

# GRAND TRUNK



*Painting Rebekah– a work in progress!*

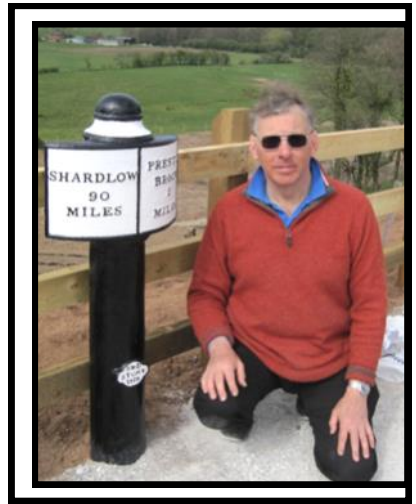
**September/October 2023**

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

## Chairman's Bit

The saga of Lock 49 (towpath side) continues. Back in January I pointed out to CRT that as this lock was closed there should be a navigation restriction notice for it on their stoppages pages, like the ones published for Lock 50 and for Lock 60.

In April we passed Lock 49 again. It still had yellow warning labels on each paddle, and the bumper board was still leaning against the wall by the top cill. As it was now 3 months later, I reminded CRT that nothing had yet happened, either to refix the bumper board or to add the problem to their stoppages site as a navigation restriction.



In June I was told that “Our local team have been working and repairing the locks along this stretch of the Trent & Mersey Canal, over the last few weeks and will be at Lock 49 tomorrow.”

We passed again in mid-August, and I reminded CRT that Lock 49 was still (10 weeks after their previous assurances) out of action with all 4 paddles marked "Do not use". It was also STILL not shown as a navigation restriction on their stoppages list, despite being out of use since January to my knowledge.

They replied “I've shared your valuable feedback with the Area Operations Manager and wider team for the Trent & Mersey Canal. I'm informed, following investigations last month we identified the paddle repairs at Lock 49 to be too big of a repair to undertake during the summer months, and the work will now be scheduled into one of our Winter Works Programmes. Regarding the number of paddles out of operation and the restriction notice, a member of the local operations team is returning to site very soon to identify exactly what paddles are out of operation, and an accurate notice will be raised, thanks for your help in raising this.”

To be continued ...

## Editorial

Hello everyone! I hope you are having a good summer and not getting too wet.

I am writing this while moored at Pelsall on the ‘Curly-Wyrley’ (before starting work on setting up the festival site). Our journey down the T&M was great (see pp. 14-15) but the journey slowed down after we moved onto the Staffs & Worcs. We took ages getting through Penkridge, especially as we were following a training boat from Gailey.

It took us a long time to get up the Wolverhampton 21 as there were a number of boats ahead of us. Chairman Roger worked several locks ahead helping the other boats through while I ran back and forwards around *The Lady Beth* like a demented rabbit!

The Curly-Wyrley was very weedy and sported much more assorted rubbish than I remembered on our last trip there in 2016. Roger spent a lot of time down the weed hatch. Progress was slow and dinner was very late– tonight we are going to the pub!

Looking ahead to the dark nights, you will see from pp. 20/21 that a splendid season of talks has been planned, and our famous Christmas Dinner is booked. 2024 is our 50th anniversary year and a little celebrating is in order. Any help or ideas which you have for this will be gratefully received, especially for our special gathering on our actual birthday (February 2nd).

Although a shadow of our former self, the society still continues and the waterways need us more than ever (see p, 10).

Details of how the festival went in the next issue.

*Margaret English*



College students create waterside mural at the Trent & Mersey Canal

*Trent & Mersey Canal to highlight the issue of plastic pollution in the nation's waterways.*



**The mural**

Designed by final year Art, Design and Graphics students from the College, the aim of the artwork is to highlight CRT's [#PlasticsChallenge](#) campaign to remove plastic and litter from the canal and towpath and prevent it from ending up in our seas and oceans.

