

# Pennine Link

Magazine of the Huddersfield Canal Society



Issue 210 Summer/Autumn 2020



# Huddersfield Canal Society Ltd

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## NON-COUNCIL POST

**Bob Gough** Administrator



*The views expressed in Pennine Link are not necessarily those of Huddersfield Canal Society Ltd*



# Pennine Link

Issue 210

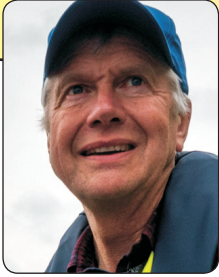
Alan Stopher



*An early frost and falling leaves at Lock 17E as Autumn comes to the canal.*

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## Editorial

When I offered to be Guest Editor I had in mind a summer edition anticipating the activities which bring our canal to

life. Little did any of us know in early March how quickly our lives would change.

I hope that some members availed themselves of the opportunity to read our online version of the Spring 2020 edition of Pennine Link as the closure of our office delayed the issue of the hard copy. We usually publish back issues in this way after some time has elapsed. This ensures paid up members get to read the magazine first.

This year with our Spring edition boxed up at the printers it was decided to change our usual practice just this once. Let's hope the public availability of the latest Pennine Link brought us some new readers.

With Bob Gough, our Administrator, returning to work in early August, albeit part time, he soon managed to retrieve the Spring edition and post it out along with the backlog of membership cards. A special slip had to be inserted explaining that our AGM had been postponed to 6th October and would be conducted using the Zoom video conferencing application as large gatherings were still precluded.

With less of the usual activities to report it was decided to produce this edition



Alan Stophar



as a Summer/Autumn one effectively reducing the number of editions to 3 this year. I feel sure that this news will be received with understanding given the extenuating circumstances. In order to create space before the next one, Issue 211 is likely to be a Winter/Spring 2020/21 one to compensate.

The recent months have been particularly hard for those living in cramped conditions, without access to gardens, and those working long hours to return people to health, keep our loved-ones safe, deliver our supplies, staff shops and teach our children and grand-children. The canals of the UK and areas of upland such as the Pennines have enabled many to gain some respite and fresh air. Unsurprisingly this has put pressure on towpaths and some of the more popular locations described by the media as 'beauty spots'. It is

to be hoped that an affinity with our waterways will continue as people adjust to whatever the future brings. Certainly the attractions of being enclosed in an aeroplane or air-conditioned train in the cause of travel are likely to take a long time to be appreciated and may never reach the levels of before the pandemic.

Two pictures illustrate the lockdown period along the Huddersfield Canals. The Diggle flight and top pound benefit from having paths on both sides which certainly helped with physical distancing during the summer. My picture (*below*) shows both paths being used by those seeking fresh air and exercise. Limitations on cruising were only properly lifted in early July so May and June gave an opportunity for boaters at Aspley Marina in Huddersfield to spruce up their boats (*pictured overleaf*).

Besides the usual Chairman's report on what the Society and its partners have (and haven't) been doing this summer, we have some contributions from community groups in Uppermill and Greenfield and news of the new volunteers' cabin at Stalybridge. I know many are chomping at the bit to get back to volunteering along the canal and I hope it won't be long before some activities can resume on the west side to complement the start made in the Colne Valley by the HCS maintenance team.

With good progress being made by the Marsden Shuttle team on developing plans for a replacement craft using





electric propulsion, I felt that readers may be interested in an article on my recent week on one of the few electric hire boats. The Mon & Brec Canal provides an interesting comparison with the Huddersfield Narrow Canal as both are costly to maintain and have relative shallow channel profiles. If the Society's planned new boat is as pleasant to use as our hire boat there will be a big queue of people wanting to volunteer.

We have some sad news to report. Back in May we heard that Canal Society stalwart John Sully had died at his home in Sussex. Having read in Pennine Link about our plans to take on the former Icebreaker Marsden and present it on static display at Standedge, John's family kindly asked for donations in his memory to go towards our work on Marsden. An appreciation of John's contribution to the Huddersfield Narrow Canal is printed in this edition. Our condolences have been sent to John's family and some of us had a chance to see the remote video of his memorial service.

More recently we have learnt that Dianne Shore, one of the organising committee of several canal festivals and a regular canal observer died suddenly in May. Our thoughts and best wishes go to Dianne's partner, former HCS Council trustee Vince Willey, and family and friends at this sad time.

On a more positive note I'm pleased to include an introduction to our most recent recruit to Council, Martin Clark, author of the influential Pennine Waterways website.

As autumn arrives I hope that many of our readers will be able to venture out along the Huddersfield Canals to seek tranquility and memories to store up for what may be a challenging winter. With infection rates still high in the UK, I sincerely wish that you and yours are able to stay safe and well in the coming months.

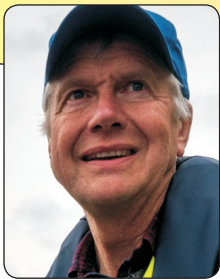
**Alan Stopher**

*Boaters at Aspley Basin sprucing up their craft.*



*Alan Stopher*





## Chairman's Report

What a strange summer. In some ways there is not much to report on the canal and your Society's activities in the 'lost summer'

of 2020 but the Covid-19 pandemic has meant that in management terms your Trustees have had to get used to different ways of managing.

