

GRAND TRUNK



*Festival Plaque?
(see p. 10)*

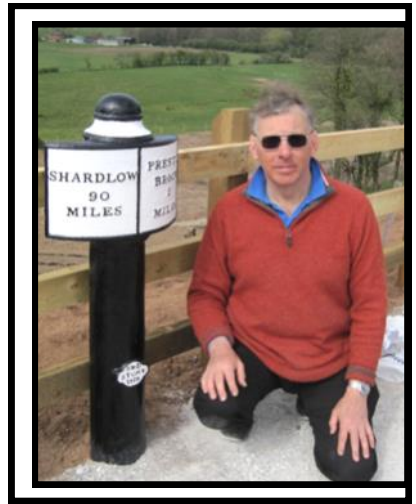
July/August 2023

www.trentandmerseycanalsociety.org.uk

Chairman's Bit

Our AGM took place as planned on Saturday 3rd June at Westport Lake Visitor Centre. 20 members attended and everybody seemed to enjoy the day (which, as well as the AGM, included a buffet lunch, 2nd-hand transport books for sale, and an optional walk around the lake afterwards).

During the AGM it was mentioned that our society was founded on 2nd February 1974 at Red Bull Pub, so 2024 will be our 50th anniversary. It was agreed that we wanted to celebrate our first 50 years, but that we didn't want to spend too much time and effort on arranging elaborate events. Our new talks organiser, David Clegg, volunteered to arrange an informal get-together at the same venue for a meal on the actual anniversary. He is also planning a special talk for April when Steve Guest (our founding chairman) will talk about significant events in the history of our society and David will look at changes to our canals during that time.



It was also agreed that we should invite members to put forward their own ideas. So, please let me know how you think we could celebrate our 50th anniversary year (but please do remember that the committee is already fairly thinly stretched, so they would need extra help to make most things a reality).

On a totally different topic, we were saddened to read recently that CRT are proposing to close Bosley (and Marple) locks "from 10th July for several weeks" because of water shortages. This will obviously have an effect on the amount of water entering our own summit pound. Low water levels could well lead to restrictions on passages through Harecastle Tunnel (and eventually to restrictions on the flights either side of the summit) as it did last year.

Finally, it may only be June, but we have just booked our Christmas meal for Friday 1st December at our usual venue of Red Bull. Hope to see lots of you there.

Editorial

Hello everybody,

Here we are in high summer again— complete with water shortages and worry about the waterway system. As I write, closure of the Macclesfield has just been announced after restricting lockage at Bosley for some months. This means, of course, that the T&M summit will receive less water and Heartbreak Hill will once again be in jeopardy.

In the South, Derwentmouth Lock is restricted with frequent closures and pleas to share the broad locks at that end of our canal. It would seem that state of affairs will become an annual occurrence due to global warming.

On a brighter note, our stall had its only outing of the year to Middlewich Folk and Boat Festival (see pp. 12-13). The festival itself was in danger of folding after the huge financial loss it incurred in 2022, but a few dedicated volunteers undertook to run it themselves. The weekend was a great success (helped by warm weather)- well-done Middlewich!

Our stall attracted a great deal of interest, especially (as usual) the famous nail game. Anne Chetwyn's lucky dip (hosted by us for IWA) was also a big attraction. Unfortunately no new members were recruited. Thanks go to members who came along and helped (especially at lunchtime).

This issue is an international one, including three articles on waterways abroad visited by members and a full list of the wonderful talks planned for next season.

All contributions to *Grand Trunk* gratefully received. I hope to find time to write about another Canadian canal for the next issue.

Finally, there are still a few members who have not yet renewed their subscription and will find a reminder in with this issue. We have avoided increasing rates for this year, so please pay up— we really don't want to lose you!



Margaret English

Bears take over canal societies!

Following Sonning bear's adventures in the local IWA branch magazine Knobsticks, another bear has emerged on the waterway scene- BISCUIT bear.



Biscuit is a bear named in a Rington's (the tea company) competition and was a present last Christmas from my sister-in-law and her husband (Audrey and Martin).