Each year, an estimated 14 million pieces of plastic rubbish end up in and around the nation's canals and rivers, with around 500,000 pieces flowing out into our oceans. The [#PlasticsChallenge](#) campaign, supported by players of People's Postcode Lottery, encourages local people and boaters to pick up any litter they see whilst exploring their local canal.

The final mural design concepts were created by student Xavier Mordi and were brought to life by Grega Greaves from Creative Arts North Staffs. The



artwork can be seen along the Trent & Mersey Canal at Cliff Vale, an area of the canal near to the Cauldon campus and depicts a canal scene with a mermaid character being surrounded by pieces of plastic.

Julianne Joyce, CRT's community & youth events coordinator said: "The mural is looking great next to our canal and really adds a pop of colour. The wall used for the mural used to get graffitied, so the artwork has further enhanced the canal environment.

"I was really impressed at how hard the students worked on coming up with designs to highlight our #PlasticsChallenge campaign. As a charity, we want to work with local people and community groups to help us improve our canals. Projects such as this one really make a difference to the thousands of people who visit and spend time on our canals every year."

### **Showcasing amazing talent**

Stoke on Trent College Principal and CEO Lisa Capper MBE, commented: "We are delighted that our Art and Design students have embraced this opportunity to engage with and support the #PlasticsChallenge campaign. Not only has it allowed them to use their creative skills and showcase their imagination and talent, it has also highlighted a compelling environmental story which we must all recognise as being vital to a sustainable future.

"The canal network is a hugely significant part of Stoke-on-Trent's celebrated industrial heritage which is why we are thrilled our students have helped to brighten up the area along the towpath for boaters, leisure seekers and other users of the network."

Please send contributions for the next issue to me, Margaret English, by email to [margaretetlm@hotmail.com](mailto:margaretetlm@hotmail.com), by post, or by hand. Remember, this is *your* magazine. Contributions from the South especially welcome! Last date for inclusion in the November/December 2023 edition is **18/10/2023**

## **The Lachine Canal**

On our recent Canadian adventure we discovered another short canal in Montreal. We learned that as early as 1680, the St Lawrence system and the Ottawa river were being used to transfer goods into the continental interior. However, this involved negotiating the Lachine rapids or carrying goods overland for 9 miles to Montreal. Various solutions were considered, and in 1783 a small canal was built, usable only by small local boats.

The war of 1812 demonstrated the need for a much larger waterway, and work started in 1821. It had 6 locks and was larger than a British canal, but soon became too small as the century progressed. The canal was widened, and the original 6 locks replaced by 5. In 1863, 4 new locks were built adjacent to the existing locks. These were then rebuilt and incorporated into the system as (you've got it !) twin locks. The 5th lock (at the Lachine end) was rebuilt 250 feet away from the 1842 lock.

The locks were 270 feet long, and 140 feet wide and the canal was confined by masonry walls throughout its length. It was operated and lighted by hydroelectricity and was crossed (and still is!) by bridges carrying main roads and railways. Major industries grew up along its length, particularly in Montreal.

In 1959 the St Lawrence Seaway superseded the canal and the lower end at Montreal Harbour was filled in. The remainder of the canal was left for leisure use. In 1976 Robert F Leggett (Canals of Canada) wrote 'it is probably inevitable that much of it will have to be filled in, as adjacent industrial plants make alternative arrangements for their transport needs.'

Today the canal at the Montreal end has information boards explaining history and importance (in both French and English).. The locks are still operational, although only one of each pair is usable (that sounds familiar!), the other having fake gates to retain the semblance of twinning. These locks have concrete posts in them to deter usage.

There is even a specimen tugboat on the canal, but it is not afloat- it sits on a concrete base. We had hoped to see a boat pass through, but although we visited the canal twice, there was no sign of movement. The industry which Mr Leggett thought would outlive the waterway now consists of derelict and abandoned buildings with rusting railway tracks.

