

Pennine Link

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Pennine Link

Summer 2000 Issue 133



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Restoration Progress



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Panama**
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Front Cover: Deep in the basement of Bates & Co's carding shed, the outer wall has been removed to gain access to Queen Street South Bridge. In restoring the canal through a tunnel underneath the Bates mill, it will have to be lowered by about 3m from its present level. Major excavations are required in the bridge hole, which would undermine the foundations of this Grade 2 listed structure. Consequently, contractors are busy underpinning the abutments by drilling and jet grouting the underlying sediments.

Photo: R. Gough

Back Cover: Left to right - Canal Company Chairman, David Sumner, Lady Mayoress and Mayor of Oldham, councillors Philomena and John Dillon on board the Pennine Moonraker at Wool Road, Uppermill, celebrating the official opening of the Wool Road bridge project. This, and other completed schemes, will be detailed in the next Issue of Pennine Link. Photo: Oldham Metropolitan Council



Editorial

Things are hotting up! All around people are beginning to ask when and where the "official" opening will take place. Will it have 10,000 people

and a brass band, like in 1811? Will there be a "Royal" and, if so, which one? Will there be boat festivals and, if so, how many - when - where? Quietly, behind the scenes, plans are being made, invitations considered - and not easy when the canal passes through three local authorities, each with civic events to promote, and the whole thing overlooked by British Waterways with their own ideas, and HCS with ours! It will all come right, soon! But the end result is likely to be a lot of little "openings", for individual restoration schemes, with a big one, somewhere to be decided, to celebrate through navigation.

I was a proper journalist for another day, recently. We had a "press day" to Bates and Sellers schemes in Huddersfield before the Sellers tunnel was covered over completely - very exciting, as the photos elsewhere prove. And by now Sellers yard is back to normal - the only way to tell we were ever there is new tarmac!

All the various staff - engineers, planners, admin. officers, lawyers, etc. from the six partners, met in Marsden recently to have a "beer and bonding" session. Hosted by BW and HCS it was a good old "knees-up" as a thank you to a lot of dedicated people, most of whom have no real interest in canals as such but only in doing a job well. And how young most of them are! Their efforts over the last few years belie the usual comments about "public servants". I am proud to

have been amongst them. Although, as an ex-local government person for 37 years, perhaps I am a bit partisan!

Whilst talking ageism it is time to announce my retirement from the post of editor of Pennine Link - not resignation, I hasten to add. I intend to carry on to produce a full-colour celebration issue next summer, to coincide (roughly) with the reopening to through navigation and then to call it a day. I will have reached my biblical "sell by" date by then and think it is time for somebody else to have a go. You will see, under "HCS Council News" that I have spelled out, in brief, the future hopes and aspirations of the Society and not much of it is of continuing interest to a restoration engineer! I shall enjoy my caravan, instead, since I refuse to pay boat hire charges these days (they are far too expensive) - except, possibly, for a journey along our Canal.

I must congratulate Tom Rowe on his appointment as Waterways Manager for the new South Pennine Ring. Tom came into our organisation at the time that BW were perking up their interest following the announcement of the millennium funding. He has had to suffer a fair amount of "stick" from the rest of us but has taken it all with considerable good humour. Of course we have our differences, it will be ever thus, but Tom has been one of the leaders in carving out the unique charter between BW and HCS. He is now installed in new offices at Castlefield in Manchester - and not because the beer is better at the Duke's 92 pub at the bottom of the "Rochdale 9"!

I will never understand local politics. Councillor Brian Mather, who has been a good friend to the canal, described the traffic signals at Wade Lock as "a nightmare" in his election pamphlet - and he still got in! Ah, well.

Ken Wright



Chairman's AGM Report

It is now less than twelve months to the completion of the restoration of the Huddersfield Narrow Canal.

The commitment

made by the Huddersfield Canal Company, of which the Society is a full member, is that by April 30th 2001 the scheme will be completed. It may take a little longer for full commissioning of the canal but to all intents and purposes the main aim of the Huddersfield Canal Society will have been met.

The year 1999 saw reconstruction and new construction work not seen on the canal since the period 1794 to 1811. The cost by 1811 was £411,000. The cost to April 2001 will be in excess of £40,000,000 discounting the cost to destroy the canal in the 1960's. In 1999 all the major reconstruction works were under progress including the three most stunning examples of civil engineering in Stalybridge, Standedge and Huddersfield Town Centre.

On 31st March 1999 the funding agreement between British Waterways and English Partnerships was signed. This historic agreement ensured the project's success by BW underwriting the whole scheme and becoming the direct recipient of EP and Millennium funds, thus saving a possible Customs and Excise liability of £5 million. Let no one underestimate the commitment and contribution made by BW to the project. Our Society can claim credit for initiating the project, but BW have been the key to its delivery and with our three other partners, Kirklees, Oldham and Tameside Councils, the Grand

Alliance can be proud of its achievements to date and look forward to April 2001.

I do not propose to detail the progress on the canal in 1999. Our award-winning magazine Pennine Link admirably does just that. Photographs and Alan Stopher's reports in each issue plus information on our website including the CCTV in Stalybridge has kept members and the nation informed. Indeed, most press reports originate from our journal. In addition to the 1999 Tom Rolt Award, IWA recognised the success of our scheme by awarding the Society, on 29th March this year, the Kenneth Goodwin Trophy for the second time. In making this award, Richard Drake, IWA National Chairman, stated *"You might think that with all the restoration work going on at the present time that it would have proved difficult to decide who should receive this award this year. However, the evidence of progress on the Huddersfield is such that there is little doubt that HCS merit the award."*

He quite rightly acknowledged our partners including, of course, English Partnerships and the Millennium Commission. A Guardian leader article on the 29th October 1999 also praised the project and added, *"Here is the kind of monument the Millennium Commission ought to be proud to leave behind."*

There would be nothing to leave behind if it had not been for our founder members. On the 4th April 1999 John Maynard and Bob Dewey were present at our Silver Jubilee celebration in Uppermill. We all pledged to meet again in 2001. Two festivals took place in 1999 - Ashton and Saddleworth - precursors of plans now being made to celebrate the reopening in 2001. We are in discussions with BW

about a programme of celebratory events for 2001 including a grand opening in the summer. We have agreed to promote a special performance by Mikron Theatre for 2001 on the subject of the restoration of the Huddersfield Narrow.

After many years of canal restoration, including repairs and maintenance on the Peak Forest Canal, we decided to close HCS (Restoration) Ltd. This decision, not taken lightly, meant redundancy for the staff and workers, and came about as likelihood of work on the Narrow vanished as the twenty or so projects necessitated main contractors used to large civil engineering works and the resources and reserves to undertake work for the local authorities and BW. Over the years, HCS Restoration restored 27 locks, including the Diggle Flight, dredged six miles of canal, re-laid towpaths, rebuilt washwalls, restored the Transhipment Warehouse and carried out landscaping and other works. I quote Keith Gibson, HCS Restoration Chairman, *"Without their efforts, the Society would not have been able to put in the huge effort needed to bid for the Millennium Commission grant."* Steve Whitby and his team also won respect from local authority engineers and planners. We thank all our past employees for their contribution to our success.

The strength of HCS has been the tireless devotion to our aims by volunteers. From boat crews to festival officers, our profile has been forever in the public eye. One of our council members did just that. With her husband Steve, Gay Quilter was a regular at canal festivals and other events throughout the country. She died in November last year and we all miss her.

We have all but achieved our aim. The Society chaired the Canal Company in

1999 until May 2000 seeing the most progress on restoration yet. This year I handed over to Councillor Roy Oldham, leader of Tameside Council, who will appropriately be Chairman when the Stalybridge scheme is completed. He will hand over to Derek Cochrane in 2001 to see the completion of the 'Impossible Restoration'. I hope that many members, past and present, including employees and friends, will share in our success in 2001.

