

GRAND TRUNK



*Articulated Lorry
in The Trent & Mersey Canal
(See page 2)*

Autumn 2025

www.trentandmerseycanalsociety.org.uk

On 5th May, your chairman and editor fled to Riga (Latvia), leaving all well on the good old T&M. On 8th May, the following notification arrived from CRT.....

The Navigation and towpath between Lock 69 and Lock 70 on the Trent & Mersey Canal are currently closed due to a police incident involving an articulated vehicle that has entered the canal near Bridge 165A.

Our teams are working closely with the vehicle owners and emergency services to coordinate a safe and careful recovery. Due to the unusual nature and location of the vehicle, this operation is expected to continue throughout the weekend to ensure the protection of canal infrastructure.

Once the vehicle has been removed, our engineers will carry out a full inspection to assess any damage and determine the necessary repairs before we can confirm a reopening date.

A further update will be provided on Monday, 12 May.

Horried, we searched our local paper (online). The results are reproduced below.....

Booth Lane in Middlewich closed after HGV enters canal

A LORRY crashed into the canal in Middlewich trapping the driver in the cab and causing an ongoing road closure.

Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service received reports a heavy goods vehicle had entered the Trent and Mersey Canal from Booth Lane, near British Salt, at 7.15am on Thursday, May 8.

Two fire engines, one from Congleton and one from Macclesfield, went to the scene.

While the driver is not believed to be seriously hurt, at 7.35am the fire service reported they were stranded in the cab.

At 7.43am, fire officers reported Booth Lane was still closed and warned drivers to avoid the area.

A spokesman for the fire service said: "A heavy goods vehicle has entered the canal on Booth Lane in Middlewich.

"The driver is not thought to be seriously hurt at this time, but the road is closed to enable firefighters to rescue them from the cab.

"Please avoid the area if you can."

From Middlewich Guardian 8th May



A new housing estate is springing up opposite the canal at this point. As you can see from the front cover, new road markings have narrowed the road to allow vehicles to turn into the estate entry. Perhaps this change had a part to play?

*I am extremely grateful to John Watson for providing me with these pictures.....*Editor

Chairman's Bit

Well, I suppose it had to happen after all the hot weather, but it is still sad to see that CRT have announced the closure (from 25th July until at least 22nd August) of our canal between Middlewich and the summit. It looks like this closure will continue afterwards unless there is "sufficient and prolonged rain over several weeks". So far the canal south of Harecastle remains open, but "further restrictions may be required" if the situation doesn't improve. See page 21 for full details.

The Cheshire Locks work parties will continue monthly even whilst the canal is closed, so why not take advantage of the good weather to join us. See page 18.



Rather than ramble on I have included two pictures below taken during the emergency stoppage at Colwich Lock to replace a ground paddle.

Drained Forebay

Missing Paddle



Editorial

Hello everyone! Chairman Roger and I are recently back from working at the Foxton rally, celebrating 75 years since the first one helped start the revival of our canals. The journey was not without its pitfalls. We set off down the Trent & Mersey Canal with plenty of time to spare, but were held up at Stone. Deep drafted working boats who had been waiting for water levels to rise, were struggling to get through Star Lock. The queue was cleared eventually, but we kept going until we were safely past Aston Lock.

We were held up again at Colwich, where emergency repairs were in progress. This was not posted on the usual site, although all the hire boats had been warned! When the repair was complete, I spent several hours working boats through and met some lovely people.

We left the T&M at Fradley and turned onto the Coventry, where we found a lovely spot to moor with a wood behind the towpath. Unfortunately, one of our boating cats did not come in the next morning. We waited, searched and called for three days, then had to go and boat for long days to get to Foxton on time. You can imagine our state of mind! The rally was a great success, the weather warmed up and we fell in love with Market Harborough.

We decided to return home on the Soar and teamed up with another boat, a great help through Leicester. On returning to the T&M at Shardlow, we were disappointed to note that the double locks had deteriorated since we were last that way. Towpath gossip warned us that water levels further North remained low, so we left the T&M at Great Haywood and turned onto the Staffs and Worcs. We knew the Shroppie would be ok, as all those loos flushing in Wolverhampton keep the water supply going. We were 2 days from home, and not looking forward to returning with one elderly cat and one little ghost, when Chairman Roger's phone rang—it was a vet in Tamworth ringing to tell us that our prodigal cat had just been handed in— he had been missing for three weeks!

