

GRAND TRUNK



Lock 60 looking good after work parties in 2022

Photo Sandra Lawson

January/February 2023

www.trentandmerseycanalsociety.org.uk

Chairman's Bit

I am delighted to announce that our social events at Red Bull have been saved and will resume on our usual night (the third Friday of the month) with a quiz in February and talks in both March and April.

As you may remember we no longer had a volunteer to organise talks of our own, so we had agreed a potential merger of talks with the local IWA branch (North Staffs and South Cheshire) holding joint talks on “their” night (the second Friday of the month) at “our” venue (Red Bull). However this fell through after their numbers improved making the room at Red Bull too small for the combined audience. All seemed lost and we announced at the November talk that there would be no more TMCS talks! Then, at our Christmas meal, two people volunteered to restart our social evenings with a Quiz (that they had devised) in February, to give them time to organise talks as usual for March and April. As you can imagine we gratefully accepted. See page 20 for more details, including who volunteered!



Currently the Cheshire Flight has plenty of water, and some parts of our canal even have too much with the Alrewas river crossing closed. Hopefully the reservoirs will soon be full enough to remove any fears of more closures next summer.

The repair work at Anderton Lift is going well, and CRT still hope to reopen it at the end of March 2023. The planned program of works to replace the seals on the main hydraulic rams is progressing steadily, but they are still at the design stage for the emergency gate safety mechanisms (needed because of changes to Health and Safety regulations in case the main gate operating systems fail).

You will read elsewhere in Grand Trunk about plans by CRT to sell Northwich Navigation Yard, which has worried many people that valuable heritage may be lost. Although this is on the River Weaver, rather than our canal, we are joining in the discussion about how best to save this valuable site.

Editorial

Happy New Year everyone!

I hope you all had a great Christmas and are ready for a Special 2023.



Our celebrations got off to a shaky start at the beginning of December when chairman Roger managed to write off his car on the way to our society Christmas meal. No-one was hurt and a good time was had by all at the meal (except Roger– he had to stay with the car!). Grateful thanks go to our supportive members who helped out and arranged lifts so that the event could continue. Roger was not deprived of his meal as it was parcelled up as a take-away. He enjoyed it on the following day after he had stopped shaking!

Things got better after that, Roger now has another similar car and has promised to look very carefully when turning right! *The Lady Beth* set off up the Cheshire flight immediately after Christmas. We enjoyed mild weather and, surprisingly, only a little rain. We patronised *The Broughton Arms* in both directions and are pleased to report that the quality of food and friendly staff remain unchanged. It was sad to see so many of the duplicate locks closed, even though some of them were beautifully painted (especially the lock ladders which are my speciality!). We cruised up the Macclesfield Canal, getting very muddy, and spent New Year in relative peace. We met an average of one moving boat per day.



I apologise for starting 2023 with a late issue. I wanted to make sure that our resurrected social evenings were planned and organised before issuing this magazine. Grateful thanks go to David and Jean Clegg for their 11th hour offer to save our social evenings. ***Please support them all you can.***

Finally, our thoughts are with our work-party organiser, John Lawson, who is not at all well and is awaiting surgery. We hope to amaze John with the quality of our Cheshire Lock work on his return to duty.

Robbie Cumming and Stoke-on-Trent (from *Stoke Sentinel*)



At the end of October 2022, the star of a BBC show touring the Trent and Mersey Canal decided to ignore fellow boaters who warned him "not to stop" in Stoke-on-Trent.

Robbie Cumming took his narrow boat - *Naughty Lass* - from Shardlow, in Derbyshire, to the city in one of the televised episodes of *Canal Boat Diaries* on October 31st.

He moored up in Stone, before carrying on into the city to be greeted by a graffiti Grim Reaper spray-painted under a bridge. Cumming then told viewers: "Every single boater I've spoken to says just get through it (Stoke-on-Trent) - go straight through. That makes me want to stop even more, so I'm going to make an effort to explore it."



