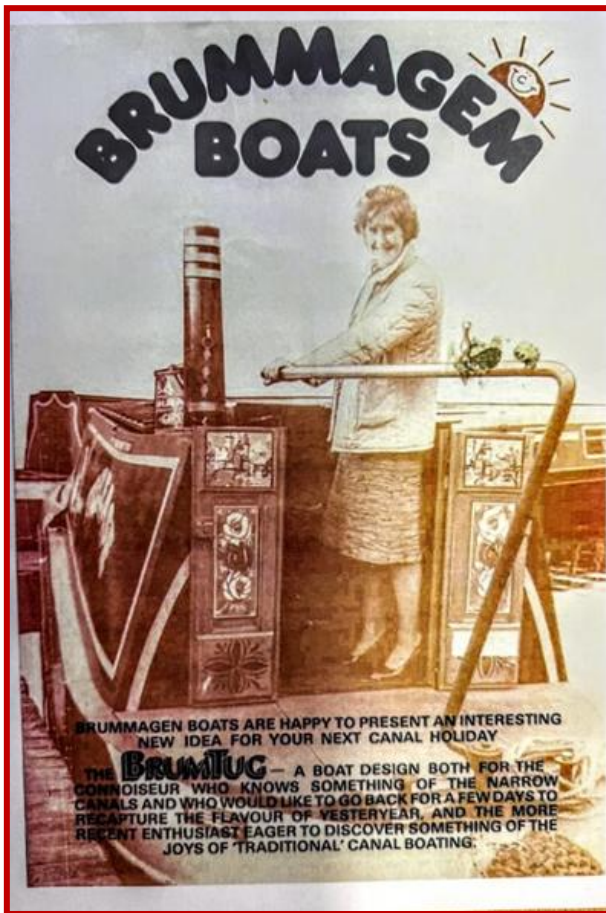


# GRAND TRUNK



*Ever heard of a Brumtug?  
See pages 8-11*

**Spring 2026**

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

## Chairman's Bit

Before setting off for our New Year cruise we noted which of the duplicated locks on the Cheshire Flight had chambers marked as out-of-use on CRT's "Notices and Stoppages" web-page. We started doing this after, several years ago, we sailed into an empty lock through wide-open bottom gates only to find that all the paddles were locked (so we had to back out and use the other chamber). This year we were surprised to discover, whilst actually passing up the flight, that 2 chambers were closed with all paddle locked despite NOT being shown in the notices.

We contacted CRT (by email) and pointed this out. After a couple of weeks they agreed that Lock 42 offside chamber (closed waiting for parts to repair a paddle) should be listed as a "Navigation Restriction" after all. However they also decided that Lock 61 towpath-side chamber (closed long-term because it is too narrow for many boats) should NOT be listed (even as "Advice"). In general they seem to feel that when there are 2 chambers they don't need to list the closure of a single chamber.



On 27<sup>th</sup> January a notice appeared saying: "*All passages of Harecastle Tunnel from March 1<sup>st</sup> must be pre-booked 48hrs before passage online.*" They originally proposed to make this change in 2021. However, after discussing it with us and the local IWA branch, they agreed to retain the morning for boats to "turn up and wait". We had explained how difficult it was to estimate an arrival time when passing up 26 locks. Also that this requirement would mean hirers from nearby bases would have to make the booking (through the hire company as the hirer wouldn't know which boat they were getting) even before they left home to pickup their boat.

**STOP PRESS:** Today (4<sup>th</sup> February) CRT relented and now say: *To guarantee passages please pre-book online 48hrs before your planned passage. We cannot guarantee of passage for boats unless pre-booked. Where possible, and subject to availability, if you turn up earlier than your booked slot, or you have not pre-booked and arrive before 12 noon, the Tunnel Keepers will do their best to get you through. We appreciate that navigation plans can be affected by various factors. If you have pre-booked but do not think you will arrive in time for your slot, or for any other enquiries, please contact us on 0303 040400.*

Roger Evans

Grand Trunk

## Editorial

Happy New Year to you all! We started out on our New Year cruise as usual, heading up the Macclesfield Canal as the Llangollen was out of commission, as was the route to Chester. We got most of the way up our favourite Cheshire Flight to discover we could only travel at tick-over. A broken throttle cable, we thought. We had a spare on board but were unsure how to fit it. A nice gentleman from RCR established that the problem was actually the lever on the control panel. He managed a temporary repair to get us home, but the next day it went again. Fortunately we were near *Heritage Narrow Boats*. Their engineer repaired it once again, but we thought we had better return home while we could. Not a good start to 2026!