This came as a complete surprise and, I have to say, it reminded me of Christmas past and took me back to my childhood. I am not one for surprises (at least when I am on the receiving end!), but you should have seen the smile!

Biscuit arrived with a request to be taken on our canal holidays because he had heard of all the amazing places we visit on N.B. Almira.

So, here he is- complete with his kit bag and contents and, of course, wearing his boat bear's belt (all courtesy of yours truly).

Incidentally, crewman Biscuit's kit bag had a recent addition, following a winning ticket in the raffle at the T&M social evening. A COMPASS, just what he needed-and who knows, it could save us from getting lost on our wonderful canal system!



He is yet to go aboard Almira. I do hope he doesn't get sea-sick!

Anne Chetwyn

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 September/October 2023 edition is **18/08/2023**

The Rideau Canal

After two weeks in Quebec, we arrived in Ottawa with mixed feelings. Being boaters, we set off in search of the nearest waterway. We found the Rideau Canal with its eight-lock staircase drained and accompanying small museum firmly shut. There was hardly anyone about and the towpath was closed, so we took some pictures and headed for the art gallery.



Our return on the following Saturday found a very different scene. The canal had awoken from its winter sleep. The staircase was filling, passers-by were crossing the locks (on substantial walkways), delighted that their canal was ready for use once again, and the little museum was open and very welcoming.

First stop was the Bytown Museum. This small but detailed and excellent display on several floors charts the capital's beginnings from a rather rough frontier town to an elegant city (and they serve wonderful hot chocolate!).

The museum was the first stone building in Ottawa (Bytown) and housed the secure room where the navvies' wages were kept- you can visit it today. The starting point of the transformation is (of course) the canal.



Following the war of 1812, the British colony of Canada had a hostile new country on its borders- the USA. The British government was concerned that any blockade of the St. Lawrence Seaway would hamper the transport of goods and troops to the Great Lakes. The

Duke of Wellington supported the idea of building a waterway to connect Montreal to Kingston (guardian town of the Great Lakes) and Lieutenant Colonel John By of the British Engineers was appointed. Work began in 1826 and was completed in 1832. Eighteen miles of its length is artificial waterway and there are a total of 47 locks. The Ottawa staircase raises the canal over eighty feet and the locks are 134 feet long and 33 feet wide. The gates are opened and shut by winches which are operated by hand. We had hoped to watch a boat passing through, but the only traffic seemed to be a small (and rather expensive) trip boat which only operated above the locks.

The canal was difficult to build, with mosquitos spreading disease among the navvies. The problems of working with shovels and dynamite are familiar to British canal enthusiasts. When the amazing feat was completed, the cost far exceeded expectations. Colonel By was recalled to England to explain himself. He was exonerated but died four years later.

There was no further war between USA and Britain so the miliary purpose of the waterway was never fulfilled. However, it was a useful trade and supply route until the coming of the railways, when it fell into disrepair. Today it is much loved as a green lung and a leisure waterway.



In the winter Ottawa skaters make great use of the frozen expanse. We would love to explore the waterway by boat, but the cost and distance involved means it is unlikely to be more than a pipedream!

This lock has a new bumper board!



Filling the Staircase– cruising season has arrived!

Paintwork on the Canal du Nivernais

It was interesting to read in the May/June 2023 issue of Grand Trunk about the new canalside mural in Stoke-on-Trent.

During our visit to France in April this year we saw some more canalside artwork, although on a very much smaller scale, when we walked along the Vermenton Branch of the Canal du Nivernais.

The Branch, which passes through the countryside of the Burgundy region, is 2½ miles long and is surrounded by vineyards and fields of oil seed rape until it reaches the old town of Vermenton. Here there is a large mooring basin and a variety of boats were moored including hire boats and private cruisers. We went to have a look at them and someone had been very busy with their paints and had painted the tops of some of the mooring bollards.



They were certainly not in the Roses and Castles style but they were attractive and bright and much more eye-catching than the usual black and white paintwork on bollards.

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

Middlewich Plaque

(see front cover)

Chairman Roger received the email below on 14th June.....

