

HUDDERSFIELD CANAL SOCIETY

BULLETIN NO. 4.

MARCH, 1975.

EDITOR: G.W. Greenwood, 12 Kenview Close, Halebank, Widnes.

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From your Secretary:

( hi Things have been very quiet recently. Please don't think that this means nothing is happening. The Committee meets once every 6 weeks and a very full agenda is dealt with. Some of the matters are purely routine, but the Committee is very conscious of the need to look ahead. In a way we're in a strange position in that we've no idea whether the basic principle of restoration will be accepted in 1975 or 1985, of course, we hope it is the former. We must, however, not be disheartened if things don't happen as quickly as we'd like. We said from the beginning that this is a long term project. I know its tempting to feel that the slow pace is not encouraging, but this ground work must be done first. I for one don't want to prolong the talking; I want to get digging. Do we have a special 'silver' spade to remove the first 'muck'?

1975 will be a critical year for the Society; we've lost the first flush of enthusiasm now we've got to prove that the restoration is not just a whim, but a feasible idea which has the continued backing of a considerable number of enthusiasts whose ideas are based on a logical and coherent plan.

To the more mundane things of life: I know appeals in Newsletters are generally ignored, but I'm the perpetual optimist'. Please think who you would like to see on the Committee - there will be at least two vacancies, but the whole Committee needs re-electing.

At a meeting I went to not so long back, someone said that they had (or had seen) some old pictures of the canal in use. If anyone could tell me where I can find old pictures, preferably with craft on them, I would be very pleased.

Look forward to putting a few faces to the long list of names I have, so do come to the A.G.M. and the Society Meetings.

ROBERT DEWEY.

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ASHTON RALLY OF BOATS

TAMESIDE

JUNE 27, 28, 29th, 1975.

TO: ALL BOAT CLUB and  
CANAL SOCIETY MEMBERS.

Dear Members,

This is your chance to celebrate the final re-opening of the CHESHIRE CANAL RING, at the same time cruising the Peak Forest and Ashton Canals; and the Manchester section of the Rochdale Canal, all of whom will be open as a through route for the first time for nearly fifteen years. Surely this is a historic event which you cannot miss!.

The Rally site and moorings are along the newly and attractively landscaped areas forming part of the Tame Valley environmental improvement scheme. Canals stretch in three directions from Portland Street basin (the centre of the Rally site) towards Marple, Manchester and Huddersfield. All the usual rally services will be provided for entrants; there will be an attractive Rally plaque and entertainments both on water and on land. And - the site is close to the centre of Ashton where all the town's facilities may be sampled - from pubs to the new public baths!.

If you agreed with the campaign to restore the now re-opened Cheshire Canal Ring,  
or, if you agree with the idea of restoring the Huddersfield Narrow Canal,  
or, if you see canals as environmental amenities for local people,  
(basically, these are the Rally aims), then to attend this Rally with your boat is a must.

Do come and join the first Rally to be held in a new linear park.

Yours sincerely,

BRIAN BEAGLEY,  
(Rally Publicity Officer).

\* Boat entry forms are available from Your Club or Society or from:-  
Chris. K. Potter, 3 Lady's Close, Poynton, Stockport. SK12 1AN.

## THROUGH THE STANDEDGE (IN DAYS OF STEAM)

by Brian Beagley.

On 23rd June six of us travelled from the Midlands to join a party of about thirty for a journey through Standedge Tunnel on the Huddersfield Narrow Canal. We travelled to the canal in two cars starting at 6 a.m., one car with four passengers started from Coventry and the other with two from Birmingham.

A storm which started at 4-30 a.m., continued until about 8 a.m., and consequently the journey was not pleasant. As we passed through a flood at one point we wondered whether it would have been easier to travel by narrow boat'. We had to arrive by 9-30 a.m., and due to an error in Glossop, some hard driving was necessary over the last stages on the journey. The error involved a detour taking us up into the hills, and the mist to a height of 1718ft. This serves to emphasize the tremendous difficulties with which Outram the canal engineer had to contend.

We arrived at 9-35 a.m., at the Marsden end of the tunnel. The scene which greeted us was strikingly familiar. Things have changed little since the photograph in L.T.C. Rolt's "The Inland Waterways of England", was taken.

There are four tunnels through Standedge Hill, three for the railway and one for the canal, the last being the longest. The canal tunnel runs underneath the railway tunnels for the whole of its length, except at the ends where the railway lines swing away to the south. The canal tunnel was the first to be built, being completed in 1811, although the remainder of the canal had been open for some years. In 1893, the canal tunnel was lengthened by about 200 yards at the Diggle end, when the third and only double track railway tunnel was built.

The narrow boat in Rolt's photograph could very well be the one in which we travelled through the tunnel. The boat had no engine of its own and was propelled by a jet of water produced by a mobile high pressure pump. This boat was legged through the tunnel as recently as last year, when carrying a party from Huddersfield.

The tunnel entrances have been fitted with iron gates (painted as one would expect, "B.T.W. blue".), which are normally padlocked to prevent canoeists and others from attempting a passage. These gates were fitted after attempts to navigate the tunnels had been made by people inadequately prepared for such a perilous voyage, or so we were told.