# LE CANAL DE LACHINE

## Un lieu d'une importance historique indéniable

Ouvert à la navigation en 1825, le canal permet d'éviter les rapides de Lachine. Aujourd'hui, ses imposantes écluses ne sont plus fréquentées que par de petites embarcations de plaisance. Il en allait tout autrement au siècle dernier, alors

qu'elles suffisaient à peine à accueillir les grands cargos fluviaux. Précurseur de la Voie maritime du Saint-Laurent et berceau de l'industrie canadienne, le canal de Lachine a marqué de son empreinte une ville qu'il accompagne toujours sur le chemin de la modernité.

## Entre l'Europe et le cœur du continent nord-américain

Ici, à l'entrée aval du canal, vous vous trouvez naguère à la frontière de deux mondes. D'un côté s'étendait un domaine maritime, tourné principalement vers l'Europe, source intarissable de produits manufacturés et de nouveaux arrivants. De l'autre, un domaine fluvial, axé sur le transport et l'exportation des matières premières si abondantes qu'elles faisaient la fortune du pays. Malgré les apparences, les éclusiers n'avaient aucun répit : leur labeur incessant assurait la bonne marche des affaires.



Illustration de la gare 1825 à l'entrée du canal de Lachine. (Source : Archives de la Ville de Montréal)



Écluse de la gare 1825 à l'entrée du canal de Lachine. (Source : Archives de la Ville de Montréal)



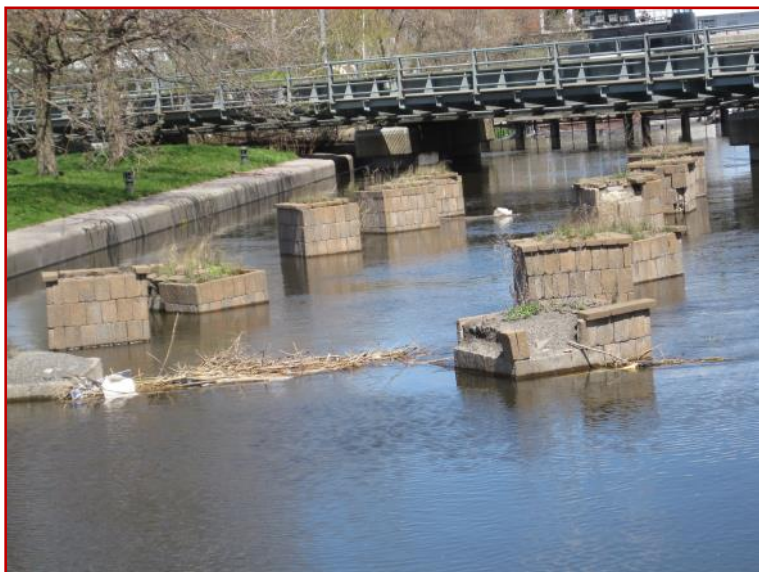
L'entrée du canal dans le port de Montréal, vers 1900. (Source : Archives de la Ville de Montréal)



I do hope this 9-mile waterway survives as a monument to the great age of canals.



*Derelict Canalside Factory*

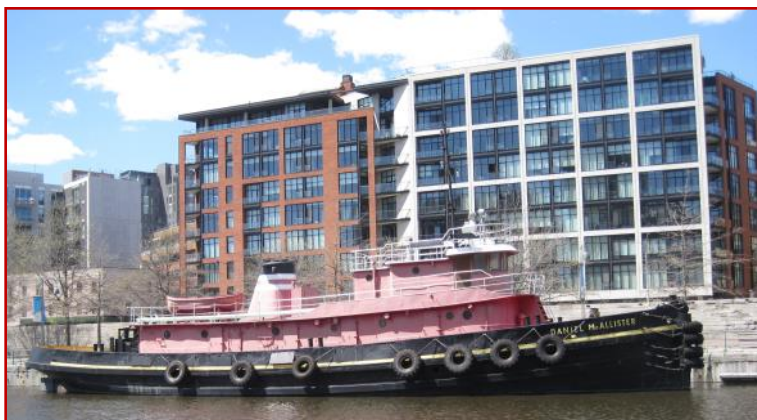


*Twinned  
lock with  
Cement  
blocks*





*When gates are not really gate!*



*Tugboat  
Daniel  
McAllister*

September/October 2023

Page 9

**Only IWA – Protect Our Waterways**  
***By Sarah Niblock, CEO of Inland Waterways Association***

***STANDFIRST***

The Inland Waterways Association (IWA) is the only independent, national charity dedicated to supporting and regenerating Britain's navigable rivers and canals as places for leisure, living and business.