This edition contains the official notice of our AGM. Please save the date (although a venue has yet to be decided). There is also a report of more problems with Anderton Boat Lift and the official notice of Harecastle opening times and booking arrangements. If you have read the Chairman's bit, you will know they are not ideal.

You may have noticed that Chairman Roger and I live and moor on the Northern end of our wonderful canal (actually on The Middlewich Branch of The Shropshire Union just above Wardle Lock). This means that we know far more about the doings at this end than those further South. I see from CRT notices that all sorts of things are happening, trees down, fluctuating water levels, lock closures to name but a few-BUT I AM UNABLE TO COMMENT OR TAKE PICTURES OF THE SOUTHERN SECTION because I am simply too far away.

If any members further South would like to send me copy about Southern happenings, I would be delighted. Alternatively, if anyone would like to take over as editor of the magazine, I would be happy to arrange this.

Looking forward to a trouble-free Spring cruise  
(usually around the Four Counties Ring)  
I'll let you know!



## 2025 Christmas Meal

On Friday 5th December a very special Christmas get-together was held at our usual venue. The food was excellent and the cracker jokes were as amusingly bad as always. During the meal diners tackled a general knowledge/Christmas quiz arranged by David Clegg, and a canal-related picture quiz set up by Anne Chetwyn. The evening was lively, friendly, and a great start to the festive season. Thank you to the Cleggs for arranging the event and to Anne for her enjoyable quiz. Have a look at page 20 and see what other delights are waiting for members (non-members are also welcome).

Here are some pictures David took of the festivities.



- 1) *Enjoyable Meal in Convivial Surroundings*
- 2) *Picture quiz– where could that be?*
- 3) *Have a beary merry Christmas!*



*Margaret English*



**Talk by John Pomfret**  
**(to whet your appetite– 20th March)**

**City of Lakes and Rivers**

John will be telling us about waterways in and around Berlin. Following a brief introduction to the early, largely natural river navigations that served Berlin from its founding in the 13th century.

This talk traces the development of the canals and river navigations around Berlin, from the early canals of the 17th century, through the peak of expansion in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, to final completion of the Mittellandkanal in 2003, following the unification of Germany.

Having set the scene, we then take a tour along the present-day waterway system, starting with the complex network of waterways within the city, then looking at the links to the Baltic, the Elbe and the Rhein and upstream to the unique waterways of the Spreewald (the picture shows Potsdam). You will see ports and palaces, locks, lakes and a lido, old and new boat lifts and many other points of interest in and around this fascinating city.

## **Harecastle Tunnel Summer opening times** ***from 1 March 2026 to 31 October 2026:***

To guarantee passages please pre-book [online](#) 48hrs before your planned passage . We cannot guarantee of passage for boats unless pre-booked.

Where possible, and subject to availability, if you turn up earlier than your booked slot, or you have not pre-booked and arrive before 12 noon, the Tunnel Keepers will do their best to get you through.

We appreciate that navigation plans can be affected by various factors. If you have pre-booked but do not think you will arrive in time for your slot, or for any other enquiries, please contact us on 0303 0404040

For direct tunnel enquiries please email-  
[lentsnorthstaffs@canalrivertrust.org.uk](mailto:lentsnorthstaffs@canalrivertrust.org.uk).

### ***Bookable passages are available:***

Southbound (Kidsgrove to Tunstall) at 8am,  
10am, 12pm, and 2pm

Northbound (Tunstall to Kidsgrove) at 9am,  
11am, 1pm and 3pm

Please always follow the directions of our team members on site. Passage is only permitted with a working horn and tunnel light; at present we are unable to lend such items.