Within a few days of writing the Spring edition report it was clear that things were changing rapidly and the year would be very different than the one we had planned. As the pandemic got a foothold in the UK and the Government started to introduce measures to slow it down we cancelled our Council meeting on 16th March and I visited our Transhipment Warehouse office to discuss options with Bob Gough. It was decided that he would continue to work at the office as he was working alone. The following day the social distancing policy was announced and all outside operations by HCS volunteers were suspended with immediate effect to keep safe all involved. A week later the national lockdown took effect and it was decided that Bob should try and work from home from 24th March. Effectively we closed the office down that day. A suitable notice was posted on our website including advice for those who had booked the Marsden Shuttle for their wedding day.

It was decided that the Spring edition of Pennine Link which was nearing completion at the printers would be boxed and set aside at the printers until

we resumed operations. This would allay concerns about printed matter arriving in 500 mailboxes and each having to be set aside for 72 hours as the advice suggested. Various tasks were divided up between certain Trustees so that we could ensure that essential issues such as settling of bills and receipt of book orders were acknowledged. It was decided to keep the 220 club going operated by me using the random number generator.

A recorded message was placed on the office landline advising callers to ring my mobile number if they have any issues to raise and also directing callers to look at our website for up to date news. It soon became apparent that the way we store our files and the methodology used for office duties precluded any sensible amount of home based work so, grateful for the Government's furlough scheme we decided that our member of staff should go on full time furlough from 6th April. This meant that we could claim 80% of his salary which would go some way to offsetting the loss of income from our boat operations.

With operations suspended it was mid-May before we decided to have a meeting of Council using the Zoom app. Most of the discussion involved reviewing finances, Coronavirus planning and giving initial thought to holding an Annual General Meeting. We weren't alone in having to work through things which had never had to be considered before. Charity Commission advice recognised that organisations such as ours could not hold physical meetings and as long as we conducted our business in an orderly manner a delay was justified.

Because the Company Accounts had been prepared for the December 2019 year end we were able to have those submitted through our accountants, Moffatts, whose staff were working from home. Moffatts, who also run the payroll for our sole employee, were able to make the furlough claims on our behalf.

Whilst I kept tabs on our email 'inbox' our Treasurer did what was possible to scale down monetary outgoings to a minimum whilst the office was closed. Trevor Ellis used his daily exercise to post out a few copies of the Standedge Tunnel books which had been ordered after the office closed.

It wasn't until 22nd May that I decided to venture over Standedge to combine a walk up the Diggle flight with a first visit to the office since lockdown. Thankfully there wasn't such a heap of mail that I couldn't open the door. After a quick sort through, I took home the ones which needed dealing with, which included a number of membership renewals. Under normal circumstances Bob would update the database and issue membership cards to those renewing. It had been a bridge too far for me to learn how to use the routines, so those members renewing during the summer have had to patiently await Bob's return to work before receiving their cards.

Our Council meetings are usually held every other month in the Transhipment Warehouse, but the accessibility of the newly learnt technology together with the need to keep on top of emerging advice on the pandemic and to agree how and when to approach a return to our normal operations meant that we had monthly Zoom meetings.

It has been apparent throughout the summer that operating the Marsden Shuttle would be impossible with social distancing rules. Besides that from regular contact and tele-conferencing with Andy Widdowson, the manager in charge of Standedge Visitor Centre, it became clear that the Centre would not be open this season at all. It was not cost effective to reopen with only part of the season available and all the extra safety costs and limitations on visitor numbers. We were all concerned about not letting down anyone who had booked the Shuttle for ferrying wedding couples to the venue but in the event all weddings were cancelled for the summer and into the autumn. To ensure the boat was kept operational Eric Woulds or Terry Sigsworth gave it an occasional run. A decision on restarting operation of the Shuttle will have to await a review in Spring 2021.

The HCS maintenance team were keen to return to work as soon as possible and this became more likely when the restrictions on volunteers over 70 were lifted by CRT in early July. It took another month for clearance to be obtained by Trevor Ellis to make a restart and the team returned to work on 14th August abiding by social distancing rules. When more than six have taken part the team has been split into two groups. With all of the team being east side based, many without their own transport, and Trevor not being able to give everyone a lift in the van, work has been concentrated on the section from Huddersfield up to Slaithwaite. Recent tasks have involved painting at Lock 3E and removing vegetation from within lock chambers using CRT's demountable pontoon. It is hoped that a safe method



of working can be established to enable the pontoon's use for off-side vegetation cutting which is a major need on some pounds.

With some operations restarting and the accumulated backlog of office tasks it was agreed that Bob Gough would come back to work half-time from the first week of August. The furlough scheme allowed this flexibility and the half-time arrangement continues to the end of October when the scheme finishes. Consideration will then need to be given to the new business support model announced by the Government in September.

