

# GRAND TRUNK



*Cheshire Flight top lock  
All finished!*

*Photo Tony Walker*

**Summer 2026**

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

## Chairman's Bit

Our AGM went off well with *The Rising Sun* proving to be an excellent venue. As expected Gillian Watson left the committee, having given us a year's notice. I must personally thank her for 14 years of service since 2012. This leaves us with only 5 people on the committee, which is really too few, especially as 4 of them are 2 couples. Please think whether you would like to join us.



We took the boat to the AGM, and on using the Cheshire Flight we found that another 2 of the duplicate locks had one chamber padlocked out of use (Lock 64 offside chamber and Lock 61 towpath side chamber) even though there were no notices about this on CRT's "Notices and Stoppages" web-page. We reported these to CRT and also a broken bottom paddle on Lock 51. CRT tell us that they already knew about all these problems but have no fix-date yet. They will investigate why they aren't on the web-site.

Our society stall will be back on the Salinae field again this year (after missing last year) over the weekend of June 20-21 at "Midsummer Middlewich". [This is a different event to "Middlewich FAB" which seem to have disappeared.] We are told that there will be lots of folk music at the various pubs as usual, and that plenty of stalls have already booked for both the main street and the Salinae, open from 10-5 both days. Anyone wanting to help, please let me know.

Next year will be the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the opening of our canal (in "May 1777", no exact date can be found). We won't be organising an event ourselves, but will be supporting other events taking place. In particular, we hope to have the stall and a mobile bell tower (to take part in the ringing of a commemorative peal all the way along our canal) at Etruria. We have also heard that Staffordshire are planning something, no details yet.

## Editorial

We normally break down on the Macclesfield Canal, but in attending the AGM by boat we almost managed to beat the jinx. We made it all the way onto the Peak Forest Canal, spent a quiet night moored in Bugsworth basin and actually succeeded in mooring in Whaley Bridge. We enjoyed a visit to the bookshop in the old warehouse and took the charity shops by storm. The canal is very shallow and I had fun with the swing and lift bridges. Our only problem was keeping our batteries at the right level.

The Cheshire Flight was wonderful as always (in spite of so many double locks being out of action-see chairman's report). It was not as busy as I had anticipated, so we were able to notice some features. For example, the sunken boat which had been described as in the lock (middle of Red Bull Three) was actually at the mouth of the lock. It appeared to have been set alight and then pushed up the lock gate as this showed signs of charring. It had been removed on our return.



Another interesting feature was the wall by a bridge which has been rebuilt and looks most attractive (see above).

Next trip out, the Four Counties Ring, just as soon as We can manage it!

Let's hope the weather improves and we can all Enjoy our wonderful canals!



## *City of lakes and rivers (Waterways in and around Berlin)*

*by John Pomfret*

(Talk Friday 20th March)

John began his presentation with an introduction to the early history of the city and its mainly natural river navigations. Berlin was founded by 1230 as two separate settlements across the River Spree. Unification into one city came in 1432.

The development of canal and river navigations around the city from the early canals of the 17<sup>th</sup> century to the period of major expansion under the German Empire between 1871 and 1918 was explained. Of great importance was improvement to navigation to the east, the River Oder and the Baltic ports.

In Berlin itself the local canal network developed as the city expanded and many industrial areas were accessed by linking lakes with artificial cuts.

The partition of Germany and of Berlin after WWII led to further waterway development to avoid crossing the border between the Allied and Russian sectors – post-1961 such crossings became difficult. These new waterways, built out of necessity, remained useful following unification of Germany and Berlin in 1990.

John then took us on a photographic tour of the Berlin waterways including:

The hotel boats *Eastern and Western Comfort* moored close to some of few remaining parts of the wall.

Kreuzberg which, since reunification in 1990 has undergone significant ‘gentrification’ and is now known for its vibrant arts scene.

The imposing Friedrichstraße Bahnhof which was split along the length of the platforms when Berlin was divided.

We saw the River Spree very busy with tripboats and large commercial vessels sharing the waterways with Canadian canoes.

