

GRAND TRUNK



*Lock 74
(bottom of Middlewich Three)
is prepared for new gates*

Photo Margaret English

January/February 2024

www.trentandmerseycanalsociety.org.uk

Chairman's Bit

50 years! Half a century. Yes, that's how old our society will be this year. How should we celebrate this achievement? Maybe a grand dinner with lots of civic dignitaries? How about a celebratory boat rally open to the public? As usual, people have thrown around lots of grand ideas like these. However, also as usual, we don't have enough volunteers willing to put in the large number of hours needed to turn either of these ideas into reality.



In fact, with the average age of the long-serving committee now well into the 70's, we are struggling to just keep the society ticking over. Here I should mention the one exception to this before you accuse me of being all "doom and gloom". We have recently recruited David & Jean Clegg to organise our talks, and they are doing a great job with lots of new ideas and already have a large part of next season organised.

So, what are we going to actually do to celebrate our half-century? Two things, neither very large or difficult for the committee to organise (especially as the Cleggs are doing the organising for us!).

Firstly (as mentioned in the previous issue of Grand Trunk) there will be an informal gathering for a meal at Red Bull (where the society was founded at a meeting in the upstairs room) on February 2nd, which is the exact date of the society's 50th birthday.

Secondly, 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, some more recent society work dedicated to painting the Cheshire Locks).

Sorry if that all sounds like a bit of a letdown from the original grand thoughts of how to celebrate. If you feel that we ought to be doing more, why not volunteer to join the committee and let some of the existing members retire?

Roger Evans

Editorial

Happy New Year everyone!

Firstly, an apology for the tardiness of this magazine. I started it before wrapping Christmas presents so we could escape on our traditional post-Christmas and New Year cruise. The plan was to go up the Welsh Canal as far as Whitchurch then return to Hurlston before the winter stoppages commenced on 2nd January. We would then head for Chester and return home for 12th night in time to take the decorations down.

However, matters did not proceed quite as we had planned. We set off towards Barbridge on 28th December and I trotted off to open Stanthorne Lock (our local lock on the Middlewich Branch) I waited for *The Lady Beth* and waited and waited.....) then I discovered our beloved boat was immobile as she had a tyre very tightly wrapped around her prop. I walked home and gathered up every tool I could find which might help, all to no avail. After three hours we called out *River and Canal Rescue* and just managed to make it through the lock before it got dark.

Needless to say, we could no longer make it to Whitchurch and had to turn at Wrenbury. We did however spend a wonderful and peaceful night moored under Beeston Castle. The next morning the only fit members of the crew were our boating cats (no, not alcoholic problems– the dreaded winter coughing bug). We limped home, and the male crew members managed to get some antibiotics. I just carried on sounding like a sea-lion and feeling dreadful.

Further distractions were several funerals, a trip to London which could not be delayed any further, and a heavy workload.

Well those are my excuses, and I don't like 2024 at all so far– even though it is the society's anniversary year!

Please take note of the special events noted on the social page.



I hope to return to cheerfulness by the next issue.

Margaret English

The Anderton Lift Campaign 2024

I recently received an email from CRT inviting me to donate to this campaign, you too may have had the same email.

I was disappointed because sometime ago Richard Parry, Chief Executive of CRT had asked me if T&MCS would be interested in being involved in the next Anderton Lift restoration and after consulting the committee I had told him we would.

I replied to that email expressing my disappointment on behalf of the society and copied Richard Parry in. He replied by return "Please accept my apologies for this – we remain very keen to take up the T&M Society's offer of support. We'll ask our new fundraising team to follow up with you directly" and they did. Eleanor Mason, Major Donor Fundraiser arrange to call me on the phone a few days later.

Eleanor and I spoke on 22nd November 2023, it was not an in-depth discussion, here is the gist of the conversation.

I learned:

That Heritage Lottery Funding has already been secured.

A Stakeholder event (by another name) will be held in early 2024 and that the society will be invited.

I advised:

That we are aware that this campaign will be very different from the one that the T&MCS ran in the 80's and that our involvement will be different this time round but that where possible we would like to be able to help.

That the Anderton Lift is very popular not only nationally but also internationally and that CRT would do well to take their campaign to canal festivals as far and wide as they can.

I suggested:

When CRT take their stand to events and festivals that they may also consider having a small stand dedicated to the Anderton Lift campaign to sell promotional goods such as the T-shirts, they were very well received in the 80's and not only raise funds but were an on-going advert. I also said that if T&MCS were also at such an event then where we have sufficient volunteers we might also be able to man their dedicated stand for short periods.

