

Sankey Canal Restoration Society

# CANAL CUTTINGS

VOLUME 8 Number 11  
Autumn 2018



## **SCARS' Roadshow Special**

Featuring pictures and reports from the Shows and Rallies  
in the region which the Society's dedicated team of volunteers  
has attended over the summer months

# Sankey Canal Restoration Society

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Founded 1985



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Keith Morley (Halton) Steve Parish (Warrington)

Paul McQuade (St. Helens)

**The Inland Waterways Association:**

Colin Greenall(Chester & District Branch)

# Sankey Canal Restoration Society

## CANAL CUTTINGS

VOLUME 8 NUMBER 11: Autumn 2018

Editor and Production: David Long  
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### *The Chairman's Report—from Colin Greenall*

Well what a lovely summer we have had with temperature soaring in to the eighties, and forecast of hosepipe bans looming, but, even as I write these words and look out of the window - it's raining, just to remind us this is England.

However this fine weather comes at a cost to the canal system with restrictions on water supplies meaning that locks have been padlocked to conserve water on various canals around the country. But that doesn't mean that the canals are closed to other users—walkers, joggers and cyclist etc. can still use the towpath to enjoy their healthy pursuits.

The mention of healthy pursuits leads nicely into the latest rebranding of both the Inland Waterways Association (IWA) and Canal & River Trust (CRT) who are both advocating healthy living and exercise and the use of the canal towpath as a way of achieving this. Both IWA and CRT have gone through a reorganisation programme in an attempt to make themselves more economically efficient.

The hot weather has caused problems on the Sankey Canal resulting in heavy loss of fish stocks in various areas, due to the rapid growth of duck weed all along the canal. Halton BC have been using an amphibious craft to remove this problem but Warrington BC appear to be reluctant to go to this expense, and I'm certain that the anglers in Newton and St Helens have had similar problems

Other news, the Sankey Canal Partnership has submitted a £2m bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund under the heading “The Nature of Industry-the Sankey Canal Corridor Project (Rediscovering the working landscape of the Sankey Valley)” If successful the three local authorities will contribute equal amounts, making it a £6.5m project. A decision from HLF is expected in September

The Milestones project is moving forward with St Helens MBC agreeing to erect the “8 Mile to Ferry Lock” to the west of Penkford Bridge, and Halton BC wanting to place one near Carter House Swing Bridge “1 Mile to Widnes Lock”. We are just waiting for Warrington BC to indicate where they would like one established.

During the past few months our events team has been out at various shows, attending events at Scarisbrick Marina, Runcorn Hill, Lymm, and Newton-le-Willows (see Events Report). A big” thank you” to all those volunteers who have helped out on these occasions.

If anyone out there has any questions about the canal etc. or as a story to tell, or old photographs which they think might relate to the Sankey, and which may have been puzzling them for years— send it in and let’s see if we can solve the mystery. Don’t forget this is your magazine and we are always looking for new contributions to add interest

Now I’ll sign off and wish you all the best, and hope you continue to enjoy the wonderful world of waterways, especially the Sankey Canal.

*Colin Greenall*

*Follow SCARS on any of the social media platforms and keep up-to-date on our activities and news. Find us on:*



**Facebook** Sankey Canal Restoration Society

Twitter: Sankey Canal @scars567



Instagram: Sankey Canal Restoration: sankeycanal1757



# Reports From Our Work Parties

*By Colin Greenall*

On Wednesday 18th July Ian Hornby and Richard Corner were at Widnes, clearing vegetation from along the canal towpath leading up towards the old railway crossing at the northern end of Spike Island. The images show two Before and After scenes.