The talk concluded with a look first at north east connections (the Havel-Oder canal allowing access to the Baltic ports). The 1934 Niederfinow Boat Lift which was built to bypass staircase locks is now a major tourist attraction.

We were then treated to views upstream on the River Spree to the enchanting area of Spreewald. A major tourist area reminiscent of the Fenland where local transport, including the postal service, is by punt.

Finally, John covered the 202-mile Mittelland Canal which forms an important link in the waterway network of the country, providing the principal east-west inland waterway connection. It links France, Switzerland and the Benelux countries with Poland, the Czech Republic and the Baltic Sea.

Some attendees commented that the talk made them want to visit Berlin, others that they wished to go again.

*Dave Clegg*



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



***Chas Gilbert***  
***Of Belper, Derbyshire***

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



## **Burslem Post Work Party News**

It was back to the beginning for the Burslem Bramble Bashers on lucky Friday 13th March, only our 2nd work party of 2026! For our first venture out into the cold in January, we cleared the steps from Luke Street down onto our canal path. Now that there are 4 of us we can certainly shift more stuff.

But for March we headed back to where our canal once joined the Trent and Mersey to set about clearing more of that area than ever before. From boats chugging past on the Trent and Mersey, we want all aboard to be able to see up along our canal and get a view of Burslem (and also our lovely large historical display. We have started to make good progress with some special help from co-ordinator Beth and her CRT squad, who took on the mighty task of digging up our roots!

Since then we are just one step away from clearing this area. It has been a revelation to discover fencing which we never knew existed. Finding concrete fence posts has given me ideas!



### ***Planning News***

Fresh in is a planning application to develop the former Co-op bakery site adjacent to the line of our branch canal. We have yet to study this in detail and meet with the new developers-watch this space.

*Dave Broome*

Grand Trunk

## **Revised Tunnel booking Summer 2026**

Following feedback on our original operating proposal, the Trust have revised the booking arrangements for Harecastle Tunnel.

From 1 April 2026, passages will operate as follows:

- ***Bookable passages at 8am (Southbound) and 9am (Northbound)***
- ***Open, non bookable window from 10am to 2pm***

### ***Bookable passages at 2pm (Southbound) and 3pm (Northbound)***

The open window allows boats to arrive and pass through without a booking, subject to capacity and safe operation on the day. Each passage can accommodate up to eight boats.

While these times provide a clear structure, the tunnel team will remain flexible wherever possible. Staff and volunteers will use their judgement on the day to make best use of available capacity, including accommodating unbooked boats, using unused booking slots, or allowing early arrivals to join an earlier passage where it is safe to do so.

Changes to bookings should be made by 5pm on the day before your planned passage wherever possible. Where late changes cannot be made online, the team will try to accommodate them on the day, although this cannot be guaranteed.

***A victory for common sense!***

***A big 'Thank You' to the volunteers who man the tunnel.***

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 Autumn edition is 01/09/2026

### **Holiday Lodges at Mercia Marina.**

*Our Southern reporters alerted us to a proposed development at Mercia Marina. I have reproduced a little of the planning proposal for interest...Ed*

The proposal is for 17 luxurious and sustainable holiday lodges which will incorporate high quality design that is in keeping with the local character and sympathetic to the surrounding landscape. The proposed design of the lodges will be in keeping with the aesthetic of Mercia Marina, through the use of natural materials and expansive windows allowing guests to be immersed into the natural environment. ***This will allow guests to enjoy the T&M Canal Conservation Area.*** The proposed design will mean that the lodges, much like Mercia Marina, blend well into their surroundings. The lodges proposed will have a ground bearing slab circa 200mm thick and will be craned on top. Development proposals that enable the sustainable growth of Mercia Marina as a tourism destination are supported where; a) they are of a scale, layout and design that respects the rural character of the setting, b) the proposal supports the rural economy c) the landscaping scheme maximises opportunities to enhance the biodiversity of the Marina, d) pedestrian access into the Marina is improved, e) any increase in traffic volumes that result can be accommodated at the road junctions in Willington Village and on Findern Lane.

