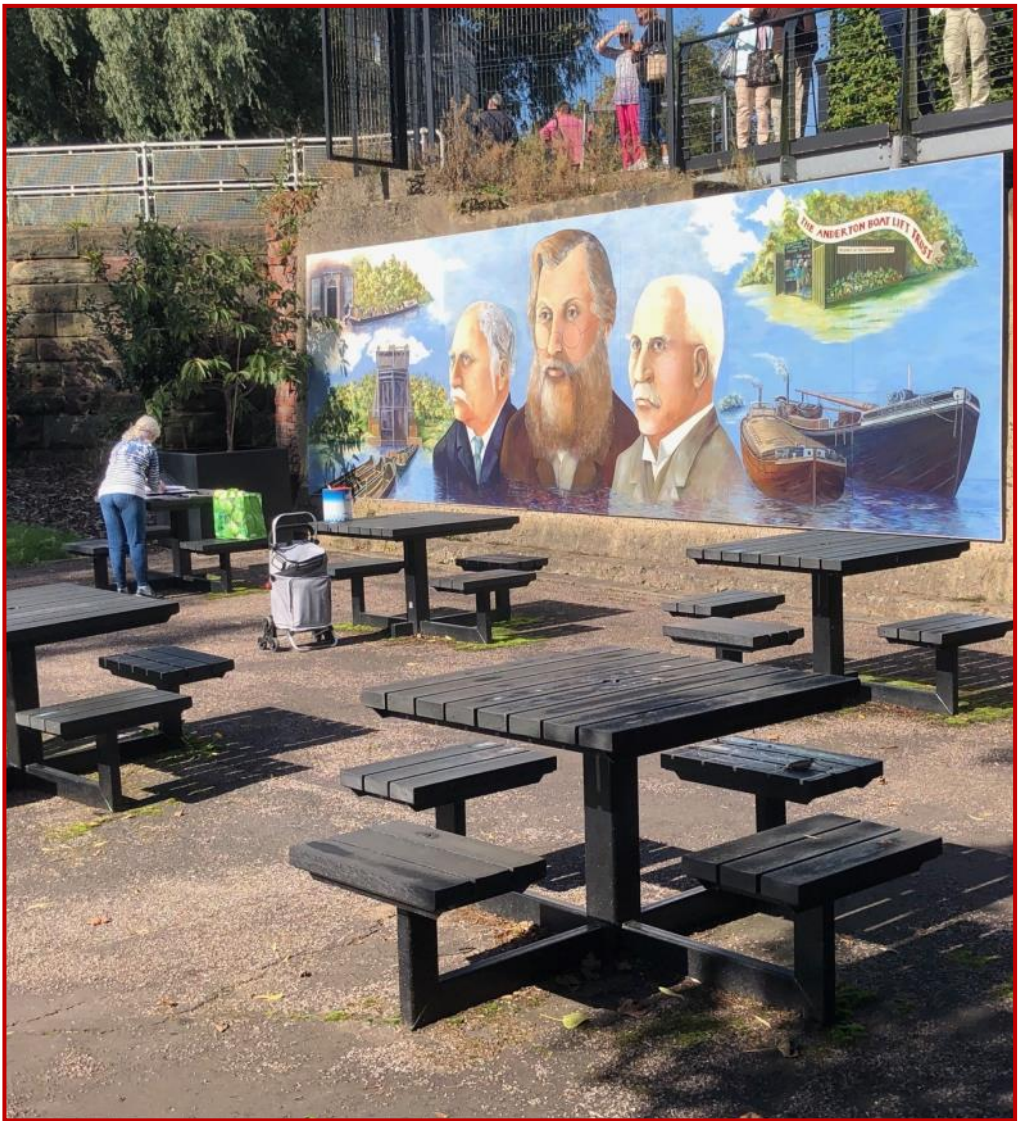


GRAND TRUNK

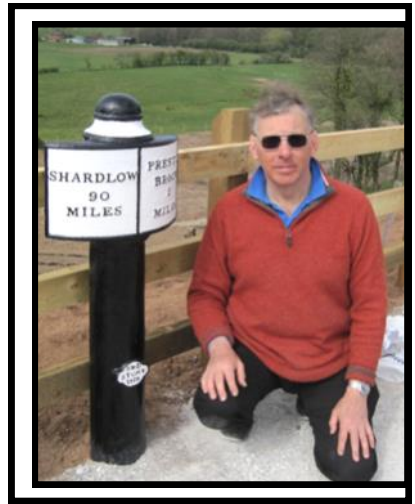


November/December 2023

www.trentandmerseycanalsociety.org.uk

Chairman's Bit

Our Winter season of social meetings at Red Bull started on Friday 20th October with a fascinating trip along the Cambridge Backs by narrow-boat and then through the Caledonian Canal by cabin cruiser. To see what you missed look at the "Reports of Talks" in the "Archive Pages" section of our website (or you could just follow the link on our "Latest News" page, assuming that you look in the next few weeks).



One thing it doesn't say in that report is that, sadly, only 5 members were present to enjoy the talk. Admittedly the weather was appalling with some roads still flooded after "Storm Babet" earlier in the week, but we do worry that we don't seem to be attracting the size of audience (around 20-25 members) that we used to enjoy. Please do have a look at the rest of the season (5 more talks, our usual Christmas meal and a special "50th Anniversary" meal) and consider coming along to some of them. Also, If you have an idea for a talk that you would like to hear in our next (2024-25) season, please let David Clegg know as he is always pleased to receive members' ideas.

Speaking of the Christmas meal (which is on Friday 1st December), details of the menu and how to book are on pages 14/15. Please note that Margaret needs to receive your order by Monday 20th November so that she can pass your menu choices to Red Bull in plenty of time.

Our extra "50th Anniversary" meal will take place on 2nd February 2024 which will be exactly 50 years after our society was founded. Following that theme, our April 19th meeting will be "A Celebration of 50 years" looking back on the founding of our society, and our campaigns to re-open Harecastle Tunnel, reinstate the mileposts and re-open Anderton Lift (plus, maybe, some more recent society work too).

Roger Evans

Editorial

It's a bit early to wish everyone 'Merry Christmas' (even though the shops seem to think the season is upon us). However, there is information about a new book which might make a good present (P. 12/13) and details of our Christmas meal (P.14/15), famously the first event of the festive season. The next edition will be the first one of 2024. If you have any tales of winter boating during the holidays, drop me a line– all contributions gratefully received.