I bought the attached plaque today and am interested to know what the musical notes signified back in 1990 please. Apologies if I have emailed the wrong person but love this item!

***Thank you
Elizabeth Buckley***

This lovely plaque dates from the year of the first Middlewich Folk and Boat Festival. In those far-off days the society was responsible for arranging boat moorings over the festival weekend.

All I can suggest is that the plaque was issued to members who helped with this task- and of course the musical notes would relate to the 'folk' part of the festival.

Sadly, we no longer have enough available members to perform this function.

Does anyone have any other ideas about the plaque?

Answers will be passed on to Elizabeth (who has given permission to publish her email).



Margaret English

Sad Discovery in T&M

The body of a man has been pulled out of a canal in Stoke-on-Trent. A water rescue unit, along with the air ambulance, had been called to a stretch of the Trent and Mersey Canal in Trentham at around 10.40am on May 23.

Photos from the scene off Longton Road showed multiple fire crews were sent and a footpath taped off.

A West Midlands Ambulance Service spokesman said: "We were called to reports of a patient in the water at Trent and Mersey Canal in Trentham, Stoke-on-Trent, at around 10.40am. Two ambulances, a paramedic officer and the Midlands Air Ambulance from Tatenhill were sent to the scene.

"The patient, a man, was pulled from the water with the assistance of fire colleagues but sadly, after being assessed by ambulance staff, it quickly became apparent that he could not be saved and was confirmed dead at the scene."

It has now been confirmed that nothing could be done to save the man who was pronounced dead a short time later. Police say the death is 'non-suspicious'.

His name and age have not yet been released.

From Staffordshire Live

23rd May 2023



The T&MCS Sales Stand

The sales stand was out at the Middlewich Folk and Boat Festival in June and was busy on both Saturday and Sunday. The Nail Game was a big draw as was the Lucky Dip — they bring the children and the children bring the adults.

Over the years the sales stand has had some ups and downs, some good times, membership recruitment, lots of stock and some meagre times. It has brought in people who want to help maintain the locks and the mileposts and the list goes on.

The sales stand has been much more than a vehicle for filing the coffers, it's one of our important public faces.

There are very few members who will commit in advance to man the stall with the result that it has been going out less frequently to the point where it went out only twice in 2022 and will probable only be once this year.

What is really needed is someone (or a couple) to take ownership of it which means:

Storing and replenishing the stock and equipment.

Booking the venues...

Staffing the stand for each event

Taking the stock and equipment to the venue

Setting out the stall.

It is a rewarding occupation. Customers are often usually there because they want to be there, in jolly moods and keen to ask questions

We haven't had display boards showing T&MCS activities for some time, but if we did that would be a draw for customers, cause conversation / questions and we may even get more members and volunteers that way.

Most of what we sell is acquired through donation but the society is not poor and we are in a position to buy new products if someone has a brain-wave about what customers might like us to sell or that we could become known for.

Gillian Watson - "I ran the stall for the IWA North Staff South Cheshire Branch for many years and took it from a ragbag of stock to a proper, well stocked and inviting display which brought in new members / volunteers

and was self funding. That stall used to be out about 4 times a year and also had a small display at the social talks.”

It's good fun when:

The children play the “Nail Game” and the “Lucky Dip” and get really excited about it.

The neckerchiefs sell and we provide a fitting service for dogs.

We meet other likeminded stall holders and exchange knowledge and tips.

Customers turn up books that used to belong to people they knew.

If you are interested in being the one who runs the stall then take notice of how other organisations present themselves at events, what they sell and display, also have a chat with Margaret, Roger or Gillian for more background (see page 23).

THIS STALL NEEDS A NEW COMMANDER IN CHARGE WITH FRESH IDEAS AND A SMILE.



T&MCS stall at Middlewich Folk and Boat Festival on T&M

Cruising the Canal de la Marne au Rhin and riding the Saint Louis Arzviller Inclined Plane

We set out early from our home in Kent with our friends Paul and Sue heading for Hesse in France, over towards the German border, to pick up a Le Boat cruiser for the week. Arrived at Hesse 16:00 hrs, took over the boat, and decided to stay at the base for the night. Went out to eat and it being Monday most restaurants were closed but we found a Pizza place.

