

GRAND TRUNK



Trudi Beswick with the baton (see pp.4/6)

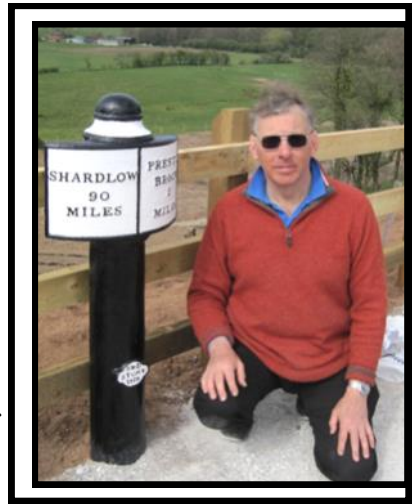
September/October 2022

www.trentandmerseycanalsociety.org.uk

Chairman's Bit

I am pleased to say that our sales stall made it to the IWA Festival of Water at Burton over August Bank Holiday weekend, and all went well. See the full report on pages 14. and 15.

After helping to dismantle the festival, we set off the following Thursday for our return cruise the long way round (via Leicester and Birmingham). This enabled us to see for ourselves that part of our canal to the east of Burton. We enjoyed the journey to the River Trent very much, but were disappointed in the state of the some of the wide locks we encountered. Stenson, Swarkestone and particularly Weston were very difficult and heavy to work, with the bottom gates of Weston being compared to a colander by a passing boater!



Shardlow was, as usual, very interesting and enjoyable. Sadly, we never managed to get any volunteers to take our stall to the Shardlow Inland Port Festival (on September 10-11) so we had to apologise to the organiser. I also noticed that our plaque at Derwent Mouth Lock was badly worn with most of the white paint on the lettering missing (although you can still read it if you look carefully as the lettering is raised). As with the many mileposts which need repainting, we would love to find a volunteer to carefully restore the lettering on this plaque. If anybody is interested, please let me know and we will be happy to order the correct paint for you to use.

Our social events at Red Bull resume on Friday 21st October with a talk about the Daniel Adamson. Please note that (unless we find a new volunteer to arrange the talks at our socials) there will be no meetings from January 2023. This would be very sad after many years of holding talks in Cheshire, but neither Margaret nor I are prepared to take on yet another role within the society.

**There will however be a Christmas meal at our usual venue—
more details just as soon as they are available.**

Editorial

Hello everybody,

I am writing this while moored on the summit of the Grand Union Leicester Line. It was supposed to be a leisurely cruise home from the festival, but Aslan the cat had other ideas. We moored beside an impenetrable bramble bush, which was home to a large cohort of unsuspecting mice, below Swarkestone Lock. Aslan enjoyed this so much that he refused to return to *The Lady Beth* for a whole day. We got up early (yes, even Mr Chairman) and spent two gruelling 11-hour days boating through Leicester, the locks (all against us) turned up relentlessly at 10 minute intervals. They were in poor repair, often with missing paddle gear and very heavy gates—and we think the T&M has problems! This wide canal is so overgrown with reeds that Dave Brewin would have a heart attack (see p.11). Seriously though, it is very worrying to see the system falling into such a bad state, and that is without the current water problems.



After reading the editorial in our last magazine, Andrew Denny (*Waterways World*) pointed out that there are several canal bridges across the system with changing profiles following alterations to accommodate larger roads. The other one we Four Counties Ring travellers are likely to encounter is Radford Bridge on the Staffs & Worcs Canal. Andrew was kind enough to provide a picture.



The Queen's Baton route

Travelling via land, air and sea, more than 180 communities in England have experienced the Queen's Baton on a route spanning 2,500 miles (4,000 kilometres). It contains a special message from the queen.

The baton returned to England on Monday 4 July to commence a 25-day tour of the regions with activities and notable visits throughout.

The Queen's baton relay visited the Anderton Lift on Sunday 17th July. Lift passages were suspended and the site was closed to the public.

The tour began at midday when a Baton bearer carried the Baton by boat down the 50ft lift to emerge onto the River Weaver, where the baton sailed along the river by boat, accompanied by a flotilla of paddle boarders and canoeists before disembarking at Winnington Swing Bridge (Barnton Bridge) and then travelling along Winnington Lane heading towards the town centre.

The next day, the baton moved on to Kidsgrove arriving at 12.08pm. Custodians of the Trent and Mersey Canal and Harecastle Tunnel, Canal and

River Trust, had organised an exclusive visit for the Queen's Baton. It was carried for a short time on a narrow-boat (loaned by *Heritage Narrow-boats*) along the canal. The journey took a whole fifteen minutes as the boat sailed through the famous orange water.