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 Summer edition is 01/04/2026

## A SMALL BOAT ADVENTURE

In the 1980s, Brummagem Boats of Sherborne Street Wharf, Birmingham built a small fleet of short boats characterised by their traditional design with a boatman's cabin, solid fuel stove and a sheeted, open hold. As a concession to modern requirements, the hold contained a small galley and toilet compartment. The 29ft BrumTug was born.



It was on a Wednesday in May 1984 that Brummagem Boats phoned to say that Tug No. 14 had been returned early from that week's hire and we could have it for an extra two and a half days at no extra charge. Needless to say, we accepted and we set off via the Soho Loop and the New Main Line to the Netherton Tunnel Branch.

From here I cannot document the overnight stops because I cannot locate the log for the journey. The next day, we traversed the tunnel, the Dudley No. 2 canal, the Dudley No. 1 Canal, Delph Locks and the Stourbridge Canal. We ignored the Stourbridge Arm and I don't know why because it had been open for a few years by this time. We joined the Staffordshire & Worcestershire Canal.

I know we moored in the delightful village of Kinver but did not attempt the Kinver Cocktail (a drink in every pub).

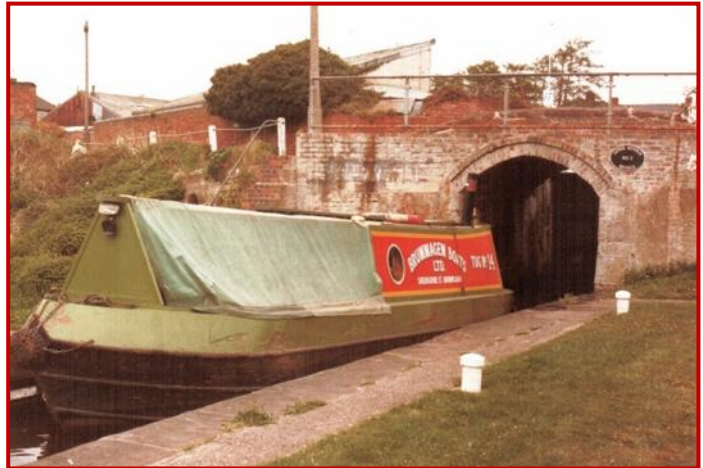
## DEBDALE LOCK



Here we see the wonderful Grade II listed Debdale Lock. It is cut into the red sandstone ridge and the rock has been further cut away to allow for the movement of the balance beams. The artificial cave was used as night stabling for the working horses.

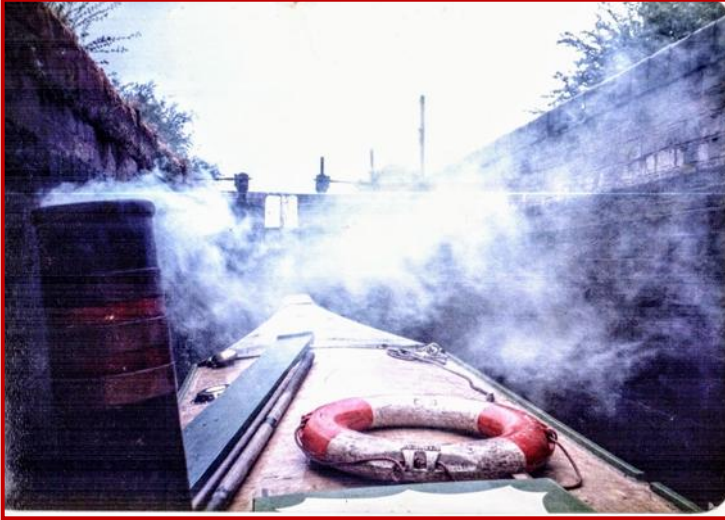
Onwards through Kidderminster we approached Stourport entering the basin on exiting York Street Lock. We moored up and made our way to The Bell for a well-earned drink. The landlady expressed surprise that my mate had returned to the pub so soon and I now knew what he had been doing while I was descending to the depths of the lock.

The next morning after breakfast we decided to have a look at the river – after all if we had any doubts it would be easy just to return the way we had come. I think we were both hoping to find a raging torrent - in fact it was almost impossible to discern any water movement at all.



