

GRAND TRUNK



*The Wedgwood Trophy is presented to Cheshire Locks leader
John Lawson at the May Work Party
by Chairman Roger Evans*

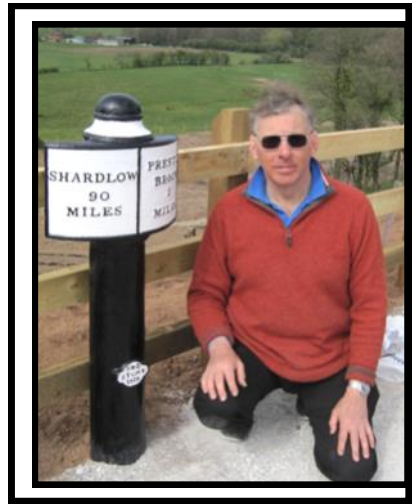
Photo, Margaret English

July/ August 2022

www.trentandmerseycanalsociety.org.uk

Chairman's Bit

Having visited Anderton Lift in May to photograph the quilt (see Margaret's photographs in the previous issue of Grand Trunk), I wasn't expecting to be back there soon. However I have actually been there twice this past week to attend meetings on behalf of our Society. The first meeting was to find out about the current problems with the west caisson, and how they will be fixed. It was a very useful meeting where, not only were we told about the problems and possible solutions, we were also invited to make suggestions about how best to overcome the problems from a boater's perspective. See pages 6/7 for a full report. The following day, both Margaret and I attended a consultative meeting about the future development of the lift site. See Margaret's article on pages 12/13 for details.



At our May "Cheshire Locks" work-party I presented our "Wedgwood Trophy" to John Lawson (our work-party leader) during the lunch-break. This trophy is awarded annually to the person who has done the most to further the cause of our society during the previous year. See the photo on the front cover.

On June 18-19 our sales stall was present at Middlewich Folk and Boat Festival (MFAB) and the total takings were £260.16. This included £24 in the "Donations Box" and (a very roughly estimated) £90 from the "Nail Game". My thanks to all those people who helped run the stand. See page 11.

We are still looking for volunteers to help man our stand at the IWA Festival of Water, Burton on August 27-29 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 - Northwest stall!

Finally, we also still need a volunteer to arrange the talks at our socials meetings from January 2023 onwards. See page 21 for details of our social events up to the end of 2022.

Editorial

Hello everyone! Summer is here, the queues are building up at locks and our beloved canal is very busy!



Festival season is also here (after a two-year covid break). The society stall had its first post-covid outing at Middlewich Folk and Boat Festival in mid-June (see p. 11). Grateful thanks go to our willing helpers who turned up, got cold, were cheerful and efficient and enabled us to have lunch, see a little of the rest of site, and clear up quickly at the end of both days.

Unfortunately, our popular and venerable nail game met with a small accident on the way home, but chairman Roger has worked out a plan of repair and it will be in full working order for the stall's next outing at Burton-on-Trent. This is the IWA Festival of Water on Shobnall Fields, always a fun event and well worth a visit. I hope to meet lots of members there.

Those of you who keep an eye on waterway issues will be aware that the Anderton Boat Lift has problems. There is a detailed summary of these on PP.6/7. I also attended a meeting about funding issues for the lift and its environment, there is a synopsis of this event on P.12.

I see there is a free open-air concert at Anderton Boat Lift on 11th August from 3pm to 4pm. For more details, see the CRT website. Any comments about this event (for possible publication) will be gratefully received (hint!).

Please put a note in your diaries for our last two social meetings of 2022 (and perhaps for some time to come) and, of course, the Christmas meal.

Finally, I was interested to read a small article in a local Middlewich publication about Tetton Bridge (that's the one that takes the road across our canal on the Sandbach side of Middlewich). Apparently the local name for this was **Turnover Bridge**. Originally a hump-backed bridge, it was lengthened and strengthened by the addition of a concrete extension when the road was modernised. Road travellers hurry over, completely unaware that beneath them the bridge outline changes dramatically and can catch the boater unawares. As both a boat and road traveller, I must admit this had never occurred to me. Does anyone know of similar interesting structures along the canal?