The Day Boat waits for its precious passenger

Photo Margaret English

Residents who wanted to attend

this event were advised to arrive half an hour ahead of time. and found steps and grassy areas to sit on with their bottles of water.

Special events to commemorate the occasion at each location included dance performances, outdoor activities, and themed activities for children.

The Leader of Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council, Simon Tagg, said: “This is a truly momentous day for the borough. It is a huge honour to be selected as part of the historic Queen’s Baton Relay journey and we’re going to provide some unique entertainment and activities while the baton is here.”



The baton was carried by Trudi Beswick, a successful designer entrepreneur and former Director of the Caudwell Group, Trudi has been the driving force at *Caudwell Children* since its inception in 2000. Over the past 19 years Trudi has orchestrated the charity’s continued growth, developing it

from a small local charity to a national organisation helping over 7,500 children each year and has become an influential voice within the voluntary sector.

A gathering of enthusiastic supporters, including the press, local schoolchildren and members of T&MCS lined the route from the top lock to Harecastle Tunnel in the baking heat. The atmosphere was electric.

Trudi recalled the experience on Twitter. She said’ ‘I was truly honoured to help the Queen's Baton Relay on its journey towards Birmingham for the

opening ceremony of The Commonwealth Games. Thank you to all the team, volunteers and everyone that came out to watch’.



Enthusiastic Schoolchildren Wave as the baton passes

Journey's end (on the T&M, that is!)



*Photos by Margaret English
Cover photo by Roger Evans*

Narrow Escape

The crew of the Dragonfly had a narrow escape on the evening of Sunday 24th July, when the old Horse Chestnut tree behind the Lady in Grey in Shardlow decided to submit to the stresses of age and the weather, and shed a branch across the bows of their boat moored on the towpath.



Fortunately no one was hurt. Any damage was limited to the foredeck area and although no one was sitting out there at the time (thank goodness), people had been passing on the towpath just moments earlier, the only indication that anything was about to happen was, according to an eyewitness, a scrunching, cracking, grinding sound, seconds before. The old original perimeter wall appears to have escaped any substantial damage, but that remains to be seen when the branch is removed.

CRT, once notified, quickly sent their out of hours team to assess the situation, and according to their latest update are bringing in specialist contractors today to deal with the situation.

Vaughn Wheatley

Gordon Diprose June 1929-July 2022

Gordon was born in June 1929 in Kent, East of the River Medway so he was a Man of Kent and definitively not a Kentish Man He was an only child but was part of a much larger, lively family circle in the Maidstone area. World War 2 played a prominent role in his childhood, from aircraft identification, to Air Training Corps at school and very memorably for him, 4 or 5 months of evacuation to Lands End in Cornwall as a 10-year-old.

Ironically the transatlantic cable terminus in West Cornwall, very near where he was then living, was bombed months before Maidstone was threatened, although reassuringly, according to letters home, only 2 rabbits were killed in the incident. At Grammar School he met and made friends remaining in contact with them for the rest of his life and then followed this with 2 years National Service in the RAF in North Yorkshire. There he learned, among some less useful skills, to service RADARs on Mosquito aircraft - which further cemented his interest in aviation.

After National Service Gordon became the first in his family to go to University as he took up a place at Bristol University to study Chemistry. His 1st class degree was followed by 3 years successful research towards a PhD.

However, by far the most important event was meeting his wife Betty, at the Scout and Guide club. They married in 1954 and on his graduation moved to join the ICI gang in Northwich. The family lived first in Sandiway and then in 1963 moved to what is still the family home in Hartford. The new house allowed him to indulge in his inherited love of vegetable gardening, which he continued until this year.

In the 70s Gordon's ICI role changed from lab work to a more senior position and he began travelling the world as Environmental Advisor – a man ahead of his time. He was prominent in the Manufacturing Chemists' Association and was very involved in addressing the problem of CFCs and the depletion of the ozone layer.

In the later years of his working life, he and Betty developed an interest in canals and boating and had 3 boats of their own, graduating from glass fibre hulls to a "proper" steel narrowboat– *Merganser*. Each summer saw an expedition to exotic places like Leeds, Birmingham or Llangollen. This interest

further developed with the arrival of grandchildren, allowing grateful parents to deposit the little ones into their tender care.