CRT kept a core operational staff in work to do essential tasks but many of the others were, or still are, furloughed. Government rules about staying away from your normal residence were finally lifted in England in early July. Prior to that, only live-aboard boaters were allowed to stay overnight. The relaxation enabled CRT to state that the canals were open for cruising. It has to be said that not all canals were functioning fully by then. CRT had taken advantage of the lockdown period to bring forward repair work in many locations and the Huddersfield Narrow was no exception. A wide range of stoppages were notified on our canal during the spring and summer. Dredging work was undertaken in and around Locks 14E to 12E to

remedy the silt build up from the Golcar stream. Some lock repairs were found to be necessary and a notice was issued on 28th April to the effect that fluctuating water levels in the pound above Lock 1E meant this section was effectively closed until mid-July except for requests for emergency passage. Even as I write CRT asks boaters to ring them beforehand so their staff can ensure there is water in the pound. Loss of water in this section has been a recurring theme for a number of years. The Society is keen to see the reason established and the issue resolved at the earliest opportunity as this section is the gateway to the restored canal from the east and includes the tunnel under Bates Mill to the isolated Lock 2E.



Alan Stopher

*An unwelcome sight at Lock 1E, Huddersfield*



Stoppages continued into July with the chief one being for some much needed dredging between Locks 26E and 32E. The picture (above) shows the dredger craft operated by contractor Land & Water waiting for the return of the mud hopper below Lock 28E. From mid-July onwards most of the stoppages were of a day or less and included work on a heel post and balance beam at Lock 27W, repairing a damaged culvert between Locks 20E and 21E, plugging a void in the pound above Lock 29E and cutting up and taking away a number of fallen trees.

Recent observations are that there are still few boats making the passage. There could be a number of reasons for the low traffic levels. Stoppages on other northern canals such as the Calder & Hebble and Rochdale will have made an

impact and the temporary policy of CRT staff steering all craft through Standedge Tunnel rather than acting as chaperones could dissuade those who want to steer themselves through this 'Wonder of the Inland Waterways'.

An issue of concern in the River Colne was spotted by one of our Council members. Beside Lock 28E there is a weir with two sluices, one to reduce levels to expose the weir and one to draw off water originally to the old dam belonging to Shaw Carr Wood Mill and latterly to informally feed the canal. Both sluices have recently collapsed which has resulted in the river no longer flowing over the weir but instead eroding its own course in a position close to the canal bank. If left to erode further it could undermine the canal boundary wall with serious effects. We sent photographs to





Alan Sopher

Above: View of water flowing in an S-bend taken from wall beside Lock 28E.  
Right: View of both sluices from weir with the river flowing through the gap.

Victoria Levine, Area Operations Manager for the Canal & River Trust who advised us that the Environment Agency were aware and planning to make repairs.

Other than a video-conference to discuss what needs doing there has been no progress on the proposed move of the former icebreaker and maintenance craft Marsden to Standedge.

With the search for places to exercise near home it has been no surprise that the HNC towpaths have come in for some heavy use by walkers and cyclists. I've heard reports of



Trevor Ellis

walkers having close encounters with fast moving bicycles on the Marsden flight which suggests some of the visitors are not familiar with the need to respect all users. An increase in fly tipping on the west side has been drawn to my attention and these two instances of unsocial behaviour had been replicated many times in country areas according to media reports. There will need to be a relaunching of the Countryside Code to help educate those unfamiliar with good practice.

Unsurprisingly many initiatives have made slow progress during the lockdown period but I did learn that approval had been given to funding an extension of the towpath improvements from Milnsbridge towards Slaithwaite. I hope to be able to provide more information in future.

I was invited to attend a site meeting recently to explore the tasks which need to be included to make the route from Marsden Goods Yard to Standedge

Visitor Centre accessible to users of Inspired Cycle Engineering (ICE) trikes with variable abilities to get into the countryside. The project, led by Craig Grimes of Experience Community, drew support from a number of partners including Kirklees Council, Canal & River Trust, the Marsden Community and our Society and an expression of interest to the Green Recovery Fund has now been submitted for an ambitious but deliverable series of works to make the route a reality.

By the time you read this edition we will have conducted our first ever Annual General Meeting remotely. With infections on the rise again the country is a long way from being back to normal, whatever that might be. Whatever circumstances throw at us our favourite canal will still give pleasure to those venturing out during the autumn and onset of winter.

**Alan Stopher**



Ian Bradbury



# Stalybridge Volunteers

## Stalybridge Town Team Volunteer Hub

A new name for a great new facility for the Stalybridge Town Team Volunteer Group. It's good to have something nice to report in these strange and uncertain times.

It was planned to open this new building at the beginning of the Easter Holidays with an official opening but unfortunately the Covid-19 Pandemic and the lockdown restrictions prevented that. A simple, short and sweet ceremony at the beginning of September saw the building's façades unveiled to the public for the first time. The sides have been attractively decorated with a scene of the town centre and canal on one face and images of significant points of interest around the town on the other. The two gable ends have information about future dates, restrictions permitting, of our main Clear up sessions and of the main partners and sponsors of the facility and the Volunteer Group.

