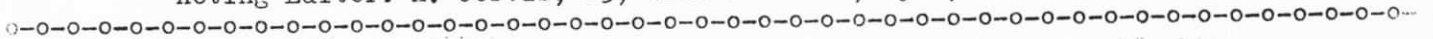


THE HUDDERSFIELD CANAL SOCIETY

JUNE 1974

Bulletin Nr 1

Acting Editor: A. Jervis, 23, Wilson Street, Hyde, Cheshire. 061 368 6589



Introductory Meeting

The Huddersfield Canal Society was formed at a meeting held at the Zetland Inn, Huddersfield on the 19th April 1974. The meeting approved, after modification, a set of rules, and elected the following committee members:

Chairman John Maynard, 29, Thick Hollins Drive, Meltham, Huddersfield.
(Meltham 850575)

Secretary Robert Dewey, 3, Pump Row, High Flatts, Huddersfield. (High Flatts 596)

Treasurer Robert Wilkinson, 81, New North Road, Huddersfield. HD1 5ND

Committee Members Margaret Bradnum; Gerry Greenwood; Robert Keaveney* ;

Robert Lear* ; Tim Noakes* ; John Parkinson* ; Margaret Sinfield; Alan West.
(* = based in the Manchester Area)

Since the first meeting, one committee meeting has already been held, and the initial strategy of the Society discussed. Essentially, this consists of:

- i) Ensuring that no further seriously detrimental works occur on the Huddersfield Narrow Canal. (Such as the cascading of Diggle Locks under the Tame Valley Improvement Scheme.)
- ii) The commissioning of a feasibility study, leading to the line being surveyed by a qualified Civil Engineer to propose a detailed estimate of the costs of restoration.

It was also decided to organise a public meeting for members and all others interested. This will be held at Huddersfield Polytechnic, starting at 7.45 pm. on FRIDAY 28TH JUNE. It will consist of a brief report on progress so far, followed by a slide show.

Membership

This is one of the most important facets of our initial campaign. We cannot hope to wield influence unless we have a really substantial membership to back up the committee. Reproduced in this Bulletin is a membership form. Please use it - persuade someone to join today.

PRESS

We have already sent out a press release reporting the Society's formation and objectives. As a result of this, one of our committee members was interviewed on Radio Manchester, and a small article appeared in the Daily Express. There may well have been other mentions that we did not hear about. Robert Keaveney has agreed to keep a record of such items, so if you see one, could you please send it to him at 57, Northdale Road, Liverpool L15 4HT.

MEMBERSHIP FORM

To Robert Wilkinson Esq., 81, New North Road, Huddersfield. HD1 5ND.

I/We would like to join the Huddersfield Canal Society and enclose my/our subscription of £..... (Rates: Adult £1.00, Husband and Wife £1.50, Under 18 and those in full time education £0.50)

Address..... Signed

31st May 1974

29, Thick Hollins Drive
Meltham,
Nr Huddersfield,
Yorkshire. HD7 3DL
Tel. 0484 850575

Dear Fellow Member,

Welcome to the Society and to this, our first Bulletin. I have been astounded by the enthusiasm and support which has greeted the formation of the Society.

Your committee has met once so far, and a lot of basic 'once off' decisions taken. We are hard at work contacting amenity societies along the route of the cut with a view to enlisting support or conversion as the case may be - we must not delude ourselves into thinking that we are going to have it all our own way - opposition is inevitable in some quarters.

Some people are still asking what we intend to do, so here, briefly, are our main objectives:-

- 1) Lobby the appropriate authorities and obtain support to preserve and improve the canal.
- 2) Physically help to clean up and improve the canal where we are able.
- 3) Keep a watch and object to any further official vandalism or development that will hinder the eventual reopening of the canal to through navigation.
- 4) Set up a study group to look seriously into the feasibility and costs of reopening.

There is a great deal of work to be done, both physical and mental. Can you help? If so, let us know. Can you find new members? New members mean increased income and more help. Our present resources are already stretched with the initial expenses of setting up the Society.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to thank Bob Dewey, our Secretary, for doing a full time job in his spare time.

Yours sincerely,

J.K. MAYNARD.
(Chairman)

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THE HUDDERSFIELD NARROW CANAL

Robert Dewey (Hon. Gen. Sec.)

An Act in 1794 first authorised the construction of a canal between Huddersfield and Ashton-under-Lyne. The chosen route climbed from Sir John Ramsden's Canal (authorised in 1774, and now usually known as the Huddersfield Broad Canal), up the Colne Valley by means of 42 narrow locks (70'0" x 6'11") in almost eight miles, through the famous Standedge Tunnel and down 32 locks through Mossley and Stalybridge to the Ashton Canal.