Meanwhile, the year 2000 will see the Society's role changing again and I am very proud to be able to launch an Alliance Charter with British Waterways. This Alliance will create a future, post restoration, relationship with BW to operate, maintain and enjoy the canal. We shall also have a crucial role in the operation of the Stand-edge Visitor Centre. The signing of this Charter is again a first for the waterways. We have achieved the impossible by partnership, before the word became fashionable. Our Society can look forward to another year of phenomenal progress and to the ultimate goal of through navigation. Your Society has contributed considerable financial resources to the restoration of the canal. We are financially strong and with your support will ensure the success of our unique waterway in the years to come.

David Sumner



Huddersfield Canal Company Report

We've now reached half way on the Millennium project. Since my last report work has continued

apace on all the sites. Once more a selection of photographs will give members a flavour of the activity along the whole canal.

At Stalybridge progress is being made throughout the town centre, making it the most impressive regeneration project anyone can think of for a small town. Comparison with waterfront developments in recent years in Manchester, Leeds, Liverpool and Birmingham do not take into account how the centre of Stalybridge's commercial district is dominated by efforts to revitalise the town with the restored canal as a focus.

Work is underway on the second half of the Mottram Road bridge and traffic has been diverted onto the completed section of bridge. The adjacent lock 7W has been exposed and around half its length will be used in conjunction with new reinforced concrete sections. The Delta section of canal is well on the way to completion beside the Tesco store construction.

The new lock 6W in Armentieres Square is almost complete. New bridges are in place for the service road and Back Melbourne Street. Castle Hall Sports Hall has been demolished and the buried lock 5W has been unearthed and found to be in good condition. Construction of a new lock 4W is underway beside the Texaco Service Station in Caroline Street.

Scout Tunnel work is now underway with pointing and rock bolting in place. British Waterways has completed repair work at Division Bridge Aqueduct between Mossley and Greenfield and a very attractive job has been made.

The coping stones have been relaid to match the refurbished concrete channel, thereby improving on earlier repair works and the new steps and crushed stone paths look well.

Dredging work on the section between Frenches and Mann's Wharf has been temporarily suspended, pending further discussions between British Waterways and North West Water over tipping arrangements.

Work has started at High Street Bridge, Uppermill. The sides of the original stone bridge were found to be in good condition and the arch has been reconstructed to form the upstream end of the new bridge. This has enabled work to proceed using temporary traffic lights. Local residents and traders have welcomed the result as it avoids the need for a massive temporary Bailey bridge and associated disruption to traffic. Wade Lock has been excavated and remedial works are underway.

Old Sag Aqueduct beside Brownhill Countryside Centre has also been repaired since the last issue of PLink, in time for the Easter boat trips. Excavation of the complete infill to the arch showed the structure to be sufficiently solid to allow a new concrete channel to be installed without demolition of the arch.

Work is now complete at Wool Road and the traffic is flowing on the main road again. Everyone is pleased with the finished result and also the efforts made by the engineers and contractors to ensure the project went smoothly.

The nearby lock received its new set of gates and gearing just in time for the official opening on 19th May by the Mayor of Oldham, Millennium Commissioner Judith Donovan CBE and David Sumner, Chairman of the Huddersfield Canal Company. The popular Pennine Moonraker trip boat was in the limelight as dignitaries took a brief trip through the new bridge.

At Standedge Tunnel removal of debris by pumping has been completed and the centrifuges taken off site. The remaining silt in the canal at Diggle will be excavated by conventional methods in due course. Stabilisation of the tunnel roof and shaft bases is following along behind and making good progress. Redbrook Shaft has been reached from the Diggle end and temporary supports have been installed to enable a new arch to be constructed at the rock fall 850 metres from the Marsden Portal.

At Slaithwaite work has reached the halfway point. The replacement car park in New Street is open for use. A 20mph one way system has been introduced around Carr Lane, New Street, Platt Lane, Bridge Street and Britannia Road bridge.

This is now working very well. It helps keep the traffic moving and allows for street parking near the shops. At the upstream end, minipiles have been installed to strengthen the ground behind the river wall at Old Bank so that it will be able to support the new bridge. The first half of Britannia Road bridge has been completed ahead of programme schedule and

the old lock 22E which was buried beside Carr Lane car park has been excavated. This has proved to be the least structurally sound of the locks to be repaired and work is underway to rebuild the walls. A large section of concrete channel, including the mooring area, has been built upstream and downstream of lock 22E. The massive excavation for the new lock beside Waterside Cottages is complete within the cofferdam and steel fixing for the new lock structure has commenced. Site clearance work downstream of Platt Lane has revealed the old lock 21E structure. Slaithwaite residents and businesses are being kept up to date through a liaison meeting chaired by the Colne Valley Trust.

Further down the Colne Valley, the main concrete structure for Lees Mill Bridge beside Grosvenor Chemicals is complete and the new carriageway has been brought into use. Holme Mill Bridge off Britannia Road Milnsbridge is approaching completion with work concentrating on the wing walls and stone facings. Golcar Aqueduct has been strengthened by the construction of a new concrete channel and is now complete except for bund removal. Construction of a new Mark Bottoms Bridge at Stoney Battery, Paddock is making excellent progress and should be complete by mid-summer.

In Huddersfield, at Sellers, a two hundred metre length of brand new cut-and-cover canal tunnel has been constructed beneath the yard of the textile machinery factory. This was shown to the press in mid-March before the final roof slabs were placed and the whole length restored to a tarmac road. Work has started on a replacement grinding shed and electrician's shop so that the old ones can be demolished to make way for the

tunnel to continue westwards. Canal works are now concentrating on the new Lock 3E. At the nearby Bates Mill, the piling for the tunnel under the various buildings has now been completed and a breakthrough made from the carding shed to the canal under Queen Street South. The sewer diversion work in this road is complete and underpinning of the bridge is now in hand. The cofferdam for the new lock 2E upstream of Bates is complete and the reinforced concrete structure is taking shape within.

Tenders have been returned by contractors bidding to refurbish the historic warehouse building for the Standedge Visitor Centre. Progress is also being made in the quest for a design team to bring the attraction to life.

The Huddersfield Narrow Canal has made the headlines this Spring and been compared to some of the wonders of the world. The Independent newspaper ran an article headed 'Step aside Taj Mahal, Huddersfield Narrow Canal aims to become a World Heritage Site'. This is not so far fetched when you consider the great importance of the canal in changing the economy of the South Pennines 200 years ago and the fact that other industrial sites such as Ironbridge Gorge are already recognised as World Heritage Sites. A comparison with the Pyramids was used at the start of a ten minute piece on BBC Radio 4's 'You and Yours'. This extolled the virtues of the canal restoration and was heard by millions of listeners. We've had Fred the Weatherman (known to many North West viewers) enthusing over the restoration of the canal through Stalybridge and even a request from Songs of Praise to visit the Standedge Tunnel!

British Waterways has given a welcome boost to the region's inland waterways by setting up a new office at Castlefield, Manchester where Tom Rowe, the new Waterways Manager, will manage the South Pennine Ring. This will include the soon to be restored Rochdale Canal, as well as operation and maintenance of the Huddersfield Narrow, along with the Ashton Canal, which will be a major influence on the development in East Manchester for the next Commonwealth Games.

It is many years since some sections have been restored and work has started on what has sometimes been described as secondary restoration. British Waterways is committed to completing all the remedial works on the canal in time for next Spring's opening to through navigation. This will involve more dredging, particularly in the Milnsbridge area. With the Marsden tip now full following work on the Marsden flight, a number of dredging disposal options are being considered. British Waterways' team headed by Waterway Supervisor Ken Middleton has started to check on the operation of all the restored locks and make any repairs.

On the issue of opening events, the Company is consulting with the partner organisations on the arrangements for an official opening in Summer 2001. The Canal Society is in separate discussion with British Waterways about boat rallies. With careful planning and a methodical commissioning of the restored canal, every effort will be made to ensure that the first season's cruising is a pleasurable experience for all.