Just as soon as we got home, we drove to Tamworth and gathered up our boating miscreant. He was thin, hungry and distressed but otherwise fine and now back to normal.

We are working at the Bridgewater rally at the end of August, so I hope the feline crew remains intact— I'll let you know next time!

Don't forget to note the date of our Christmas meal!



Boat Names



In 1971 my late wife and I bought 'Small Fry II' a 15 ft cabin cruiser on a trailer. (We went all over the place including the Caldron canal to the end of the Leek Arm).

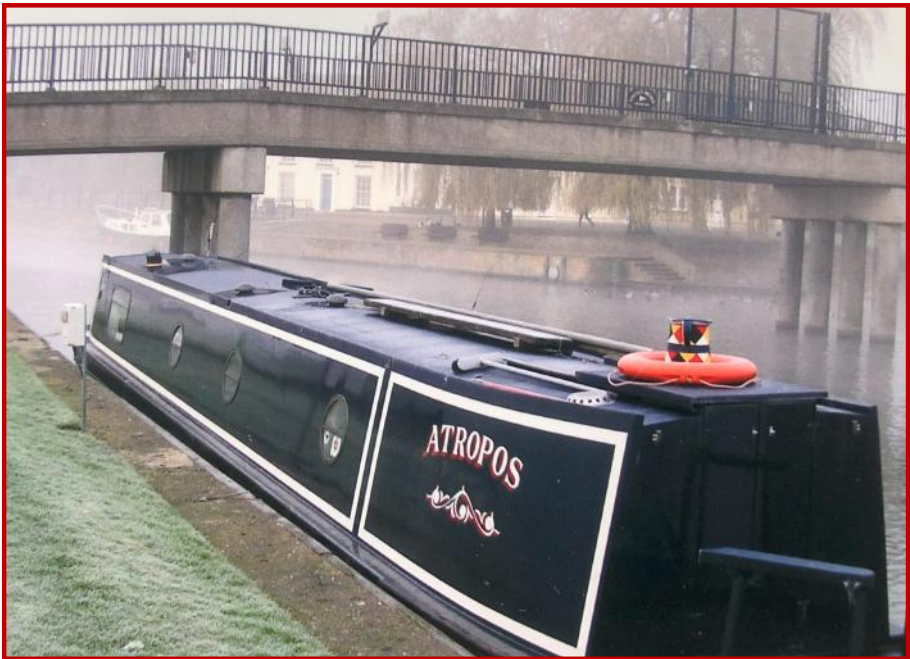
After moving to Sheffield, in 1975 we bought a 25 ft Springer ex-hire boat and renamed it **'Chateau Fleurie'** (we both liked Beaujolais). Sold 1978.





We bought 'Nimbus' from Rugby Boatbuilders for hiring (not very successfully) and then took it over and renamed it '**Riverdale**', after the road where we lived in Sheffield. Sold 1995.

We decided to get a custom-built boat and over the winter of 1995/6,



Peter Nicholls made us a 46 ft floating cottage but what name for it? As an anaesthetist, I suggested 'Ethereal'; pooh poohed by my wife and daughter. While discussing it, as a great fan of 'Hornblower' I recalled he had traversed the Thames & Severn canal on his way to his first command: HMS Atropos. No more argument; atropine is an anaesthetic drug so Atropos was the name. Subsequently on several occasions I was hailed as 'Captain Hornblower'...

Adrian Padfield

What's in a name?

As we are very fond of telling anyone who will listen, our narrowboat *Almira*, has been in our family ever since she was built 54 years ago in 1971.

Alan's uncle, Harry Turner, took delivery from G. Faulkner of Cosgrove and was responsible for naming her.

There has been much discussion and speculation, resulting in an expectation that the initials of some of the family would be used. To call the boat Rajah (Robert, Audrey, Judith, Alan, Harry). Uncle Harry had other ideas, however.

On delivery, two very 1970s nameplates (pictured) were mounted alongside the BW registration number on wooden backing plates mounted inside the leading side windows. The name on these plates was Almira.