You'll see from the photos that the new building is a far cry from the rusty container that we had before (*pictured bottom right*). With its pitched roof and decorated façades, it is much more befitting of its town centre location next to the canal and Armentières Square. Work on the building was organised by Town Team Chair Ray Harrison who deserves great credit for his extensive input in delivering this.

Unfortunately, at present we are unable to carry out our volunteer sessions given the current Coronavirus restrictions. Please be assured that we will get back on track with this in the not too distant future and start to make good use of the new facility as soon as the circumstances allow.

Finally, just to thank the main funders who have made this possible. They are the Canal and River Trust who have provided funding through the Community Routes Project and Tesco for their contribution from the Bags of Help initiative and also for allowing the facility to continue to be sited on their car park.

**Peter Rawson**



Ian Bradbury



Dave Sweeton

# Uppermill Community Action Network

## March

The focus of this month's Project Days included UCAN Volunteers cleaning up the area around the village pond near the bus turning circle in Uppermill.

Recently we assisted local residents who have been regularly cleaning the area and we were very happy to help them. After being rained off at our first attempt, we eventually managed to carry out our clean-up which focused on clearing assorted debris and collecting litter.



We concentrated on two key sections throughout the day which were the pond area and adjacent footpath. The pond is populated by our local wildlife, used by ducks, moorhens and the occasional heron and is watched and enjoyed by members of our community who live nearby, so it is important to keep this area clean and litter-free. In addition, we tidied the adjacent footpath, ensuring the

public's right of access is generally clear for users of the path.

Our last task of the day was to re-build the nearby bench which was missing the backrest. We successfully completed this work using a quantity of timber fencing which we found around the local area. The bench is now, we hope, restored to its former character and gives our local community members a lovely, quiet and peaceful place to sit on a sunny day and enjoy our beautiful Uppermill environment.



On a final note, UCAN will once again be supporting the national Keep Britain Tidy Great British Spring Clean which runs from 20th March to 13th April. UCAN volunteers are very proud of their record of clearing litter from around our village and thank all our supporters and community members for their clear and on-going commitment to keeping our wonderful village litter free.



## May

Our regular UCAN Project Days have obviously been on hold as we have all been following the Government guidance regarding the coronavirus pandemic. As part of that, we have not been meeting as a group of volunteers nor using the local towpath owing to the challenge of keeping two metres apart. In the interim, therefore, we have all settled on our own household regular exercise including walking near to home, sadly avoiding the canal area but still enjoying our beautiful village surroundings.

As part of our daily short walk, we have been observing from afar our voluntary work from previous months and you may remember that earlier in the year UCAN volunteers planted over 500 daffodil bulbs in various spots alongside the canal towpath. To ensure we grew healthy daffodils, we selected a good range of planting sites for the bulbs planting some in partial shade or full sun and in moist but well-drained soil.

As the daffodils - the traditional yellow with six petals and a trumpet-shape central corona - are now in full bloom, it is great to see that our efforts have produced such a good display to brighten up

both the canal bank and walkers hearts during these worrying times.

We don't yet know how long it will be before we can resume our regular volunteering but we are sure there will be no shortage of enthusiasm when we are able to start to return to our normal canal-side activities again.

We are always pleased to welcome new members; for anyone interested in getting involved in our future voluntary work or for further information, please contact Peter Killan on 01457 878361 or email [peterkillan@hotmail.com](mailto:peterkillan@hotmail.com)

**Karen Williams**



# Obituary

## John Sully

24<sup>th</sup> March 1939 to 10<sup>th</sup> May 2020

### **An Appreciation by the Huddersfield Canal Society**

John Sully, who has died recently at the age of 81, was a vital cog in the machinery to restore the Huddersfield Narrow and Rochdale Canals. In the 1970s John was an elected member of West Yorkshire Metropolitan County Council (WYMCC). By 1981 he had become Chairman of the Recreation and Arts Committee, and in this role managed to persuade opposition members of the value of canals. It wasn't long before he championed the cause for full restoration after reading Huddersfield Canal Society's report on restoring the Marsden to Slaithwaite section using the Job Creation Programme.

Not long after, John cycled along both derelict canals and it was on one of his trips that then Chairman of Huddersfield Canal Society, David Sumner, met him at Marsden with the Society's publicity officer. John's enthusiasm was infectious. He had a lot of contacts in the media and he was frequently interviewed on Yorkshire TV. In the spring of 1986 he was present at the reopening of the Marsden flight with Councillor George Speight from Kirklees Council.

John also became a regular contributor to Waterways World. In the same year WYMCC was abolished, along with Greater Manchester Council, but a dowry promoted by John enabled the reopening of the canal under Wakefield Road, Huddersfield.

Whilst a County Councillor John Sully attended Huddersfield Canal Society's Council meetings by invitation as an observer. He wasn't known for his reticence so after a short while, following contributions as an enthusiastic observer, he was voted on to the Council of Management as Society Treasurer. He helped husband resources through the significant early stages of restoration so that by completion to through navigation the Society still had a healthy bank balance. This was a factor in establishing the charity's place in the Joint Committee of all five (later three) councils plus British Waterways Board. The healthy balance also underpinned many bids for funding.