Alan Stopher





Stalybridge

Top Left: Initial excavation for Lock 4W with Caroline Street and Staley Wharf behind. (AS)

Top Right: Cofferdam formed for the construction of the new Lock 4W. The old lock was partially under the petrol station forecourt to the right. Wellpointing has been used to dewater this excavation which is in an area of particularly high water table. (AS)

Middle Left: Reinforced concrete channel and retaining wall downstream of Back Melbourne Street. The north wall curves to meet the new bridge. (AS)

Middle Right: The entrance bay to the new Lock 6W in Armentieres Square with the bywash weir to the right. (BG)

Bottom Left: A bird's eye view looking west from above Armentieres Square. The tail of Lock 6W and towpath ramp are in the foreground, Melbourne Street bridge in the middle distance and the start of work downstream of Back Melbourne Street in the distance. (DEW)

Bottom Right: Completed reinforced concrete channel upstream of Trinity Street at the site of the old Lock 6W. The formwork for the new Tesco's is in the right background. (BW)







Stalybridge & Division Bridge

Top Left: Central section of canal channel through the Delta site. A protective clay layer is being laid over Rawmat bentonite matting to give a waterproof channel bed. The Tesco supermarket is taking shape to the right. (AS)

Top Right: A long-reach excavator is shaping the canal profile within the clay fill between the precast concrete wall units to produce the required navigational depth. (AS)

Middle Left: Stone cladding being applied to the western face of the new Mottram Road bridge. These high quality, sympathetic finishes characterise work on the Narrow. (AS)

Middle Right: Phase II of the work on Mottram Road bridge has started with a major excavation between temporary sheet piles. The first, substantial, precast box units are in place. Sections of the original stone bridge walls are visible between the piles. (BG)

Bottom Left: The eastern extension to Lock 7W at Mottram Road showing the new base slab and strut reinforcement for the walls. About half of the original lock structure will be retained as it is 'moved' eastwards to allow the towpath to pass under Mottram Road. (AS)

Bottom Right: Curved wall extensions being formed at Division Bridge aqueduct. The masonry copings have been re-aligned to complete the repaired concrete channel. (AS)





Old Sag, High Street & Standedge

Top Left: The fill within the masonry arch of Old Sag aqueduct has been removed, the arch stonework saddled with concrete and a new channel is being formed as defined by the steel reinforcement work at its base. (AS)

Top Right: At High Street bridge, traffic has been diverted to a single file at the right hand side. The stone arch is being reconstructed with the help of a wooden former. Wade Lock, just beyond the arch, has been excavated and found to be in reasonable condition. (AS)

Middle Left: Standedge Tunnel silt removal. A contractor's operative moves the sludge pump into position at the 'face'. This operation is now complete throughout. (BW)

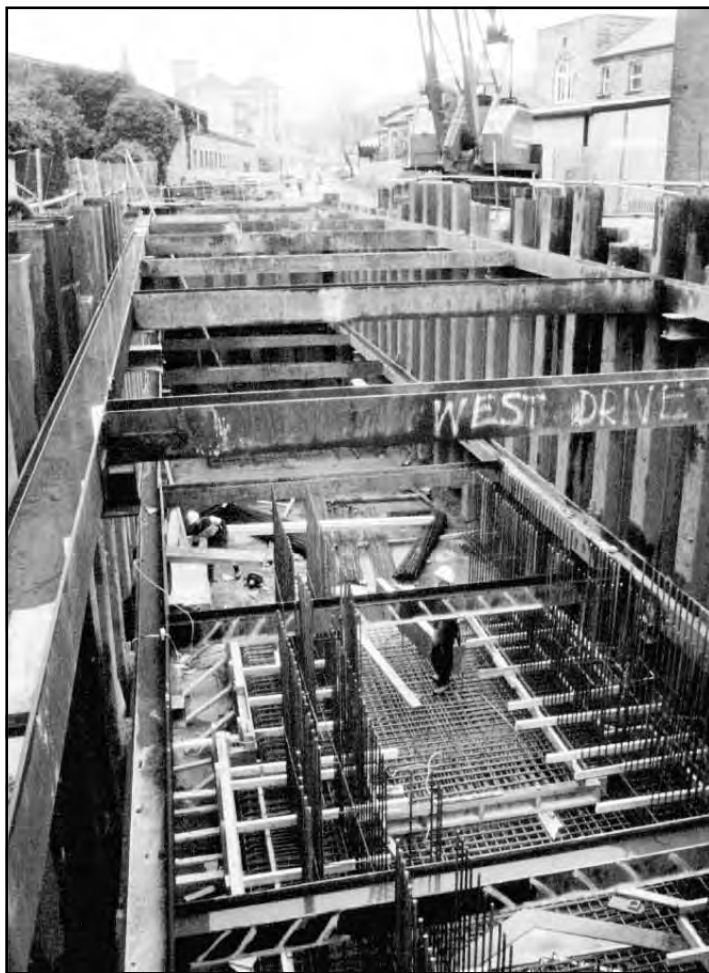
Middle Right: Rock bolts and steel reinforcing mesh on a section of tunnel roof. (BW)

Bottom Left: Sprayed concrete finish applied to a section of tunnel wall. (BW)

Bottom Right: A section of masonry lining being pressure pointed. (BW)







Slaithwaite

Top Left: The completed Phase I of Britannia Road bridge box culvert with sheet piling in place to enable construction of the channel and landing stage upstream. (JS)

Top Right: Concrete channel under construction at Carr Lane at the western end of the short, missing section of canal. (JS)

Middle Left: The mooring bay beside Globe Mill, upstream of Lock 22E. (BW)

Middle Right: Lock 22E as revealed following excavation. This lock chamber requires major refurbishment as both walls are bowed. A new bywash pipe will be laid to the right as the original bywash linked to a lock-side dock on the left. (AS)

Bottom Left: New Lock 21E at Slaithwaite. This temporary sheet pile cofferdam has been formed upstream of Platt Lane adjacent to Waterside Cottages. Excavation has been completed and a base slab formed. Reinforcement is being fixed for the lock structure. (AS)

Bottom Right: Reinforced concrete channel downstream of Lock 22E; this tapers in height and width. The rebate is formed to accept stone cladding above the water line. (JS)





slaitnwaite





Bridges, Golcar Aqueduct & Sellers

Top Left: Lees Mill Bridge, east of Slaithwaite. An in situ reinforced concrete box culvert has been constructed to form the farm accommodation bridge. (AS)

Top Right: Holme Mill Bridge at Britannia Road, Milnsbridge. The reinforced concrete structure is substantially complete and work is concentrated on the stone finishes. (BG)

Middle Left: Golcar Aqueduct. The new concrete channel has been faced with stone and the copings have been replaced. The gas main has been returned to the towpath and only the bunds need removing to complete the restoration. (BW)

Middle Right: Mark Bottoms Bridge at Stoney Battery, Paddock. The reinforced concrete box culvert and wingwalls are substantially complete and stone facing is underway. (BW)

Bottom Left: Sellers tunnel under construction. The props are used to hold the sheet piles apart until such time as the base slab has been concreted. (KMC)

Bottom Right: Completed section of Sellers tunnel. Pre-cast roofing slabs span the pile walls and timber rubbing strips have been fixed above water level. The sheet piles are left untreated and have a design life of 125 years. (AS)





Bates & Co

Above Left: Excavation for the new Lock 2E within the temporary cofferdam upstream of Bates. The tunnel will pass directly under the factory from the middle distance. The original Lock 2E, downstream of Bates, is to be abandoned and boats will cruise through it at the lower level. (KMC)

Above Right: A later view of the new Lock 2E showing the reinforced concrete walls leading to the tail of the lock. (BG)

Right: This view shows the concrete piles as they cross the small yard at Bates mill. The teasing shed is behind. Hardboard is being laid prior to casting the roof slab; this helps to break the bond between the slab and the earth which will be excavated from below. (AS)





Above Left: View into the Carding Shed basement showing the tops of two rows of in situ concrete piles. These will form the walls of the new tunnel under Bates mill. A roof slab will be cast where the men are standing so that this part of the mill can revert to a storage area for Bates & Co. (BW)

Above Right: This new shaft gives access to the sewer diversion under the Carding shed. Its substantial size was dictated by the need to remove the tunnelling shield driven to this point from Queen Street South by Yorkshire Water's contractors. (BG)

Left: The canal will be lowered by 3 metres under Bates mill. This deepening process means that the foundations to the grade 2 listed Queen Street South bridge must be underpinned. In this view from under the Carding shed, jet grouting is underway to the bridge abutments. The grouting rig drills deep into the under-lying sediment and then pumps in, under pressure, a cement slurry which hardens and stabilises the ground prior to excavation. (BG)

Photo credits:

AS - Alan Stopher BG - Bob Gough BW - British Waterways DEW - Dew Construction
JS - John Sully KMC - Kirklees Metropolitan Council

Ken Goodwin Award

The Huddersfield Canal Society has won a prestigious national award presented annually by the IWA. The Kenneth Goodwin Trophy is awarded: *'To the restoration project which has made the most progress in the previous year'.*

The Society has been actively involved in restoring the Huddersfield Narrow Canal for over 25 years. It was the vision, initiative and determination of Society members which kept the dream alive and maintained momentum, so that when the prospect of major sources of funding arose enabling the project to be completed, the necessary skills and experience of those still involved were directed with fresh enthusiasm.