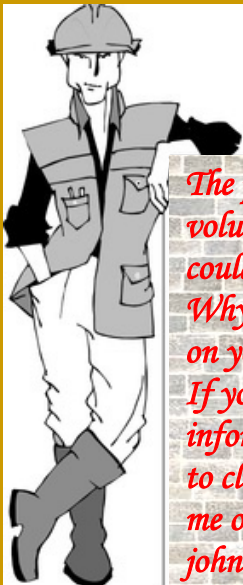


## WANTED—Volunteers

*The pics on these pages show what just two volunteers can achieve—with more folk, we could do much more.*

*Why not join in? The work you put in depends on you and what you feel capable of.*

*If you would like to get a little involved in an informal day in the fresh air and do something to clear up our local environment then contact me on: 01744 600656 or email me at : [johnhughes11@virginmedia.com](mailto:johnhughes11@virginmedia.com) John Hughes*



# Robert Daglish & Co. Engineers, Boiler and Bridge Makers and Millwrights

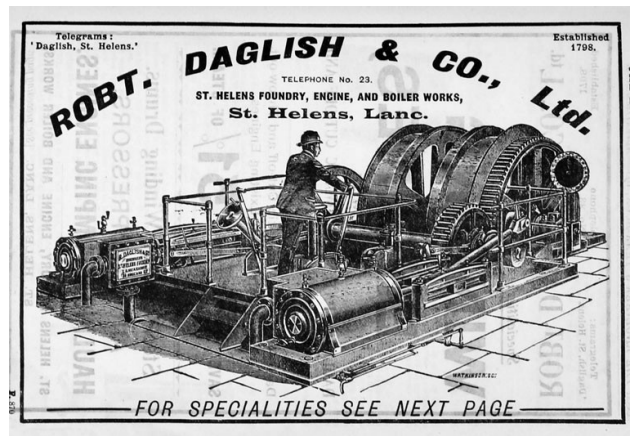


The print (left) in the St Helens Local History Archives shows that section of the St Helens Canal which we now know as ‘The Hotties’. It is viewed from the south bank where the present hotel is situated. All the buildings in the foreground are

part of Robert Daglish & Company’s foundry—the Parish Church is just visible in the background. The canal is busy with various types of craft—a horse drawn boat, a sloop moored alongside the works, a flat under sail, probably heading for the Ravenhead terminus, and a narrow boat on the nearer bank. On the north bank of the canal the Daglish Foundry is clearly in an ideal location to utilise the canal, bringing in its many raw materials and shipping out its products.

The site is currently occupied by the world of Glass. During the excavations for its foundations massive stone and brick plinths were revealed, presumably the bearers of foundry machinery, furnaces, presses, rollers, and guillotines, all now concealed beneath the present building.

The advertisement on the right shows one of the Company’s major products—a colliery winding engine. Over the page we reprint the “Next Page”, listing the items which could be fabricated on the premises. There is an astounding range of items, large and small, covered by its title “Manufacturer of every description of condensing or high pressure blowing, pumping rolling, winding and patent Steam Engines”.





# ROBERT DAGLISH & CO.,

ENGINEERS, BOILER & BRIDGE MAKERS, MILLWRIGHTS,

BRASS & IRON FOUNDERS,

MANUFACTURERS OF EVERY DESCRIPTION OF CONDENSING OR HIGH-PRESSURE BLOWING, PUMPING,  
ROLLING, WINDING, AND PATENT

## STEAM ENGINES,

Of any required Power, for Irrigating, Draining, Mining, Rolling Mills, or  
Water Works purposes,

AND MANUFACTURERS OF

ACID PUMPS of Lead for Sulphurous Acid.  
AIR ENGINES AND PUMPS for Acid Poreing.  
AGITATORS, for Chemical Manufactories.  
BRINDING MACHINES, Patent and Power.  
BOILER MOUNTINGS.  
BONN MILLS.  
BOATS of Wrought Iron.  
**BLOWING ENGINES**, as supplied for Weldon's  
Patent Process.  
**CANNONS AND MORTARS**, as supplied H.M.  
Government.  
**CASTINGS** in dry Sand, green Sand, and Loam, of  
any weight.  
CENTRIFUGAL MACHINES for drying purposes.  
**CRUSHING MACHINERY**, for Rock Salt, Copper  
Ore and Pyrites.  
CREOSOTING MACHINERY.  
COPPER EXTRACTING PLANT, Complete.  
**CHEMICAL MANUFACTURERS' PLANT** of  
every description.  
CLARIFIERS.  
**CONTRACTORS' PLANT.**  
COPPER ORE MINING MACHINERY.  
COPPER ORE WASHING MACHINES.  
CLASTIC POTS.  
**COAL TIPS AND HOISTS.**  
**CONICAL WINDING DRUMS**, up to 30 feet  
diameter.  
**CRABS**, Double and Single Purchase.  
**CRANES**, Steam Overhead travelling, up to 30 Tons.  
" up to 16 Tons.  
" Wharf, up to 60 Tons.  
**CYLINDERS** of Cast Iron, up to 30 tons.  
DRESSING PANS.  
BRANERS.  
DREDGING MACHINERY.  
EDGE RUNNERS.  
FORGE and ROLLING MILLS.