At the time none of us knew the origins of this name, as Uncle Harry was very mysterious about it and, of course, in 1971, there was no Google to consult. We were also distracted by the rather eccentric decision to register Almira on the maritime registry in Plymouth as a 'single deck, single screw, steel ship'!

Uncle Harry was amused by keeping both decisions a mystery and never revealed the truth of either before going to cruise the great canals in the sky in 1993.



At that point we all thought the mysteries would remain unsolved and, indeed, we still have no idea about the dual registration. We do, however, still carry on board a wooden plaque with the legend 'Reg'd at Plymouth'. Back in 1970s, Harry dabbled in enamelling and produced a small pin tray with the figure of a woman in white on a blue background. this, we were told, was Almira, who was possibly a princess (see picture).

Wind forward many years and a casual chat on the towpath brought forward a suggestion that Almira could be an opera. This made good sense, as Harry was a lover of opera with a good collection of records. Google is now a 'thing' and guess what? Almira is indeed an opera by Handel and she is actually a queen.

The mystery is solved. We have a unique boat name based on one of Uncle Harry's passions, and although neither of us like opera, we would never consider changing it. The ship registration is almost certainly going to remain a mystery for all time, however.

Alan and Anne Chetwyn



Welcome to New Member

**Michael Isherwood
Of
Davenham, Cheshire**

*We hope you enjoy being a member of
the Society.*

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 Winter edition is 01/10/25.

Trent & Mersey Canal Society AGM 2025

This year's AGM took place on Saturday 17th May at Stoke-on-Trent Boat Club. The event was not as well attended as in previous years, but was a great success. Grateful thanks go to the amazing Dave and Jean Clegg for organising this special day.



The AGM business was taken care of painlessly, and the committee was re-elected. Concern about member numbers in the Southern part of our region was noted.

Canal-based and fiction books were available for purchase, including the Anderton Boat Lift booklet. Tea and coffee were

available throughout and a wonderful (and very plentiful) finger buffet was provided by the boat club.

Following lunch, a guided walk was led by IWA's Alison Smedley (who had rushed home from another charity event specially). The weather was fine and sunny and Alison explained how the course of the Caldon Canal around the Leek arm had been changed over time. A special treat was a trip into the gardens of the Smedleys and their neighbour to investigate the remains of the staircase locks which were once there.



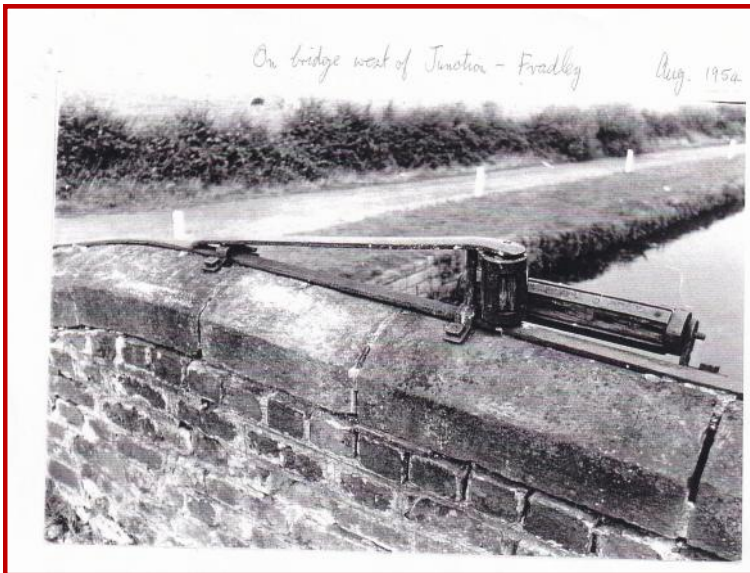
After a refreshing drink we all dispersed, tired but happy.

Historic Pictures

In June, chairman Roger received an email (via the website) from Mr Desmond Wrenn: He told us that his late father-in-law had left a collection of photographs relating to canals. Mrs Wrenn felt these should be passed to an appropriate organisation. We were delighted to take charge of those relating to the Trent & Mersey Canal.

The photographer was William (Bill) Jones. He worked as a carpenter for British Waterways for nearly 30 years, working out of the Red Bull maintenance workshops in Stoke on Trent (sic). He worked on and maintained most of the locks covered by them.