IWA was formed to protect our inland waterways in 1946 at a time when they were under threat. As a result of IWA's work many navigations that would have closed remained open. Appreciation of the value of our waterways began to grow and restoration schemes got under way. We can now say proudly that since IWA was formed 500 miles of waterways have been restored and another 500 miles are under restoration.

But, gravely, the clock is starting to turn backwards. The government has announced it's cutting its grant to Canal and River Trust, putting the network's future in peril. IWA is very concerned that without adequate funding our waterways will again face closures and the millions of hours of volunteer time spent restoring and protecting waterways will be lost.

We launched the ***“Protect Our Waterways”*** campaign in March 2023 and, by joining IWA, you will strengthen our voice.

Your society is doing a sterling job of restoring your stretch of the navigation and IWA is proud to support the work of societies across the country.

**Our support includes:**

Educating politicians about the many and varied benefits of our waterways.

Access to expertise to guide your projects through the planning system.

Engineering and heritage expertise to call upon

Help with construction costing and planning

Help with construction projects through WRG camps and weekends.

Sharing knowledge and ideas through the Restoration Hub.

Technical expertise – engineering, planning and heritage etc.

Provision of cost-effective insurance for restoration projects.

***Only IWA*** provides this range of support to the waterways family, but now we need every member of this society to help to reverse this damaging decision. Restoration projects will become untenable. You know better than anyone that it is far more costly to repair and restore than to prevent decline in the first place. Here is how you can – and should – support our campaign.

As well as being an individual society member, please join IWA. You will have access to all the benefits above and more. Your membership will help strengthen our voice to protect the network and ensure another 500 miles are restored.

Make a one-off or regular donation to IWA towards our campaign costs. Sign up for our mailing list where you'll find links to our petition and how to write to your MP.

Spread the word – please use your communication channels to engage as many of your local waterways users as possible and direct them to our website.

It will only take you a few minutes via our website [www.waterways.org.uk](http://www.waterways.org.uk), but could put the waterways on the right path for years ahead.



*Dee Lock in its present State*

*Entrance to Old Bedford River*



## **A floating sleuth in France**

Terry is a great fan of Agatha Christie and had Agatha been as fond of canals as she was of travelling by train she may well have written such classics as *"The Disappearance of the Buckby Can"*, *The Case of the Missing Windlass*, *"The Floating Fender"* and *"The Twisted Tunnel"*.

During our travels in France last Spring we walked from the town of Briare across the 656 yards long beautiful aqueduct over the river Loire with the fourteen masonry supports designed by Gustave Eiffel. The paired obelisks at each end are similar to those on a bridge over the river Seine in Paris and art nouveau style lamps light the aqueduct at night. It is certainly a very impressive piece of canal architecture which is listed as a French Historic Monument.

Having reached the far side of the aqueduct we then walked through very peaceful countryside along the towpath of the Canal Latéral à La Loire to Châtillon-sur-Loire, which as the name suggests is next to the Loire with the canal running through the town. Here we visited the public moorings and saw a very smart and well looked-after vessel moored there.





Upon closer inspection, and much to Terry's surprise, we saw the name of the vessel was "Miss Marple" so for all Agatha Christie fans please note "Miss Marple" was last seen alive and well on the Canal Latéral à La Loire.



