

# GRAND TRUNK



*New Lock Gates for Weston Lock  
(see p. 8)*

*Vaughn Wheatley*

**March/April 2024**

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

## Chairman's Bit

We have an unusual post-AGM activity this year. Our AGM will be held at Apedale Heritage Centre and the activity is a tour of the coal mine. As it was a drift mine there is no vertical shaft or ride in a cage, we simply walk down a slope. Warm clothing and sensible shoes are advised, and no children under 5 are allowed. The cost (payable on the day) is £5 per person.

**Please note** that we have to give them the final numbers for the tour 2 weeks before the AGM. As the AGM is on Saturday 11th May this means that you need to tell David Clegg that you will be attending the AGM (and that you want to go on the tour) by Friday 26th April.

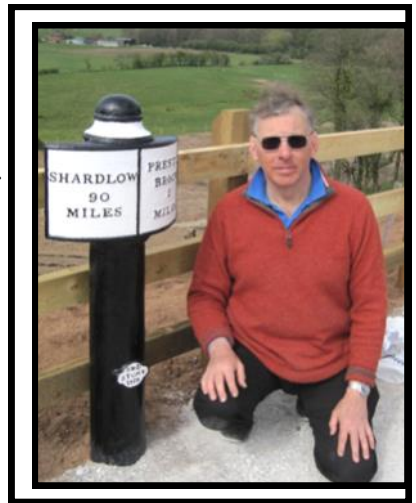
As you will see on pages 10/11 there used to be a canal at Apedale, but you would be hard pushed to find any remains there today as it closed in 1850. The canal was known by several different names: Apedale Canal, Sir Nigel Gresley's Canal, or simple Gresley's canal. It was hoped to join it to our canal via the Newcastle Junction Canal, an inclined plane, and the Newcastle Canal, but the through route was never completed.

To avoid confusion I should point out that this is a different "Sir Nigel Gresley" to the one who was a locomotive engineer and had a famous (and now preserved) blue-liveried railway locomotive named after him.

However, there is a narrow-gauge railway at Apedale which offers short rides and will be open on the day of our AGM. Steam train (2 foot gauge) rides are available every half hour until 16:00 with a return fare of £4 (£2.50 single). The return trip (0.5 Km each way) takes about 15 minutes.

Enough from me. Hope to see you at the AGM.

*Roger Evans*



## Editorial

Hello everyone

It's supposed to be Spring, the snowdrops and daffodils both came out together, but the temperature still seems to be very low! Our tortoise is still fast asleep and the boat remains decidedly cold inside. We had hoped to make our usual Spring journey around the Four Counties Ring before now, but health issues got in the way. We have now rescheduled for early April, so fingers crossed.

This year has been a record one for us for attendance at funerals (and the year is still young!). One of the most moving was that of canal legend David McCarthy (Mr Mac). Chairman Roger was part of the guard of honour (all with shovels) and we all wore WRG uniform. Mr Mac was 40 days short of his 100th birthday and will be greatly missed.

Chairman Roger and I were very interested in the examination of Croxton Aqueduct ( see pages 4/5) and went dashing to site hoping to take pictures. We were very lucky as the towpath was left open and the CRT staff were most helpful.

About a year ago, the Cheshire Locks work party were asked if we would be prepared to paint the aqueduct (which is definitely in need of some TLC). We agreed to undertake the task, but arrangements were never made. It did not help that we would need a workboat to deal efficiently with the offside, and these are in very short supply.

Please don't forget that annual subscriptions are due on 1st April. If you normally pay by other than standing order there should be a reminder included with this issue..

On looking back in the cashbook which I inherited in 2003 (yes, I've been membership secretary for 20 years) it seems subscriptions have been unchanged since 1991– not many societies can say that!



*Margaret English*

## Croxton Aqueduct

On the last day of January, a stoppage notice was posted about a closure of our canal to enable Croxton Aqueduct to be drained for inspection the next day. Too good an opportunity to miss!