Down the locks and into the river and my memories of this section are very limited. I recall it being very wide (of

course) and then there was the flotilla of tiny yachts in the charge of very young and highly competent sailors. I brought the tug to a stand and made sure I didn't make eye contact with anyone until the junior armada had gone. What I have no recollection of whatsoever is the locks on the river – and no photographs either.



Entry into Worcester, by contrast, was magnificent, our tiny, brave boat dwarfed by the railway bridge and the Cathedral. The very sharp left turn into Diglis Lock appeared and we could see a narrowboat about to leave so once again I paused with very

slight reverse in the centre of the river. The crew noticed the BrumTug and left the gates open and the crewman needing only to rejoin his boat jumped from the footbridge onto the stern deck. No injuries but it could have been a disaster. By contrast Tug No. 14 and its crew were a model of efficiency. My mate climbed the ladder to shut the gates and open the top paddles. I didn't realise quite how many people were watching our perfect operations from the lockside. As you can see, the stove was well alight.

And so – back to Birmingham with only 30 miles and 58 locks to go. Approaching Tardebigge Bottom Lock we saw the opportunity to share the locks with another short hire boat. The steerer asked if there were many locks to go because they had to be back in Stratford on Avon the following morning. There were 36 miles and 82 locks to go for them and they had been navigating with only a road atlas. We felt very sorry for them for surely this would have put them off boating for life. They left Tardebigge Top Lock at breakneck speed and were into the tunnel before we had finished the lock. Not surprisingly, we never saw them again.

Our 77 mile, 105 lock journey ended back at Sherborne Street Wharf without further incident.

Overall we decided that BrumTugs were a jolly good idea and jolly good fun.



*David Clegg*

***Welcome to New Members  
A warm welcome to***



***Philip Griffiths of  
Wheelock  
Sandbach***

***Mark Packham  
Of Kidsgrove***

***We hope you enjoy being members of the Society.***

# Treasurer's Report

	<u>2025 Accounts</u>	versus	<u>2024 Accounts</u>
<b><u>Income</u></b>			
Bank Interest	£127.84		£109.30
(Note 2) Gift Aid	£125.71		£185.50
Grand Trunk Adverts	£100.00		£100.00
(Note 2) Membership Subs	£930.00		£1,100.00
(Note 2) Donations	£129.00		£300.62
(Note 3) Fund Raising	£102.35		£165.00
Sale of Goods	£202.82		£173.72
	=====> <b>£1,717.72</b>		=====> <b>£2,134.14</b>

## **Expenditure**

Accountancy	Nil		Nil
(Note 4) AGM+Annual Report	£190.00		£289.92
(Note 5) Grand Trunk	£807.19		£880.29
Insurance	£100.80		£100.80
(Note 6) Meetings	£50.00		£115.95
Prizes and Engraving	Nil		Nil
(Note 7) Publicity /Recruitment	£88.96		£130.60
(Note 8) Sales (Stock, Postage)	£341.39		£200.66
Subscriptions to others	£95.50		£95.50
Sundry Expenses	Nil		Nil
	=====> <b>£1,673.84</b>		=====> <b>£1,813.72</b>

**Surplus in 2025** (before  
Campaigns & Donations) **£43.88** **Surplus 2024** **£320.42**

## **Campaigns and Donations**

(Note 1) Anderton Boat Lift	Nil		£1,060.00
Friends of Cromford Canal	Nil		£100.00
	=====>	<b>£0.00</b>	=====> <b>£1,160.00</b>

**Final Surplus in 2025** **£43.88** **Loss 2024** **-£839.58**

## Notes (to Treasurer's Report)

1) When Anderton Boat Lift Trust closed down, they left the residue to us. It is ring-fenced for use ONLY at Anderton Lift.

In 2024 we spent £1,060 on restoration of the mural at Anderton Boat Lift. There was no expenditure in 2025.

Total amount ring-fenced for Anderton Boat Lift (ex-Trust)	<b>£541.28</b>	<b>£541.28</b>
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2) Gift aid was more in 2024 as we had a new life member and an equivalent donation (from an Honorary), both with gift aid.