The prints are of great historic interest and a few are reproduced here. The headings are those written on the prints.



*Bridge West of Junction
(Fradley) 1954*

Note double roller.....Ed.

Next Page: 1) Alrewas Lock 1961 2) Near Anderton Lift 1954

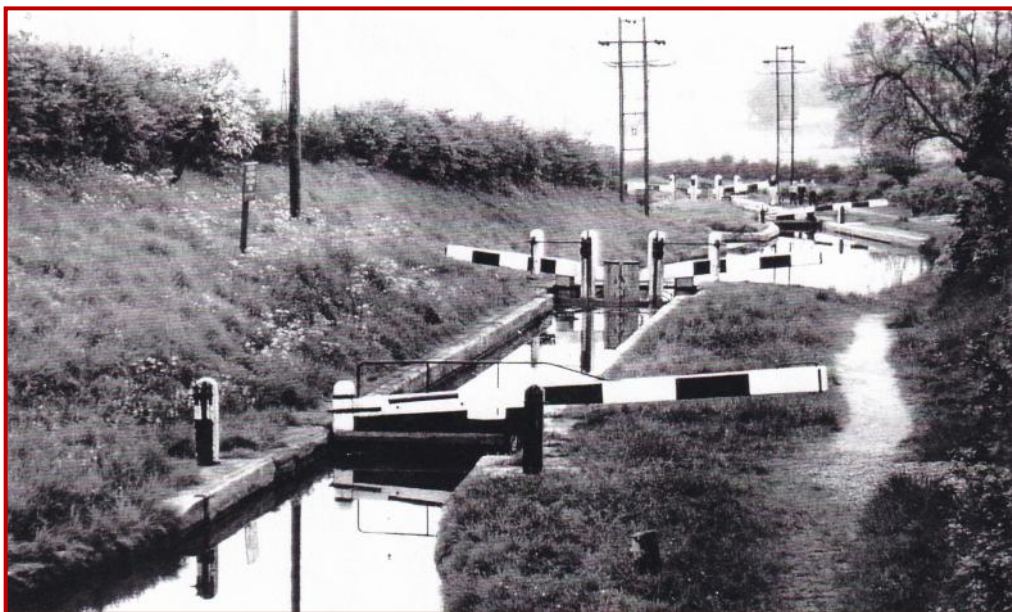
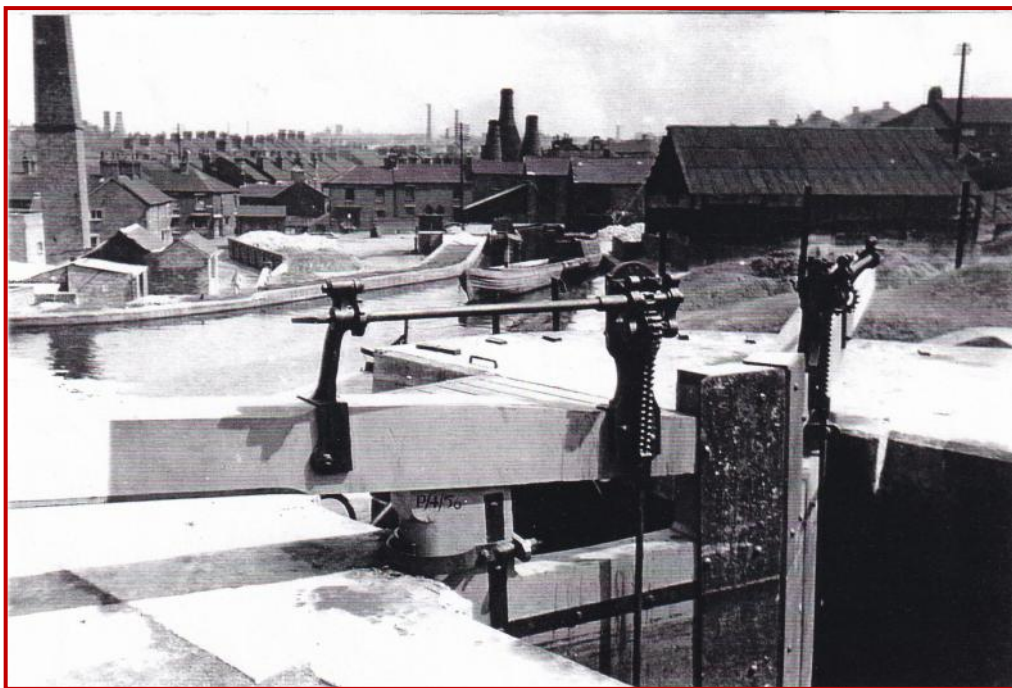
3) Etruria Junction 1956 4) Lock North of Stone 1961