And after two days in the city, Cumming spoke into his boat-mounted camera to declare how much he had enjoyed his stay. He said: "Everyone said 'don't stop', but I like the fact it's not pretentious - there's always more to a place than you think".

New owners for Barton Marina

New bosses have revealed their plans for a popular beauty spot near Burton after taking the helm. Lakeland Leisure Estates has announced that it is now the owner of Barton Marina.

A spokesman for Lakeland Leisure Estates said: "We are excited to introduce Barton Marina on the Trent and Mersey Canal as our newest member of the Lakeland Leisure family. Barton is the fifth inland marina operated by Lakeland Leisure Estates and the very first of our portfolio to offer residential moorings."

Now that it has been officially taken over, the company has plans for the coming months. They include opening a Lakeland Leisure boat sales office "with a friendly and professional team".

According to bosses: "Whether you're looking to buy or sell a boat, they will help you throughout the process." Planned renovations include updating the walkways on the pontoons with anti-slip grid-mesh and modernising the toilets and wash room facilities.



The firm will also be introducing the Harbour Assist customer portal, which bosses say is the leading cloud-based marina management software, and establishing a brand new chandlery "stocking a comprehensive range of marine products and consumables".

The marina, in Barton under Needwood, is home to a variety of businesses including The Waterfront, The Red Carpet Cinema and a variety of shops and eateries. Barton Marina is home to more than 300 narrowboats linked to the Trent and Mersey Canal.

The spokesman added: "Barton Marina first opened for business in 2001. On the Trent & Mersey Canal in the peaceful surroundings of rural Staffordshire, Barton Marina is just a short drive or a day's narrowboat cruise from Great Haywood Marina and offers 300 berths for both residential and annual mooring with monthly, quarterly and annual rates, plus visitor moorings for cruisers looking for somewhere to stay a couple of nights. You'll also find two lakes on site, ideal for fishing and leisurely walks.

"Today Barton Marina is a vibrant and popular destination for shopping, dining and days out, with regular events such as a monthly artisan market with 40 stalls of unique arts and crafts, and Streetfood Social for the best street food, music and great atmosphere.

Jenny Moody
Staffordshire Live 811/22
Picture from website
www.bartonmarina.co.uk

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 2023 edition is **18/02/2023**

Rogny of the Seven Locks

Last September we finally returned to France after an absence of three years due to the pandemic, lockdowns, travel restrictions etc. We headed south in our motorhome to the River Loire which certainly had more water in it than we expected after such a dry summer. We followed the river as far as the town of Gien from where we picked up a route which took us down narrow country lanes to the village of Rogny-les-sept-ecluses (Rogny of the seven locks) which is on the River Loing and Briare canal and about 87 miles south-east of Paris. Just before we arrived at the village we crossed the Briare canal on a bridge next to a grain silo that is still in use with what looked to be a loading/unloading arm next to it.



Leaving the bottom lock heading towards Rogny

The Briare canal and the seven locks at Rogny were part of a large project designed by King Henry IV to link the River Loire to the River Seine. These locks took the canal down a steep descent of 79 feet to the River Loing at Rogny and was the first staircase of locks to be built in France with each lock being 92 feet long and 16 feet wide.

Work on the canal began in 1605 and brought together 12,000 workers and 6,000 soldiers to protect them from the violent opposition of the local lords whose land had been taken! Work progressed quickly but was delayed by the assassination of King Henry IV and the 30 Year War and was finally completed in 1642.

Boats used the staircase of seven locks at Rogny until the 1880s. Following the passing of the Freycinet Law in 1879 which standardised the dimensions of locks in France the staircase of locks was replaced by six others each separated by a pound on a route by-passing the original hilly location. However the name of the village wasn't changed to Rogny of the six locks.