Margaret English

CRT posted this on their website in May.....

CRT work on lock 60 quadrant May 22

A good example of everyday work is on the Trent & Mersey Canal at Lock 60 where work was recently completed on the lock quadrant. It had seen better days so, to help boaters operate the lock more easily, the local construction team got to work levelling the site, re-laying the bricks and tidying up the periphery. In this, and the many other similar jobs we do, we try to use as many of the original bricks as possible.



The problem uncovered!



And afterwards!

*This picture was taken before the Cheshire Locks work party of 19th May.
See page 17 for a bit of a transformation!*

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

Last date for inclusion in the September/October 2022 edition is **18/08/2022**

Anderton Lift – Maintenance issues

On 10th June CRT issued a stoppage notice headed “Restricted Passage, Anderton Boat Lift”. This was because they found a problem during their weekly inspection the previous day which meant that they had to stop using the west caisson whilst they investigated the cause and the solution. Passages were therefore limited, and all customers advised to book in advance.

On 22nd June they announced “Unfortunately we have taken the difficult decision to suspend use of the west caisson for the rest of this season. A recent expert inspection of the boat lift hydraulic rams has identified excessive wear on the seals of the west ram which has damaged the ram coating. While we investigate the cause, continued use risks permanent damage to the ram which may result in the requirement for a complete replacement. This problem was identified recently as part of the feasibility work the Trust is undertaking into a major refurbishment of the boat lift. Although the repairs relating to last week’s temporary closure are nearly resolved, for the reasons above, the west caisson will not be brought back into use. We are now planning for the repairs and by protecting the west ram from further damage now, we expect we will be able to return the lift to full operation next year. We apologise to our boating customers for the inconvenience this will cause. We are reviewing our operational schedule for the rest of the year in order to maximise the passage for customers and will update further later this week. We know that many people may be disappointed not to see a full return to operation, but these measures are necessary to avoid a potentially extended closure and costly repair.”

Two days later came the news “We have listened to feedback from customers, and we have taken the decision to reduce the number of Trip Boat passages at the Anderton Boat Lift and extend our operating times to be able to accommodate more bookings for our customers.

So, what has happened to the west caisson? Apparently, the problem is being caused by a (very slight) misalignment of the west ram compared to the static part of the lift. Detailed laser targeting measurements started to be made on 28th June to find out exactly how much out-of-alignment the ram is, and whether it varies with temperature and usage. Currently it is thought to be about 1.5mm, but as the ram raises the caisson over 50 feet, this is enough to cause a problem with the caisson rubbing against 2 of the 4 guides (normally only there for emergency use) on the static part of the lift. There is also a crack in one of the support columns of the static part of the lift which needs to be further investigated.

The damage to the ram coating is almost invisible to the naked eye, but experts have advised that it will get rapidly worse if the ram continues in normal use now that damage has started.

A worst-case scenario would be that, if the ram were seriously damaged, then it would need to be replaced at a current cost of around £1,000,000 (yes 1 million!) supply only. Originally it was thought that removing a ram would need the lift to be dismantled first (at very significant extra cost) as it can't simply be lifted straight out. However, a method has been worked out to avoid this by putting in an "access hatch" in the bottom of the caisson (after the caisson has been jacked-up and supported), lifting the ram part-way through the caisson, then "wiggling" it diagonally through the static part of the lift. Still not a quick or cheap job, nor one to be looked forward to!

Luckily the current damage is relatively slight, and the ram can actually be repaired in-situ. This involves disconnecting the ram from the caisson, removing and replacing the seal and the ice/mud scraper from the ram, then polishing the ram by hand, before fitting a new seal and scraper. Even this is estimated to cost around £35,000 for doing both rams (as the other one also needs a new seal and a polish). The east ram is in very good condition for its age so the "new seal and polish" should be all that needs doing for another 10 years service. However, the west ram would only last 2 years unless the misalignment problem was solved.