Willington does not have a designated conservation area but it is closely associated with ***the Trent & Mersey Canal conservation area*** which was designated in 1994. Although it does not lie within the conservation area, it is within the setting and consequently the character of the canal must be acknowledged in order to ascertain the impact development may have on the character and setting of the Trent & Mersey Canal.

The conservation area is defined along the entire stretch of the canal. The following is an excerpt from the Trent & Mersey Conservation Area Appraisal that was adopted in 2014.

“On its completion in 1777 the Trent and Mersey Canal was the greatest civil engineering project yet carried out in England. Along its length are the surviving bridges, locks and buildings, mileposts and canal-side ephemera that were associated with the canal and its wharves. The development of the canal also led to the expansion of a few Derbyshire settlements in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, in particular Willington, Shardlow and Stenson. These contain buildings developed in association with, or influenced by, the presence of the canal, but often not built or owned by the canal company.” Development of Willington’s industrial heritage happened in two stages the first being as a result of the canal’s arrival in 1777 and the second stage was due



to the rerouting of the Birmingham-Derby railway line through Willington in 1836. The canal has always been instrumental to the development of Willington, with several large warehouses on the riverbank for iron, salt, pottery and other commodities.

By 1836 the small canal basin had disappeared and had been replaced by railway sidings, providing an interchange between the Birmingham and Derby Junction Railway and the canal. A small brick building served as a wharfman's cottage, built gable-end onto the canal to serve the railway/ canal link c1836 and a hand-operated crane also sat nearby. The whole industrial area of the wharf was replaced in the 1970s by the grassy area, shrub planting and car park that is known locally as the "Marina" located between the canal, and the railway embankment to the east of The Green. The brick cottage was eventually demolished in 1973 when the "Marina" was built"



Plate 10: Body of water around which the lodges will be positioned.

Mercia Marina was created in 2008 which was the remains of gravel extraction, used for the building of the A50/A38 Toyota Island.

It must be stated that Trent & Mersey Canal Conservation Area is a significant heritage asset not just locally but nationally, with the links to the heritage of the UK, specifically with its importance to the Industrial Revolution. The area has been designated since 1994 and has been enhanced by previous developments at Mercia Marina since 2008 that have led to a significant increase in footfall and canal traffic along the ***T&M Canal***. This has allowed the setting of the conservation area to have greater communal value in Willington.

The opinion of the Society is that, as the lodges are not canal-side, and as shown above, Mercia Marina has had a positive influence on present-day enjoyment of our canal, no objection will be made.

***Thanks go to Dave Broome and Vaughn Wheatley for monitoring proposed developments which might affect the Southern part of our canal.***



***Figure 14: Artist Impression of visual landscape looking West along the T&M Canal***

### **Trent and Mersey Horse Brass**

***We have received the message copied below from a very nice lady called Rosi Huber:***



‘ I have a Trent & Mersey horse brass and wondered if a member of your society would like it for their boat? It is on a brown leather strap (which has cracked with age), but otherwise good condition. ‘

***Rosi is asking for £10.00 for the horse brass (plus postage).***

If you would like to contact Rosi about this, her email is:

[rosihuber29\\_at\\_gmail.com](mailto:rosihuber29@gmail.com)  
[rosihuber@duck.com](mailto:rosihuber@duck.com)

## **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***





*As I started put this issue together, the last work-party was in October 2025, subsequent events being cancelled owing to bad weather (oh, and Christmas got in the way). Then, it seemed as if Spring had finally decided to arrive.....Ed.*

### **Cheshire Locks work party report March 2026**

Thanks to great weather conditions and our enthusiastic (as ever) volunteers we made great progress at lock 41 last week on our first visit of 2026. There were 8 of us in attendance on Thursday and 4 of us were present on the follow-up visit on Friday. In addition, 2 of us carried out an impromptu session 2 weeks beforehand. We concentrated our efforts on the towpath-side lock which had been inaccessible on our previous visits due to ongoing paddle repairs. We also made great strides in prepping and painting the extensive metal fencing by the offside lock as well as starting work on the lock-keepers building plus some vegetation tidying.