**WHEELS**—Bevel, Mitre, and Spur—Moulded on the  
shortest notice by PATENT MACHINERY.  
LISTS SENT ON APPLICATION.

MANUFACTURERS OF EVERY DESCRIPTION OF

## CHEMICAL MANUFACTURERS' PLANT

On the most approved plans, and as  
supplied to the largest Alkali Makers in England, Ireland, Scotland, and Wales.

PHOTOGRAPHS AND PLANS SUPPLIED ON RECEIPT OF ORDERS.

St. Helen's Engine Works and Foundry, LANCASHIRE.

ing grinding machines and equipment for 'Plate complete'. Less local industries were catered for—nitre pots, and oxydizing towers for chemical works, equipment for sugar refineries, soap pans, retorts, sulphur pots and screw propellers. For overseas customers Daglish produced gold mining machinery, along with machinery for the pyrites mines in Norway and Spain

Despite the wide range of products, and its proud record of exports to Africa, India and the Americas, Daglish's prosperity depended mainly on the local markets. When those local industries declined or migrated south to Widnes and Runcorn, the foundry was left with dwindling orders. Whilst the town's population could breath more freely, the eventual demise of Daglish's Foundry led to extensive job losses and the closure of linked works in the town.

As if this span of products was not enough the customer could order any kind of casting, cylinders of any size and wheels, bevel, mitre and spur. The company was even a supplier of cannons, mortars, shot and shell to the Government. Ready markets for the foundry products could be found in the great number of St Helens industries of the time. Chemical manufacturers could purchase "plant of every description", the collieries needed tips, hoists winding drums, cranes and many other metal based items for use both underground and on the surface. The Copper industry was present in the town, alongside the canal, with the need for mining, crushing, washing equipment along with receptacles for the chemical processes involved in copper production. The foundry also catered for the glass industry, offer-

**GOLD MINING MACHINERY.**  
**GLASS MACHINERY**, for Crown and German Sheet.  
**GLASS MACHINERY**, for Plate complete.  
GRINDING MACHINES, for Glass.  
HOISTING MACHINERY, for Coal, Mills, &c.  
HYDRAULIC AND STEAM HOISTS.  
INCLINE PLANE PULLEYS.  
IODINE PLANT, from Seaweed.  
HEAD GEAR FRAMING, for Collieries, of Wrought Iron.  
JIB CRANES, up to 60 Tons.  
JAWS OF HARD METAL, for Stone Crushers.  
LOAM MILLS, with Hard Metal Rollers and Bottom Plates.  
**MANURE PHOSPHATE PLANT.**  
MILL GEARING of every description.  
**MINING MACHINERY**, for Coal, Copper, Gold, &c.  
NITRE POTS.  
OXYDIZING STEAM TOWERS, for Canitic.  
**PYRITES BURNERS AND MILLS**, for Irish,  
Norwegian and Spanish Ores.  
**PUMPS**, for Sugar Canes.  
PIZES of any size and weight.  
PUMPS and their Fittings.  
PLATE GLASS MACHINERY.  
**POLISHING BENCHES**, for Crown and Plate Glass.  
**PHOSPHATE MANURE PLANT.**  
PIT-HEAD PULLEYS to 20 feet diameter.  
RETORTS, Acid, Gas, Nitre and Vitriol.  
ROLLS, Chilled, Grain and Forge.  
**RAILWAY PLANT.**  
RIDGES, Revolving, for Coal, Copper and Salt.  
ROOFS of Wrought Iron.  
SOAP PANS.  
**SCREW PROPELLERS**, in Brass and Iron.  
SULPHUR POTS.  
SAWING MACHINERY, for Greenheart and other Timber.  
SHOT AND SHELL.  
STEAM SUPERHEATERS, Improved.  
SUGAR MACHINERY.  
**TURNTABLES.**