The next day we cruised away from the marina and went through two tunnels, the Niderviller tunnel 475 m long and the Arzviller tunnel 2306 m long. Both tunnels are one way only and you have to wait for the green light before proceeding through. These tunnels are wider than ours in UK with a walkway all the way through and much better lit.

At Arzviller we left the Moselle valley and started to go down towards the Rhine. Up until 1968 and the construction of the inclined plane, you descended via the valley of the Tergelbach, a tributary of the Zorn. There were seventeen locks stretching over 3.6 km, each one separated by a pound. It took ten hours to go up or down and at times there were severe water shortages to contend with.

The solution to this problem was decided by an international contest, most of the proposed designs being rejected as not being suitable for the topography of the site while the transverse system was favourable, similar to the Inclined Plane at Foxton, Leicestershire. The system works by lifting or lowering a caisson containing boats on a carriage along a slope using a balancing counterweight. According to Archimedes' principle the boat which enters the caisson displaces an equal quantity of water equivalent to the weight of the boat. Thus the caisson always weighs the same. It has a level change of 44.5 m slope 41% at an angle of 22 deg. Two concrete counterweights are on guided carriages of 450 tonnes each, fastened to the caisson by 14 steel cables of 27 millimetres diameter. In the machine room there are two winches each driven by 90 kW electric motors.

The inclined plane is able to carry 39 barges per day, each journey being made in four minutes, making a total transportation of twenty minutes between going in and going out. We cruised on stopping at Lutzelburg, Saverne and finally turning round at Detwiller. All the locks were electrically self operated with cameras at each end so we were observed from a re-

mote command station somewhere. We have missed the declining use of Eclusier over the years and it seemed somewhat sterile going through the locks without the cheery banter of the lock keepers.

We arrived back at the Arzviller inclined plane late Sunday morning, expecting to get back to the marina that afternoon to wash the outside and clean the inside of the boat for inspection early Monday morning, only to find it broken down and not in use. They told us it would not be working again until 07:00 hrs Monday so we phoned the marina to let them know, but the Towpath Telegraph had beaten us to it.

They told us that they had twenty boats stuck out on the canal because of the breakdown. Boats were being stopped further up and down the canal to ease congestion at the inclined plane. Several boats which arrived after us had to be reminded that there was a queue. As luck would have it the guys fixed the problem in three hours so we were able to get on our way back to the marina.

The next day we set off for Epernay where we had arranged a Champagne tasting and lunch. This was very good and recommended as a wine tasting experience. Epernay is a very clean and friendly town and we enjoyed the experience.

We came home the next day feeling that we had enjoyed a fabulous trip and the experience of the inclined plane.

Ronald Isaacs



*Photo
courtesy of
TripAdvi-
sor*



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

We made good progress with our first visit to Lock 54 (lower Thurlwood) in May and hoped (weather permitting), to continue the good work.

We expected to do a lot of preparation work but hoped to be able to do plenty of painting as well.

"On June 15th, we continued working Lock 54 on the towpath side. Excellent progress was made despite the searing heat and absences due to holidays, surgery etc.. The 4 volunteers were glad to meet up with Grace Kennedy (CRT Volunteer Supervisor) and her colleague Andrew who were able to add their assistance in between attending to their other duties. As well as painting the lock itself, we also applied paint to nearby towpath posts and gate. We expect to complete at our next work party and start work on the adjacent lock."

"On June 19th, yet another mini working party finally (really!) put the finishing touches to Lock 59 by completing the lock numbering and painting the mooring posts on the approaches to the lock."

