

NEWSLETTER



CONSERVATION AWARD FOR CCHT

Since 2008, CCHT has been working hard to get the Chester Canal designated an official Conservation Area. This year we finally hope to achieve our goal. In the last stages of the task we have been partnered by CRT and by conservation officers from Cheshire West and Chester and Cheshire East councils but the lion's share of the work has been done by CCHT members, particularly Gwynneth Buss, Ann Farrell and Joseph Boughey. It has involved producing a lengthy designation document as well as a detailed gazetteer of all the canal's heritage features, both large and small.

Chester Civic Trust has now recognised CCHT's work in its 'New Year Honours' for 2017. Every year the Civic Trust publicises new developments that have had a real impact on Chester's environment – the good but also the bad and the ugly! The citation which commends our conservation initiative says '*the policy is a credit to all involved*'. On February 9th Gwynneth Buss, Ann Farrell and John Herson went to Bishop Lloyd's Palace in Chester to receive the award from the Civic Trust's chairperson, Christine Russell.

The consultation carried out by Cheshire West and Cheshire East councils last summer showed that the canal conservation area has overwhelming public support. CCHT is now working with the councils on remaining details before the final designation which we hope will take place this summer. This year marks the 50th anniversary of the 1967 Civic Amenities Act which brought in conservation areas and our Canal Conservation Area will be Cheshire West and Chester's

first new conservation area since the authority was set up in 2009.

The Chester Canal has a wealth of important structures and heritage features and forms a vital but often underestimated feature of the landscape through which it passes. This is particularly the case in Chester where the canal has long been undervalued and where great – and often unsuccessful – battles have taken place down the years to preserve the canal environment from unsympathetic modern developments. Two cases are the new student housing at Tower Wharf and the redevelopment of the Leadworks.

That's where the Conservation Area designation will be important. It puts down a marker for developers and the planning authority on what they have to consider when proposals are likely to affect the canal and its setting. Equally, the existence of the Conservation Area and its detailed description of the canal's heritage are important evidence if developers go to appeal against refusals of planning permission.



The Civic Trust Certificate

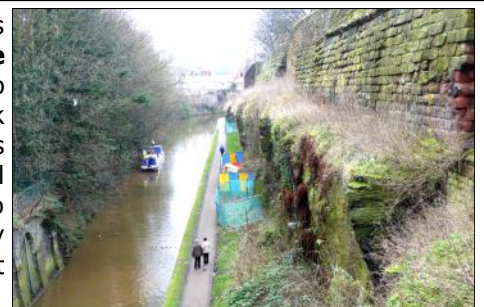
To view all the documentation for the canal conservation area, go to CWAC's website at:

www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk

and search for '**Chester Canal Conservation Area**'

.... BUT NOT FOR NORTHGATE CUTTING!

In the same 'New Year Honours' list, another aspect of the canal in Chester was declared '**BAD**' by the Civic Trust. This was the '**Unightly Barriers alongside the Canal in Northgate Cutting**! The barriers have been in place for over two years and are there because of potential problems arising from large pieces of rock which are in danger of falling on to the towpath and harming anyone who is passing by at the time. As members will recall, CCHT has been calling on the Canal and River Trust and Cheshire West and Chester Council to cooperate in order to reach a sensible compromise on disputed issues and to carry out the necessary works as quickly and sympathetically as possible. We can only hope that this latest brickbat might help to shame them into making real progress!



LONG LOST MARKER STONE FOR LOCAL CANAL

Founder member of CCHT, Stewart Shuttleworth, writes about his visit to view an historic marker stone for the area's first canal, which predates the Chester Canal!

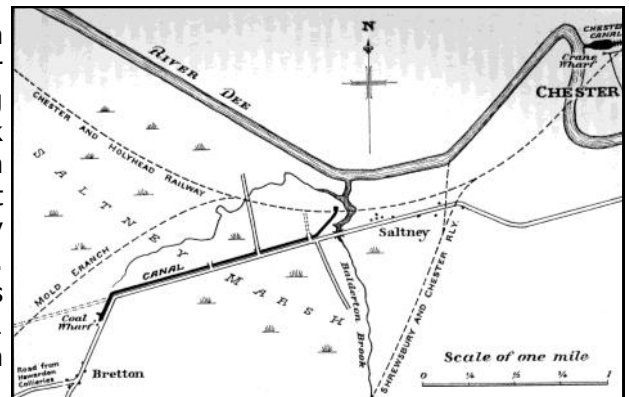


Towards the end of 2016, I visited Mr Paul Broad's house on Chester Road, Saltney to view the stone he'd unearthed and re-set marking the boundary of the Bretton Canal. The stone, which is about 3' high, 18" wide and 9" thick was unearthed in 2012 alongside the house where it was buried in clinker. Its inscription is shown on the graphic alongside.