Cruiser entering the replacement locks

Thanks to the helpful Tourist Office in the village we were given maps of walks in the area – we'd managed to download the walk details before we left home but had failed miserably trying to download the maps! One walk took us up by the new locks and back to the grain silo we had passed whilst driving to the village. What we thought was just a loading/unloading arm



turned out to be the course of the old canal when the staircase of locks was in use, complete with a derelict lock chamber and lock cottage. The towpath beyond the silo was blocked off so we were unable to reach the next lock and the summit level but we followed a footpath by the original, abandoned and overgrown canal which took us back to the top of the staircase of locks with wonderful views down the flight to the village of Rogny.

In 1983 the staircase of seven locks was listed as an Historic Monument – what an amazing example of engineering from the 1600s.

*Annette & Terry
NB Emily and Steamboat Sidney
Kennet & Avon Canal*

Anderton Boat Lift Update

At the beginning of November (on a torrentially wet night) a meeting was held at Anderton to keep interested parties informed about the problems with the boat lift. The meeting was chaired by Fran Littlewood, project manager of CRT.

Fran started by saying the lift had undergone many changes during its lifetime. It had changed from a hydraulic mechanism to being electrically powered, for example. It has been 20 years since its last renovation, but it is still actually operable- problems with the gate safety systems have forced the current closure for reasons of public safety.

The lift is now in need of major maintenance. The control systems need upgrading and the paintwork needs to be replaced, or the steelwork beneath will suffer. Safety systems need to be upgraded, and it has been discovered that the West cylinder is slightly out of alignment and jams against the structure. More investigation is needed into this problem.

In 2018 the upgrading of the control system was postponed, while in 2021 a full strip down was considered (this would cost £11-15million!). Then along came the pandemic and necessary investigation was postponed again.

On the plus side, it is not thought necessary to replace the rams (£1 million each). It is possible to remove the cylinders without stripping down and to find out exactly how much painting is required. A bid has been made to the National Lottery Heritage Fund for £5 million to match the Trust's £6 million. If this is successful, there will be a 2-3-year period of work followed by an 18-month closure.

The planned winter works involve changing the seals (they have already been ordered), changing the cylinder oil (12,000 litres) and other minor maintenance. This should be done every 10 years. The safety of the gates also needs to be addressed. If the West cylinder cannot be adjusted, then this seal will only last for 2 years.

The lift should be open again in March 2023, but closed for refurbishment in Autumn 2024 for 18 months for the painting etc. However, if funding is not forthcoming, major donors will have to be approached. No-one wants to think about the elephant in the room- the lack of funding would mean the lift's status would revert to that of a deteriorating static ancient monument.

Hire boat operatives asked that they be kept up to date with periods of closure and alternative routes for their customers, then we all trudged out into the dark wet night again.

Margaret English

Progress Report 21/12/22

We had conditions of -10 degrees at the lift on Thursday and it has been a bit slow going. The good news is the contractor has managed to split the cylinder and the caisson on the west side and it went to plan like clockwork. I've attached some photos. I also missed the event as I was expecting it a day later and I was away, but I think the contractor just wanted to get on without too many onlookers.

It took 300 bar pressure to split it equating to around 100T which is good considering it has had around 250T on it for 20 years. The cylinder head is in good condition and we have put it



back in so that we can prepare the East cylinder for Van Halteren when they arrive in January with the seals (now over two months late). In mitigation,



we would be closed due to the gate safety systems so we will now run the works concurrently. We've also taken the opportunity to change the oil which has not been done before.

The new gate safety system is proving exceptionally difficult to resolve, we have at least narrowed down through

risk assessment the required works. Part of the challenge is that every set of gates is different and there are 5 sets. I'm happy to have an update on site in the new year if you would like?

I hope you all saw the recent news regarding the National Lottery Heritage Funding, which is exceptional considering previous funding.

*Fran Littlewood
Published with permission*

Northwich Yard

A Letter to our chairman is reproduced below. He has kindly given me permission to publish this as being of interest to members.

You may have heard that Canal & River trust have now officially put the Northwich Navigation Yard on the market to developers for housing.