Chairman Roger and I did without morning coffee break and hurried down to the aqueduct (where the canal crosses the River Dane below Big Lock). The aqueduct was originally wide, as wide boats from the Weaver could bring their cargoes for transhipment through Big Lock and up to Middleswich Town Warf. It was washed away in floods in the 1930s and was rebuilt as a narrow waterway, although the brick supports of the original structure are still visible.

We were told that the aqueduct is now leaking quite badly, so it seemed a good idea to carry out an inspection while Lock 74 (see previous issue) was closed. Unfortunately, the pump which was available was not strong enough to drain the structure completely, but it was doing its best! Both ends of the aqueduct were dammed and inspectors (in bright orange hi-vis) were abseiling down the side to inspect beneath.



Thanks go to the CRT staff who were helpful and friendly. We await the results of the inspection with interest.

*Picture and  
article,  
Margaret  
English*





*Speaking of Lock 74, the CRT staff at Croxton Aqueduct told us that the new gates were being fitted on the same day, so after lunch we went for a walk.....*



## **Notice of AGM of the Trent & Mersey Canal Society 2024**

**To be held at Apedale Heritage Centre**

**On**

**Saturday 11th May at 10.30 for 11am**

**A mine tour will be available following lunch at a cost of £5 per person**

*Numbers for the Mine Tour are needed at least two weeks in advance ,*

*Numbers for buffet at least one week in advance.*

***Bookings to David Clegg (see page 23)***

**The buffet (at 1200):**

*Mixed sandwiches*

*Chicken and bacon, cheese and spring onion, Ham.*

*chicken drumsticks*

*baby potatoes in mint*

*Indian platter*

*Salad*

*Mediterranean quiche*

*Chocolate brownies GF*

*Gateau*

*of course chips with if needed*

*tea coffee.*

***Directions to Apedale:***

**Address**

**Apedale Heritage Centre,  
Loomer Road,  
Chesterton, Newcastle-under-Lyme,  
Staffordshire. ST5 7LB**

***Please use the postcode “ST5 7LB” which will guide you to Loomer Road. Then simply follow Loomer Road to the end, where you will find the entrance to Apedale Community Country Park. Parking for the Heritage Centre can be found about 600 yards from the entrance.***

***Note: please make sure that your SatNav guides you to Loomer Road.***

***For more information, check the Heritage Centre website***

***[apedale.co.uk](http://apedale.co.uk)***

**Society merchandise and second-hand books  
will be available for purchase.**

For those interested, there is also a railway on site (this does not form part of the AGM or tour).

***For more information on Apedale, see Pages 10-11***

## Weston Lock, New Gates

I think most boaters will be delighted to see, at long last, new bottom gates being fitted to Lock 4 (Weston Lock) on the southern section of the T&M.

I called there yesterday (Thursday 2nd Feb) to see what was taking place and to take a few pictures. According to the CRT web site the scheduled stoppage is due to last until Friday 17th Feb.



Although I have boated through there many times, with the lock being de-watered I couldn't help but appreciate the sheer size and structure of the gates, and the amount of timber required to construct them. No wonder they are so expensive!

*Vaughn Wheatley*

See also P.18.....



## Great Haywood Junction

The threat to the ambience and scenery of Great Haywood Junction has been removed when the local council turned down the planning application for the construction of a sizeable housing estate opposite the junction. Grateful thanks go to Lichfield Branch IWA, who campaigned vigorously, and to all those who made their feelings known.



*Picture: Waterwy Images*

Please send contributions for the next issue to me, Margaret English, by e-mail 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 May/June 2024 edition is **18/04/2024**

## Apedale Canal

In the early days of industrial activity in Apedale and throughout Britain, transport of coal and minerals was by pack horse or wagon. This was both slow and also expensive, as road tolls often had to be paid. An answer to the problem came along with the industrial revolution in the middle of the 18th century; the canal.

Apedale canal was built in 1776, after Sir Nigel Gresley (the then owner of the Apedale Estate) and his son Nigel Bowyer-Gresley obtained permission to build it through an Act of Parliament in 1775. Unlike many Canals this was privately owned. The 1775 act also set maximum prices that coal could be sold for, since the canal would give the Gresley's almost total control over the supply to Newcastle-under-Lyme. For the first 21 years the price could be no greater than 5 shillings per tonne, and for a further 21 years the price was restricted to 5 shillings and 6 pence. The canal was often called 'Sir Nigel Gresley's Canal' or just "Gresley's Canal".