# Events—by Colin Greenall

Well our events team have had some interesting outings so far this summer. First of all we had our **Heritage Weekend at Blackbrook (16th & 17th June)**, which worked well with lots of interest from the general public. On the rather wet Saturday we were pleased to welcome Cllr Andy Bowman, Assistant Leader of St.Helens MBC. He spent time talking to us about what we are doing, before browsing through our archives and photographic display. Sunday was much warmer and more people came to see us, including Cllr Paul McQuade (Blackbrook) and Dr. Barrie Pennington of the Milestone Society.



*Left:* The Society's gazebo was erected at the entrance to the Rangers' Centre at Blackbrook to provide an eye-catching entrance to the SCARS' displays inside



*Above:* Visitors' questions are answered, as others look through the displays and other archive material out on show

*Right:* The full extent of the SCARS' photographic and information displays



At the end of June it was off to Cheshire for the annual **Historic Transport Day at Lymm**. The weather was glorious and the event was has good as ever with lots to see and enjoy from classic cars to traction engines and a Spitfire plus all the action down by the canal with its line-up of historic boats.



## WANTED

- We are always in need of quality goods and books which we can sell at the various events we visit each year. So please get in touch if you're having a clear-out
- Our sales stall is a real help in keeping our restoration projects going.
- Contact Colin Greenall on 01744 731746 (evening) if you can help.





Over the weekend of **7th & 8th July** we were at the **Scarisbrick Marina Open Weekend & Boat Festival**. Unfortunately this clashed with Southport Air Show... and England's game against Sweden in the World Cup, meaning that the attendance was poor. But the people who did come enjoyed a pleasant time in the sunshine at this lovely venue. The attractions included classic road vehicles and lots of boats in the marina, and they could even have a go at Dragon boat racing. There was also a hog roast available as well as the usual restaurant facilities. We were located in the large craft marquee along with various other charities



*Above:* Ian Hornby and Peter Keen behind our stall in the marquee

*Below:* Part of the Vintage Cars display *Overleaf, top:* Visitors among the boats







By the end of July the long, hot summer was beginning to change so that on the weekend of **28th & 29th July** to say that it was pleasant to be out at the **Runcorn Hill Summer Fete** would be rather misleading. When Ian and I arrived to set up the marquee the wind was blowing so strong that we feared we would be blown away. But eventually we managed to get everything set up ready for the opening at 11.00am. But the weather put people off turning out for this wonderful event— which had a medieval Saxon encampment, mini steam traction engines, classic cars and a large fairground, plus the lovely park with its model boating lake (and Model Boats) and children’s play area. During the day the weather got gradually worse as the wind and rain became stronger and heavier so we decided to packed up and go home hoping that Sunday would be better. However the weather on the Sunday morning proved to be just as bad so it was decided to not return.



*Left:* One of the miniature traction engines on display

*Right:* The clouds gather— and the parched grass will soon turn green again as normal weather resumes...



Thankfully, better weather returned the following weekend for the **Newton Town Show on July 4th**. The bright sun set the scene for another successful event, and so it proved, with thousands turning out to enjoy what now becoming one of the best one day shows in the North-West .

Attractions included the Monster Truck Show, classic cars, a military display team which throughout the day threatened us with the sound of heavy gun fire. Musical attractions included a performance from the George Formby Society, the Valley Brass Band and the Mucky Mountain Morris dancers along with other local singing and dancing acts. The arena was surrounded by dozens of stalls, and a large fairground entertained all ages. We enjoyed a very busy day chatting to people about the canal and listening to their stories of their childhood adventures down by the sugar works etc.