Some of you may remember that chairman Roger managed to write off his car on the way to the last Christmas meal. He has made two promises, firstly that he will not repeat the experience this year, and secondly that he will be present, even though he has some health problems at the moment.

We are unable to make our usual trip up the Llangollen Canal to celebrate New Year, as the stoppages come down again immediately after Hogmanay, but we will set off for somewhere, complete with leftover mince pies and the feline crew– we'll let you know!

We have just bought a new fridge/freezer (for our attached house) as our current one is considerably older than our boat. Now we are known to be eccentric, and our old model is completely covered in fridge magnets listing our travels over the years. There are also lots of owls and anything else which caught our fancy. My clever idea is to sell some of the collection on the T&M stall for a very small price, thus passing on the pleasure.

We do hope the stall will be out and about in 2024 (see p.11), but will need some help.



A VERY MERRY
CHRISTMAS
and Happy New Year!

The Tugboat Daniel McAllister

I thought yu might like to know about the tugboat on the Lachine Canal, Montreal (see last edition)- I promise this is the last Canadian item!.....ED

Tugboats are small powerful boats that tow and push ships on entering or leaving the port, and assist them with docking. They are indispensable to port operations.

A century and counting

The Daniel McAllister is the largest preserved tug in Canada and the second largest preserved ocean-going tug in the world. The Canadian Cultural Property Export Review Board has recognised her as being of exceptional importance.

Over the years The Daniel McAllister has undergone several transformations, changing workplaces and names. Originally launched as Helena in 1907, she began service on the Atlantic Coast. In 1940s while working on the Great lakes, her steam engine was replaced with a more powerful diesel engine. After a major refit in 1956, she was renamed Helen M.B. Later, in the 1960s in Montreal, McAllister Towing Limited renamed her Daniel McAllister after a member of this important family of ship owners.