This resulted in well trained crew for travel holidays in later years, as evidenced by copious photos in the archives. Betty and Gordon both became active in the Trent and Mersey Canal Society, attending events and giving numerous slide shows of their European Waterways World holidays which were always eagerly anticipated by the society, and many other local organisations.

Betty was for many years an assiduous Membership Secretary and Gordon gave much of his spare time to promoting the restoration of the Anderton Boat Lift, creating and supporting many activities to assist in raising funds for the successful campaign to restore the Lift. Betty and Gordon were always at the forefront of any activity to raise funds, firework displays, regattas, publicity cruises, visits to the continental lifts, they were prominent in them all.

Following retirement Gordon also joined PROBUS and enjoyed several years attending their events and meeting like-minded people. In particular the on-line Zoom meetings helped him greatly to cope with 2 years of COVID and he was very pleased to have been awarded honorary membership recently.

Thanks to John Tackley for compiling this obituary, and to Gordon's family for helping.

Right up to Christmas 2021 Gordon sent Roger and I a Christmas card thanking us for our continuing work with the society and enquiring about developments. Christmas 2022 won't be the same!.....Ed

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 November/December 2022 edition is **18/10/2022**

Commemorative Plaque

Those of you who read the May/June 2021 edition of *Grand Trunk* may remember that we were very sad to lose one of our stalwart Cheshire Locks volunteers, Paul Taylor, to Covid 19.

Paul is very much missed, and plans were made to remember him by siting a small plaque alongside the locks. Red tape successfully dealt with, Cheshire Locks work Party Leader John Lawson is delighted to report that volunteer Tony Sproston and himself met up with Paul's wife (appropriately named Pauline) on Monday 18th July. Tony had brought along his tool kit so the plaque was affixed to the bench. She was very pleased. And sat upon the bench.



The plaque is situated on the support beam of a bench seat. Genuine and unassuming, just like Paul!

Vegetation reply

Dave Brewin has given me permission to publish the reply he received to his questions about vegetation highlighted in the last issue.

We have had a very troubled start to the new arrangements, in part due to contractors' performance at the start of the contract for the reasons outlined in the boaters' updates but also issues relating to the specifications where we have found some points of error. In particular, the cutting to water's edge every kilometre, to ensure that there were informal moorings, has not been as completely done as we had intended and is a key point for improvement in the future. In the last month, there has been a steady improvement I believe and while I do not pretend that things are perfect, the cutting has been much better overall. At the start of September we will commence the hedge to water edge cut which will provide a full reset on the towpaths.

There is no doubt that that design of the new specifications has also been a factor. With these we have sought to find a balance between the towpath walking area, and the fringe growth that is left. There is more fringe because that is what has been specified locally, but the cut walking width is prioritised over that. By doing this I still believe that we can achieve a balance between the utility of the towpath and the desired ecological benefits. We will be reviewing this in the Autumn and making sure that we learn lessons for next year.

Your comment about Fountains was heart-felt. The new arrangements offer savings to the Trust which we needed even before the current inflationary difficulties. I'm determined to ensure that we get the benefits of that – we're reinvesting that into the dealing with the backlog of overhanging trees and beyond that tackling the outgrown hedges that we are increasingly receiving comments about. Our vegetation management obligations are only set to increase, so having modern contractors with up-to-date practices is essential for us.

Regards

David Baldacchino
Head of Operations Support
07879 421 503



Picture: Wikipedia commons

Swarkestone Crane

Our intrepid reporter in the South, Dave Brewin, has kindly given me permission to publish the details of an email conversation he had with Kerry Walmsley CRT about the famous crane.

Kerry

I have had a very informative discussion with the building surveyor in the West Midlands who recently undertook a similar repair due to the health and safety risk of a crane.

The crane was not actually on our asset register, and we have now added it and are awaiting an initial inspection. Whatever we do we need a basic inspection to inform proposals.

I attach what was done at Stourbridge, I do not know the condition of the crane but at the very least we need to replace/repair the timber.

What are your thoughts?

Dave

The metalwork of the crane is OK in my view. The chain/winding mechanism is seized but as the crane is not intended to work that is not a problem; it still looks the part.

The jib will definitely need replacing or repairing. The jib sits in a cast iron bucket so the end of the jib sits in a puddle for much of the year. Therefore a solution needs to be found to prevent a repeat of this or the same problem will recur.

I think it is too far gone to repair as you did with the one at Stourport but let's wait to see your inspection report. We appreciate timber is very expensive but I guess the cost of a good repair will be similarly expensive. The current jib is relatively modern so of little heritage value.