IWA National Chairman, Richard Drake said, *'The Huddersfield Narrow Canal was once dubbed the Impossible Restoration. In the early days HCS had very little support for their cause and it is a credit to the volunteers and organisation to now see the amazing progress being made. A project of this magnitude really stands*

out amongst the various schemes currently underway nationally restoring Britain's inland waterways'.

HCS Chairman, David Sumner said, *'This is indeed a significant accolade for everyone involved with this project and justifies the funding and the wide ranging support and enthusiasm being shown.*

This unique Pennine waterway will soon be reconnected to the national canal network, allowing through navigation between Ashton-under-Lyne and Huddersfield for the first time in over 50 years.'

It is the second time the Society has been honoured with this trophy which will join the many other awards the Society has won over the last few years in its campaign to re-open the Huddersfield Narrow.

John Sully

Renowned actor and Society patron, Timothy West, accepts the Kenneth Goodwin Award from IWA Chairman Richard Drake (far left) in the company of (left to right) HCS Restoration Chairman, Keith Gibson, General Secretary, Frank Smith and Society Chairman, David Sumner.



R. Gough

Interpret Britain Award



THE NATIONAL TRUST

MARSDEN MOOR WINS A SPECIAL CATEGORY AWARD FOR COMMUNITY HERITAGE IN THE ANNUAL INTERPRET BRITAIN AWARDS

The Marsden Moor Estate, a National Trust property in West Yorkshire, has been presented with a special award for Community Heritage in 'recognition of excellent interpretative practice contributing to greater awareness and understanding of Britain's Heritage' at the annual Interpret Britain Awards. The Award was presented at the Geffrye Museum in London in a ceremony hosted by Penelope, Viscountess Cobham and Julian Richards of BBB2 - "Meet the Ancestors".

National Trust Property Manager and ex-HCS publicity officer David L. Finnis, who collected the award said, *"I was delighted to receive the award on behalf of everyone involved at Marsden and I am also pleased that we are now achieving national recognition for all that we do here. The submission to the Interpret Britain Awards featured our six self-guided walks leaflets, extended omega signs - which provide information about the landscape, and our guided walks & events programme. This includes all the community events we*

organise such as Marsden Cuckoo Day and our annual plant fair which raises thousands of pounds to enable us to undertake vital revegetation works on the moor. It is especially gratifying when you consider that all our activities here rely on the dedication and enthusiasm of a group of very committed volunteers."

David Finnis returned to London to give an illustrated presentation about all the activities at Marsden to a national seminar on Community Heritage at the Museums & Heritage Show taking place at the Royal Horticultural Halls.

The Interpret Britain Awards are organised by the Association for Heritage Interpretation.

The staff and volunteers at Marsden are very pleased with the award as it follows on from other regional awards won recently. These included first prize in the voluntary organisations category of the South Pennine Awards presented by the Standing Conference of South Pennine authorities, where they also won the 'Bill Foster Award' for the best overall submission. Also the South & West Yorkshire Village Ventures Awards in recognition of collective action for the benefit of rural community life in South & West Yorkshire, organised by the Yorkshire Rural Community council when the Volunteers won a 'Certificate of Merit' and Marsden Cuckoo Day was 'highly commended'.

Interestingly, another winner in the 'Special Category for Community Heritage' was the Portland Basin Museum in Ashton-under-Lyne. So out of six awards, nationally, two were - as near as dammit - on OUR canal!

Ken Wright



Dave Finnis (left!) receives the Interpret Britain Award from Lady Cobham.

Tameside Canals Festival, 14-16th July 2000

The festival, now in its 23rd year, continues to be as popular as ever, providing a fun day out for all the family.

Based, as usual, around the Portland Basin area, it features traditional attractions of highly decorated canal boats, craft stalls, boat trips, bands and a Festival of Dance. In the evening several well known groups have been booked to provide excellent musical entertainment. On the Friday night, commencing at 7.00pm are the 'Fivepenny Piece' followed on Saturday night by 'Smokey City Jazz Band'. Admission is £2.50.

The festival opens its gates on Saturday and Sunday from noon until 5.00pm. There is a small admission charge for adults at £1.50 - no charge will be made for accompanied children.

Various refreshment stalls will be available around the site from ice cream and hot dogs to the ever popular real ale marquee for those partial to a drop of the amber nectar.

While you are at the festival, why not visit the Portland Basin Museum for a fascinating look at the history of Tameside and the lifestyles of previous generations. A key feature of the museum is the mock-up of a period street bringing history partly to life. And, of course, entrance is absolutely free!

Festival Contacts:

Trade Stall Bookings:

Susan Ruffley
31 Middle Green, Ashton-u-Lyne,
Lancashire, OL6 9JP
Tel: 0161 330 9810

Boat Bookings:

Mr R Richardson
14 Mossley Road, Ashton-u-Lyne,
Lancashire, OL6 9RU
Tel: 0161 339 8036
Email: ricky@cboat.freeserve.co.uk

Caravan/Tent Bookings:

Mr R Maycock
9 Warwick Close, Higher Crompton,
Shaw, Oldham, OL2 7DZ

*And if you would like to help out on the day,
please contact the HCS Festivals Officer:*

Mr Brian Minor
45 Gorton Street, Peel Green,
Eccles, Manchester, M30 7LZ
Tel: 0161 288 5324

Frank Smith



Liz Rushton

Tameside Festival 1999

Get the Message



Mikron Theatre Company's National Waterways Tour 2000

Their 29th tour of the waterways of England, travelling aboard their newly-refurbished narrowboat "Tyseley". They will be performing at canal and riverside venues including pubs, museums and village halls. They aim to attract those people who are not normally theatre-goers or who live at some distance from theatre centres.

There are two plays in this year's repertoire.

Don't start from here

Was a great success last year and is being repeated. Judy lives in the city. Peter lives

in the country. They decide to meet but encounter nightmare journeys. The transport system conspires to keep them apart but will love prevail? A treatise on government intervention in life but told with pace, humour and original songs and music.

Beer Street

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All over the waterways world between June and the end of August. Full details by ringing 01484 843701 for a brochure, writing to Mikron at Marsden Mechanics, Peel Street, Marsden, Huddersfield HD7 6BW or visit their website at:

www.alden.u-net.com/mikron/mikhome.htm



The following CRAFT WEEKENDS are being run at the famous Ellesmere Port Boat Museum. And it's worth a trip anytime, even if you don't fancy a crafty weekend!

CRAFT WEEKENDS 2000

Roses & Castles Traditional Narrowboat Painting Courses - Nov. 4th & 5th

An introduction to the basic painting techniques of this traditional and colourful art form. Cost of 2 day course £70, includes buffet lunches & refreshments.