It ran from Sladderhill colliery in Apedale, past the Iron works, across what is now the Holditch Industrial Estate, and then onto Newcastle. The Newcastle end of the canal terminated at Liverpool Road, North of Newcastle, close to where the college now stands.

Later, in 1795, the Newcastle Canal was opened on the opposite side of Newcastle. This canal connected to the Trent and Mersey Canal and therefore to the entire canal network. Although this was a big step forward in transportation for Newcastle, goods from the Apedale Canal destined for further afield still had to be transported between the canals by wagon. So two years after the opening of the Newcastle Canal, a branch off the Apedale Canal was built by local businessmen including Nigel Bowyer Gresley; the Newcastle Junction Canal.

The canal joined the **Newcastle-under-Lyme Junction Canal** at a mill in Cross Heath, a site now occupied by a motorbike shop in Swift House on the A34 Liverpool Road. It then ran northwest to Milehouse, Chesterton and the Apedale mines. The Junction Canal was planned in turn to connect to the Newcastle-under-Lyme Canal via an inclined plane, but this was not built due to lack of money, thus the Sir Nigel Gresley's Canal remained severed from the main inland network and the Junction Canal became no more than an extension of the Gresley's Canal.

Although successful for a while, the canal was eventually abandoned and some of the the land reused for the railways.

The coming of rail also spelt the end for the Apedale Canal which closed to traffic in the 1850. Very little remains other than a few traces in Apedale, notably an embankment which carried the canal across the stream at the bottom of Apedale Valley can still be seen.

*Information courtesy of Apedale Heritage Centre*

<https://www.apedale.co.uk/history/apedale-canal/>



*Heritage Centre Frontage*



*Museum Artefacts*

## Trent and Mersey Canal Society - Annual Accounts

	2023 Accounts	versus	2022 Accounts
<b>Income</b>			
	Bank Interest	Nil	<i>Nil</i>
(Note 2)	Gift Aid	£119.25	<i>£171.45</i>
	Grand Trunk Advertising	£100.00	<i>£100.00</i>
	Membership Subscriptions	£960.00	<i>£1,010.00</i>
(Note 3)	Donations	£190.00	<i>£381.00</i>
(Note 4)	Fund Raising	Nil	<i>£37.00</i>
(Note 5)	Sale of Goods	£150.95	<i>£374.95</i>
	=====>	£1,520.20	=====> <i>£2,074.40</i>

### **Expenditure**

	Accountancy	Nil	<i>Nil</i>
	AGM & Annual Report	£290.00	<i>£319.00</i>
	Grand Trunk Magazine	£1,030.43	<i>£1,185.54</i>
	Insurance	£100.80	<i>£100.80</i>
(Note 6)	Meetings (Speaker, Room Hire)	£120.00	<i>£175.00</i>
	Prizes and Engraving	Nil	<i>£10.00</i>
(Note 7)	Publicity & Recruitment	£0.34	<i>£54.34</i>
	Sales (Stock, Postage)	£25.00	<i>£27.05</i>
	Subscriptions to other orgs	£91.50	<i>£76.50</i>
(Note 8)	Sundry Expenses	£104.89	<i>Nil</i>
	=====>	£1,762.96	=====> <i>£1,948.23</i>

**Loss in 2023 -£242.76 (Surplus 2022) £126.17**  
**(before Campaigns (before Campaigns**  
**& Donations) & Donations)**

### **Campaigns and Donations**

	Burslem Port Trust	Nil	<i>Nil</i>
	Cheshire Locks Campaign	Nil	<i>Nil</i>
	=====>	£0.00	=====> <i>£0.00</i>

**Final Loss in 2023 -£242.76 (Surplus 2022) £126.17**

## Notes

1) This note does NOT appear in the accounts as there was no expenditure in 2023, but it is noted here as a reminder. When Anderton Boat Lift Trust closed down, they left the residue to us. It is ring-fenced for use ONLY at Anderton Lift.