All in all, a very successful series of tasks. Some work remains to be done including prepping and painting the old lamp stand plus some final bits and pieces on the locks themselves. However, we'll definitely complete Lock 41 on our next visit and should be able to move onto Lock 42 where, as usual, there is lots of work to be done and keep us occupied in the coming months.

Tony Walker

## **Work Party report Thursday 16th April**

We had a great turn-out of 9 volunteers on the day and the weather was very kind. This meant we were able to finish Lock 41 at long last. 2 of us will return next week just to paint the numbers on the lock gates. The lock, lock-keeper's building and surrounding fence and lamp post now all look pristine.

Additionally, some of the team were able to make a good start on Lock 42 which we will be concentrating on for our next 2 or 3 tasks – it's in a pretty poor state.





## Peter's Canal Walk

Between 5<sup>th</sup> - 22<sup>nd</sup> April, I completed the 93.5 miles along the Trent and Mersey Canal. It was a fascinating and challenging adventure and I thoroughly enjoyed every step.

I live in Weston on Trent and have always wondered what was at Preston Brook indicated on the mileposts on the canal. I have been thinking about walking the full route for a number of years so I decided to commemorate my recently departed parents between their respective birthdays.



The first challenge was how to complete the walk logistically. I went to Shardlow Marina to obtain a map but they don't offer any! Not much online either so my main source was a Geo projects map from Preston Brook to Fradley Junction. This was coupled with an Ordnance Survey map so I can gauge if there were nearby interesting places to visit. I managed to come home each day which was nice as the train journey from Derby to Crewe is enjoyable too.

My first day was from Preston Brook tunnel to Milepost 20 in Sandbach. I was going to wear headphones to have music accompany me but decided against as the sounds of the canal add to the enjoyment. Great array of birds with their various calls, the hum of passing narrow boats, feeling the sense of purpose of the canal as it lined up against other forms of transport of railway lines, major roads and nearby airports. The industrial heritage of the canal was a key point of interest for me passing through the salt mills of Northwich, Anderton boatlift, the potteries around Stoke being the main reason the canal was built, Stone the halfway point where the canal was first dug, Armitage (Shanks) for its dominant porcelain factory and Burton for the breweries finally to Shardlow the inland port.

Some of the little villages along the canal have great pride in their properties notably Barnton, Trentham and Alrewas. Stoke needs a tidy up and it's a shame many of the potteries along the canal have been neglected and are in disrepair.

The towpath was excellent in places and unsurfaced near the start and actually the area around Weston on Trent is not the best for regular foot traffic. Some parts of the canal were so tranquil it was perfect for contemplation. In some areas I wouldn't see anyone or boat for 1 mile or so! The only place which was tricky was finding the best way to cover the Harecastle Tunnel as there are no indicators once you're off the towpath.

My favourite spot is a lovely area in Weston with a great view of the fast-flowing River Trent nearby. There is an old bench there which needs replacing. I contacted the Canal and River Trust about replacing the bench with a picnic table as it would be ideal to sit looking at all the viewpoints. Unfortunately they declined saying it would attract anti social behaviour. They offered a new bench but I would have to donate 10 times the cost of the composite picnic bench I was proposing. The area is to be altered as a gravel pit will be dug by the river soon so I'll wait and see.



Thank you to the society members for their hard work - its much appreciated.

*Peter Koukoularides*



*Here are some  
of Peter's lovely  
Pictures*



*Can you  
guess where  
they are?*

## AGM 2026 Report

This year's Annual General Meeting took place on Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> May at the Rising Sun, Scholar Green. Twelve members attended (slightly down on last year). Our thanks go to landlady Jo and her team for making the restaurant available for our meeting, for laying out the room as requested and for providing a plentiful and tasty buffet lunch including delicious cakes. The tea and coffee machine was available to us throughout.



With committee reports complete, our chairman announced that the Wedgwood Trophy is awarded to David and Jean Clegg who were overwhelmed by the honour.

The Committee was re-elected and, with Gillian Watson retiring as she had announced at the 2025 AGM, members were invited to consider whether they would be interested in serving.