3) Fund Raising was apparently more in 2024 because the raffle takings in 2023 were actually banked in 2024.

4) AGM & Annual Report were less in 2025 because we used a less expensive venue.

5) Grand Trunk cost less in 2025 because there were only 4 editions as we completed the change from bi-monthly to quarterly. 2024 had 5 editions.

6) Meeting costs were higher in 2024 as we had to replace a broken projection screen.

7) Publicity & Recruitment was more in 2024 as we renewed the web domain names for 3 years.

8) Sales in 2024 included the launch of our Anderton Lift Millennium Restoration booklet in December. Sales in 2025 included the first sales of our new fleeces.

Sales expenditure in 2024 included printing of the Anderton Lift booklets. In 2025 it included restocking of Fleeces.

Total Nominal Value of stock	<b>£734.25</b>	<b>£541.85</b>
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Bank Balance at the end of year	<b>£10,326.47</b>	<b>£10,282.59</b>
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## The T&M Pub Crawl

The social evening in January was a little different this year, owing, as they say, ‘to circumstances beyond our control’.

The talk was Canals of the Eastern USA by Pete Gurney, and was, as usual, at the Red Bull Public House. Several of us go for a meal beforehand (numbers vary) and David (Clegg) organises our meals for us. However, this time the Red Bull chef was on holiday. They did offer to make sandwiches available, but this could have turned out to be somewhat complicated.

So, our amazing social organiser (you can blush now, David came up with the idea of dining out beforehand at The Bleeding Wolf, another pub just down the road. This, coincidentally, was already booked for the local IWA branch annual dinner, so you could say it was a practice run for some of us! David’s wife, Jean, was in Australia visiting family, but we were joined by Rob (David’s son), Jon and Sarah Honeysett and the speaker and his wife, Sue.

We all enjoyed a good meal (and beer) and time flew as usual. So, about 7.30 we thought we should make a move, pay the bill, and high-tail it to the right venue up the road. So far so good-then the lights went out and the till went down! You can see the problem, and time was passing. Oh and by the way, negotiating the roadworks right outside ‘The Wolf’ added to the kerfuffle.

It was agreed that Rob would stay behind and pay for everyone when power was restored (I should add that there was emergency lighting!)

David was obviously keen to get the speaker to ‘The Bull’ on time. We were very aware that members would be arriving to find NO SPEAKER (never a good feeling). All was well as we got there on time. As it turned out, the power wasn’t back, so the beleaguered pub said they would ring David next morning to settle the bill. Rob (computer whizz) came to ‘The Bull’ to en-

sure all things IT were ready for the lecture/ He was not staying, so he returned to 'The Wolf' and paid the bill (thanks for all your help, Rob)!

Good, all set for the Canals of the Eastern USA. An interesting insight into a subject I certainly knew nothing about. Who knew they had so many canals and 'big ones'! We were shown a fascinating old film from 1917 (I think) by Thomas Edison.

Thanks to David (and Jean) for all you do, and also to those who came along. It was a good turnout. We do have fun and learn as well.



*The Bleeding  
Wolf*

*The Red  
Bull*



So to conclude: The question is.....do two pubs constitute a pub crawl?  
*Anne Chetwyn*

## More Anderton Lift Problems

The Anderton Boat Lift was restored at great expense and with prodigious efforts made by our Society and many other organisations and individuals (see, "The Anderton Boat Lift -The restoration campaign years 1983-2003," by Sandy Wright and available through our Society) .

I commented in the last edition of *Grand Trunk* on the debacle of the Trust's inability to readily solve a fault an incredibly simple guillotine gate hoist application - now another example of total indifference.

The redesign of the Boat Lift in 1908 to electric power operation required a control cabin to be mounted atop the massive lift framework - which was also new - to house the electrical control gear and control the lift's operations and house and protect the lift operator - this was the operating hub of the whole new complex.

I was fortunate to experience this mode of operation prior to the lift closure. A visit to the control cabin with a known friend of the operator/manager was very informal and with several spectators/staff/boat crew often present in the control cabin, lots of noise from the myriad meshing synchro mesh gears outside, a kettle on the cast iron solid fuel stove steaming away inside the cabin for cups of tea and fanciful boating stories being told all helped to create a wonderful atmosphere!