Additionally,

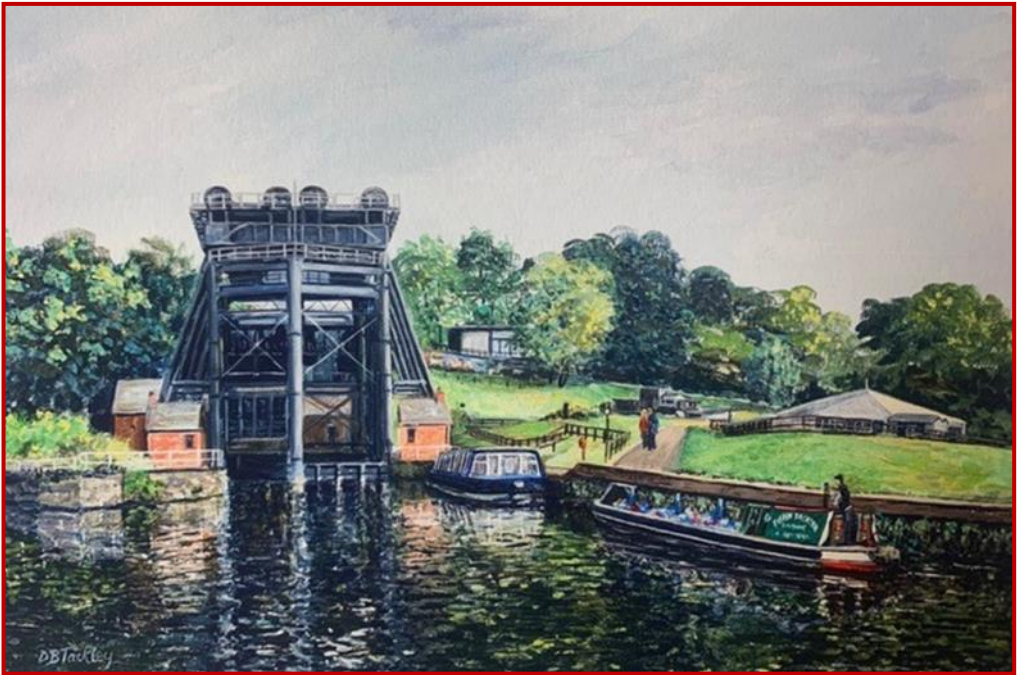
I pointed out that there are several steam events locally to the Anderton Lift and that steam and canals have close links so promotions at those might be productive.

Summary:

I was glad that I had made this approach and that we can feel sure that our society will have the opportunity of continued involvement with the Anderton Lift.

I will keep you appraised of progress and opportunities as they arise.

Gillian Watson



Painting by Bernice Tackley
Prints & cards available.

Anderton Lift Appeal

Everyone in our area received an envelope from CRT appealing for help to save Anderton Lift.

For those who didn't, this is the gist of the contents:

Protect the past. Secure the future.

Today we're asking you to protect the past of a unique local landmark and give it a future as a working, living lift for everyone in our region to enjoy. With the risk of it breaking down at any time, we are asking local people like you to donate today to support vital work to keep the lift open and working. Together, we can protect its steel work for many years to come and help to bring to life an amazing vision to improve the whole site for our local community and young learners to enjoy for generations to come.

£25.00 could help remove 0.5m of cabling and future-proof the lift controls.

£50.00 could help to protect Anderton's steelwork for many more years by sandblasting and repainting the structure to prevent it rusting.

£100.00 could help to revitalise Anderton as a working lift and a visitor attraction full of living history.

Visit **canalrivertrust.org.uk/keepandertonalive**



Bad news for winter cruising– this notice was posted by CRT just before Christmas

Newcastle Road Lock

A recent inspection of Newcastle Road Lock in Stone revealed the need for urgent works on the bottom end gates, which are likely to fail before next winter. While they weren't in our original winter stoppage programme, we're looking to take advantage of a existing planned closure at Lock 38 to get this work done ahead of the spring. At the same time, we'll take advantage of the closure to tackle other works required at the lock.

Our plans include refitting, relining, and bracing both bottom gates, and bracing the towpath side balance beam with a steel brace. We'll also install a new paddle and frame in the towpath side bottom gate. Together these works should give this busy lock several more years of operation ahead of planned gate replacement.



Thank you for bearing with us while we complete these works. The canal will remain open to navigation on either side of the lock, and access to the boatyards on both sides will remain open, as will the customer facilities below the lock.