*Top: Visitors could ride around the large showground area*

*Bottom: SCARS flying the flag amongst the stalls*



I'd like to take this opportunity to thank Ian Hornby, Richard Corner, Peter Keen, John Hughes, Neil Forshaw and Cynthia Greenall for all their help and assistance during this busy summer programme of events. Unfortunately we had to cancel our usual attendance at the Rural Craft Fair at Victoria Park, St.Helens due to lack of volunteers on that particular weekend.

Just a gentle reminder to anyone who might like to volunteer to spend a few hours out in the fresh air in good company at any of our forthcoming events, you will be made most welcome

Many Thanks, Colin

# Sankey Canal Sailing Vessels

SCARS has been fortunate in the past to publish materials provided by Mr D. Atherton of St Helens.

One of the fruits of his research in Merseyside Maritime Museum Archive produced a list of “Vessels Built on the Sankey Navigation Registered in Liverpool ; In Existence in April 1845”.

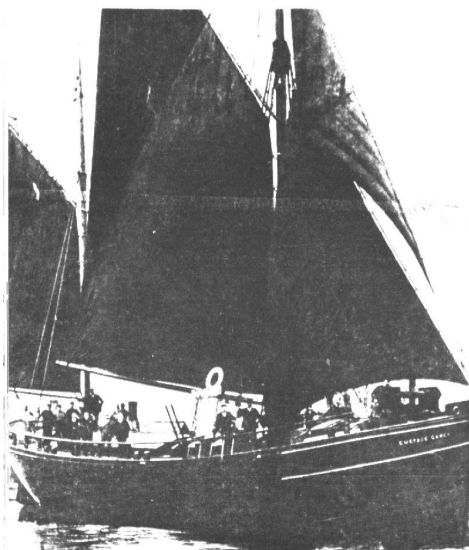


No less than 39 vessels were listed, of which the majority ( 30 ) were Sailing Flats, plus 7 Sloops and just 2 schooners. The Flats were of various sizes but followed a similar pattern of a large open hold abaft the mast, with forward accommodation for anchors, chain and sheets whilst the crew's quarters were at the stern. A single mast had sails fore and aft, hoisted by pulleys via a windlass mounted on the foredeck. In use the hold would be covered by removable covers, sheeted and tied down for travel on the open river.

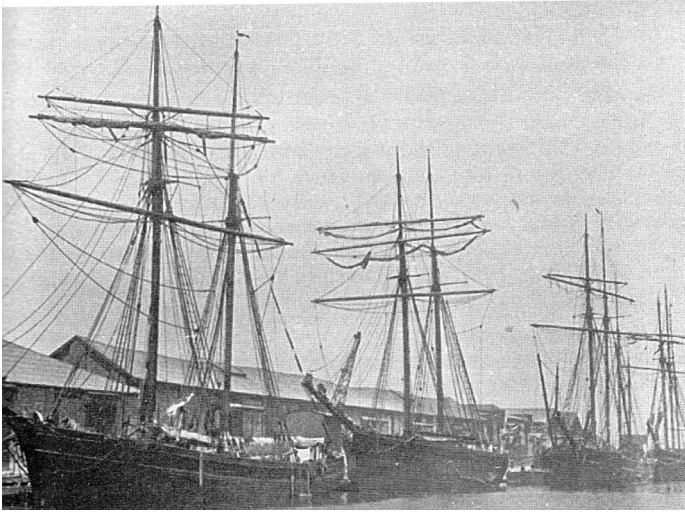
Larger Flats, Jigger Flats, carried two masts and more cargo. *Vessels up to 75' by 20' were able to enter the Sankey at Widnes, but could not sail through the older locks from Bewsey Lock upstream, which were smaller, 68' by 15'. This also restricted the size of vessels which could be built at St Helens.*

Sloops were very similar to Flats with fore and aft sails but were rigged with two masts and of a larger capacity. Both Flats and Sloops were mainly confined to coastal waters although trips to Anglesey, Ireland, the Isle of Man and Cumbria were fairly commonplace in search of cargoes.