There is, of course, the little problem that while the seal is removed the ram can no longer support the caisson. Therefore, a temporary support structure must be designed, fabricated, and installed to hold the caisson clear of the rams before the work starts. A very rough guess is that this will cost an extra £150,000, although the temporary structure could be saved and reused again in 10 years time at a much lower cost.

Currently the west ram will only be used once per week when it will be "exercised" to stop it seizing up. There is no risk to the public in using the west ram as it is designed to fail safe with no way of dropping suddenly. It is planned to create, fabricate and install the temporary support structure in early November, then do the "new seals and hand polish" work, which will take about a month.

Other work still needs to be done on the lift to replace the control systems (probably with a wireless system) and also to grit-blast and repaint the whole structure using new paint systems (like those used on the Forth Bridge) which will have a much longer life.

Roger Evans

Membership of Trent & Mersey Canal Society

Those of you who attended the recent Annual General Meeting in Middlewich will have heard our Chairman, Roger Evans, our Grand Trunk Editor and Secretary, Margaret English, and our Events Organizer, Gillian Watson make a clarion call for an initiative to increase both our active and overall membership.

Paula Jackson would have said it too, but she was too busy taking the minutes!

The mere fact that Roger, Margaret and Gillian also have other Society duties that they perform to keep the Society vibrant and active emphasizes that we need more support both in numbers and Society commitment.

As a separate issue, David Dumbelton is encountering difficulties in maintaining the Burslem Port Initiative in its current form because of the increasing age of its participants.

We have 146 members, which is about half the number we had in our heyday around 20 years ago, when we achieved what I believe was our most notable achievement, (with help from others!!) the restoration of the Anderton Boat Lift.

The Society has much to be proud of in its 48 years life, and we still have an excellent magazine in, "Grand Trunk", monthly volunteer work parties, interesting talks, a sales stand at Boat Rallies and Regattas, , a Christmas Dinner, fascinating locations for our AGM, and other individual events, when opportunity occurs - but this is all at risk as it is all arranged by so few people - and they are needing assistance, support and encouragement, and, in some cases, new role adopters.

It would be foolish not to acknowledge that the survival of the Society is in jeopardy if we cannot find new members interested in the roles of Chairman, Social Secretary and Talks Organiser, Accountant and Membership Secretary.

Our membership average age is also increasing year on year and we especially need new younger members to support us with our public activities and bring in new ideas.

Please

can I ask you all, after reading this, to actively and DEEPLY consider

1. ***Who do I know whom I can persuade to join the Society***, particularly if they use any of the facilities that this fascinating Canal provides - Boaters, Anglers, Hikers, Dog Walkers, Canoeists, Paddle Boarders, Ornithologists, Photographers, etc. If they have an interest, perhaps the Society can benefit or campaign for them.

2. ***Am I, or is anybody I know, prepared*** to commit themselves to attend committee meetings to determine the future of the Society and/or lend a hand in miscellaneous ways when opportunities occur to promote the survival and wellbeing of the Trent and Mersey Canal and its environs, for the benefit of all.

Being involved in group activities can be both worthwhile and fun, and this is an opportunity to change the currently more introverted lifestyle that most of us are having to adopt in this fast growing electronic age.

Let us all look outwards, achieve more, obtain greater life satisfaction by becoming more committed to the - TRENT AND MERSEY CANAL SOCIETY!!!

(with apologies to the small number of members who make such a wonderful contribution already!)

Watch this space - IN YOUR BI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE - to learn if this appeal has had the desired intent. It all depends upon you - You -YOU!!!

John Tackley



Marina at Barton-under Needwood

People living on a new housing estate in Barton-under-Needwood can now walk directly to Barton Marina. After years of petitions for direct access to the popular tourist attraction, the marina has installed a pedestrian gate and footpath that links the estate to the venue.

The gate is located on Causer Road and opened to the public at weekends. The paths in the area are especially popular destinations with dog-walkers. Previously residents, had to take a long detour.