Ring-fenced for Anderton Boat Lift (ex-Trust)	<b>£1,601.28</b>	<b>2022 £1,601.28</b>
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2) Gift aid was less in 2023 as we had no new life members with gift aid (one in 2022).

3) Donations were lower in 2023 as we only attended MFAB (in 2022 MFAB and IWA Festival of Water).

4) Fund Raising was less in 2023 as the profit of raffles at several meetings was banked in 2022, but was not worth banking in 2023 (so was carried over to the following year).

5) Sales in 2023 were lower as the stall only went out once (twice in 2022).

Total Nominal Value of stock at the end of 2023	<b>£439.90</b>	<b>2022</b>
<b>£455.35</b>		

6) Meetings cost less in 2023 as fewer speakers asked for payment.

7) Publicity & Recruitment was less in 2023 as our stall only attended 1 event (2 in 2022).

8) Sundry expenses were more in 2023 as we bought some milepost paint.

Bank Balance at the end of year	<b>£11,122.17</b>	<b>2022 £11, 364.93</b>
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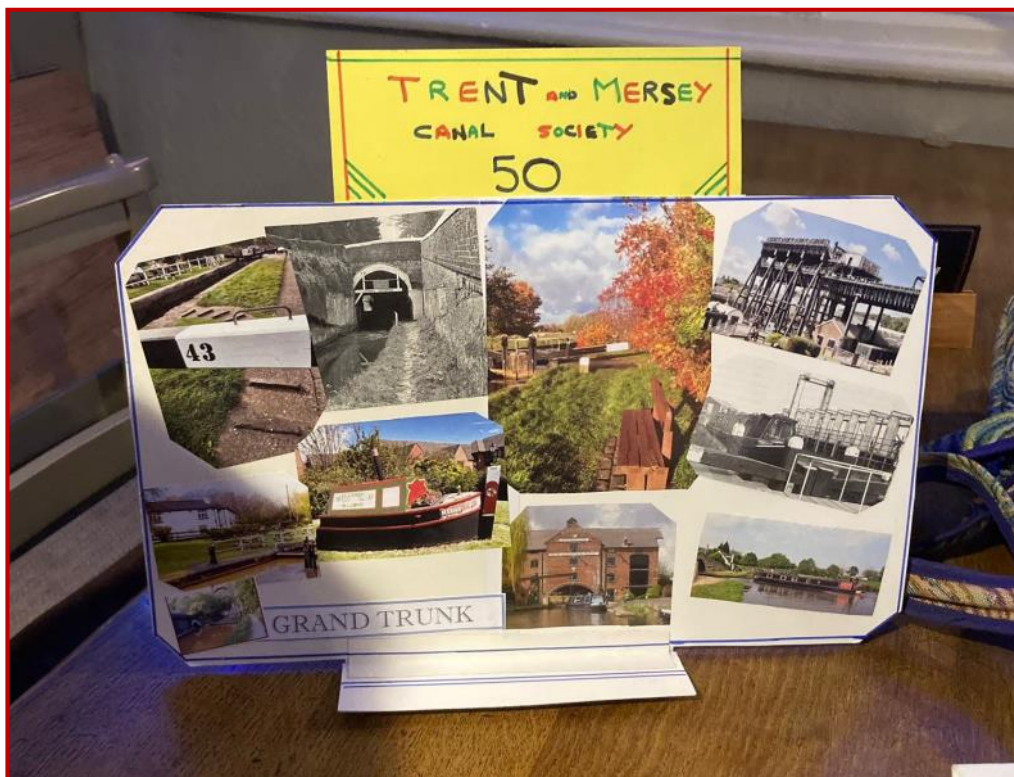
## 50th Anniversary Dinner



On Friday 2nd February, a group of 19 members gathered in the upper room at Red Bull Public House to celebrate the actual day that the society was born. This was an informal event including a very pleasant meal and lots of chatting about the early days of the society.