Any idea when the inspection is likely to take place?

Personally I can't see the point of splicing in a new jib section. The existing jib is not that old so has little heritage value and it's perhaps quicker and cheaper just to replace it.

**Roger Evans (T&MCS
Chairman)**

Large pieces of wood are now very expensive. The last jib we bought (over 10 years ago) cost over £500 then, and prices have risen fast since then. Hence it might make economic sense to patch rather than replace.

I would be happy with whatever is thought to be best in the long term (patch or replace) since as you say there is little heritage value in the existing jib (unlike the metal-work).



***Photos
Dave Brewin***

Festival of Water at Burton on Trent

We arrived at the festival site early enough to help with marking out the pitches, then we fenced in the workers' compound (did you know that your editor is an expert fencer?) Tents and marquees up, bar put together, any possible danger to the public fenced off, and we were ready for the traders.

By Friday afternoon an amazing assortment of colourful stalls were ready (including ours) and the entertainment ring was ready. The weather had been amazing (apart from one downpour).



Lots of people came to our stall and were particularly interested in the problems of the Anderton Lift. Grateful thanks go to members David and Val Fletcher (lunchtime relief), Paula Jackson (Sunday staff) and son-in-law Paul, who came on Monday. The nail game was very popular – the local children trawled the bins for discarded glasses (20p on return to the bar) and used their money to play the game (yes, they did pull out the £1 nail)!

*The stall
up and running*

Paul brought his famous wiggly wire, which attracted eager contestants (including member Sarah Honeysett) – much harder than it looks.

*Sarah
And the
Wiggly wire*





The local dignitaries were very impressed with the efficiency of the site team and the festival itself.

We were pleased they attended because a special tea was laid on for them, and we got to eat the leftovers!

This picture was taken early in the morning while the field was quiet– you can see a stall across from us selling hand-sewn items.

Most of the canal society stalls were in the back row, but we were next to WRG(NW) so we could help each other. There were tombolas, sweet stalls, a bonsai tree specialist, beautiful jewellery, and even an artist at work. Several stallholders asked where they could book in for next year.

There was musical entertainment around the site and in the large marquee. Children could operate a digger (carefully supervised) for a small fee; and contestants were encouraged to enter the ring and show their skill at activities like handstands and hula-hoop rotating

Altogether, a successful outing. The site came down without problems, fencing was dismantled and stacked, and temporary water pipes removed. Shower and loos were closed up ready for removal. The whole site was litter-picked– by Thursday it was hard to believe the weekend had happened.

The Lady Beth and her intrepid crew will be there again next year, ready and willing to join the site team. It is unlikely that the T&M stall will be there, as the next venue is unlikely to be on or near our canal.

***Now the big question is-
Where will it be?***

As soon as I know, I'll let you know!



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

Cheshire Locks work party report July

Another very warm day at Lock 60 where our six volunteers set about completing the remaining preparation and painting work on Lock 60. The waterway was again very busy and with only the offside lock available due to the long awaited repair and the low water levels slowing the filling of the lock, we made sure that members of our group helped boaters through.