The new gate linking the housing estate to Barton Marina is strictly on a trial basis, with no permanent plans to keep the pedestrian gate in place just yet.

Barton Marina is a top tourist attraction with a restaurant, garden centre and boating marina, connected to the busy Trent and Mersey Canal. It is visited by thousands of people each year, said a spokesman for the marina.



The popular venue opened for business in 2001, after 1.3 million tonnes of sand and gravel were excavated to create the marina and two fishing lakes. Woodland was planted and pathways were constructed to complete the leisure facilities at the marina.

The Waterfront pub was opened in 2007. Other eating places, shops and a cinema quickly followed, all built in the same Victorian warehouse style using reclaimed timber and brick.

From Staffordshire live by Barry Hodgkiss (Photo Samuel Hodgkiss)

Middlewich Folk and Boat Festival

The society stall came out of storage and was dusted off for the occasion. By 9pm on Saturday 18th June it was proudly displaying its wares by the tow-path below the Middlewich Three. It was cold and footfall began slowly. However, as the morning progressed it warmed up and business became brisk. The Nail Game attracted much attention and visitors kept returning for another go. The atmosphere was alive, and people were happy to chat after two festival-free years. We were pleased to welcome helpers, so everyone had a chance to admire the trading boats moored all the way to Big Lock, the stalls on the car park and the delightfully aromatic goods next door.



Sunday was very similar, and a good time was had by all. We had agreed to have a lucky dip (made up by life member Anne Chetwyn) to help raise funds for IWA, as they were unable to bring their stall this year. The little blue and pink parcels all disappeared and a whopping £64.00 was handed over. Unusually, we made a profit, as well as reminding

people that the society existed. From our position, it was great to see the historic boats leaving at the end of the day, especially Saturn and Ilford, towed by their respective motors.

Margaret English



*The free trip
boat
(manned by
CRT)
gave short
rides
throughout*

Anderton Boat Lift Consultation

On 28th June a meeting was held at the boat lift to consider ways and means of encouraging and funding repair of the lift (see pp 6/7) and revitalisation of the lift area, especially as CRT is 10 years old this year.

It is a multi-million-pound project to maintain and refurbish the 147-year-old lift, which has now been back in operation for 20 years. An important part of this is a major appeal to the lottery fund. This will only be successful if it can be proved that the site can become a leading visitor attraction, promoting and teaching science, heritage, nature and well-being. It should foster a unique sense of place, welcome visits and engage communities.

To achieve these aims the entire site would need to be re-developed and a better idea of the nature of employment opportunities available formulated. The vision needs to incorporate the participation of under-represented communities, the disadvantaged and local groups. Closer liaison with nearby woodlands and Marbury Park, and possibly the formation of a lift village and a hydro-electric scheme (it was pointed out that the one installed at Dutton Locks was causing problems) are all proposals worthy of consideration..

The audience was asked to make a note of suggestions which could be used in the lottery application (which must be submitted by 11th August). It was noted that there was no mention of boaters in the presentation but we were told that the nature of the lift assumed their inclusion.



After a delicious buffet, the delegates were treated to a quick tour of the existing site, noting innovations like beehives. John Tackley gave a short talk on the mural, and *I noted some discarded 'round things'* which turned out to be remnants of the original inspection tunnels from 1875. The event ended with a visit to

the middle level of the lift, where we watched two boats descend.



*Original lift weights
(Now used as a maze)*



*Boats descending
(viewed from middle level)*



*Measuring with theodolite
Preparatory to repairs*

*Article and photos,
Margaret English*

Vegetation Issues



Southern section member, Dave Brewin, is concerned about vegetation issues at the Southern end of our canal. He has kindly given me permission to reproduce his letter to CRT, readers' comments will be published as long as they are not rude!.....Ed

I am writing to you to place on record my deep dissatisfaction with the CRT approach to this issue.

Having just been on a short cruise on the southern Trent and Mersey I found the state of the towpaths to be completely unacceptable and presenting a clear safety risk to boaters. In fact they are the worst I have seen them in almost 40 years of boating.