Founding chairman Steve Guest, said a few words about members who are sadly no longer with us. He read out a list and we all raised our glasses in a toast. Steve had intended to resign after the initial project was successful and Harecastle Tunnel was re-opened— here he is, 50 years later!

Anne Chetwyn had prepared a very special card for the occasion, shown on the next page. Thank you, Anne.



*Photos by David and Rob Clegg*

### Subscriptions Due

***Don't forget that society subscriptions are due on 1st April.***

If you pay by standing order, then you need do nothing more (and thank you very much).

If not, you need to pay by cheque, cash or direct bank transfer.

The current annual rate (unchanged for a very long time!) is

**£10.00.**





## **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)**

## **Recent Work Parties**

Unfortunately work parties for the first 2 months of 2024 had to be cancelled due to inclement weather. The plan had been to complete the lock 53 gates and continue work on the surrounding metal fencing.



To make up, here is a picture of Lock 53 (Thirlwood Upper) taken in late 2023– work in progress!

*Photo John Brighthouse*



## Weston lock New Gates

I've been back on the trail of a few more pictures of the total gate replacements at Weston Lock

Unfortunately I've missed the arrival of the new bottom gates (which I'm informed took place on Monday of this week), when the road to Weston was closed from the A514.

The driver would have much preferred to come in on that route, as it would have avoided the villages to some extent, but apparently, he was forced to come via Aston, which I imagine would have made some very interesting pictures as he negotiated Weston Road in the middle of the village!

I spoke to a supervisor on site, and he told me that that the new gates were made from European Brown Oak, and it was his understanding that the wood was home grown in Scotland, which is rather nice. The planned work also involves renewal of the cills.

Indeed some repointing of the stonework was also taking place while I was there, so it looks pretty much like a major refurbishment by the time they've done. Well done CRT and worth waiting for!



P.S. The photos of the large square timbers are the cills, prior to machining to shape etc.

*Vaughn*

*Wheatley*





### **Interesting towpath closure.**

*While we don't often report towpath closure, the one below (posted on 6th February) refers to the overflow weir beyond Croxton Aqueduct and before Bramble Cuttings, where the canal seems permanently in danger of overtopping and the water cascades down into the Dane*

Please be advised the towpath between Bridge 175, Flint Mil and Bridge 176, Hell's Kitchen Bridge on the Trent & Mersey Canal will be closed between Monday 26 February until Monday 11 March to allow our engineers to carry out necessary investigation works to the towpath and weir.

Whilst the canal will be kept open to navigation, we politely request customers to approach the area with caution and to listen to any advice that may be given onsite.

*We await the results with interest!*

*Margaret English*



**Red Bull Public House**

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

**Meetings 7.45 for 8pm**

*If you would like to join others for a pub meal before the event,  
contact David Clegg for details.*

**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*** 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.



Here is our 50th birthday logo, carefully arranged by Dave Clegg. We will be using this until the end of the year.

*Thank you, Dave*

*Welcome to new member*

**John Glock  
of  
Leighton Buzzard**



*We hope you enjoy being a member of the society, John*

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**TRENT AND MERSEY CANAL SOCIETY**  
*a charity recognised for tax purposes by HMRC*

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

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



**New  
Venue**



**INLAND  
WATERWAYS**  
ASSOCIATION

**Lichfield Branch**

[www.waterways.org.uk/lichfield](http://www.waterways.org.uk/lichfield)

**Now  
Fridays**

**Branch AGM followed by  
"Photographing the Cut"  
With Margaret Beardsmore**

**FRIDAY 22nd March 2024**

**7.15PM FOR 7.30PM START**

**Darwin Hall off Heathcot Place, Lichfield  
WS13 6RQ**



**Non members welcome**

**Free entry, but donations appreciated**

**Further Information please contact the Branch at  
[lichfield@waterways.org.uk](mailto:lichfield@waterways.org.uk)**

The Inland Waterways Association is a membership charity that works to protect and restore the country's 7,000 miles of canals and navigable rivers.

**Next to Inkwell Pub and Waitrose**