Fender Making Course - Oct. 21st & 22nd

2 Day ropework course with Dave Walker. Cost of 2 day course £70, includes buffet lunches and refreshments.

Knobsticks, Graining & Scroll Work Painting Course - July 15th & 16th

Discover the history and practice of roses & castles painting on this beginners' course led by John Moore. Cost of 2 day course £70, includes buffet lunches & refreshments.

Rug - Rag Course - Sept. 23rd & 24th

An introduction to various rag-rugging methods, including Pegging, Hooking, Plaiting and Dyeing of fabrics. With tutor Kate Bellwood. Cost of 2 day course £70, includes buffet lunches and refreshments.

FOR FURTHER DETAILS PLEASE CONTACT :
VICKY EVANS ON 0150 355 5017

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Restoration Progress - Summer 2000

⑫ **Stalybridge Town Centre**
'Excavation of old canal line with new locks and bridges'
Work in progress - completion February 2001

⑪ **Scout Tunnel**
'Internal repairs'
Work in progress - completion July 2000

⑩ **Division Bridge Aqueduct**
'Structural repairs'
Work completed May 2000

⑪ **Mann's Wharf to Frenches**
'Dredging'
2nd Quarter 2000 to 3rd Quarter 2000

⑫ **Frenches to High Street**
'Dredging'
2nd Quarter 2000 to 3rd Quarter 2000

⑬ **Lock 21W to Wool Road**
'Dredging and lock repairs'
Work completed July 1999

⑭ **High Street Bridge & Wade Lock**
'New navigable culvert and repairs to lock'
Work in progress - completion December 2000

⑮ **Old Sag Aqueduct**
'Structural repairs'
Work completed May 2000

⑯ **Wool Road Bridge & Lock 24W**
'New navigable culvert and repairs to lock'
Work completed May 2000

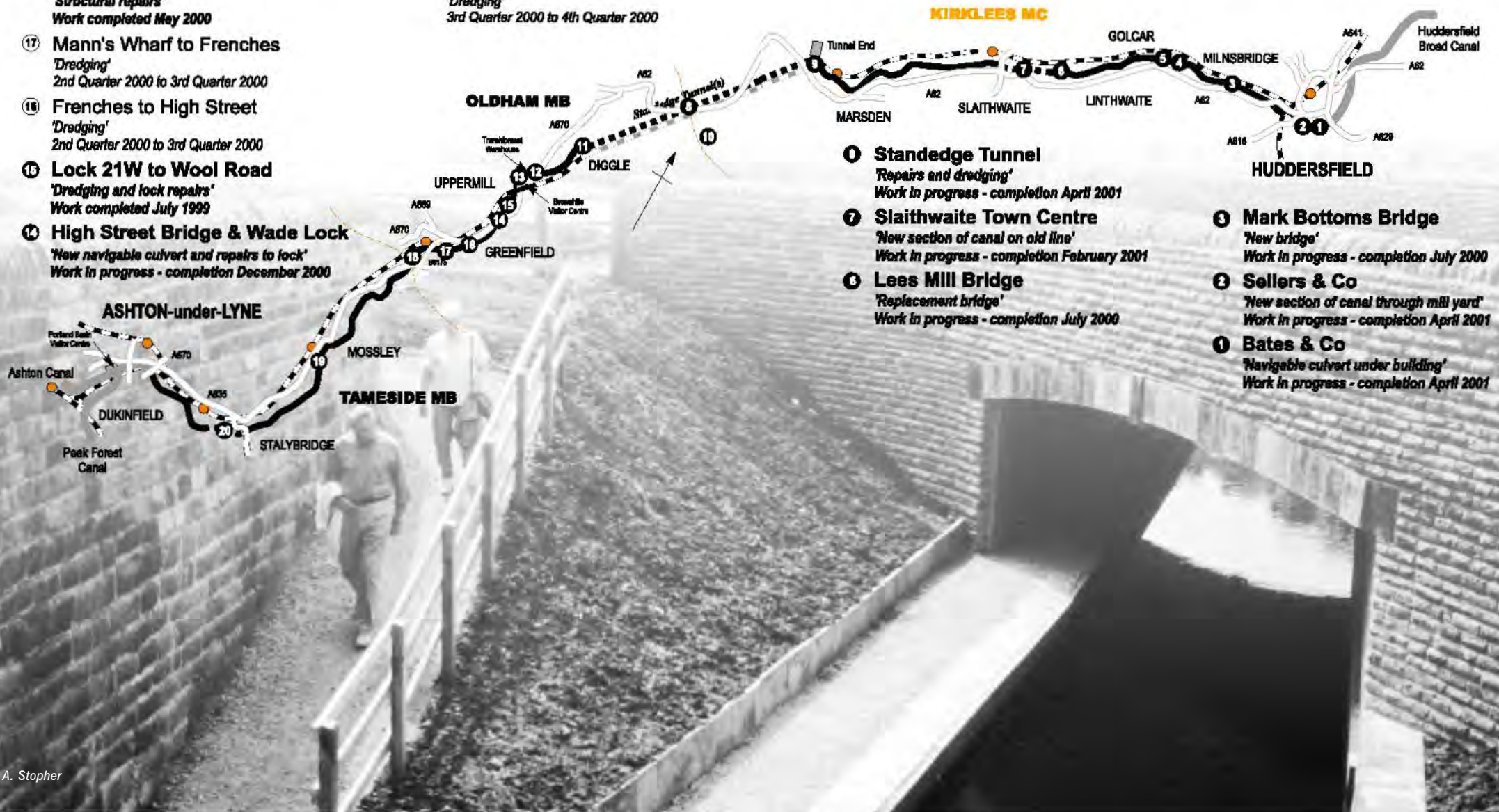
⑰ **Lock 32W to Ward Lane**
'Dredging'
3rd Quarter 2000 to 4th Quarter 2000

⑱ **Water Supply Works**
'Improvements to canal feeders'
2nd Quarter 2000 to 3rd Quarter 2000

⑲ **Standedge Experience**
'Visitor/Heritage Centre'
2nd Quarter 2000 to 1st Quarter 2001

⑮ **Holme Mill Bridge**
'Replacement bridge'
Work in progress - completion July 2000

⑮ **Golcar Aqueduct**
'Structural repairs'
Work in progress - completion July 2000





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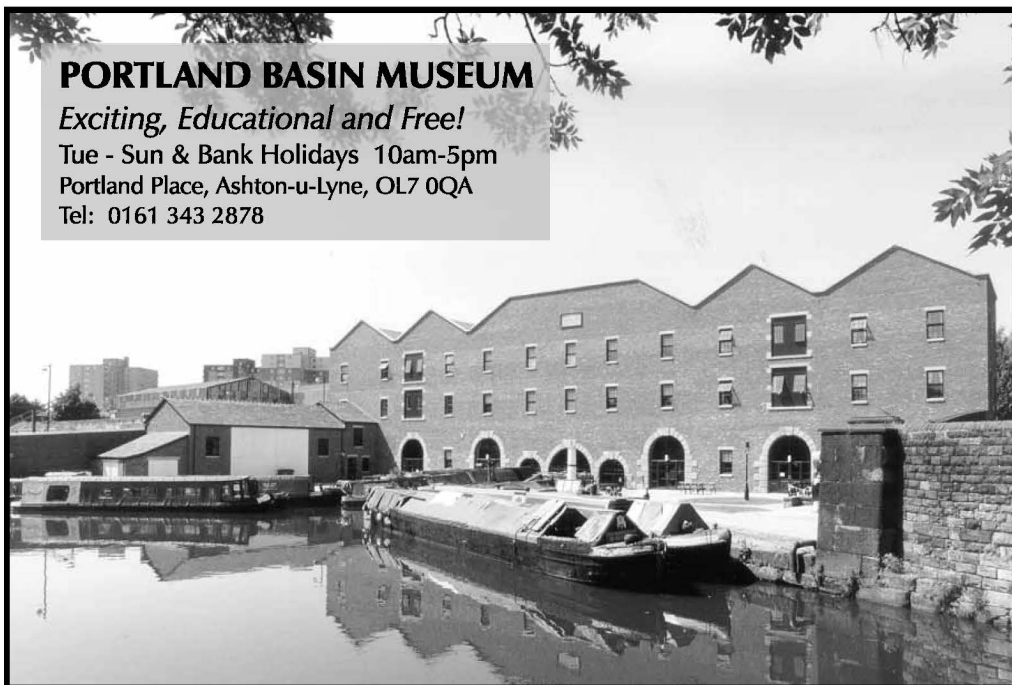
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Huddersfield Canals on Postcards

This is the final article in this series, at least until I find some more cards, and is a mixture of views from the various reservoirs around the canal.