John also attended meetings of the Northern Canals Association and the Calder Navigation Society. He continued campaigning, losing no opportunity to inform and be supportive of the Huddersfield Canal Society. With his late wife Cynthia he cruised the canal network extensively but not before he appropriately hired a boat to be the first to navigate the eastern side of the Huddersfield Narrow Canal upon its opening in 2001, a cruise which included passing under the Wakefield Road bridge which he had promoted.

Cynthia passed away in 2016 and John is survived by his two daughters.

*Compiled by David Sumner  
Keith Gibson and Keith Noble*

*A dream realised - John & Cynthia aboard the  
hire-boat Leicester in 2001.*





Alan Sloper

# Street Scene Greenfield Group

## Latest update on Volunteer Activities

What strange times we have been living through this year. Unfortunately, due to coronavirus, group volunteer work on the Tow Path Project has been postponed, as was the proposed community litter pick in Greenfield, supporting the national event in September.

However, Street Scene have encouraged people (preferably individually), to collect litter, cut back untidy vegetation etc whilst walking around the village, including along the tow path.

All equipment - fully sanitised - can be collected from Peter Lowe, SSGG Co-ordinator whose can be contacted on 01457 870524 or emailed at [plowe@peter-lowe-consultancy.co.uk](mailto:plowe@peter-lowe-consultancy.co.uk)

The Group is anxious to ensure that everyone abides by the current Covid-19 regulations which are being updated on a daily basis and especially as Oldham is currently in an additionally restricted area.

The community larder planters (*right*) on the canal tow path near the Royal George Mill have continued to flourish, due to the care and attention of the youngsters from the complex and volunteers from SSGG.



SSGG

SSGG IS GREENFIELD-BASED COMMUNITY ACTION WORKING FOR  
YOU TO BUILD CONFIDENCE AND PRIDE IN OUR COMMUNITY  
(A sub-group of Greenfield & Grasscroft Residents Association)

- YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE -

New Members welcome [info@ggra.co.uk](mailto:info@ggra.co.uk) or ring: 01457 597666





A similar planter was installed by Canal & River Trust at the Marina behind The Kingfisher pub. This was before the virus entered our lives and the group had great fun filling it ... and getting extremely wet in the process. It has also matured.

Anyone walking past any of these has been encouraged to help themselves to herbs or strawberries or tomatoes when they ripen. It has been pointed out that the produce is intended for consumption by members of the local community.

Needless to say, the Group is anxious to get going again, but only when it is completely safe to do so.

***In the meantime, stay safe and well***

**Steph Pelmore**



## Electric Cruising

*All Photos: Alan Stopher*

### A week's hire on the Mon & Brec

With our Society getting closer to placing an order for an electric-powered boat to replace our venerable Marsden Shuttle, I was keen to try cruising with an electric boat for a whole week. My wife, Ali, and I had sold our own narrowboat last December after 8 enjoyable summer cruising seasons covering the connected network of England and Wales. Little did we know that had we kept it, overnight staying on board would not have been legal until 4<sup>th</sup> July this year!

### No more smelly diesel fumes

In our final year of owning our own craft we made mental lists of things we would miss and those which we wouldn't. Of the latter, stewing in the bottom of locks with a smelly, albeit well-maintained, diesel engine was one of them. As we get older we are getting more sensitive to environmental pollution, its impact on quality of life and health.

Back in January this year we resolved to revisit a waterway which we had last cruised in 1986 when our eldest son was just 8 weeks old.

*Plan of the Monmouthshire & Brecon Canal*



Castle Narrowboats Ltd





This pound on the five lock flight at Llangynidr is the shortest.

It would give us a waterway ‘fix’ and, because we could hire one of the only two electric hire boats in the country from Castle Narrowboats, we could experience the new green approach to canal boating.

By the time our holiday approached in mid-September 2020, the hire company had been back in operation for two months and luckily it was outside Caerphilly Borough which had by then experienced a full lock down, no one entering and no one leaving.

We knew from our 1986 cruise that the hire boats on the Mon & Brecon were built with a shallow V-shaped profile to take account of the shallow cross-section of the canal and we had recollections of using the gangplank often to moor at will.

This mainly rural canal is now known as the Monmouthshire & Brecon Canal

and incorporates two once competing waterways: the Brecon and Abergavenny and the Monmouthshire. The north-western terminus is the market town of Brecon and the navigable section follows the contours of the Usk valley to the edge of the once new town of Cwmbran. There is a flight of 5 locks at Llangynidr and a single lock on the approach to Brecon. Their dimensions are unusual in being 60ft long by 9ft wide.

### **A busy waterway for hire-boats**

There are now 6 hire-boat fleets along the canal including one which includes some 8ft 6in wide craft. According to the Waterways World Annual 62 boats are available for weekly hire and I understand they were all booked out at the time of our visit. Throw in a few day-hire boats and that would appear to make for a busy waterway. Although there are a number of marinas full of



*Monmouth Castle plugged in at Llangynidr to the dedicated Castle Narrowboats charging point.*

privately owned boats, some appearing to be conventional narrowboats in profile, we were pleased to note that few were moving at the time of our cruise.