This is lock 29 on the Trent & Mersey Canal, the second lock down the flight known as the Stone flight. This is a four-lock flight which raises the canal by 39' 4". This lock is named Newcastle Road lock and has a separate tunnel under Newcastle Road for the towing path.....Ed

Christmas festivities on T&M

The magic of Christmas returned to Anderton Boat Lift once again. Excited visitors Joined Santa and his helpers for a festive cruise along the River Weaver.

Santa was once again returning to celebrate this festive season at Anderton.. He brought some helpers with him, his story book, some new songs and some gifts too!

Santa loves having his photograph taken so there was an opportunity for every family to take their own photo with him on the cruise.

The cruise lasted approximately 45mins.

All passengers required a ticket for the cruise including babies under 12 months old. They sailing along the river, singing songs and children even received a gift from Santa!

Up to Christmas Eve, visitors could also join Santa and his helpers for breakfast and a festive cruise

This event started with a cooked breakfast (or a choice of cereals for children) served in our coffee shop. After breakfast, Santa met all the children



and escorted everyone down to the boat where, he entertained passengers on the 45-minute boat cruise.

The experience started at 10am and lasted about 1hr, 45mins

Fradley Junction decoration making activities:

Christmas Decoration Crafting: Participants got hands-on and crafted their own unique Christmas decorations. The materials needed to create festive masterpieces were provided to add a special touch to the holiday celebrations.



Family Fun: This event was designed for the whole family to enjoy. Whether you were a seasoned crafter or just looking for a fun and festive activity, there was something for everyone.

Yard Decorations:

Fradley folk could immerse themselves in the holiday spirit as the entire yard was adorned with twinkling lights, colourful ornaments, and the warmth of the season. It' was the perfect backdrop for family photos!

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 2024 edition is **18/02/2024**

Planned winter stoppages on Trent & Mersey Canal

Lock 4, Weston Lock upstream of Bridge 8, near Weston-on-Trent.

Starts: 08/01/2024 08:00

Ends: 02/03/2024 16:00 inclusive

Type: Navigation Closure

Reason: Repair

Towpath closed? No

A stoppage is required to carry out gate replacement & various general repairs. .

26/09/2023 08:06: We are pleased to advise that we are now able to undertake these works from the offside, meaning the towpath will now be open for the duration of these works.

Lock 74, near Middlewich

Starts: 08/01/2024 08:00

Ends: 29/02/2024 16:00 inclusive

Type: Navigation Closure

Reason: Repair

Towpath closed? No

A stoppage is required to fit new head & tail gates. We will also be carrying out some footbridge & masonry repairs.





Opposite page: work on lock 74 begins
Above: workboat at the ready, lock 74

Harecastle Tunnel Winter Opening Times 2023/2024

Starts: 01/11/2023 00:00

Ends: 28/02/2024 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. 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 and 12pm.

Tragic November Death in Trent & Mersey Canal

Police are not treating the death of a man in the Trent and Mersey Canal as suspicious. Staffordshire Police prepared a report for the coroner following this tragedy on 7th November 2023.

Staffordshire Police and West Midlands Ambulance Service had been called to the stretch of water near Longport Wharf, off Station Street, in Longport, at 4.24pm on Sunday, November 5.



A West Midlands Ambulance Service spokesman said: “We were called at 4.24pm on Sunday to an incident in the water near Longport Wharf. One ambulance, a paramedic officer, and a critical care car from Midland Air Ambulance attended the scene. Upon arrival, we found a man. Unfortunately, it became clear that nothing could be done to save him and he was confirmed deceased at the scene.”

Police are now piecing together the man's last-known movements as part of

their report to the coroner. Anyone who saw the man on Sunday afternoon was asked to call the police on 101. The body was identified as Stoke legend, 70 year old Paul Dykes.

Devastated friends led tributes to the businessman and local boxing legend found dead in the Trent and Mersey Canal. Staffordshire Police are not treating the death of Paul Dykes as suspicious.

The adopted Stokie had arrived in Burslem in 1974 with 'no bank account, no license and just two bin liners'. But he later founded *Rapid Response Roofing* and *Paul Dykes Fine Arts* as well as dedicating decades of his life to Stoke Amateur Boxing Club and Queensbury Boxing Club.

From Staffordshire Live

November 2023

Picture, Geograph England

Bad news for boaters through Stone

CRT notice 19th January 2024

The bins at Stone have been temporarily removed, as the owners of the land didn't feel able to continue with the bins in the current location. As this is a well-used facility in a busy location, we are now actively pursuing other options in the Stone area. This is likely to take a little while, as our land ownership is limited in the vicinity, and any new site will need to meet strict access and maintenance criteria to secure approval.

