Society under Mike Mitchell agreed to support initial investigatory work into the possibility of restoring the old Burslem Canal; it would be a shame to lose all this enthusiasm and effort.



David Dumbelton



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[www.trentandmerseycanalsociety.org.uk](http://www.trentandmerseycanalsociety.org.uk) (or) [www.tamcs.org.uk](http://www.tamcs.org.uk)

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

*Bringing Boats Back to Burslem*

### **Milepost 35/57 (Taft Bridge)**



THIS MILEPOST WAS DONATED BY  
AND IS IN MEMORY OF  
FRANK SMITH  
REPLACED BY THE  
TRENT & MERSEY CANAL SOCIETY  
AND UNVEILED BY  
HIS DAUGHTER BARBARA BRIDGE-  
WATER  
ON SATURDAY 19<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 1981

*See pages 4/5*

*Milepost picture, Brian Holt  
Plaque picture and wording courtesy of Phil  
Myott*

***Welcome to new members***

**Mr Michael Johnson  
of  
Scunthorpe**

**Sara and Jon Honeysett  
of Talke Pits, Stoke-on-Trent**



**Welcome aboard!  
We hope you enjoy being a  
members of the society.**