Tony Walker



Lock 54

Lower Thurlwood

Pic. By Alamy

The Trent & Mersey Canal Society has always supported The Montgomery Canal Restoration, joining work parties at Frankton and sponsoring a milepost at Aston Locks, so we were delighted to read the information below.....Ed

Shropshire Union Canal Society ‘worthy winner’ of waterways award

The society was presented with the Tetlow Memorial Cup, an IWA regional trophy for outstanding services to the waterways, at the annual Montgomery Canal Forum in Oswestry on June 21, 2023. The award was for the society’s successful 8-year long Pryces Bridge to Crickheath Bridge restoration project which was officially opened earlier this month. The society’s volunteers overcame several major challenges during the work including very poor ground conditions, high water table, relocation of great crested newts and latterly the Covid lockdowns.

Society chair David Carter (and former restoration project manager) and Tom Fulda, current restoration project manager, received the award from Michael Haig, chairman of IWA’s Shrewsbury District & North Wales Branch, in the presence of Cllr. Olly Rose, Mayor of Oswestry.

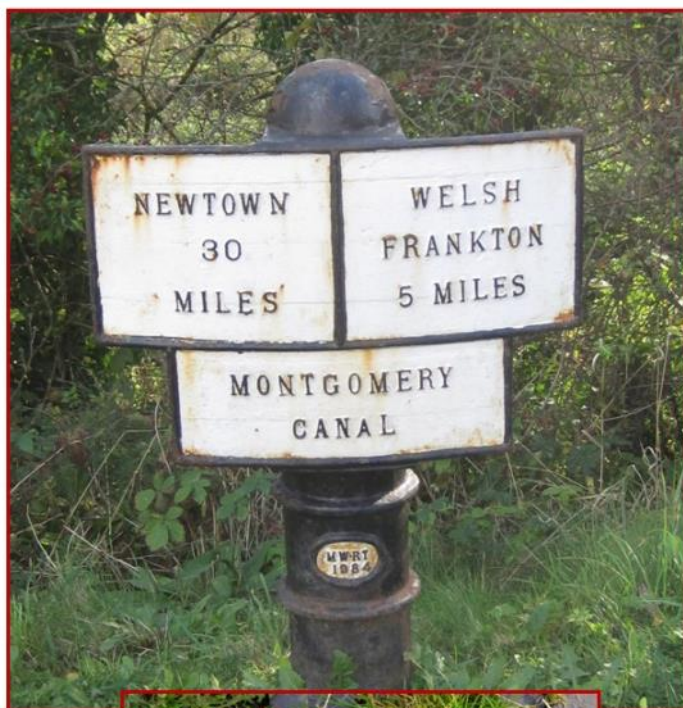
IWA’s Michael Haig said the work has required enthusiasm, dedication and tenacity as well as very high levels of skill by the many volunteers who have given several hundreds of hours to the project. He added: “It has extended the boundaries of works normally considered suitable for volunteers. The Shropshire Union Canal Society and its volunteers are worthy winners for their heroic work over eight years to complete the restoration from Pryces Bridge to Crickheath”.

The IWA’s Tetlow Cup is named in memory of a former Commodore of the Lymm Cruising Club and is awarded annually by IWA North West Region to recognise outstanding efforts of those who have gone ‘above and beyond’ to ensure work continues to restore and enhance inland waterways in the UK.

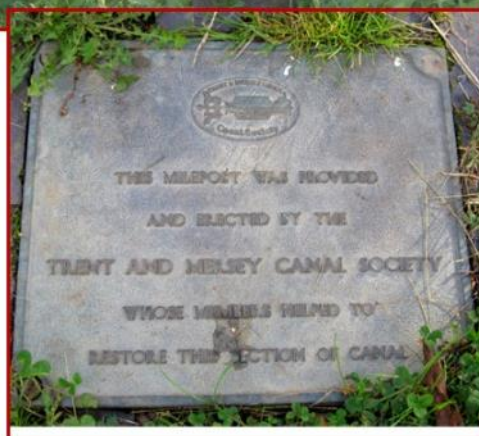
The Forum was hosted by Aico in their excellent conference facility in Oswestry and was attended by over seventy delegates including representatives from local government, CRT, and wildlife and ecological organisations.

(SUCS Publicity June 2023)

GRAND TRUNK



*Milepost
erected by
T&MCS
on The
Montgomery
Canal*



*Photos by
Margaret
English*

November/December 2021

www.trentandmerseycanalsociety.org.uk



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

Talks for this season have finished for the summer, but a splendid season is promised from October 2023 to April 2024.