Monmouth Castle is the newer of the two electric craft, being only 2 years old. With a fixed double bed at the rear and two singles in the saloon we had intended to share two half weeks with other couples, friends and relatives, but in the end we agreed with everyone to not share the limited space with a second household to minimise infection risk and to ensure a more relaxing holiday for ourselves. The older boat, Beaumaris Castle, looked equally spacious.

I was impressed by the way Castle Narrowboats Ltd had organised the welcome arrangements to keep everyone safe. There were a few special instructions such as beeping the horn on arrival and mask wearing whilst we were being briefed but they seemed to be well practiced at the new routine.

## Six charging points

Cruising and on-board power use a bank of batteries and rely on periodic charging. Six well-placed dedicated charging points with moorings reserved for the two boats are situated at Brecon, Talybont-on Usk, Llangynidr, Gilwern (Castle's base), Llanfoist and Pontymoile. They are depicted on the plan which is courtesy of Castle Narrowboats Ltd from their brochure. These enable a full overnight charge at all the main stopping points although we were advised that it was not necessary to stop each night on one of these moorings. The full length of the navigable section of canal is around 35 miles and the boat can run 18 miles on a full charge. At the time of booking the hire company told us that the southern section can become weedy near the end of the season so we decided to cover the northern part heading first of all for Brecon which would give us an opportunity to cruise



south of the Gilwern base for a couple of days near the end of the week. As we like staying in different places each night we varied the moorings on the return journey which reduced the prospect of a full charge.

The result was we cut it a bit fine on the final day by not full charging at Llanfoist before venturing southwards. We aimed for Goytre which is an interested site with a visitor centre and café but little room for visitor moorings which meant we had to cruise an hour further to moor and turn for the last but one night.

A charging point at Goytre would be a good facility to have but with so little room in a congested area with a marina and linear private moorings it is difficult to see how it could be fitted into this honey-pot site. By taking it steady we managed to conserve our power to get back to Llanfoist for a full overnight charge before the short run back to the base early in the morning.

## **Just the sound of the wash**

The boat itself is powered by an Agni motor and connected to a prop shaft using a standard flexible coupling. It is a pleasure to use as there is only a slight whirring sound in addition to the wash. It is belt driven and care needs to be taken to pause between forward and reverse. Reverse was effective at stopping the vessel though you are encouraged to only do this in short bursts and not reverse for prolonged periods.

The shore line is easy to connect to the dedicated green boxes on the moorings and the cable is simply stowed in an S formation in the space at the stern. There are a couple of 12v USB ports for phones etc. The TV and microwave need to have the 230v inverter running. This itself uses electricity and should be switched off when not in use. As with most boats, the electric fridge is the biggest consumer of service power when



*The 6kW electric motor and conventional drive shaft on Monmouth Castle.*

the boat is not moving. All the lights are LED so use little power.

### **Lock landings and moorings**

Interesting comparisons can be drawn with our own Huddersfield Narrow Canal (HNC). The HNC was built to a shallow profile and only had deeper side wall sections built where wharves were required. This is a particular issue for single-hander boaters as deep lock landings are in short supply. Even though bollards might indicate points to climb on and off they usually have a shelf to prevent this easily. Steps are built into bridges and lock structures at lock tails but these can be slippery particularly in wooded areas.

In contrast, the Mon & Brec has only a few locks and deep enough walls and bollards are provided to enable boaters to get on and off their boats. The rest of the Mon and Brec is by and large shallower than the HNC having been built to a smaller dish profile. The advice to hirers is to keep to the centre of the waterway and only deviate when passing an oncoming boat. This works fine and we avoided going aground though felt the shallow parts when we brushed past them.

I have read that the Mon & Brec has been the most costly for Canal & River Trust (CRT) and their predecessors to maintain over the years since its reopening in 1970. Major breaches have occurred in a number of places and several sections of concrete lining have had to be constructed to keep the water in the canal. Don't assume that this means you can moor near either side in these lengths as a ledge of shelving in the profile often preclude this. Thankfully there are a number of good

moorings elsewhere so we did not need our gangplank on this cruise, a definite improvement since our 1986 visit.

### **Keeping the water in**

The large expense incurred in repairs is not appreciated by all. At least one boater on the Mon & Brec said to me that they thought it was not a well-maintained canal, citing leaking top gates and the occasional shallow areas. With a good water supply drawn from the River Usk at Brecon, keeping water in the canal is more of a priority than reducing flow down through the locks. Indeed the instructions on all locks are to leave them empty with the bottom gates open whether you are travelling upstream or downstream. This might appear wasteful but it has been suggested that the wear and tear on the lock walls and the voids within make this a more cost-effective solution. Members will recall the HNC's problems with voids appearing behind lock walls and some cases of adjacent flooded cellars. On balance I'd say that CRT's priority of repairing embankments on the Mon & Brec has been correct given the number of hire boats and the businesses relying on the canal being open.