Sr S.R.G
&
Sr G.W.P
Barts

Canal historian Paul Sillitoe is very excited by the find. He had returned an identical stone (in much poorer condition) to Bretton from Devon in recent years. Mr Broad also showed Paul a deed requiring the householder to fill in the ditch. Paul considers that the ditch referred to is undoubtedly the canal and therefore the stone was found pretty much in its original location A most important find because no archaeological study has been done of the canal's line.

The canal, 2.5 km long across Saltney marshes was built by Sir John Glynn (1713-1777) and opened on April 5th 1770. Sir John was Lord of the Manor of Hawarden and had three collieries Sandycroft, Mancot and Woods. He visited the Duke of Bridgewater's canal in the August of 1767 and presumably took the ideas from there. The western terminal basin in Bretton is still traceable. In Saltney however the canal terminated at Stoop Bridge Gutter not connecting with the Dee. Coal travelled from the pits by cart and pack horse, was transhipped into punts on the canal then transhipped again in Saltney onto boats on the Dee. Not surprisingly, it arrived in Chester so 'broken as to be scarcely marketable'. The canal was therefore an economic failure. Despite this, the astute Sir John sold half the rights to his neighbour George Prescott (Sr GWP on the stone). By 1781 the 'canal seems to have been considered unusable'. Sir John died in 1777 to be succeeded by his son Stephen. Stephen tragically died in the month before the birth of his own son, Sir Stephen Richard Glynn (1780-1815) who was created 8th baronet on his birth and is the Sir SRG of the stone.



Map from Hadfield's 'Canals of the West Midlands'

Paul, in the referenced article, speculates why the boundary stones should be placed relatively late in the canal's short history. A major possibility is that land rights were important at the time of the enclosure of Saltney marsh, later in the canal's history and the owners were marking their territory.

With grateful thanks to the Broad family for access, and to Paul Sillitoe for his information.

Paul J Sillitoe, "Sir John Glynn's Canal, Hawarden, Flintshire: Recovery and analysis of an inscribed boundary stone", Archaeology in Wales, 47, 2007, 93-98.



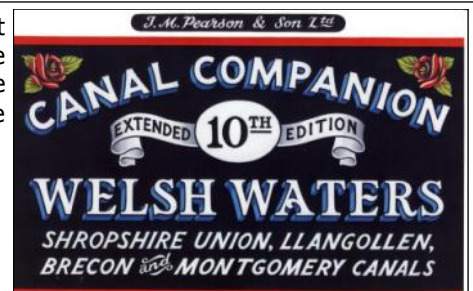
Traces of the canal can still be seen alongside the A5104 in Saltney with a bridge under the road close to Morrisons.

PRAISE FOR CCHT FROM MR PEARSON!

Boaters and others users of the canal network will be familiar with the excellent 'Canal Companions' series published by J. M. Pearson & Son Ltd. In producing the 10th edition of *Welsh Waters*, the author purchased a copy of CCHT's book. He clearly found it valuable and refers very favourably to CCHT in the guide, as these quotes show:

This, together with other illuminating facts, was gleaned from the Chester Canal Trust's excellent 2005 book The Old Chester Canal ... a model of local canal history interpretation.

Chester Canal Heritage Trust are advocating a revitalised link between the canal and the non-tidal Dee, key to which is the provision of a new lock in the former millrace adjoining the weir. An ambitious, yet praiseworthy scheme, eminently achievable were engineering the only challenge.



Welsh Waters Canal Companion
(ISBN 978-0-9928492-2-1) Price £9.95

FLOOD DEFENCES AT CHESTER'S RIVER LOCK



Flooded River Lock December 2013

Although Chester is not as much at risk of flooding as some other parts of the country, it is still a significant concern, as was highlighted in December 2013, when the River Lock was flooded and water levels came close to

encroaching on some of the properties around the Old Port area. If the river had risen higher, as was predicted by the Environment Agency at the time, then lots of homes could have suffered considerable damage. The flooding occurred in this area because there is a weakness in the city's flood defences where the canal meets the river. Various ways of tackling this problem were considered and the solution identified by the Environment Agency was the installation of a removable barrier across the lock that could be installed at times of high flooding risk. Early in 2016, work on installing this barrier system was completed and the new barriers have been in action over this winter.