I believe, when the latest restoration was first envisaged, it was planned not to replace the control cabin, as it would perform no function, but our Society objected and said they would defray the cost of its replacement and it was rebuilt and shipped down from British Waterways own Navigation Yard workshop less than one mile away.

A few days ago I took the opportunity to re-explore the upper lift framework, as I remembered how exciting it was to see this enormous forest of synchro-mesh gears, an engineering spectacle that is truly unique, but it is not actively promoted as a point of interest for the visitor, though it is available. Visitors need to be escorted, of course, for safety reasons and so a charge of £5.00 per visitor is made and our guide was most agreeable and knowledgeable.

And so, I booked a visit and the old excitement returned - another visitor in my group said it was more exciting than the trip boat transit - and I admired yet again the feeling at this incredible vista of engineering excellence, fascinating surrounding distant views and the additional feeling of slight vertigo. The view was fascinating and a unique engineering experience. Then we turned a corner on the walkway to access the platform giving entry to the motor room.



*I was appalled.*

The motor control room structure had obviously received no maintenance since the days of its installation. The rotting neglect around the windows was disgusting.

Just a simple advice to our Society that the framework needed repainting, at the correct time, would have been enough to ensure that our willing volunteer members would have attended to this simple, but time consuming function. But, TOP management does not care!!

The Boat Lift Volunteers are diligent, friendly and hard working. The public areas are tidy and attractive. BUT, management planning, long term maintenance and care, preservation and protection of what is special and important, a marketing plan to promote visitors and ensure repeat visits, where is this?

*John Tackley*

*Picture of the abandoned inside cabin on back cover.....Ed.*



## **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***

## Work Party Reports

(or the saga of the weather)

### Email from leader Tony on 11th November

We made further progress at Lock 41 last time despite being low on numbers. Unfortunately, we were hampered in completing the towpath side lock as it had to be closed off due to a damaged paddle. However, we completed as much Sadolin work as we could and finished the lock metalwork and handrails where possible. This still leaves quite a lot to be done including finishing off the woodwork plus prepping and painting the extensive surrounding metal fence and lamp-post.

***But!....***

**Thursday 20th November** – Our last work-party of 2025 was cancelled (weather too cold and damp for painting).

**Thursday 15th January** – Our first work-party of 2026 was cancelled (weather too cold and damp for painting).

***See below....***

Sorry to say that the weather forecast for Thursday shows no real sign of improvement - colder than today and the same likelihood of rain showers. In other words, too cold to apply Hammerite and too wet/damp to apply Sadolin. So we've taken an early decision to **CANCEL** Thursday's task. **Fingers crossed for better conditions in February so that we can resume work on Lock 41.**



*Tony Walker*

*Sounds familiar doesn't it?*



**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.***

**David@thecleggs.co.uk**

Tel: 07429 151313

**Talks in 2026**

***(Happy New Year!)***

**February 20th**

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).

## **March 20th**

City of Lakes and Rivers by John Pomfret (see page 6) for details of this interesting and unusual talk.

## **April 17th**

The Shrewsbury and Newport Canals (Speaker Bernie Jones)

## **May 9th**

Annual General Meeting—now that *Grand Trunk* is quarterly, I am obliged to give formal notice of the AGM in this issue although the venue is as yet undecided. ***Please save the date!***



Venue remains a surprise, but will be somewhere unusual and interesting.

### Notice of the Annual General Meeting of the Trent & Mersey Canal Society 2026

**To be held at a venue to be announced as soon as possible**

on

**Saturday 9th May 2026 at 10.30 for 11am**

***Buffet to follow at 12 noon***

***Details of special event to follow AGM business will be released later.***

Numbers for the buffet are required by Saturday 2nd May.

**Bookings to:**

**David Clegg on [david@thecleggs.co.uk](mailto:david@thecleggs.co.uk) or 07429 151313**

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

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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*



***Current interior of the Anderton Lift Control Cabin***

***( it bears little resemblance to before the lift closure  
See page 16 for details!)***

*Photo John Tackley*