HNC has its own pounds which regularly lose water. Although new channels have been constructed in short sections such as in Mossley, there are others that would benefit from such investment if funds could be justified and found. The pound above Lock 29E at West Slaithwaite comes to mind as it has voids which need plugging regularly.

### **A two-mile an hour canal**

It has often puzzled me when boaters have talked about cruising the UK



waterways at 4mph as my experience is that this is rarely attainable away from river sections. Indeed it is a maximum on the canals so it seems appropriate to talk in terms of figures less than 4. Cruising calculations usually use 3mph through the water with an additional time allowance for each lock passage of say 4 or 6 an hour depending on size and frequency. When we had our own boat I used 2.5mph to be on the safe side.

Our hire company on the Mon & Brec, Castle Narrowboats, suggested we use 2mph to plan our journey because of the nature of the canal. Our experience was that this can drop to 1.5mph on some stretches with moored boats, frequent bridges and approaching hire boats. Our briefing and the excellent 'The Mon & Brec Guide', which was part of our welcome pack, gave detailed information on the more challenging bridges and how to approach them. One, on a tight bend at Llanfoist, is virtually impossible to get around in the northbound direction without a rope being deployed by a crew member on the tow path. There were some awful bridge bashes by boats from other companies while we were moored

nearby, mainly by steerers driving too fast. I hope the wine glasses were stowed well!

I'm not sure what the other hire companies do in the way of training, but with a few crews there appeared to be a poor level of understanding of how to control the boat using as little power as possible. Perhaps some were new to canal cruising as the level of expertise on show was less than we had come to expect from hirers on the main network.

One of our President, David Sumner's favourite phrases is that a canal holiday is the 'quickest way to slow down'. This is certainly true of the Huddersfield Narrow and even more so of the Mon & Brec.

### **Beautiful scenery and a wonderful break**

As we moved along peacefully creeping up on tow path walkers, we had many positive comments about how quiet the boat was and we soon slipped into our promotional patter about the craft's propulsion. The 'Go green go electric' lettering on the side was all that was needed by the observant.



Talybont-on-Usk

The busy tow path with many cyclists and walkers was in good condition. It shows what is possible with crushed stone well-rammed down and regularly repaired. It could be that most cyclists had sturdy bikes suitable for mountain biking. Whole sections come within the Brecon Beacons National Park so active leisure features strongly. There were no sections of tarmac towpath and I did not see any of the costly flexi-pave which is becoming the norm in West Yorkshire.

I often extoll the virtues of the Huddersfield Narrow. Where else can you cruise at 600ft above sea level beside purple heather? I have to concede though that the Mon & Brec has some breathtaking views and wonderful hills and mountains within a short walk which make it one of the top cruising

destinations in the UK. For an enthusiast of industrial archaeology it also has much of interest in the way of lime kilns and tramways leading from coal pits and iron works in the hills towards Blaenavon. These of course were the principle motives behind the canal's construction. We stayed over another two nights in a B&B in Blaenavon itself to explore this fascinating World Heritage town and its hinterland. It helped that we were blessed with some wonderful late summer weather.

Ali and I can recommend a cruise on the Mon & Brec, and if you fancy trying an electric boat at the moment this is the only place to hire one in the UK.

**Alan Stopher**



*The fine terminus basin at Brecon was newly built in the 1990s along with Brecon Theatre to the left. The original narrow basin had long since been filled in.*



## JIDOKU 47

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		C		S		I		
	M						N	
		N		P		D		
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The letters in this special version being:

P-A-N-D-E-M-I-C-S

Fill in the missing blanks using these initial letters, bearing in mind that each 3x3 block can only have one of each letter and there must be no duplication in horizontal rows or vertical columns.

Solution on Page 31

# Profile - Martin Clark



As a fairly new member of the HCS Council, it was put to me that I might like to tell readers something about myself.

Growing up in the south, working for a while in the West Midlands, I arrived in

Ashton under Lyne in 1975, where I lived and worked as a teacher for many years.

22 years ago I decided to create a website about Ashton, since no-one else had done so ([www.ashton-under-lyne.com](http://www.ashton-under-lyne.com)). Having an interest in canals, this website had a small section about the canals that converged on the town - the Ashton, Peak Forest and Huddersfield Narrow. After a while it became apparent that this section merited a separate website, particularly as I was keen to include the Rochdale Canal, and thus: [www.penninewaterways.co.uk](http://www.penninewaterways.co.uk) was born.

It was at this time that serious work was about to take place on the final stages of the Huddersfield Narrow Canal restoration.

It occurred to me that a website was an ideal medium to keep people updated on the progress of this work. With weekly updates, Pennine Waterways soon attracted attention and the progress of the HNC was being followed by many people around the country and beyond.

By chance, one day when I was poking my camera through the fence surrounding the work in Stalybridge, I was approached by two gentlemen in high vis.