Bottom of Meaford Flight (Ed)

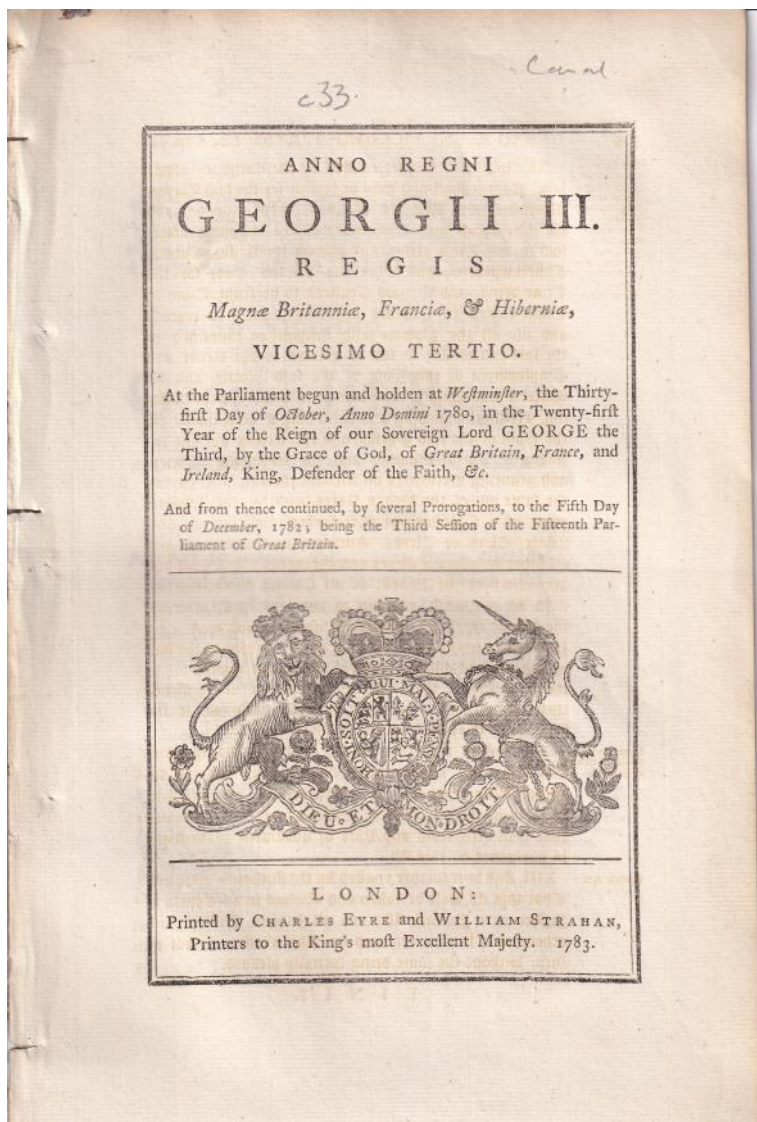
Albion Lock

Whitson 196



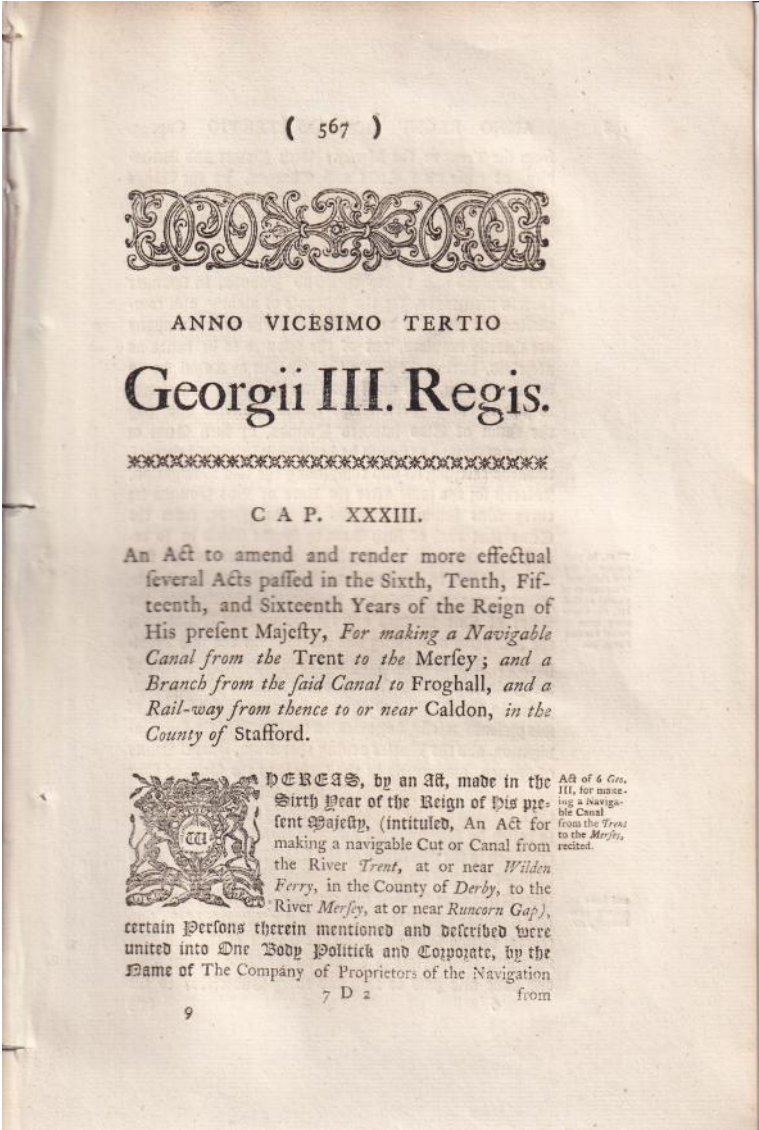


**A Rare Copy of 1783 Act Authorising the Construction of 'a canal
from the Trent to the Mersey'**



Title Page of Document

Michael Handford owns a rare copy of an act of parliament which authorised the building of our canal. He would like to sell it to someone who is interested in the history of the canal and would take care of such a valuable document.



First Page

See next page for more details.....Ed.

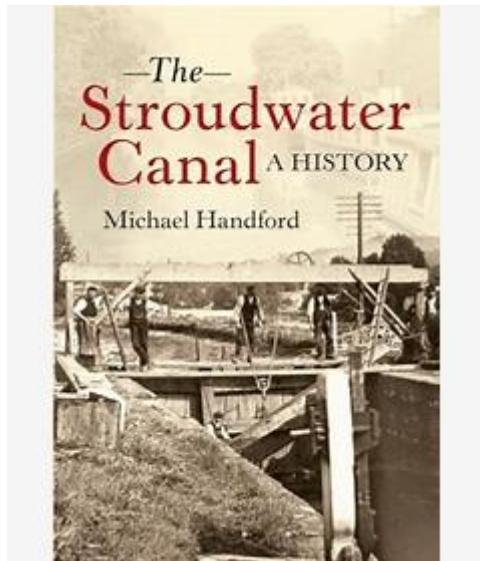
Those of you with a collection of waterway books will be familiar with the name of Michael Handford. He is the author of *The Stroudwater Canal* (1976 and 1979) and joint author of *Stroudwater and Severn Canal Towpath Guide* (1984).

The Stroudwater Canal was commercially successful canal which was abandoned in 1904. Michael was a founder member of the Stroudwater, Thames and Severn Canal Trust and assisted the Shropshire Union Canal Society in their plans to restore the Montgomery Canal. ***He also happens to be a life member of T&MCS!***

If you are interested in this document, Michael has given us permission to publish his email address so that you can contact him directly. It is:

mahandford@gmail.com

Here is a picture of the title page of Michael's famous book– hope it is in all your collections!



Margaret English

Drought and Canals

As I write this, the first official hosepipe ban has been imposed in Yorkshire. However, dropping water levels have been a problem on the canal system for some months. 2025 has been one of the driest summers on record (some of us remember the long hot summer of '76, with water turned off and stand-pipes in the streets). Our Trent and Mersey Canal has been suffering from low water from Harecastle through Stone, at Aston Lock, and at the exit to the Trent.