This year, the post-AGM activity was a quiz session comprising one of Anne Chetwyn's location identification tests. One member (your reviewer, in fact) mistook our local Weston Point Lock for Ardrishaig Sea Lock on the Crinan Canal. Perhaps he travels too much! Then a short canal knowledge quiz was followed by a 'spot the truths' lecture. Any similarity between this and the radio programme The Unbelievable Truth was entirely intentional.

*David Clegg*

Picture above by Margaret English

Pictures p.19, Jean Clegg





*AGM in progress*

*Later!*





**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 new season-October 2026**

#### **October 16th 2026**

#### ***GREATER THAN 6: The Heritage of the City outside the Six Towns.***

Heritage Assets, Listed Buildings, buildings of special local interest, scheduled monuments and conservations areas which became part of the Potteries when the City of Stoke-on-Trent was established in 1925.

ANDY PERKIN Potteries Heritage Society

**November 20th 2026**

*The History and Restoration of the Derby Canal.*

CHRIS MADGE

**December 4th 2026**

*Christmas meal (complete with the usual fun quizzes and jollity).*

**January 15th 2027**

*Narrowboat SPEY*

TOM KITCHING

**February 19th 2027**

*TBA*

**March 19th 2027**

*The River Danube*

JOHN POMFRET



*No it isn't SPEY, just a nice picture  
to liven up the page!*

**May 15th 2027**

*Annual General Meeting*

Hold the date!

# CANAL CRUISING COMPANY LIMITED NARROWBOAT HOLIDAYS



## Dry Docking Facilities

3 Dry Docks  
(Available for DIY)  
Boat Repairs & Blacking  
Pump Outs, Diesel & Gas  
Welding & Machine Workshop  
Engine Services

*Request  
your  
brochure  
today!*

## Narrowboat Holiday Hire

Choice of Excellent Routes Available

10% Discount for CAMRA, IWA,  
CART Members

15% Discount FORCES, NHS  
STAFF, POLICE & RESCUE

(See website for full terms and conditions)



Check Live Availability & Book Online!

Taster Day Hire & Overnight Stay

**Crown Street, Stone, Staffordshire ST15 8QN**  
**Tel: 01785 813982   Email: [mail@canalcruising.co.uk](mailto:mail@canalcruising.co.uk)**  
**Web: [www.canalcruising.co.uk](http://www.canalcruising.co.uk)**

**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)

**OFFICERS**

|                                                              |                                                                                                                                                                          |
|--------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| PATRON                                                       | Sir Ian Dudson KCVO CBE                                                                                                                                                  |
| VICE-PRESIDENTS                                              | Steve Guest, Malcolm Gray                                                                                                                                                |
| CHAIRMAN                                                     | Roger Evans, 10 Long Lane, Middlewich, <b>CW10 0BL</b><br>Tel:01606 834471 Email: <a href="mailto:rogermartinevans@hotmail.com">rogermartinevans@hotmail.com</a>         |
| TREASURER and WEBSITE                                        | Roger Evans, see above.                                                                                                                                                  |
| MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY,<br>SECRETARY AND GRAND<br>TRUNK EDITOR | Margaret English, 10 Long Lane, Middlewich, Cheshire,<br><b>CW10 0BL</b> Tel: 01606-834471 Email: <a href="mailto:margaretetlm@hotmail.com">margaretetlm@hotmail.com</a> |
| COMMITTEE MEMBER                                             | John Tackley, River View, Leigh's Brow, Barnton, Northwich,<br><b>CW8 4HT</b><br>Tel: 01606 76204 Email <a href="mailto:jtackley@hotmail.com">jtackley@hotmail.com</a>   |
| MINUTES SECRETARY                                            | Jean Clegg: details as David Clegg                                                                                                                                       |
| TALKS ORGANISERS                                             | David and Jean Clegg, Email: <a href="mailto:David@thecleggs.co.uk">David@thecleggs.co.uk</a><br>Tel: 07429 151313                                                       |
| BURSLEM PORT<br>REPRESENTATIVE                               | Dave Broome<br>Email: <a href="mailto:dave.broome@burslemport.org.uk">dave.broome@burslemport.org.uk</a><br>Tel:07974966253                                              |



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



*Peter Koukoularides enjoys his canal  
walk  
(see pp 15/16)*