"Waterside, Marsden" shows Tunnel End Reservoir and was posted in 1912. The postman waits at the extreme right for the shot to be taken. This is from the "Regent" Series by Thomas Hind of Huddersfield, but there are a couple of very similar views published by local stationers.

"Reservoir and Hill Top" is one of at least two views of the reservoir by Lilywhite for J.A.Briggs of Slaithwaite, probably between the Wars. Whatever else has changed, I am sure that there will not be four mill chimneys

visible today; some views of Huddersfield show twenty or thirty.

Finally, a peaceful scene of "High Road and Reservoir on the Moor at Standedge, Pule Hill in Distance", by a Manchester Photographer, R.Banks, posted in 1903, well before the days of regular motor traffic. Redbrook Reservoir is on the right and I was struck by the thought that a large part of the tip on the left would then be quite new, certainly less than ten years old. This card is one of a set showing views on the moors in this vicinity; I have three to date. A set is often six.

Trevor Ellis



12 - The Reservoirs



Below Left: "Waterside, Marsden" from the "Regent" Series by Thomas Hind of Huddersfield.
Above: "Reservoir and Hill Top" by Lilywhite for J.A.Briggs of Slaithwaite.
Below Right: "High Road and Reservoir on the Moor at Standedge, Pule Hill in Distance", by R.Banks of Manchester.



Where have all the Youngsters gone?

This article appeared in the Spring 2000 edition of the IWA magazine 'Waterways' and is reproduced by kind permission of the editor, Harry Arnold. The subject is one that is of concern to all the older canal enthusiasts and I feel sure the article will be of great interest to our readers.

Ken Wright

Reg at Rickmansworth asks where are the opportunities for young people to get on to the waterways.

A FLURRY OF letters in the waterways press recently has once again highlighted the problems of getting young people involved in the canals. They are the next generation of waterway enthusiasts (OK, for some of us the next-but-one generation) and we need them to take over and become the main thrust of the waterways movement when we are too old to be the main thrust of anything.

But first we have to get them interested in canals - and this is getting increasingly difficult.

In the old days, the usual career progression for the sons and daughters of the then-current generation of waterways enthusiasts was simple enough...You started as a small brat who got under everyone's feet at boat rallies ["Rally": an old English word for a Festival].

Then you joined the Scouts or Guides and braved the rodent-infested waters of the BCN in a 50-year-old canvas canoe, sleeping in derelict toll-houses, drinking canal water and cooking over a bonfire of old tyres dragged out of the cut. And meanwhile all around you, Alfred Matty and Caggy Stevens kept the old traditions going with their joey-boats full of stinking rubbish and toxic chemical waste.

A week or two with WRG

Next you spent a week or two with WRG, wallowing in slime and Weil's disease at the bottom of a derelict lock while an incompetent drunk with tunnel vision (and deaf in one ear) waved loaded barrows around at head-height with a knackered barrow-hoist and poisoned everyone with diesel fumes - and in the evenings you listened to the old timers talking about how rough it was in their early days.

Then you saved up your pennies and lied about your age to get you and all your mates into a cheapo Willow Wren 12-berth camper (rising to about 20-berth as soon as you were out of sight of the boatyard) for a week of learning about beer, the opposite sex and canals, in that order.

Hopefully this meant that by the time you had found out all that was necessary about the opposite sex, there was a good chance that both you and the main person responsible for providing this information were already canal enthusiasts. After a particularly heavy session in the Bear and Bolinder you would discover that you were (a) on a total of six different IWA committees between you and (b) soon to become parents. In another couple of years the whole cycle would start all over again with the kids getting under your feet at boat rallies.

No more cheap campers

Not any more. Cheapo camping boats are no more. Modern-day nanny-state attitudes mean that expeditions on the BCN in canvas canoes are likely to end with the kids in care and the parents in prison. Health and safety regulations mean that

instead of getting killed or poisoned by WRG barrow-hoists at the bottom of a lock chamber, teenagers these days have to hang around on street corners getting killed or poisoned by passing cars instead.

In the absence of any opportunities to get the new generation of potential waterways enthusiasts into canoes, campers or canal camps, people are having to look elsewhere.

One place to look is of course the education system. Most of us learned about the canals in our history lessons (OK, when some of the current IWA council members were at school it probably didn't count as history yet). But how many actually remember anything that they learned (or rather failed to learn) about canals at school. All right, I admit that when it came to canals, I was the one sitting up listening attentively to the teacher while the rest of the class flicked ink-pellets at each other and cribbed each other's maths homework. But that was only so I could put the teacher right when he made an elementary error such as confusing the Walsall and Walsall Junction canals or mis-pronouncing 'Pontcysyllte'.

Get the kids out on the cut

The best way to make canals more interesting to pupils is to take them to see a real canal, rather than boring them about it in class. We need to "get the class onto the cut, not the cut into the classroom". As it happens, one of my friends actually managed to quite literally get the cut into

the classroom - the school was situated at the bottom of a canal embankment, there was a flight of locks nearby, and the paddles weren't padlocked overnight... and the metalwork teacher was too dumb to even wonder why his kids wanted to make lock-windlasses...

But I digress. We need kids to get out and see real canals, not just hear about them in their lessons. And this is happening to a certain extent - with field-trips to canals, special schools' events at waterway museums, and TV programmes in which a couple of moronic rag dolls demonstrate that you don't have to be clever to do canals.

But even that isn't necessarily enough. Take a look at the average bunch of youngsters on the towpath. How many are actually listening to the teacher droning on about George Kingdom



Above: Camping boats are virtually extinct. Below: Hostelboats introduced lots of young (and not so young) people to the waterways; but would the boat get anywhere near a BSS certificate?



Telford and the Nearly-new Main Line and horses that legged boats through tunnels while the claustrophobic crew walked over the top, and so on? More likely they're busy trying to push their mates into the cut and make it look like an accident. Or planning an impromptu game of cricket using a Calder & Hebble handspike and a dead rat. Or sneaking off behind the stop-plank shed for a sly fag (if it's a single-sex school) or a snog (if it's a co-ed - or they're that way inclined...)

Even better - on boats

No, the answer is BOATS in particular and WORKING CANALS in general. As many of the recent letters in canal magazines have pointed out - and everybody but BW seems to have realised - no amount of teaching, however clever the methods used, will ever have anything like the impact on the youthful mind of a genuine in-depth experience of the canals. Or failing that, why not let them go boating? And why not? After all, children always used to help with steering the working boats. And with the proposed introduction of drink-drive limits and breath-testing for pleasure boaters, perhaps one way out for the average boozy boater might involve the use of steerers who are too young to drink?

Unfortunately I am not sure that the hire-boat industry would see it that way. Well, what about smaller boats then? As I mentioned earlier, that was the traditional introduction to boating for youth groups - but what of the perceived dangers that modern attitudes so often see in activities involving unaccompanied youngsters? As far as safety is concerned, surely if they read all the warning signs that now decorate the canals, there could be few

dangers that they would still at risk from. (Actually if they read all of them, they wouldn't have time for any boating because they'd be too busy reading signs.)

But the main trouble with getting kids back onto boats is that boating is expensive. (I think I may be stating the obvious here - but just in case any Waterways readers are unaware of this fact, I'd like to also point out to them that the Pope is still Catholic and yes, bears really do relieve themselves in the woods.)