Sections of the canal (in common with other waterways) have been closed at short notice in order to improve the situation by restricting the flow of water.

As the situation worsens, farmers with permission to extract water for their crops have to take more and evaporation in hot weather exacerbates the problem.

CRT have issued the following notice on their website:

A spokesperson for the Canal and River Trust said they had asked boaters to "temporarily stop using locks on some stretches of canal" due to low water levels.

They said: "This conserves the available water to keep boats afloat and protect wildlife.

"Boats can still cruise between locks and paddlers can use our waterways as usual. The towpath is fully open for people to use and enjoy.

"The public can help us to preserve water by reporting leaks and any lock gates and paddles that have been left open."

The spokesperson said they would continue to monitor water levels and hoped to get the locks "back open to boats as soon as possible" as the charity will continue to monitor water levels.

Share our double Locks, make sure paddles are down and always give way to oncoming boats when the lock is in their favour (that's just me!)

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.

***Tony Walker 07708 320470
walker.tony31@gmail.com***

Cheshire Locks Work Parties

Thursday 17th April – We had a very productive day at Locks 63 and 62. The weather was excellent and there were 10 of us in attendance. 4 of us were able to put the finishing touches to Lock 63 which now looks really neat and paint the metal mooring bollards between Locks 63 and 62. We then joined the rest of the team who had already made great progress in prepping and painting Lock 62 and the extensive metal fence surrounding the adjoining sluice.

Thursday 15th May – Another successful outing. Weather was perfect and, although only 4 of us were able to attend, excellent progress was made by the party led by John Brighthouse. Myself and Colin Ambery were able to follow up on Friday. As a result, Lock 62 is now all but complete. We should be able to finish it and the extensive adjacent metal fence next time round.

Thursday 19th June – 4 of us attended Lock 62 on Thursday and 3 of us continued on Friday. On both days we finished slightly earlier than usual due to uncomfortably high temperatures. Despite this we made good progress and at last finished the extensive metal. All that remains to be done is the bannister railing, some touching up and numbering of the lock. I expect us to complete on our next visit and to progress on to Lock 61.



Tony Walker



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.*

October 17th

The Peak Forest Canal in old pictures by Dave Kitching.

November 21st

Phil Gay has had to withdraw his talk for health reasons. We wish him a speedy recovery!

Watch this space!

December 5th



Christmas meal– save the date!

There will be the usual quizzes and fun. Menu to follow as soon as possible. If you would like to attend, please contact David Clegg

David@thecleggs.co.uk

Tel: 07429 151313

January 16th 2026

Canals of the Eastern USA

by Pete Gurney

February 20th

The Shrewsbury and Newport Canals (Speaker TBA)

March 20th

TBA

April 17th

The History and Restoration of the Caldon Canal

(1981 John Cunningham Documentary)

+Wedgwood and Brindley Chalk and Cheese

Both presented by Ray Johnson (Staffordshire Film Archive).

May 9th

Annual General Meeting.

Venue as yet undecided, but will be somewhere unusual and interesting.

If you have any ideas about this, please pass your suggestions on to David and Jean Clegg

As we go to press, CRT made the following announcement:

This year, we've experienced one of the driest springs on record, consequently water availability across the region is significantly lower than in previous years. To help to protect increasingly limited water resources, preserve canal infrastructure and ecology and prolong the supply of water along the Trent & Mersey Canal, we will need to implement the following closure.

Starting Friday 25 July 2025, navigation will be closed from Lock 71, Middlewich to Lock 41, Hardingswood to help prolong the supply of water to the south of the canal.

Fortnightly updates will ne published on the situation.

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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
MINUTES SECRETARY	Jean Clegg: details as David Clegg
TALKS ORGANISERS	David and Jean Clegg, Email: David@thecleggs.co.uk Tel: 07429 151313
BURSLEM PORT REPRESENTATIVE	Dave Broome Email: dave.broome@burslemport.org.uk Tel:07974966253



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

Bringing Boats Back to Burslem



N/B Atropos on Chirk Aqueduct (P.7)

Colwich Lock Repair (P5)