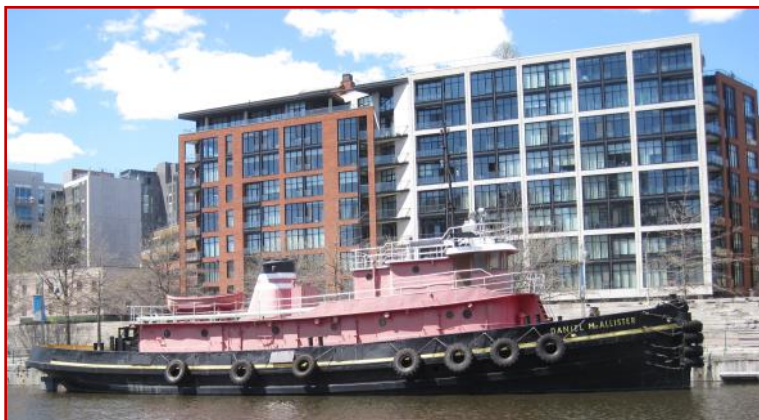
During Expo 67 The Daniel McAllister guided Canadian Pacific's great liners, The Empress of Canada and The Empress of England. She was finally retired from service in the 1980s.

An important Partnership

When the Ocean Group purchased Montreal's McAllister Towing Limited in 1987, The Daniel McAllister was purchased by the Musee Maritime du Quebec, which partnered with the old port of Montreal Corporation to ensure the ship's preservation. The Old Port of Montreal acquired the ship in 2008.

I copied these details from the information boards (in French and English) sited in the old port of Montreal.

Margaret English



*At rest on her
concrete base
in the Old Port*

*And at work in
her heyday*



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 January/February 2024 edition is **18/12/2023**

THE ANDERTON MURAL

It was 2009, Anderton Boat Lift had been working smoothly for several years, the site improvements were complete, so the Anderton Boat Lift TRUST, which had specifically been formed to ensure all the work needed to restore the previously defunct Boat Lift had actually been achieved, decided that their task had finally been completed.

This project had taken many years and had required enormous volunteer effort from many allied organizations, the Trent and Mersey Canal Society, the Inland Waterways Association, many other Canal Societies and even local businesses- and this had finally produced the funds to implement the engineering solutions and restoration required and the Lift was now working again.

So, what should their final positive action be?

It was resolved by the Trustees that their last act should be the creation of an enormous mural to highlight the very special nature of this remarkable river and the original unique Boat Lift, so they approached Bernice Tackley, an award winning local waterways and landscape artist, to execute their commission.

And so it came about. The mural, which is 8.5 x 2.5m in size, displays many activities involving this world renowned lift - including its designers, Edwin Clarke, Sir Edward Leader Williams and Colonel Saner, and showing local boat designs, the efforts necessary to raise the money and much else, was finally installed in front of an unattractive bare concrete wall - and it also pays tribute to the many thousands of people that played some part in its restoration

For the thirteen years since this mural was ceremonially revealed it has stood the test of time - and a mighty test it has proved to be. It faces South and has had to endure the rigours of severe weather and sunlight and has slowly lost some of its original lustre, which is difficult to replace.

Luckily, the Anderton Boat Lift Trust, prior to its disbandment, requested the Trent and Mersey Canal Society, wherever possible, to maintain the wellbeing of their special concerns regarding the lift - so they contacted Bernice Tackley, the original artist, to ask her to rejuvenate this epic mural.

And so she has - you will see attached illustrations of Bernice, now a sprightly 78 years old (see front cover! And below!) , working on the restoration of the faded mural to ensure that it remains bright and interesting to be viewed by further visitors yet to arrive, in the years to come.

Why not come and visit the Boat Lift (again?) - it is free to enter - and study the renovated mural and enjoy the many other features it has to offer?