Although there were problems in construction, especially in satisfying the water requirements of the local mill-owners, by far the greatest obstacle was the building of Standedge Tunnel. This is still easily the longest canal tunnel in Great Britain, being three miles 135 yards long, and is also the highest section of canal in Britain (640' above sea level). The tunnel took a great deal of time to construct, and the problems encountered meant that extra finance had to be authorised by further Acts of Parliament. The final cost was £160,000.

Commercial usage of the canal was never very great and trade slackened quickly in the 'Railway Era'. The company was officially given leave to abandon the canal in 1944, and all navigation ceased in the 1950's.

Now, although the channel is basically sound, most of the locks require rebuilding or at least extensive renovation (many of them have been concreted in) and all 74 require new lock gates, which are very expensive. Other 'simple' works include the rebuilding of 15 bridges and the realigning of four low pipes.

The big problems for the reopening of this canal to through navigation are caused by a mere $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles of the canal (it is 20 miles long in total) as they have been filled in, landscaped and even built on. Three areas are involved. The first is in Huddersfield where three sections have been sold and culverted for

industrial use. Secondly, a length of canal at Slaithwaite has been filled in, and is now landscaped. More seriously, a longer stretch in Stalybridge has 'disappeared' (culverted) under a large car park and new factories. Here, an alternative to uprooting the new works might be to divert the canal into the adjacent river.

These are severe difficulties indeed, but are not insurmountable given public support and financial help from grant-giving bodies. The existence of the Huddersfield Canal Society can give impetus for full restoration - but it's upto all of us to publicise it and to make the authorities realise that restoration proposals are to be taken seriously.

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An Extract from Priestley's 'Navigable Rivers and Canals' (1831)

This canal, which is fitted for small craft of 7 feet wide, and such as navigate upon the Staffordshire and southern canals, and what Dupin calls of the narrow section, is capable of passing boats with twenty-four tons burthen; and, by a reference to the map, it will be seen that it commences on the south of the town of Huddersfield, and pursues a south-west direction, winding its course past Slaithwaite, nearly parallel with one of the branches of the river Colne, for the distance of seven miles and a half, which river it crosses in three places by appropriate aqueducts, and, by an ascent of 436 feet, distributed among forty-two locks, it arrives, near Marsden, at the summit level, which is higher than that of any other canal in the kingdom, being at an elevation of 656 feet above the level of the sea; the summit level is thence continued for nearly half a mile, when the canal enters that extensive chain of mountains well known to travellers going from Manchester to Huddersfield, (through which it passes under the part designated Pule Hill and Brunn Top, generally called Standedge) for the distance of five thousand four hundred and fifty one yards, and emerges therefrom into the Vale of Diggle in Saddleworth, continuing to near Wrigley Mill, making the whole summit level four miles; it then glides along the valley, alternately on the north and south sides of the River Tame past Dobcross, Scout and Stalcy Bridge, to its junction with the Manchester, Ashton-under-Lyne and Oldham Canal, near Duckinfield Bridge, having passed a further distance of eight miles and a quarter, and through a descent of 334 $\frac{1}{2}$ feet, which is equally divided among thirty-three locks; crossing the River Tame in four different places and making the whole length of canal nineteen miles and three quarters.

In passing from the summit level to Ashton-under-Lyne, there are two tunnels; one at Scout, two hundred and four yards long, excavated through a strong sand rock, and the other near its extremity at Ashton, one hundred and ninety eight yards long, cut through a complete body of fine sand.

The principal tunnel at Standedge, or, as it is generally called, the Marsden Tunnel, is 9 feet wide and 17 feet high; the depth of water through it is 8 feet, leaving 9 feet from the surface of the water to the spring of the arch; there is no towing path in the tunnel; the boats are therefore haled through by manual labour, which is effected in about one hour and twenty minutes; those at Scout and Ashton have a towing path.

DATES For copy for the next issue. Contributions and correspondence to reach me by July 20th for inclusion in the August issue, September 20th for the October issue.

SITUATION VACANT! I am doing the job of Editor on an acting basis, as I do not expect to remain in the north of England for more that a few months. If any member feels able to take over the job of Editor on a permanent basis, either the Chairman or I would like to hear! The job is neither difficult nor time-consuming and two evenings every other month should be the maximum commitment required.

A. Jervis.