One of these was Pete Rawson, now a fellow HCS council member, but then an engineer for Tameside Council, overseeing the canal site. He had seen the website and invited me to be shown round the site officially and take photos of things not visible from outside the fence, which seriously increased the usefulness of the coverage I was able to give.

The hardest site to photograph was the work in Huddersfield, where very little could be seen over the wall. By another stroke of luck I was contacted by Costain, the contractors carrying out the work there, who invited me to visit the site periodically to photograph the work. They thought that if up to date pictures of the work were available on Pennine Waterways website, it would discourage keen enthusiasts from trespassing at weekends!

Gradually more canals were added to Pennine Waterways site, including the Leeds and Liverpool, Bridgewater, Macclesfield and even the derelict Barnsley Canal. Each waterway is shown as a virtual cruise in photos, many of which were taken on walking visits, while others were taken from the







22

April 2016 and local MP Angela Rayner visits the Hollinwood Branch Canal at Daisy Nook; Martin and Bob Gough. Little did we know her promotion would ensue.

boat of a friend, with whom I have travelled extensively around the network, including some unusual journeys, such as over the weir at Chester. Our arrival at Fiddler's Ferry on the Sankey Canal was believed to have been the first time a narrowboat had ever passed through that lock!

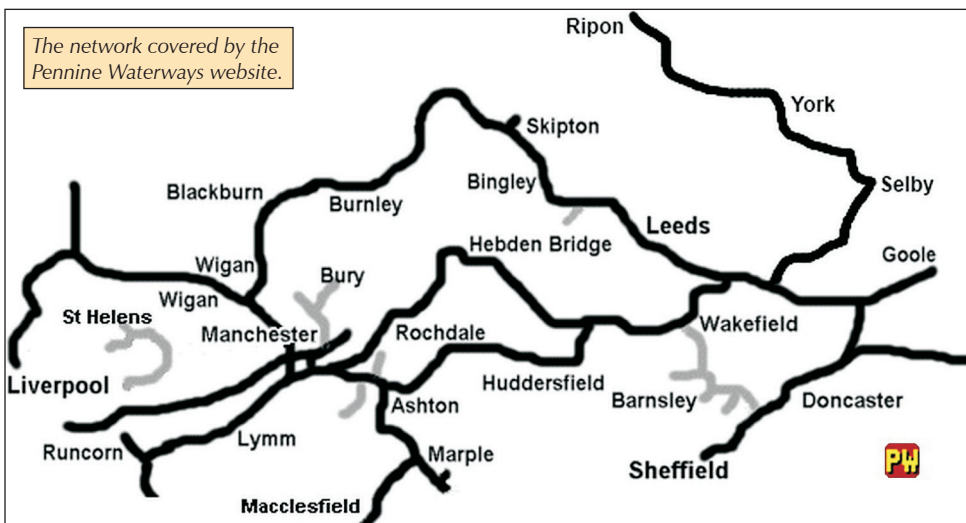
It is not possible to keep all the thousands of photos on the website up to date as new canalside buildings appear and old ones go. However, I try to keep the site up to date

in terms of accessibility and most pages are compatible with smart phones and other devices, being responsive to screen sizes, avoiding sideways scrolling to see large images.

What with running websites and volunteering my time with various local organisations, it's just as well that I retired some years ago and now wonder how I ever found time to work.

**Martin Clark**

The network covered by the Pennine Waterways website.



# Top hole

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Our Narrowboats *Mary* and *Alice* are available throughout the year and will accommodate up to 10 people. Hire cost from £90 per day.



## 220 Club - 26th Draw

This quarter, the Club benefits from 48 subscriptions, so we can offer a Prize Fund of £115.20 which means the first prize is £76.80 and the second prize, £38.40. The more who subscribe, the higher the prize fund offered for your £2 a month stake.

To join, you need to complete the form which can be downloaded from our website by following the Members' Area link, or if you prefer, call the office and we'll send you a paper copy by post. Do consider completing a Standing Order and then you'll never miss a draw.

For legal reasons, only Huddersfield Canal Society members are eligible to subscribe to HCS 220 Club, so if you are reading this and not a Society member, join us and then sign up to the 220 Club.

AND here are the results of our twenty-sixth\* quarterly draw:

Total Subscribers: 48  
Total Prize Fund: £115.20

### 1st Prize:

Mr B Edwards £76.80

### 2nd Prize:

Mr P Killan £38.40

*Congratulations to the prize winners!*

**\* Please note, the 25th draw was made remotely by the Chairman and the prizes published on our website.**



Solution to Jidoku 47

D	N	P	A	I	S	E	C	M
C	E	M	N	D	P	A	S	I
S	A	I	E	M	C	P	D	N
A	P	C	D	S	N	I	M	E
E	M	D	I	C	A	S	N	P
I	S	N	M	P	E	D	A	C
M	C	S	P	E	D	N	I	A
N	D	E	C	A	I	M	P	S
P	I	A	S	N	M	C	E	D

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### COPY DATE

Articles, letters and comments for Issue 211 of Pennine Link should reach the Editor at Transhipment Warehouse, Wool Rd, Dobcross, OL3 5QR by **Monday 1st February 2021**

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