As you may know there are two Grade II listed buildings there plus many other historic items and features. CRT have produced a prospectus/design guide that actually refers to all the items and uses lots of phrases such as “we would ask you didn’t remove xx or please be sympathetic towards yy” but in reality we know these are hollow words. We would rather no house building take place on the site and use made that is far more beneficial for the River and the local community.

Northwich doesn’t need yet more housing. A group of us including off the Danny (trustees), River Weaver Navigation Society, IWA, Local cllrs, Boat clubs and other interested parties have written a letter we intend to send early next week to Canal & River Trust’s Chief Exec and Chair along with the leader of Cheshire West & Chester County Council and the local MP suggesting the sale be halted and alternate uses investigated.

We have set out our thoughts in the attached letter. The Yard is one of the last pieces of the rivers history to remain, the former Pimlott’s yard and what remains of the buildings there is about to be demolished for housing. We feel Navigation Yard, dating back to the 1750’s has far more to offer the local Community as a Heritage/ Community hub than yet more housing.

Dan Cross.

Marine Superintendent.

Daniel Adamson Preservation Society

Captain Dan subsequently received a reply from Richard Parry....

Richard pointed out that details of the proposed sale were passed to many of the signatories of Dan’s letter, who failed to make any comments.

The trust recognises the historic importance of the site and is aware of the listed building status of some of the buildings. However, it is the duty of CRT to maximise the income from any of its assets in order to carry out its

primary purpose of safeguarding the canal system for the future.

An element of housing within the package ensures that the best possible price is paid for the development,. Richard feels that the sympathetic development of the yard will at once both secure its future and benefit the waterways.

Letter summarised by Margaret English



Impression of what the yard might look like
From Cheshire Live
January 2022

Breaking News.....

It has been agreed that a meeting with CRT is to be hosted by Northwich Town Council with hopefully Cheshire West and Chester councilors and officers from both Northwich Town Council and CWAC present.

Mike Amesbury MP will also be asked to attend

Interested parties who would like to join the discussion should contact Dan Cross.

Member Dave Brewin has been concerned about proposed works to Stenson Lock. He has given me permission to publish the reply to his query...

Stenson, Derby, DE73 7HL

Dear Sir,

Thank you for your consultation response. I contacted the applicant, The Canal and River Trust, who has responded to your concerns. Please could you confirm that these are satisfactory. I set out a copy of the points below.

1. The inspection report is 11 years old and misrepresents the overall condition of the lock which anyone who has used the lock in recent times will confirm is in poor condition and very difficult to use. Is it acceptable without planning regulations to provide such an outdated inspection report? How can the full scope of works required be ascertained from such an old inspection report?

Regarding the Principal Inspection (PI) , this will be the most recent PI which is the highest detail scheduled inspection by Engineers that the Trust carries out. The structural condition of the lock chamber and the risk the asset presents (excluding the gates) determines the frequency of the Principal Inspection (between 8 and 20 years). However, there are other inspections by the Trust's Engineers in the intervening period to monitor its condition (maximum every 4 years) although a full report is not produced. In addition, Asset Inspectors inspect every Trust asset every 2 months, and will request an Engineer attend when required. We will also attend the site during the stoppage to review the elements of the lock we cannot routinely see, such as the invert and ground paddle culverts.

The condition of the lock gates is now assessed separately (and more frequently given their shorter service life) by Gate Inspectors, and the Asset Inspectors also check them every 2 months. The bottom gates have reached the end of their life and were performing poorly which led to them being included in this years programme against other priorities in the Region.

The programme of works will not solely rely on the last PI report (especially when it is 11 years old as the correspondent notes) but will include all these various inspections. We also consider feedback from both the Trust's internal teams, and external feedback when prioritising our works programme. The most recent PI was undertaken in 2021, not 2011 and is included within the application documents. However, this most recent PI is for the bottom lock gates only.

2. Re point 1 above, one of the main issues in using the lock is the failure of the bottom gates to fully open making access and egress for boats difficult. Other than replacing the gates what is planned to stop this re-occurring?

