

August meeting report 2024



The presentation this month was 'Restoring the Danny' and given by Chris and Peter, who both volunteer on the vessel.

The Daniel Adamson was built in 1903 but was originally named, 'Ralph Brocklebank'. It was built for the Shropshire Union Railway and Canal Company by Tranmere Bay Development Company at Birkenhead. It has a beam of 24 feet 6 inches, a length of 110 feet, a draught of 6 feet 2 inches (forward) and 9 feet 6 inches (aft) and a tonnage of 173 tons. Initially, it towed Mersey flats (barges) from Ellesmere Port to Liverpool. During WWI, it saw service on the Mersey and may have been used as an unarmed patrol boat during WWII.

In 1922, the vessel was sold to the Manchester Ship Canal Company and until 1936, was a traffic tug and stern tug, with basic accommodation allowing Sunday passenger trips (7/6d, including lunch and return rail fare!). During this time, changes were made and it became an 'Art Deco' vessel. The accommodation was enhanced, it had a 'facelift' and was renamed 'Daniel Adamson' after a wealthy boiler-maker who relocated to Manchester from County Durham.

Soon, it began to carry VIPs, e.g. King Fuad of Egypt, King Feisal of Iraq, King Amanullah of Afghanistan and the Sultan of Zanzibar. Other famous passengers included The Tedders, Don Bradman and Bessie Braddock, Timothy West and Prunella Scales, princes, premiers and ambassadors. It was also rumoured that Eisenhower was also a passenger.

It was last used as a tug in 1961/2 – the diesel age and for years was only used in the summer months as an inspection vessel. It was in decline from the 1980s and in 2004 the decision was made to sell it for scrap. Later that year, the Daniel Adamson Preservation Society was created when Don Cross, a tug skipper, bought her for £1. Don had it towed to Liverpool from Ellesmere Port Boat Museum and the DAPS became a charity.

Over 12 years, with 100,000 volunteer man hours and a £3.8 million Heritage Lottery Funding Grant, the Danny was restored to the 1936 Art Deco specification. It had to have an active cruise

programme, be open to the public, take the vessel's story into schools and be used as a learning resource – all of which it does.

The refit included the removal of the wheelhouse (originally teak but rebuilt using sustainable wood), the removal and rebuilding of the boiler, new propellers and decks and the saloons recreated using original patterns. The ebony handrails were in place and cleaned up.

The Danny needs £300,000 per annum to continue to sail and this comes from society membership, bookings, public support, donations and sponsors. In 2022, the Daniel Adamson was added to the National Historic Ships Register and Don Cross was awarded the Merchant Navy Medal.

This was a really interesting story about a local vessel, which often can be seen at Acton Bridge. The vessel has a significant past, both nautically speaking and also through social history. Peter and Chris took us on a journey from 1903 to 2016, with lots of fascinating anecdotes and historical facts, not just about the 'Danny' but about society in general and also about other boats. Everyone really enjoyed the whole trip!

The next meeting will be on Wednesday 18th September at Owley Wood Club, Weaverham at 2pm, when Matthew Lepp will tell us about 'Tiger Muffin Soaps'. Come and join us! Look on the Northwich u3a website for more information about monthly meetings and our interest groups