*Right: The SCARS logo is based on this image of the EUSTACE CAREY, a jigger flat launched at Sankey Bridges in 1905*







Schooners were twin-masted with a bow sprit, but carried sails on yard-arms at right-angles to the hull of the vessel. These vessels were larger and more sea worthy and capable of longer voyages in deeper waters.

*Left: Schooners in Runcorn Docks*

Mr Atherton's list gives the names of all the vessels, the great majority bearing single word names, such as the

Augusta, Eccleston, Elizabeth, Margaret and Victoria, all built at St Helens. It is assumed that the boatyard was located at the bottom of Bridge Street, certainly a dry dock was situated there so the yard would be close by. Personal names were probably to recognise a member of the owner's family, whilst locational names would have a meaning known only to the owner, a family seat perhaps of the source of prosperity. Dual names such as the John and William, the Sarah and Jane, Thomas and Mary, or William and Mary were also likely to have been named after family members.

The list also includes the names of the Captains or Skippers of the various vessels some of which are the names of local families and are still with us today. These include James Leigh, Samuel Dagnall, Thomas Foster, Matthew Molyneux, James Hampson and Thomas Birchall. Quite a few of these names can today be seen in various retail businesses



around St.Helens. Perhaps these were made possible by the hard work and enterprise of the Skippers in accumulating the capital.

SCARS is grateful to Mr Atherton for sharing his work with the Society.

*Left: SCARS once owned a model of a Mersey flat. Sadly, it was stolen when on display at the Blackbrook Rangers Centre*

# Local History Corner: Ethelfeda's Bridge

- by *Chris Coffey*

*Ethelfeda's Bridge, the railway bridge between Runcorn and Widnes was officially opened on October 10th 1868—making this year its 150th Anniversary. Chris Coffey, Secretary of the St Helens Heritage Network, writes about the name, and the bridge:*

Why Ethelfeda's Bridge?

**Æthelflæd**, Lady of the Mercian's (c. 870 – 12 June 918), ruled Mercia in the English Midlands from 911 until her death. She was the eldest daughter of Alfred the Great, king of the Anglo-Saxon kingdom of Wessex, and his wife Ealhswith. She married Ethelred, King of Mercia, who fell ill and died in 911 and Ethelfleda became not the Queen or Duchess of the land, but the "Lady of the Mercian's", an odd title. She faced the threat of renewed Viking attacks and was said to have created a burh a year, in such places as Bridgenorth, Worcester and Tamworth.

In Cheshire she remade the old Iron Age hill fort at Eddisbury, overlooking Delamere Forest. The following year, in 915, she founded a new burh to control the Mersey crossing in Cheshire. This eventually became

Runcorn. (*Engineers digging the foundations for the bridge found ruins of her castle on the river-bank—it is said that the castellations on the bridge reflect this discovery*)

As can be seen from the map above (*Source: Wikipedia*), some historians believe the Mercian boundaries extended into our area. This is probably when Oswald, King of Northumbria, lost and was killed at the battle of Maserfeld, probably near Winwick. This would have given them more control of the great Roman road that passed through Newton and Wigan to Scotland.

*The bridge is also known as Britannia Bridge—having a figure of Britannia, part of the arms of the builders, the London and North Western Railway, on one of the three shields above the footway—the others being the arms of the City of London and the Liverpool symbol of the Liver Bird.*

The bridge was built to carry the London & North Western Railway across the River Mersey at Runcorn Gap on the direct rail line between London, Crewe and Liverpool. It was first called Ethelfleda's Bridge because, as they were digging the foundations on the Runcorn side, they found the remains of the defensive structure she had built over 1,000 years earlier. It was thought to be the longest in the world at the time of construction and is still in use. It is immediately adjacent to the Silver Jubilee Bridge (which hasn't aged as well as the railway bridge).



Before this bridge was built, travellers from London to Liverpool had to change trains at Warrington and Earlestown — a route more than 13km longer. Parliamentary approval was granted in 1861 and construction began in 1863, with the first stone laid by local shipbuilder Philip Whiteway on 12th April 1864. It was designed by the railway company's chief engineer, William Baker.