Cut the cost of boating

The reason that cheap camping boats are almost extinct (so much so that any surviving ones are likely to get SSSI protection) is that they have to pay the same licence fee as a luxury hire-boat of the same size. So although the boats cost less to build and maintain, the difference is not enough for them to be attractive to the young and not-so-rich; (or the old and not-so-rich either - but this is really one for the IWA's new Canals for Codgers campaign rather than Waterways for Youth.)

And similarly with small boats - they may be cheaper to run and license than a 70-footer, but it's still a huge expense to buy a year's licence when all you want is to take a skiff on a five-mile trip. It would probably be cheaper to load the skiff and crew onto a trailer and hire a car to tow it there rather than go by canal.

So is there any chance that in the interest of getting more youngsters onto the cut, BW will lower the licence fees for small boats, or make cheap day-tickets available for unpowered craft? For the benefit of those readers who needed to be told that boating is expensive, I have to say that it seems unlikely. (and perhaps I



*Above:
We have to get
youngsters out on
the canals, (below)
but ideally on
boats.*

should also point out that porcine aviation is as yet in its infancy) The government has told BW to squeeze the boaters until the pips squeak, and that means charging as much for licences as they can get away with - anything else represents a loss of potential revenue. (Perhaps this explains BW's apparent blindness to the importance of getting kids onto boats - it might cost them money). And for some strange reason, the government do not seem able to be able to regard this 'loss' as an 'investment' in future generations of boaters. In fact to them, the 'future' seems limited to a period of approximately five years - I

cannot for the life of me think why.

Other ways to get involved

So if we can't get them boating, can we get them involved in other ways? As explained earlier, that is not really an option on canal restoration projects. Yes, many of us can remember canal digging a while ago, when the current WRG chairman Mike Palmer looked and behaved like a typical spotty 12 year old kid - and some of us are even old enough to remember when he actually WAS a typical spotty 12 year old kid. But that was a very long time ago, and wouldn't be allowed today on a WRG dig. No, insurance rules mean that age limits are here to stay, at least on 'building site' type work.

Other kinds of work are more of a possibility - canal cleanups for example. Under-16s have often taken part in the East London and BCN rubbish-removal exercises and proven themselves to be excellent at this particular task. Better, indeed, than many of the older volunteers. It's strange how they sometimes seem to be able to guess exactly where the next old bike or shopping trolley will be found. Almost as if they were present when it was thrown in...

Another area they could get involved is canal maintenance. Many urban waterways are classed as 'remainder' waterways, which makes it difficult for BW to spend any money on maintaining them. Picture the average urban 'cruising' waterway such as the BCN main line, reflect on the fact that this is a canal that it is 'easy' for BW to spend money on, and I think you'll realise that the 'remainder' canals are a problem. Therefore I understand that BW are looking at using child labour to maintain these canals - for example to carry out jobs like painting the lock-gates. I hear that in place of the 'traditional' black and white, new colour-schemes have been devised - based on the colours of the most popular local football club with "John loves Kylie" sprayed over it in a contrasting colour of aerosol paint.

Get them back to work?

As mentioned earlier, young children traditionally helped to work the boats. Some of them could steer before they could walk, and most of them were kick-starting Bolinders at the age of three, and looking forward to running their own pair of boats by the time they were four. It has even been suggested that boaters' names for places like 'Berko' and 'Maffers' for Berkhamsted and Marsworth were a result of the toll-clerks communicating with young steerers in baby-talk.

Child labour on canals is a part of our waterways heritage that is almost lost, but which could with a bit of help be revived. So let's appeal to the Heritage Lottery Fund and English Heritage to get the children back where they belong - working 18-hour days steering working boats, blacking the stove every morning before breakfast, leading the horse until

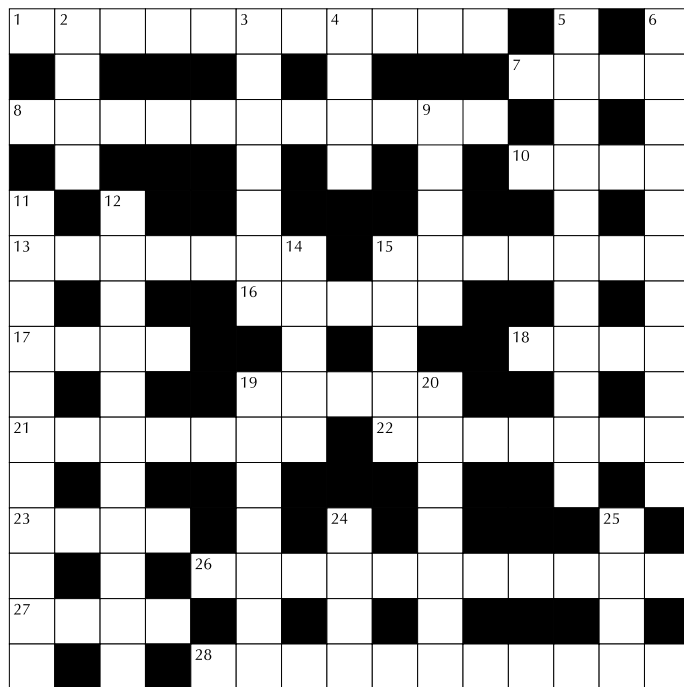
they fall asleep with the reins in their hands (and then being soundly thrashed by their parents for it) and all the other ways in which youngsters traditionally enjoyed the waterways. And the government are bound to be enthusiastic; after all, it'll save on education provision - as it was equally traditional that canal children hardly ever went to school.

But what cargo will these boats carry? Coal, of course. The staple traffic of the canal system in its halcyon days. And who is going to provide the coal to transport - well, it's all part of the same plan to get children to appreciate our glorious industrial heritage... and anyway, children traditionally worked down the mines, too, didn't they? You may think this is far-fetched. Well, my spies in Watford have already spotted one sign that at least some people involved in the waterways are taking the idea seriously - a file of papers labelled 'Brat Safety Scheme'... But I suppose it could have been a misprint.



Perhaps - with all this emphasis on heritage - we should get the kids back working the boats?

Crossword - 29



ACROSS

- 1 Suburb of Chester - birthplace of Tom Rolt (11).
- 7 A good fish to grill (4).
- 8 Hitherto her route to work took her under the Thames (11).
- 10 Initially a reference to a book (4).
- 13 L & L makes a famous turn here (7).
- 15 Not quite where the Americans put their rubbish (after burning it on a Nb)? (7).
- 16 Take a skewed look at the Trust running the southern end of the navigable Avon (5).
- 17 Fruity New Zealander? (4).
- 18 Mesdames and others on a tour of the water supply for a canal (3).
- 19 Ernes looking down their noses! (5).
- 21 Dey idle women gave in too easy (7).
- 22 Vicar seen at the scene of a tax collector's conference? (7).
- 23 A river calling to be navigated? (4).
- 26 Appropriate place on the HNC to meet a visitor from Dallas? (5,6).

- 12 O well, knocks will be felt passing through the last wide ones on the GU (6,5).
- 14 Camel and others watch for antelopes (5).
- 15 Cantankerous fisherman found on a river alongside the Coventry canal (5).
- 19 Retailers found at a blockage in Huddersfield we hear (7).
- 20 Deviser of this crossword changed his opinion of those who solved it! (7).
- 24 Flower found in most pubs (4).
- 25 Penknife found in a river alongside the northern Staffs & Worcs (4).

27 Noah's ships built on a confused Channel Island (4).

28 Dealt shocks through fiddling with the wiring in a central Birmingham flight (6,5).

DOWN

2 Throw this out before the line and sinker (4).

3 Alternative tunnel illuminators (7).

4 A great lake (4).

5 Edwin - search a Shroppie cutting near here (11).

6 In autumn reflect on a wonderful season of sunshine (5,6).

9 Hot is the right word, lifting goods into a warehouse (5).

11 Cruising from St Helens to the Mersey (figuratively speaking), on the first canal of the age (6,5).

Solution on Page 55

HCS Council News and the Future of HCS

Council has had three meetings so far this year; one for April being cancelled due to the number of apologies received! Topics continue on the lines of the report in Plink 132 i.e. the end of HCS(R); the unique agreement with British Waterways; the joint venture agreement between the parties involved in the Standedge Visitor Centre and the future of HCS.