Note - the Anderton Boat Lift itself is currently undergoing some intensive renovation involving control circuitry, caisson alignment and structure repainting which are affecting its regular operation. Intending visitors should check its operational capability on the day they intend to visit.



John Tackley

Just missed the last issue!

Trent and Mersey gains green flag status

THE entire Cheshire section of an historically important canal has been deemed among the best kept green spaces in the country.

On Thursday, September 14, waterways and well-being charity, the Canal and River Trust (C&RT), confirmed the final 33-mile stretch of the Trent and Mersey Canal to achieve Green Flag status has now received the prestigious accolade.



It was also confirmed the section of the Weaver Navigation between Runcorn to Winsford, including the Anderton Boat Lift, keeps its Green Flag status for 2023/24.

The Green Flag Award scheme, managed by environmental charity Keep Britain Tidy, recognises and rewards well-managed parks and green spaces, setting the benchmark standard green spaces across the UK and around the world.



C&RT chief executive, Richard Parry, says the achievement is 'testament to everyone who works or volunteers for the trust', adding:



“These Green Flags showcase the breadth of what the waterways have to offer: free, accessible green space on the doorstep of millions.

Welcome to new member

***Julie Arnold
of Barlaston
Stoke on Trent***

Welcome aboard!

**We hope you enjoy being a
members of the society.**



SHARDLOW FESTIVAL 2023

When we arrived on the Friday afternoon for the festival in company with ex FMC narrowboat Hawk it was already full with market traders and historic boats.



Shardlow lock ex FMC England and Hawk.



After both of us had winded with inches to spare we moored up by the clock warehouse.

Saturday saw another very hot day with record crowds turning up to support the event

All the market traders seemed to be doing a roaring trade. This year there was something for everyone from classic cars to a small train ride for the children .

The boat horse Ebony was also very popular with the crowds.

Saturday afternoon we had a visit from CRT'S CEO Richard Parry which gave me the chance to raise some concerns about the state of the southern Trent and Mersey locks and the issues which deep drafted boats are having at Dallow lane and Branston locks.

Sunday saw again high visitor numbers.

We gave the crowds some photo opportunities' when testing my reversing and breasting up skills when we off loaded some Diesel from the coal boat Hampstead to England.



Thanks to all who put this weekend together - it gets better each year and is a firm favourite on the boating calendar.

Look forward to the 2024 event was great to catch up with many old T&MCS members over the weekend.

Steve Bates

Next year it would be good to get the T&M stall to Shardlow.

Would anyone be willing to take charge of this?

Please contact Roger or Margaret !

PUBLICATION DATE: MONDAY, 9 OCTOBER 2023
CANAL GHOSTS & WATER-WIGHTS
The Spirits of Britain's Waterways

by Nick Ford

In *Canal Ghosts & Water-Wights – The Spirits of Britain's Waterways* historical writer Nick Ford combines a lifelong interest in the paranormal, folklore and the timeless romance of Britain's waterways with a spirit of open-minded academic enquiry into why so many strange phenomena have been reported on the country's canals over the centuries.

Featuring more than 200 locations (and many more recorded encounters) across 69 canals and rivers, this is a definitive, up-to-date, comprehensive guide to paranormal events that have been reported on every navigable waterway in mainland Britain.

As someone who has taken part in a number of private psychic investigations, Nick offers readers a variety of possible explanations (scientific, occult, and humorous) for these phenomena. The book includes his own experiences as well as those of people he knows – bringing the wealth of folk traditions, legends and historically recorded events right up to date with some of the reported occurrences having taken place as recently as last year.

Designed to be read as a compendium of stories, used as a cruising guide of places to look out for (or, perhaps, avoid!), or as a study to deepen the reader's knowledge of the supernatural and local history, it has a special appeal to boaters and folklore fans alike.