We propose to install the dwarf wall across the lock chamber invert to prevent materials accumulating within the gate recesses and preventing the gates from fully opening. The purpose of the dwarf wall which is a low brick wall across the chamber floor is to that prevent debris from getting to the gate but is low enough to still allow boats to pass over during operations. Please refer to page 2 of the Works Information Package within the application for further details regarding this element.

3. Again, from a users perspective one of the main and long standing safety issues is the erosion of the coping stone on the towpath side adjacent to the first bollard which traps ropes and makes controlling a boat when the lock is filling very difficult. It is not clear from the details supplied if this is to be addressed or not.

The failed coping stone in question next to the bollard is being replaced with a new like for like coping stone which will prevent the potential rope snagging on the current delaminated coping stone. Please refer to page 2 and 3 of the Works Information Package within the application for further details regarding these elements.

4. I am confused by “the installation of a dwarf wall in brick chamber”. I can find no mention of this in the information supplied in the application. Can it be clarified what this actually means?

Please refer to page 2 of the Works Information Package.

Yours faithfully
James Norton
Planning Officer – Service Delivery

Some good news from CRT!

We've been awarded £574,000 National Lottery Heritage Fund grant to prepare Anderton Boat Lift major project

We've been awarded a £574,000 grant from The National Lottery Heritage Fund to support the development of a major repair and refurbishment project, with extensive community engagement plan, at Anderton Boat Lift, Cheshire's Cathedral of Canals, near Northwich.



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 parties

November 2022

November's work party was unfortunately called off owing to a weather forecast of torrential rain followed by flooding (a bit of a change from the summer months)!

December 2022

Christmas got in the way!

January 2023

Weather permitting, we will continue preparation and painting at Lock 59. There's plenty of work left to be done, so even if we're unable to paint there's a lot of prep to do.

Lock 59 is accessible via the towpath from Lock 60 where we continue to park our vehicles. Access is off Betchton Road, Malkins Bank via a farm track leading to the lock and Bridge 149 which crosses the canal to the stables and farm yard beyond. I am pleased to advise that we have secured a parking area adjacent to Lock 60 on the right side of the track just before the bridge. The nearest postcode to the entrance to the farm lane is CW11 4YF.

If you are travelling via Hassall Green towards Malkins Bank, the access road is on your left, approx. 500 yds before the entrance to Malkins Bank Golf Club. There is a stile adjacent to the access road, and the farm road is lined with post and rail fencing. White painted large stones are placed on the grass verge

If you are travelling from Sandbach (turning right after the Top 'O the Hill Chippy) via Hassall Road then Betchton Road, the access road is approx. 500 yds beyond the Golf Club entrance. There is a red brick building (Brock Barn nameplate on the side) just before your right turn into the access road.

Bus route is D & G Bus - Service 317 Toilet facilities are available at nearby Malkins Bank Golf Club just further down the canal at Lock 61.

We will meet at 10-00 a.m. and work through until 3-00 p.m. If you are able to stay all day, please bring a packed lunch and a drink. Be sure to wear old clothes that you don't mind getting dirty and marked with paint. Stout footwear is appropriate and bring along a waterproof in the event of rain. Dave Sproson/JohnBrighouse will lead the work party (Contact Nos. 07904 388243 / 07808 878317 respectively) or you can contact Tony Walker on 07708 320470. We very much look forward to welcoming as many of you as are able to attend.

The mystery of Preston Brook Tunnel

On 12th January the following notice was published by CRT

Please be advised Preston Brook Tunnel on the Trent & Mersey canal is currently closed to navigation due to an obstruction. Our team are on their way to site to assist with the situation.

An obstruction? What has happened?

A further update was issued just after 4pm

Our team have assisted with the safe removal of the obstruction within Preston Brook Tunnel on the Trent & Mersey canal, however navigation remains closed until our engineers are satisfied the tunnel can re-open.

We would still like to know what this was all about.