In the meantime, the best option for rubbish disposal will be our other facilities at Etruria and Great Haywood. We recognise this isn't a workable option for those boaters based in Stone, and are prioritising securing an interim site in the town.

Thank you for your patience and consideration in keeping the canal and local area clean in the meantime. We'll share a further update on this arrangement as soon as we can, and certainly by next Friday 26th January.

Canal and River Trust launch new towpath code

Ahead of the busy summer holidays, we are appealing for people to remain friendly and courteous on towpaths – as figures published today show the nation's canals are benefiting more people than at any time in history.

In the last financial year, a record 885 million visits were made to our often narrow towpaths across England and Wales by walkers, cyclists, boaters, paddlers, anglers and runners, with visits having increased by over 30% in the past four years.

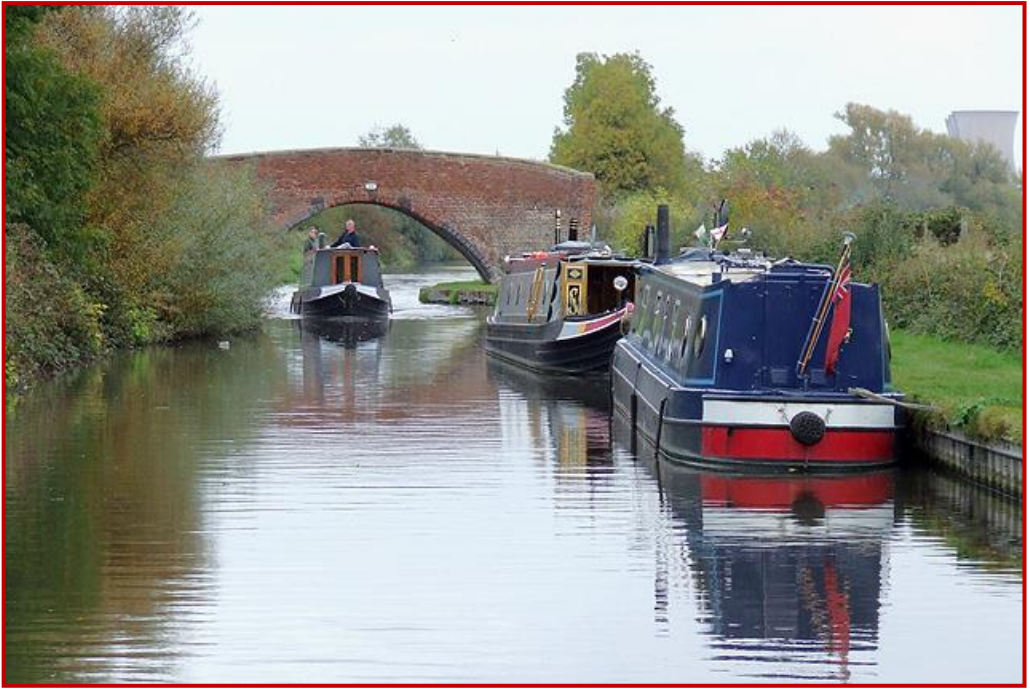
As the summer temperatures rise, we are asking people to keep their cool, and have published a new Towpath Code to help people better enjoy their time on towpaths, avoid tension between visitors and respect the wildlife and pets along the canal network.

A huge rise in visitors

Richard Parry, our chief executive, says: “With the nation's 250-year-old canals more popular than ever, the summer months are set to draw even more people to visit these much-needed spaces. But with so many people sharing them, and with waterways bringing nature and biodiversity into our towns and cities, it is important that we are kind to each other and to wildlife.”

Speaking about the rise in popularity of canals, Richard continues: “We saw a huge rise in visits to our waterways during the pandemic and they have remained important places for many people who discovered them during that difficult time.

“Today canals are playing a key role within society. They are vital links for walking and cycling and help Government hit its targets around access to nature and the outdoors. But canals are old and vulnerable and need continued investment. By sharing the space responsibly, we can all look forward to enjoying our local canals this summer.”