The bridge crosses the river on three main spans each of 93m, formed by pairs of wrought iron double-web lattice girders, supported by two sandstone stone piers and sandstone abutments founded 13.7m below water level. It carries double rail tracks and has a cantilevered footway on its east side, which was an alternative toll crossing to the ferries.



Each girder contains 711 tonnes of iron and is fastened with 48,115 rivets. The overhead lattice cross bracing between the top flanges of each girder pair is masked by stone portals, surmounted by castellated turrets in the Gothic revival style that reach 15.2m above the rail level. The turrets may be a Victorian homage to Ethelfleda.

To allow shipping to pass beneath, the railway is 22.9m above high water level. This height is achieved by a curved approach of 59 brick arches on the Widnes (north) side, rising on a gradient of 1 in 114, and a viaduct of 33 arches on the Runcorn (south) side. The abutments and first pair of girders were completed by November 1866, with all girders fixed in place on 14th February 1868. The first train over the bridge was the contractor's locomotive on 21st May and the formal opening was on 10th October 1868, though freight services did not start until 1st February 1869, with passenger trains from 1st April.

The Manchester Ship Canal (opened in 1894) passes under the bridge, separated from the River Mersey by a stone wall, its width at that point constrained by the bridge's dimensions.

In 1965 British Railways closed the pedestrian footway. It achieved Grade II\* listed status on 6th October 1983 and in 2009 it was cleaned and repainted.

So why is it in the news now? Well, an historic bell located at the top of the bridge was removed by helicopter, ahead for restoration. The Navigation Bell, which used to sound in foggy weather to warn approaching ships of the viaduct's location, was removed in mid-June as part of the £6million restoration of the viaduct. It is being restored to mark the bridge's 150th birthday.



Because of the height and location of the bell 100 foot above the water, a helicopter was the only safe option to move this historic item (*Above*). Once restored, the bell will be displayed at the Brindley Theatre in Runcorn to commemorate the vital role it played in helping ships safely navigate the Mersey between its piers. Since October 2017, Network Rail has been strengthening, waterproofing, and refurbishing the bridge's timber, steel, and brick structures. *Below*: The Network Rail crew and the bell. *Pics from Network Rail website*





# Membership Subscription



Charity No: 702571

I wish to join SCARS - my subscription is as detailed below.

Individual (at one address)*		Donation**	TOTAL
General	Unwaged		
£15.00	£10.00		
* Please indicate as appropriate		** Please indicate your wishes	

Name:	Address:	Post code:
Telephone:	Email address:	

Please forward to:

Mike Harrison - the Treasurer / Membership Secretary  
4 Darvel Avenue, Garswood, Ashton-in-Makerfield, WN4 0UA

## WANTED—More Volunteers

Our Work Parties are perhaps our most visible volunteering opportunity—but there are other roles we need volunteers for. Maybe you could help out on our exhibition and sales stand when we attend events around the area from late Spring to early Autumn; or perhaps you have a personal skill, for instance in communications or the media, which you could put to use to help promote the Sankey and our Society—even if it's simply visiting the canal every now and again, taking photographs, and putting them up on our social media sites, or carrying out research into aspects of the canal's history, or of its associated communities or industries. But don't let yourself be limited by my imagination...

To offer your services, choose a contact from page 2 of this magazine.

## Brian Bennett's Album: Part 16

The late Brian Bennett was a long-time Member of SCARS Member. He took a series of photographs of the Sankey from the mid- to late-1970s. He kindly donated his Album to the Society some years ago, and they have often be used by those of our Members who give Talks on the canal to other organisations.



Unfortunately, we have now come to the end of Brian's collection—the last one, *above*, being of the twin Woodend Locks at Widnes, taken from Spike Island, with St Mary's Church showing above the West Bank houses. The scene of dereliction, before restoration work began in the 1980s may be compared with, *below*, a photograph from Nigel Bowker's collection, taken for the London & North Western Railway Company in about 1932. The busy boating activity around the lock gates, the dockside works, and the myriad of chimneys in the background, show how much had changed in just a few decades.