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

In the 1960s and 70s, Swedish authors Maj Sjöwall and Per Wahlöö, wrote a Series of 10 crime novels highlighting police procedure and Swedish societal problems. The detective involved was Martin Beck.. The very first novel dealt with a murder on the *Diana*, a historic ship on the Göta Canal (*Roseanna*, 1965). Chairman Roger and I have travelled on that very boat, and on learning of the novels, collected and read them!.....Ed

*It occurred to me that there wasn't a great deal in this issue about the T&M, so here is a record of a few things we noticed on the T&M part of our journey to Pelsall.....*



We came across some workmen busily mending the edge of the canal above Crow's Nest Lock, and had to glide past extremely slowly. There were two workboats present and they seemed to be doing a very good job.



We raced up the Cheshire Flight as far as lock 54 (because we were working there the following day– see p.17), but took a moment to see how Has-sall Green Lock was holding up after the recent closure to deal with the damaged heelpost.



That seemed fine, but the bottom gates had been fitted with metal reinforcing bars , neatly painted black to blend in with the woodwork



The saddest thing we saw was the T&M milepost opposite the Burslem Port Arm. It had been vandalised and (in common with other Canalside information boards) was covered in graffiti. I did not get a picture of this as I was in the kitchen preparing lunch at the time!

Further south, the enthusiastic growth of grass and rushes caused us some problems, restricting the canal to alternate one-way passage in places.

In spite of this, we were sad to leave our favourite canal at Great Haywood, even though it was a glorious day and we actually moored up for lunch!

*Margaret English*





## **Join Us on a Canal Work Party**

**Cheshire Locks, Trent & Mersey Canal**  
**Monthly work party on the third Thursday each month**  
**Jointly with IWA North Staffs & South Cheshire**

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

Why not join us for our monthly work parties, on the Cheshire Locks between Kidsgrove and Wheelock, carrying out vegetation management and other tasks in the fresh air and good company?

Work parties run from 10am to 3pm on the third Thursday each month (except December) and volunteers are welcome to come for a couple of hours or all day. The meeting place varies each month, so please contact us for details.

**Contact: John Lawson**  
**07940 878923   [John.Lawson@waterways.org.uk](mailto:John.Lawson@waterways.org.uk)**



## Cheshire Locks Work Parties



In July an enthusiastic group of volunteers set to work to deal with the metallic parts of Lock 54 (Lower Thirlwell). Railings, lock ladders and anything else which stood still. were rubbed down and painted.



August saw the work on lock 54 finished while a small party moved on to Thirlwell Upper and started on the metalwork there. Volunteer co-ordinator Grace was very pleased with the result.



As there is only one set of steps (and one lock) at Upper Thirlwood, the trusty volunteers had to work passing single-handers through until the paint dried!

*Photos Margaret English*

## Arzviller Tunnel and Boat Lift

Reading Ronald Isaac's article in July/August edition of Grand Trunk brought back memories from 2012 when we covered the same route. We actually went quite a bit further starting in Strasbourg and finishing in Lagarde, travelling with CroisiEurope on a slightly larger boat than Ronald.

So we also passed through the tunnels and up the lift he mentioned so I thought I would share a couple of photos with you.



In this photograph we are approaching Arzviller Tunnel and have a green light to enter. The signal lights are laid out in a similar format to those at the locks with a triangular back board. There is also a light above the tunnel entrance.

Inside the tunnel is well light and has a towpath running the full length, this wasn't for horses but for a small train, the track is still just visible.



We only went up the lift, but as we were only passengers I was able to take photographs. The first one (back page) is looking up the concrete tracks, you can see the counter weights coming down between the track so they can pass under the caisson.

The picture on the back page shows us approaching the top and shows the top guillotine gate holding back the canal above us. The caisson seals against the gate surround before the gate is lifted allowing us to continue on our journey.

If you would like to read more about our trip it can be found online at [http://dandbholidays.blogspot.com/2021/10/a-cruise-with-croisieurope-on\\_14.html](http://dandbholidays.blogspot.com/2021/10/a-cruise-with-croisieurope-on_14.html)

*Brian Holt*



**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 17<sup>th</sup>**

#### **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 19<sup>th</sup> 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 16<sup>th</sup> 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 15<sup>th</sup> 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 19<sup>th</sup> 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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***The Trent & Mersey Canal Society is proud to  
continue supporting Burslem Port***

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