October 20th

Narrowboating through Cambridge and..... Cabin Cruising the Caledonian Canal, Neil Barnett

Neil will be describing two quite different boating experiences. Part 1 will be an illustrated talk about his boating trip from Inverness to Fort William on the famous Caledonian Canal. Part 2 will be a video and narrative of the highly unusual experience of narrowboating through the centre of Cambridge.

November 17th

Changing Places, Patrick Marks

An illustrated talk showing locations on the midland canals which looked different in years gone by. A post-interval item will include random signs and notices to make you smile .

December 1st

Christmas meal, usual venue— a great way to start the festive season.

January 19th 2024

Cruising the Mon & Brec, Alan Chetwyn

Alan's film of his journey along the canal.

February 2nd 2024

Informal gathering on the society's 50th birthday

February 16th 2024

Ireland (part 1), Malcolm Bridge

Malcolm will describe exploring the Irish waterways system on Ampère (an all-electric narrowboat), prompted by her getting trapped in Hebden Bridge by the Calderdale floods on Boxing Day, 2015. Having had earlier Irish ambitions thwarted when they were unable to trail their Sea Otter there, they took the opportunity of needing a crane and low-loader to do any boating in 2016 to have Ampère lifted to Ireland, spending a year there during which time we managed to cover almost all the system before the Winter closures. Part 1 of the talk will cover dropping into the Grand Canal about 20 miles West of Dublin and then cruising to Enniskillen via Dublin and then along the Royal Canal.

March 15th 2024

Ireland (part 2), Malcolm Bridge

Part 2 will describe Enniskillen almost to Limerick and almost to Waterford (including the 'great lakes') before returning to where they were dropped in.

April 19th 2024

A Celebration of 50 years, Steve Guest and David Clegg

Steve Guest will talk about significant events in the history of our society. David Clegg will look at changes to our canals during that time.

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a charity recognised for tax purposes by HMRC

Registered Office: 10 Long Lane, Middlewich, CW10 0BL
Telephone: 01606 834471

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

OFFICERS

PATRON

Ian Dudson CBE, KSt.J
Lord-Lieutenant of Staffordshire

VICE-PRESIDENTS

Steve Guest, Malcolm Gray

CHAIRMAN

TREASURER and WEBSITE

Roger Evans, 10 Long Lane, Middlewich, **CW10 0BL**
Tel:01606 834471 Email: rogermartinevans@hotmail.com

DEPUTY CHAIRMAN

Gillian Watson, St. Anns House, 107 St Ann's Road, Middlewich,
Cheshire, **CW10 0AA**
Tel:01606-835606 Email:gillian.watson@me.com

**MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY,
SECRETARY AND GRAND
TRUNK EDITOR**

Margaret English, 10 Long Lane, Middlewich, Cheshire,
CW10 0BL Tel: 01606-834471 Email:margaretetlm@hotmail.com

COMMITTEE MEMBER

John Tackley, River View, Leigh's Brow, Barnton, Northwich,
CW8 4HT
Tel: 01606 76204 Email jtackley@hotmail.com

COMMITTEE MEMBER

Sarah Honeysett, 14 Lodge Road, Talke Pits, Stoke-on-Trent,
Staffs. **ST7 1QX** Email s.honeysett@btinternet.com

MINUTES SECRETARY

Paula Jackson, 37 Weaverham Road, Sandiway **CW8 2NJ**
Tel: 07740356286 Email paula.dreamcatcher@hotmail.co.uk

TALKS ORGANISERS

David and Jean Clegg, Email: David@thecleggs.co.uk
Tel: 07429 151313

**BURSLEM PORT
REPRESENTATIVE**

David Dumbelton, 32 The Lea, Trentham, Stoke on Trent,
ST4 8DY
Tel: 01782-641765, Email:david.dumbelton@gmail.com

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

Bringing Boats Back to Burslem



Saturn leaves Middlewich Festival on the T&M



Festival Time on the T&M at Middlewich Wharf