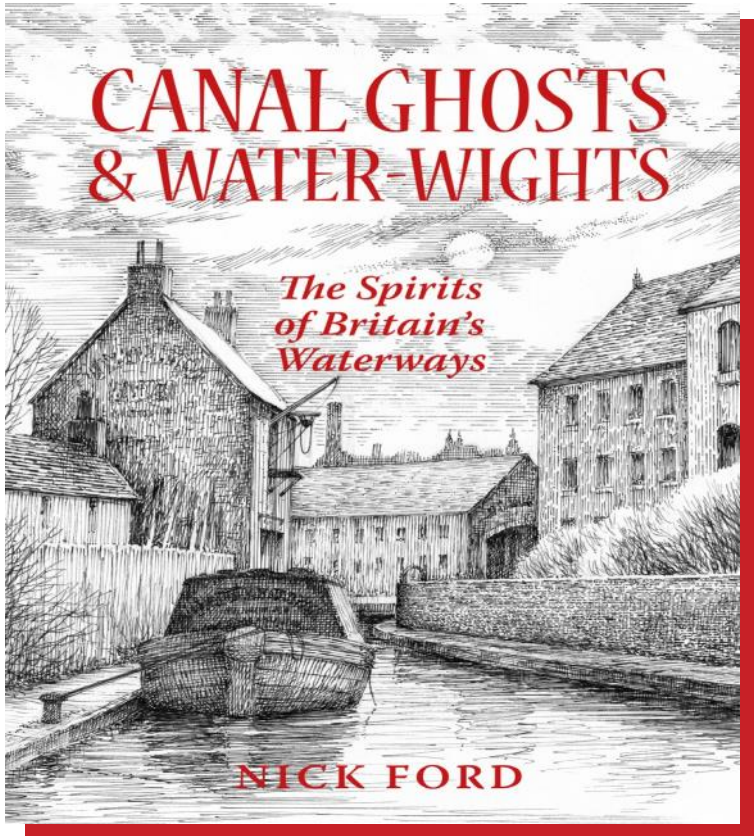
The book is illustrated with 15 atmospheric line illustrations by Nick's brother, Jeremy, a past President of the SAA.

No canal or river cruise, in boat or armchair, would be complete without a copy!

Nick Ford is an historical writer. Educated at Lancaster University and the University of Southampton, with an Honours degree from the Open University, he spent 13 years working for the Royal Navy, the best years of which involved messing about in boats and getting paid for it.

His latest work *Canal Ghosts & Water-Wights* is a new departure from his previously published books

- ♦ a history of Jerusalem at the time of the First Crusade, a biography of King Henry VIII and a re-evaluation of the life and work of Nicolo Machiavelli.



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November/December 2023



*It will soon be party time again!
Come and join us at Red Bull Public House for our
famous Christmas meal– the perfect way to start
advent!*

**TMCS Christmas Meal
Friday 1st December**

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



7 for 7.30 pm

Starters

Soup of the day.....	£4.50
Pate with festive relish and brown toast.....	£5.75
Crispy mushrooms with garlic mayo.....	£5.45
Whitebait with mayo and lemon.....	£5.75

Main Course

Turkey with all the trimmings.....	£12.95
Cod, bacon and brie fishcakes with redcurrant sauce.....	£10.95
Honey and mustard chicken breast.....	£13.95
Fillet of salmon with white wine and mushroom sauce.....	£14.95
8oz rump steak (grilled) with trimmings.....	£15.95

*Sweets are available from the sweet trolley for those with any
room left!*



The evening will include the usual exciting quizzes (this year our wonderful (and sometimes devious) events manager is preparing a quiz– put your thinking caps on!

For vegetarians

Don't panic! We are assured the honey and chicken breast option can be adjusted by the chef to cater for the vegetarian palate!

If you would like to attend, please give your names and choices to Margaret English (that's me!) by email:-

margaretetlm@hotmail.com

By telephone:-

01606 834471

Or any other way you can think of-

BY THE 20TH NOVEMBER PLEASE





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 additional work party

At our last scheduled work party, we were again assisted by 2 volunteer lock keepers from Red Bull who used a strimmer to good effect clearing back vegetation to assist us.

On this theme, I was asked by Grace Kennedy, our Canal and River Trust temporary volunteer co-ordinator, if some of the Cheshire Locks volunteers could advise and assist, if available, with preparing and painting Lock 43 and adjacent metal railings alongside the Red Bull pub. The volunteer lock keepers had been clearing the overgrown grass and vegetation around the lock in the absence of contractors.