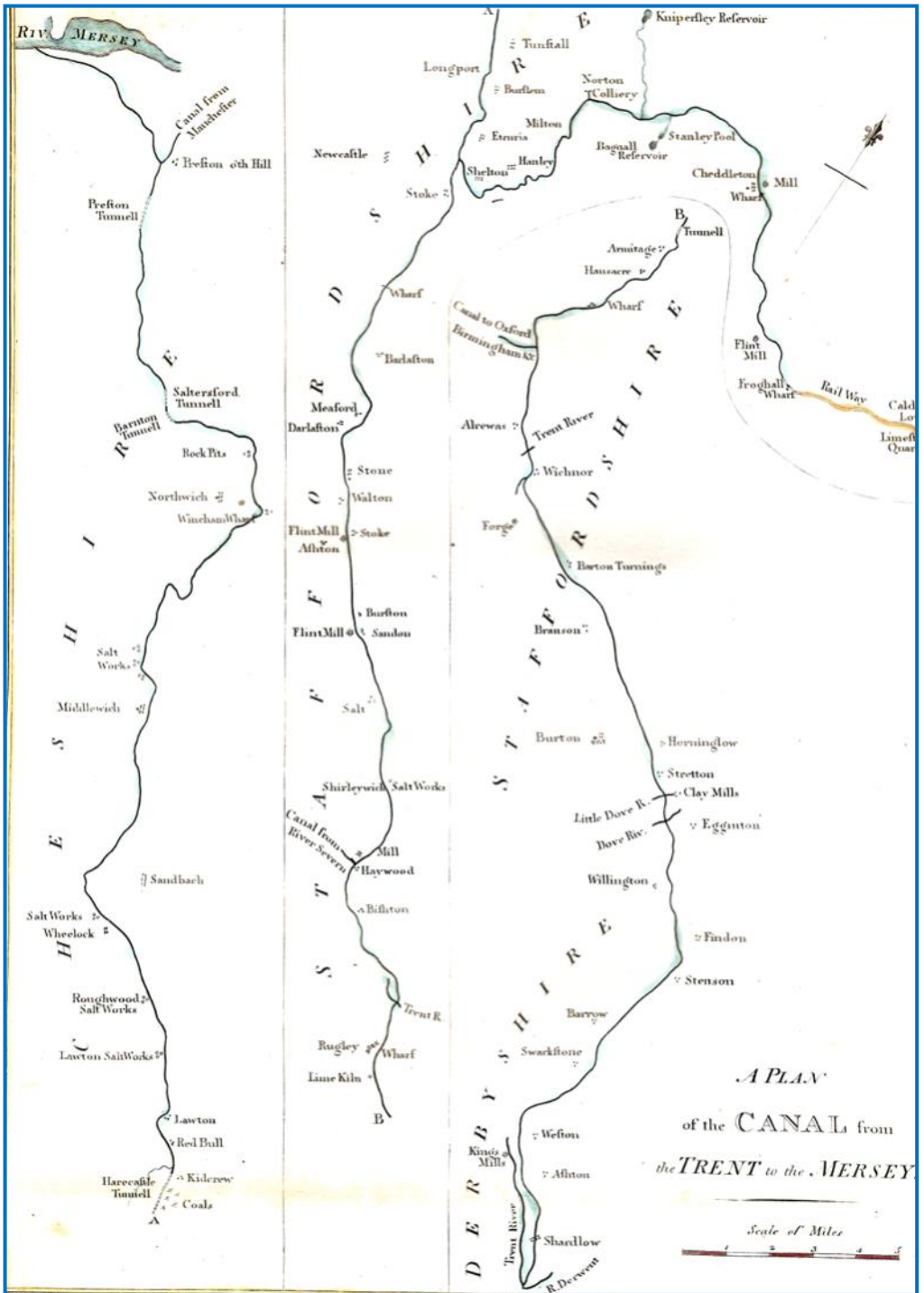
The continuing dry weather ensured that we completed painting. Finally, the lock number was painted on the bottom gates and the towpath side top gate.



The day ended with news that the Trent and Mersey was closing that afternoon due to an acute shortage of water, and we were to deny passage through the lock, boaters were asked to moor in the pound between Locks 60 and 59. Several boats on the way down from Rode Heath were reported stranded on the mud or unable to negotiate the locks.



Stranded boats keeping cool (photos by Sandra Lawson)



After the focus on the Anderton Lift in the last issue, this update from CRT is particularly disappointing!

Anderton Boat Lift update

In July, during testing of the gate mechanisms one of the components that forms part of the systems needed for the safe operation of the gates failed its test. The lift has been closed since then while we have been investigating this and working out what repairs may be needed. We can now see that work is needed that will affect all of the aqueduct gates, requiring the installation of new equipment in the gate lifting mechanisms. The boat lift is a unique structure; so new components have to be specifically designed, manufactured, and tested which cannot be done quickly. We have therefore taken the difficult decision that the lift will not reopen for use this season. We are hugely disappointed about this turn of events and are very sorry for the disruption that this will cause our customers. We have around 40 boats directly affected by the closure and want to specifically thank them for their patience with us so far.

We have been exploring alternative passage options via the Manchester Ship Canal for our customers needing to travel to or from the Weaver Navigation and Ellesmere Port, and should be able to start these next week, which will be available for a short period.



In the meantime, the visitor centre remains open, and trips on the Weaver are taking place and proving popular. We'll provide further updates when we have them on the repair works and progress. Anyone who was planning to use the lift should sign up to our stoppage notices to stay in touch with developments relating to this. If you are on the Weaver or Trent and Mersey Canal, and are affected by this closure, please contact the North West Regional team on 0303 040 4040 to discuss your options in more detail.

[Facing Page](#)

Thank you to life member Adrian Padfield, who has allowed us to share the 1795 map of the T&M which he has recently acquired.



*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



*Children's artwork
Mounted on the wall
Approaching Harecastle Tunnel*