Our Towpath Code

Our Towpath Code is a simple, easy to understand guide for how to share towpaths thoughtfully and considerately. Remember: *Share the space, Drop your pace, It's a special place.* The following applies:

- **Pedestrians have priority.**
- **Cyclists must slow down for others.**
- **Take extra care when passing people, pets and wildlife.**
- **Respect people using the waterway for activities like angling, boating or paddle-sports.**
- **Wheelchairs, mobility aids, cycles and legal e-bikes are allowed.**
- **E-scooters, motorbikes, modified e-bikes and other unauthorised vehicles are not allowed.**
- **Keep dogs under close control and clean up after them.**
- **Take litter home.**



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 end of year report

In November, Dave Hyde, Dave Sproson, John Brighthouse and I continued work on Lock 53. Thankfully, the weather turned out much better than anticipated and we were able to make great progress by prepping and applying Hammarite paint to the metal fence on the towpath side - The fence is pretty extensive, so much to be done yet. We also finished some outstanding metal-work on the lock itself. Sadly, the wooden beam on the upper gate was still too damp to apply Sadolin. So next time we congregate in January we'll have plenty to do.

As usual there was NO work party in December (the volunteers had my permission to take a well-earned break). So I think this is the right time to sincerely thank you all on behalf of John Lawson and myself for the sterling work you've done during 2023. It's been a difficult year due to the vagaries of the English weather and other less foreseen circumstances. However, we managed to complete Lock 59 at long last, Lock 54 and (nearly) Lock 53. Not bad, considering that included 2 double locks and lots of lock side furniture (including extensive fencing, mooring posts, bench etc.). And not forgetting the additional work carried out by some of you on the Red Bull Locks. So, I think we can justifiably give ourselves a big pat on the back.



I must add thanks to Grace for her enthusiasm and commitment since she became our Volunteer Supervisor.

Tony Walker

*Photo: John
Lawson*

The residents of Middlewich who were beginning to believe that their promised by-pass would not happen, must be re-assured by the CRT notice reproduced below

Please be advised that third-party contractors will be onsite between bridge 164 and bridge 166 on the Trent and Mersey Canal.

The third-party contractors are working on behalf of Cheshire East Council. They will be removing vegetation, carrying out ground clearance and demolition on both sides of the canal in preparation for construction of a new bridge.



Whilst the navigation and towpath will remain open, we politely request all customers to approach the area with caution and be prepared to stop if necessary.

Please take note of the signage and to listen to any advice that may be given by the third-party contractors onsite.

.....so I nipped out to take some pictures!



*Photos
and article
Margaret
English*



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

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

Do come along and share reminiscences. Contact David Clegg for more information.



***This is particularly important when the society is not
gaining new members and the Anderton Lift is once
again in danger!***

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

Steve Guest will talk about our Harecastle Tunnel campaign.

Roger Evans will talk about our milepost campaign.

John Tackley will talk about our Anderton Lift campaign.

John Lawson will talk about Cheshire Locks working parties.

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Telephone: 01606 834471

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

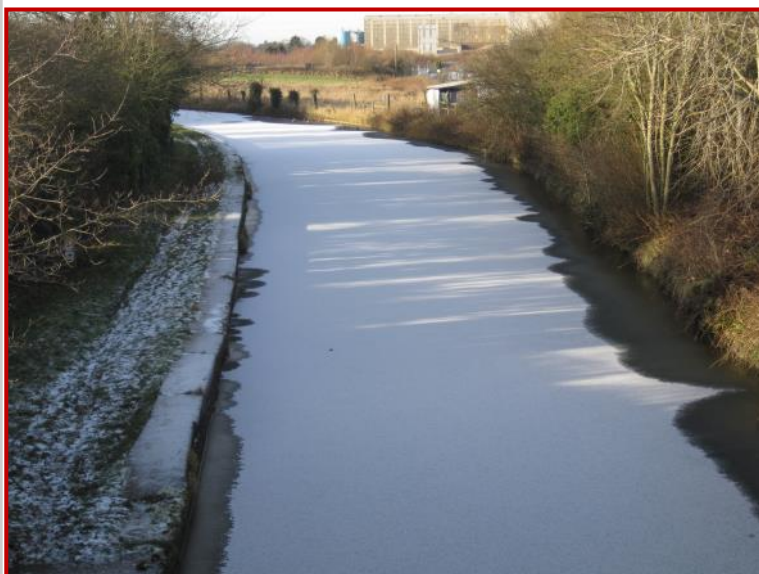
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***The Trent & Mersey Canal Society is proud to
continue supporting Burslem Port***

Bringing Boats Back to Burslem



***The Lady
Beth well
and truly
iced in
(cheating—
it's the Mid-
dlewich
Branch of
the Shrop-
shire
Union!)***

*Pics, Margaret
English*

This is the T&M near Middlewich