There was very settled and dry weather forecast for the week commencing Monday 4th September so work commenced and continued through the week with 3 members of our group able to be there for a couple of days along with the lock keepers. Lock 43, gates, rails, ground paddles, paddle gear and railings between the lock and the Red Bull pub beer garden were all painted by the end of the week, taking full advantage of the dry weather.

Member Dave Brewin works part-time for Aqua Narrowboats. Dave kindly wrote this account as he is concerned about the happenings during the recent bad weather. He asked me to make it make it clear that opinions expressed are his own.....Ed

Hire Boat Havoc

I don't know what the weather was like with you in mid October but here in the East Midlands it started raining heavily on the evening of 19th October and didn't stop for the next 36 hours.

This caused CRT to chain up the lock gates at Alrewas, Wychnor and Derwent Mouth due to the Trent being in flood with the relevant stoppage notices posted on their website.

As some readers may know I work for a local hireboat company based out of Barton Marina and the weather severely impacted its operations on 21st October, our turnaround day. Fortunately we only had two boats going out and, despite one of the hirers having long made plans to go into Birmingham, they were forced to head in the opposite direction for the short cruise to Shardlow and back. In fairness they were very philosophical about it.

On Tuesday afternoon it became apparent that even this modest cruise was problematical. As the boat approached Weston Lock, 4 locks above the Trent, it's crew were met by the unusual site of a boat rising stern first in the lock. A quick conversation with the crew revealed that on reaching Shardlow Lock they had found the gates chained up so were faced with the choice of either a wait of an unknown period or reversing 5 miles to the winding hole above Weston Cliffs; they chose the latter option.

So, our crew rang the office for advice and they were asked to stay put whilst a staff member was sent to Shardlow to investigate. Sure enough, despite the water levels either side of the lock looking normal the gates were securely chained shut, denying access to the winding hole frustratingly in view just below the lock. A check on the CRT website made no mention of the stoppage so a phone call was made to the local CRT office. After some initial confusion it transpired that the lock had been closed by the Environment Agency due to concerns about letting more water down into Shardlow village. A request to remove the chains to allow boats to wind and return the way they had come was firmly rebuffed.

Now I'm no hydrologist but this seemed a pretty pointless exercise to me given that thousands of litres of water per minute were running unchecked into the pound below the lock via the by wash. Surely every litre of water that might enter the pound by the lock being emptied is one less litre to run over the by-wash? Even if there is some water saving by preventing use of the lock it would surely have made much more sense to close Swarkestone Lock, where there is a winding hole immediately above the lock. This would prevent boats making a 6 mile cruise to a dead end with no way out other than reversing back for 5 miles, including having to reverse up two deep and wide locks.

At least our crew, having stayed put immediately above Weston Lock, were only faced with a two mile reverse but still daunting for a relatively inexperienced crew in a 62 foot boat.

So, the morning of 25th October saw the company owner and myself despatched to Weston Lock to help the crew complete the manoeuvre, which I'm pleased to say went off without incident. In fact it was a lovely quiet autumn morning making it a pleasure to be on the canal; it would have been even more enjoyable though if we weren't having to travel backwards!

Dave Brewin

Harecastle Tunnel Winter Opening Times 2023/2024

Starts: 01/11/2023 00:00

Ends: 29/02/2024 23:45 inclusive

Type: Booking Information

Towpath closed? No



During the winter season 2023/24, booking will be required for all passages through the Harecastle Tunnel at least 48 hours prior to, passage.

From Wednesday 1st November to Thursday 29th February 2024, booking slots are available between 9am to 12noon on Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays, and Saturdays **only**: - North to South – 9am & 11am South to North, 10am & 12pm.

See website for Christmas and New Year times



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

This season's talks got off to a splendid start with a talk about a trip through the Cambridge backs and another on the Caledonian Canal.

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. SEE PAGES 14/15

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 they 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 hosted by 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*

Bringing Boats Back to Burslem



Autumn on the Cheshire Flight
Photo Sandra Lawson