Even on regularly used moorings, such as the 48 hour moorings at Branston, the grass and weeds are knee high, making it virtually impossible to see where you are putting your feet whilst mooring up. Other stretches of towpath are much worse with the vegetation approaching head height in places.

The result of this is that a scythe and pair of garden shears are now essential cruising equipment.

It can only be a matter of time before your approach to vegetation management, or rather non-management, results in a serious accident. My wife put her foot into a deep hole that was invisible in the undergrowth whilst we were attempting to moor up above Shardlow Lock ; she was fortunate not to break her ankle. When she walked the towpath between Tatenhill and Branston Locks whilst I steered the boat, there were several occasions when she completely disappeared from sight due to the height of the vegetation.

You must be aware that the age profile of boaters is high, my wife and I are both approaching 70, and whilst reasonably fit we are finding mooring to the towpath increasingly hazardous.

Your attempts to justify this approach by emphasising the environmental benefits is clearly just a way of detracting from the real reason which can only be related to saving money. It is impossible not to believe that CRT really do see the safety of boaters as a very low priority; indeed I am reluctantly coming round to the view that you would perhaps rather not have boaters at all so that the canals can be completely devoted to wildlife conservation.

Can I therefore please ask that the current policy is reviewed as a matter of urgency. You could start by reinstating Fountains as your contractors who, from my observations, always seemed to do a good job.

Could I also request that you forward my letter to the Chief Executive as I am unable to find his email address.

Cheshire Locks June work party report

On the warmest day of the year so far, four volunteers assembled at Lock 60 to continue the excellent work completed by the Work Party the previous month. We were reduced in numbers due to holiday and other commitments on a day when the canal was very busy with boat traffic, heading in the main towards Middlewich for the Folk and Boat Festival .

We decided that two volunteers would prepare and paint the previously untouched by-wash fence, and the remaining two would focus on paddle gear, rails and balance beams which inevitably also meant much opening and closing paddles and gates for the boats passing through the single lock chamber in use. Despite all this and the increasing heat, much was achieved. In addition, we had the first visit of the year of the CRT grass cutting contractors , who, to be fair, worked alongside us, prioritising areas of the very long grass at our request to give us some clearance in the areas where we would be working.

All round, a good day and a special thank you to Laura from the adjacent stables who very kindly supplied us with mugs of tea.

John Lawson





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

May Work Party



Our team of enthusiastic volunteers set to work in the sunshine on lock 60, which along with lock 59, are the only pairs the group has never worked on since its inception in 2013– they made quite a difference!

Photos by John Lawson

Chairman Roger was very proud of his newly painted gate!





Bye-wash fence preparedand completed!





...and the grass was cut!

*Photos:
John Lawson*



*White
painting
done!*



*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

Details of the final events arranged by Gillian are on the facing page.

Without help, there will be no talks in 2023!

Last events in 2022

21st October

The Daniel Adamson

A talk by two volunteers from the Daniel Adamson Preservation Society who are going to tell the remarkable story of the Danny "The Tug that Survived to Sail Again"

The Daniel Adamson is a coal fired steam tug tender launched in 1903 from the golden age of British engineering and had a career ranging from towing humble barges to entertaining Kings and Queens on the famous Manchester Ship Canal.

After a working life of over 80 years, she was eventually abandoned and destined for the scrap yard. At the 11th hour in 2004 she was rescued by a dedicated group of volunteers and after many trials and tribulations was returned to her former working glory, sailing the waterways of North West England.

18th November

More sustainable boating

A talk by Malcolm Bridge

Malcolm will address behavioural changes, new builds and the future together with what the navigation authorities could do to reduce the environmental impact of boating. Malcolm travels the country on his all-electric narrow boat *Ampere*.

2nd December

Christmas Meal

Once again this exciting seasonal event is being held in the upper room at Red Bull. Start your Christmas festivities with a convivial gathering. Further details to be confirmed nearer the time.



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

Bringing Boats Back to Burslem



*Newly painted gate
Lock 60, Cheshire Flight*

Photo: Jane Hargreaves (CRT)