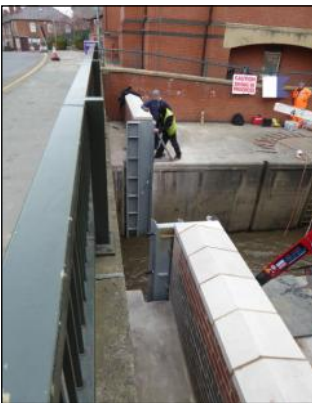


One of the new stop planks

As a first step, a new wall was built either side of the lock just to the east of the road bridge. Steel channels were then installed in the sides of the lock into which a series of steel stop planks can be inserted when there is a threat of flooding. This work was a major effort involving specialist contractors and a team of divers. One unusual factor that the design for the barrier had to take account of was the need to allow water from the canal, which normally weirs over the lock gates into the river, to escape, rather than building up behind the barrier and creating a flood of its own! The solution identified was the inclusion of valves in one of the stop planks to allow the canal water to escape when the tide has dropped.



Valve flaps in one of the stop planks



Installing the channels for the new stop planks

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Planks in use, December 2016

A BUSY WINTER FOR THE SMALL TASKS TEAM VOLUNTEERS!

The Small Tasks Team Volunteers are a group of people who work together one day a month in partnership with Canal River Trust in the North Wales & Borders Region. They carry out work such as towpath surface improvements, new bollards at locks, mooring rings on towpaths, fences erected and painted and refurbishing existing picnic tables and benches. The volunteers come from all walks of life and bring with them their skills. Tools and consumables are provided either by Canal River Trust or the Small Task Team themselves from donations and fund raising at IWA events. Recent work parties have focussed on the Chester Canal, with projects at Barbridge, Calveley and in Chester.



New Bin Compound at Barbridge



Installing Stepped Access at Calveley



New Gate at Chester

They are always looking for new volunteers to join so if you would like to know more, ring Paul Mills on 0151 336 1049 or 07947 887 909 or email him at exelbee@sky.com

February 2017
Number 28



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www.chestercanalheritagetrust.co.uk

Chester Canal Heritage Trust (CCHT) initially formed in November 1997, and now registered with Companies House (company number 04360134) and with the Charities Commission (charity number 1094394)

THE OBJECTS OF CCHT ARE:

To advance the public education by engendering and fostering an awareness of the Chester Canal, its activities, heritage and environs (including adjoining waterways), in local people and visitors through the following powers:

- the provision of training and education in the skills of the watery environment;
- the encouragement of exploration of the role of the waterways in the development of the surrounding area;
- the support and preservation of the canal's heritage, including the historic narrowboats and other craft that made use of it;
- the development of recreational activities within the canal environment;
- the dissemination of information about the canal;
- the monitoring of developments and proposed developments affecting the canal;
- and participation in schemes and initiatives designed to safeguard, promote and enhance the canal.

JOIN TODAY!

**CHESTER
CANAL
HERITAGE
TRUST**

IS

OPEN TO ALL

Individual: £12 per year
Adult Family: £20 per year
Junior (under 16): £7 per year
Corporate: £35 per year

Application forms can be downloaded from the website

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Saturday 1st April 2017

Telford's Warehouse

Tower Wharf, Raymond Street, Chester, CH1 4EZ

Annual General Meeting - 11.00 a.m.

and then **Lunch** (at own expense) at 'Telford's Warehouse'

To assist with catering arrangements, please inform the Secretary if you plan to attend any or all of the day's activities. Formal notice of the meeting will be given separately.

E-mail secretary@chestercanalheritagetrust.co.uk

**SHREWSBURY FLAX MILL
& THE SHROPSHIRE CANALS
COACH TRIP – SATURDAY 18TH MARCH 2017**

Built in 1797, the main Flax Mill in Shrewsbury was the first iron framed building in the world and is Grade I Listed, as are two other buildings on the site. The visit will include a guided tour of the site followed by lunch (at own expense) at The Dolphin Inn, a Joules pub close to the Flax Mill. In the afternoon, there will be stops to view what remains of the canals that served the mills. We will finish at Wappenshall Wharf, the canal junction created by Thomas Telford when the Newport Branch Canal joined the Shrewsbury Canal in 1835, but later closed, along with the canal. in 1944. We will be joined for afternoon tea/coffee and biscuits by members of the Shrewsbury & Newport Canals Trust.



Shrewsbury Flax Mill

For further information and to reserve a place,

E-mail: gwynneth.buss@gmail.com

Educational Services for Local Groups and Schools

Chester Canal Heritage Trust can offer a variety of walks and talks about the canal and its history to schools, local groups and societies.

For further information about this and other services, contact us:

E-mail: education@chestercanalheritagetrust.co.uk

FINAL WINTER TALK FOR 2016-17

Wednesday 1st March 2017

The Canal at Nantwich

A talk by Graham Dodd, Author and Trustee of Nantwich Museum.

**Talks start at 8.00 pm in the Clubhouse at
Chester Boughton Hall Cricket Club**

**Boughton Hall Avenue, Boughton, Chester, CH3 5EL
Free to members of CCHT, IWA & SUCS, non-members £2.50**