Once inside the tunnel the paraffin lamps which outside had seemed so dim, suddenly became brighter and searched the gloom, which

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seemed to stretch to infinity. The first part of the tunnel is brick and stone lined, but after a while this gives way to sections which are not lined at all. The jagged rocks remain as they were when the tunnellers left, and jut out their dangerous edges from the sides and roof of the cavern. The tunnel is unlined for a considerable length in the centre, and many intersecting galleries join it to the three railway tunnels. The thunderstorm had caused a good deal of water to accumulate in these tunnels, and it drained away into the canal tunnel. At intervals we passed openings pouring water into the canal, and occasionally we had to take cover as water poured down on us from above where planks joined galleries on either side, presumably for the convenience of railway maintenance men requiring to move from one railway tunnel to another. When the railway tunnels were built spoil was passed through these galleries into narrow boats which removed it to a dumping ground at Diggle.

Halfway through (more than 600ft below ground) the boat stopped and we drank coffee.

Besides water the railway tunnels belched smoke and soot. The walls of the tunnels were coated with black slime, and the smoke thickened as we penetrated further towards the western end.

The roof of the tunnel near the Diggle end where it passes under the station is composed of transverse cast iron girders. Because of the smoke we were unable to see daylight until we were very near the mouth. When at last the opening did appear it seemed orange coloured as though the countryside beyond were bathed in bright sunlight. On reaching the end we saw that we were mistaken; the weather was still dull and rainy. Presumably the colour was caused by the diffraction of light by the smoke particles, in much the same way that the glorious colours of a sunset are produced.

When we emerged after nearly  $2\frac{1}{2}$  hours underground we realised just how dirty the tunnel had been, many of us had sooty patches on our clothes and faces.

From the outside the Diggle end of the tunnel seems rather odd. The opening is not in the side of the hill, but the tunnel rises above level ground. The railway is the cause of this. After a few yards the canal passes under it (the railway tunnels start  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile away).

We travelled back to Marsden by train through the big railway tunnel, but before we started our journey home we had a look at the canal in the vicinity of the two ends of the tunnel. At both ends the first lock is only about  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile away. There are 74 locks on the 20 mile long canal. Regular commercial traffic ceased in 1916, the last cargo passing in 1921. After that only a handful of pleasure boats passed, the last in about 1950. In its heyday the canal had regular leggers stationed at each end of the tunnel. The pay for a trip was 3s/6d.

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All the lock gates have now been removed, the top gates being replaced by permanent stanks to retain the water level in the pounds. The waterway supplies water to factories in the Huddersfield and Manchester areas. It is frustrating to note that the lock chambers are in better condition than those on the Southern Section of the Stratford Canal, and also that the canal is almost free from weed. The lock chambers are deep by Midland standards, the deepest being 12ft 5 inches.

The summit pound is about 650ft above sea level and is the highest stretch of canal in Great Britain, in addition the tunnel is the highest and longest canal tunnel in Great Britain and probably in the world. Rolt quotes the length as 5415 yards, but my own estimate as about 5600 yards. There are 109 numbered cast iron plaques placed at 50 yard intervals. It would seem that these make up the 5415 yards, but they do not appear to continue under Diggle Station, so we must add about 200 yards to Rolt's figure.

We are greatly indebted to Mr. Whitwam for allowing us to be present when he the District Inspector made his biennial inspection of the tunnel and for making the trip so interesting and instructive.

(Reprinted from "Navigation", I.W.A. Midlands Branch Magazine,  
July/Aug, 1960.

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SECRETARY'S NOTE:

I for one envy Brian for having been through the tunnel.  
To save you writing in, the boat has now been replaced by one unsuitable for passenger carrying and in any case B.W.B. have clamped down.....  
..... maybe one day?

Perhaps we could save up for a boat?

## TURNBRIDGE

Members in the Huddersfield Area may have been horrified to notice that the "Turnbridge" has been demolished (although no-one contacted me to report).

Fortunately, by tracing a rumour received in January, I was able to obtain a sight of the plans for replacing the bridge. The replacement which utilises parts of the original equipment will be almost identical to the old structure, parts of which had become dangerously corroded. This was discovered during an inspection made a year or two ago as part of the Department of Environment's "Operation Bridgeguard". Work will take around six weeks.

I wrote to Kirklees Council who contacted the D.O.E, and the bridge may be listed as of historic interest fairly soon so it's future now seems assured.

R.D.

### NOTE:

If you've never seen "Turnbridge" (officially "Loco Bridge"), it is an 1865 lift bridge. The roadway is lifted vertically by a system of wires, pulleys, gears, etc. It's a sight worth seeing - It's only a few hundred yards down the Broad Canal from the Aspley Marina.

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### DATES FOR YOUR DIARY:

2nd May	8.0 p.m.	<u>Annual General Meeting;</u> Tolson Museum, Huddersfield.
26/27 April		Provisional dates for H.C.S. working party.
12th May	8.0 p.m.	<u>Society Social Meeting;</u> Ashton Town Hall, "Old Canals Live", the story of canal restoration, past, present and future.
27/29 June		<u>Ashton Rally of Boats.</u>