Another update just after 3.30 pm on Friday 13th...

Preston Brook Tunnel on the Trent & Mersey canal remains closed to navigation until our engineers are satisfied the tunnel can re-open.

Our engineers have been notified and a further update will be provided by Wednesday 18 January.



If anyone can enlighten the editor as to what is happening in Preston Brook Tunnel, would you let me know please – I am very intrigued!

Margaret English

NEW TEAM AND NEW VENTURES FOR BURSLEM PORT

Following on from the retirement of Roger Savage (the long-serving Chairman) and a few other Burslem Port Trustees the new committee has been settling in and is developing a revised programme of activity to take the Stoke-on-Trent based organisation into the future. The new team comprises Natalie Ornelas as Chair, Mike Toohey (a boater) as Treasurer and Amarvir Singh-Bal as Business Director, plus Laura Wigg-Bailey (of MNV our advisers) as volunteer Secretary while carrying on from the previous management are David Dumbelton as Director without Portfolio and Dave Broome as Volunteer Director.

The second venture from the team, in addition to creating the new canal-line footpath opened earlier in 2022, is of five new interpretation boards located in various parts for the Middleport site which have been installed very recently and which are being appreciated by local residents who use the area for leisure and as a footpath route to other locations. These boards feature the history of the various parts of the old Burslem Branch Canal and help highlight the presence of the Trust and of the plans for restoration.

In addition the group acknowledge the opportunities offered for the repair of the old warehouse and wharf for ideas for their reuse are being advanced and outline architectural plans for the building are being circulated to appropriate organisations and individuals. Also, the voluntary work is being boosted and it is intended to obtain further outside funding to allow the retention of MNV's services and for further exploratory work to be undertaken on the make up of the infill in the old canal bed.

After a difficult period with the retirement of several key people earlier this year the future for the Burslem Port Trust now looks much brighter and physical progress at a faster rate is hoped for from 2023 onwards.

David Dumbelton



Social season Talks 2023



It has not been possible to combine talks with those of North Staffs and South Cheshire IWA as their audience size would make Red Bull impractical. They are a friendly society who are happy to welcome visitors to their social meetings on 2nd Friday of each month.

All is not lost, however. Members David and Jean Clegg have stepped forward with the suggestion that members are encouraged to meet together for a meal at Red Bull on the usual 3rd Friday of the month, followed by an exciting activity in our usual room.

Friday 17th February will be a quiz

If you do not wish to eat beforehand, please still come along to the quiz.

The time has been changed (for this event only) to allow both things to take place, so it is now 7pm for eating, 8.30pm for the quiz.

Following months will be talks and details will be in the next magazine.

7.45pm for 8pm in the
upstairs room.

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

IWA Talks at Stoke Boat Club



Stoke on Trent Boat Club
Endon Wharf
Post Lane
Endon
Stoke on Trent
ST9 9DU

Admission is free and the boat club has a lovely little bar.

If you would like further information', contact:

Sarah Honeysett
01782 772295
Socialsec.nssc@waterways.org.uk

Friday 10th February 2023. 7.45 for 8 pm

Benson, Brindley and Watt
Bernard Lovatt (Etruria Industrial Museum)

In the 1700s, a number of astounding inventions by Thomas Benson, Janes Brindley and James Watt, helped to transform pottery manufacturing to make Stoke the centre of a world industry. Bernard will talk us through some of these, many of which can be seen in operation at the Etruria Industrial Museum.

Friday 14th April 2023, 7.45 for 8pm

Challenges to our waterways of climate change
Speaker from CRT

Sarah has invited the Canal and River Trust to speak about how they plan to deal with challenges to our waterways caused by climate change. More details later.

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

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

Bringing Boats Back to Burslem



All our Yesterdays!

Graham Palmer (founder of WRG), John Gagg and Harry Arnold
At Fradley in 1981

*Picture Waterway Images, reproduced with kind permission of
Julie Arnold*

Happy
New
Year