As we go to press the agreements have been (or are about to be) signed, the closing-down of HCS(R) is still in its last throes and the future of HCS and the reopened canal are gaining in importance.

Amongst other items we were pleased to have been awarded the Kenneth Goodwin Trophy (a model JCB in a glass case) by IWA as the most successful restoration society of 1998/9. The permanent staff were granted improved holiday entitlements for the first time in 10 years. The Society is trying to interest Kirklees Council in the problem of potential "unofficial" car parking on Waters Road, leading to Tunnel End, which could become rife as the Standedge Visitor Centre takes off and visitors decide they would rather park on-street than walk or use the water taxi. There are about 100 car spaces, but leaving inadequate width for others, and few places to turn except in house driveways! You read it here, first!

'THE FUTURE OF HCS' was summarised in a report by secretary Frank Smith. (He was asked to do it "on an A4" - he did it on FOUR!) Nothing carved on tablets of stone yet but getting that way, with a view to adopting new guidelines and systems before the end of 2000.

Summarising the summary, here are the

22 subjects under discussion. If you feel you can assist, or have specialist knowledge that can be called upon, please let Frank Smith know.

1. *HCS Directors. Few changes to present system but probably different specialisms required.*

2. *Restoration Ltd. Not being shut down as a name, in case some work should come our way.*

3. *Property. Hang on to Ashton office - maybe swap for canal-side someday. Transshipment Shed taken back by BW but operated, similar to now, under alliance agreement.*

4. *New Ventures. There are none, at present!*

5. *Watchdog. Not a word we (or BW) like but a group to oversee the canal, planning applications, etc.*

6. *Loxvend. Wind up general sales, sell only specific logo stuff to members. Re-jig trailer for promotional work.*

7. *Promotions. Group to publicise the canal, projects and events.*

8. *Social Body. New emphasis on canal USERS, boats and things.*

9. *Boats. Sell current taxi; buy new one for Tunnel End. Refit Oldham Otter for roving commissions.*

10. *Membership. Maintain high numbers, more volunteers and "hands-on" members needed. Volunteer NOW!*

11. *Pennine Link. Maintain current high standard!!! Needs to change with circumstances. (And will still rely - heavily - on full-time staff. Ed.)*

12. *Restoration Volunteers.* Two teams. One for enhancement projects; one for dredging. Again, volunteer NOW - get your name on the list!

13. *Canal Festivals.* An important future commitment but how many - and where?

14. *Canal Boat Trips.* Standedge Pioneer probably renamed "Still Waters" and moved to Ashton to replace "Greater Manchester". New water taxi for Marsden, Oldham Otter to help out at Marsden or wherever required. Likely to need volunteer teams to help with the Standedge Tunnel trip boat/tug. Volunteer NOW!

15. *Waterway Advisory Group.* To use our expertise to help other restoration groups.

16. *Fund Raising.* Sponsor a bridge! The ever-present need to attract funds to enhance the canal beyond normal maintenance.

17. *Environmental Group.* A quarter of our canal is designated Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). We need a local volunteer hands-on group to help the professionals to maintain the canal environment.

18. *Standedge Visitor Centre.* HCS will be represented on the Advisory committee helping to run the Ccentre. Society volunteers probably needed to assist BW in day to day operation. Volunteer NOW!

19. *Alliance Charter.* The 'permit' for volunteers to work on and near the canal.

20. *Office and Staff.* Still to be decided but a genuine hope that Frank and Bob will be kept on. The office is still very busy - and Pennine Link has to maintain standards!

21. *Publications.* Towpath Guide will eventually come out. Restoration video is in full swing. History of HCS to be written - hopefully for the opening.

22. *Education.* BW has a regional education officer to involve schools in canal activities. HCS could have a local one to pursue current Canal Company objectives.

So, that's it for now. You will have noticed the word "volunteer", as a verb and a noun, cropping up here and there! The future of HCS lies in us recruiting more volunteers, and not necessarily with navying skills these days. If you are at all interested in anything you have read above GET YOUR NAME ON A LIST.

A phone call to the office 0161 339 1332 is all it takes. And then be patient. It will be some time before these things take off.

Late News: At the last Council meeting (24/5/00) it was decided to support the Mikron Theatre Company by offering them a £5,000 commission to rewrite and update one of their productions which was based on the restoration of the Huddersfield Narrow Canal. The updated play would go on tour as part of their 2001 season and be a most fitting element of the Arts Project celebrations planned for the reopening of the Canal.

It is hoped that, once again, with the Society taking the lead, it will encourage other sponsors to become involved in the Arts Project and result in a whole series of events in the Tame and Colne Valleys.

Ken Wright

IWA News

A bumper bundle of press releases since February, starting off with a good title from WRG (waterway recovery group). "Volunteers Wanted for a Dirty Weekend" invites students to join them for their 30th anniversary year. Twenty-two canal restoration working holidays (see Plink No.132) will be held this year. Visit their website at www.wrg.org.uk

IWA appoints new Vice-President announced that Audrey Smith OBE has been elevated to the Vice-President rank in recognition of her "outstanding contribution" to IWA's cause as its recent chairman.

IWA welcomes final link in South Pennine Ring tells of the news that the future of the Rochdale Canal is now assured.

IWA welcomes BW initiative to restore route to Kendal tells of the BW feasibility study to restore the northern reach of the Lanky (Lancaster Canal) from the M6 at Tewitfield, through to Kendal. "Borrowing" under the M6 in three places is required.

IWA to receive Tim Wilkinson bequest. The well-known waterways author left IWA a substantial sum (around £100,000) and WRG his tools and other contents of his garage all to be used for some restoration project on "a southern waterway".

IWA vision for the River Tees realised. New stability brought to the management of the river by appointing BW as operator of the Tees Barrage and as navigation authority.

IWA makes first donation to launch Anderton (Lift) Appeal. IWA provides £10,000 to become first "gold" patron of Anderton Boat Lift appeal. Martin Bell,

MP, will be President. Appeal will raise the final £250,000 needed to complete the £7M restoration project.

IWA announces major funding. IWA is to fund two "suitable" restoration projects at £100,000 each, one of which should be on a southern waterway (See Tim Wilkinson bequest above).

In IWA Head Office Bulletins the following snippets caught the eye.

The acquisition of responsibility for the Rochdale Canal by BW plus the proximity of the 2002 Commonwealth Games to the Ashton Canal plus the VERY IMPORTANT Huddersfield Narrow Canal have caused BW to create a new waterway office at Castlefield in Manchester to run the "South Pennine Ring". Boss will be Tom Rowe, straight from running our canal from Marsden.

The close season for fishing business is now law! Any problems of demarcation between anglers and other waterway users will be dealt with by "management methods" rather than by placing restrictions on anglers. (*How do you "manage" to control a 20-foot roach pole? Ed*).

The government quango IWAAC is having another go at making chunks of our waterway system into World Heritage Sites. Presumably we keep trying until somebody gives in?

The opening up of the northern reaches of the Lancaster Canal could create nearly 2000 jobs, attract over 1 million visitors per year and generate spending in excess of £14 million.

More about the historic meeting on 8th March when, yet again, the Rochdale

Canal was reprieved - hopefully finally this time!

The final push for funding for the Anderton Boat Lift is under way with excellent glossy brochure ideas including a £5 per month direct debit for 4 years.

Drinking on boats at sea and on the Thames is likely to be "controlled" sooner than later. IWA is afraid the control will, almost accidentally, spill onto other waterways.

Similarly, there are proposals to force trip boat operators to have "pub" type licences.

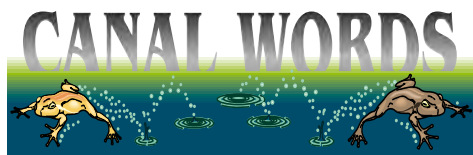
The Rochdale, we hear, is now to be open by April 2002 and not, as we hear somebody at BW has been saying, "with the Huddersfield Narrow at the end of 2001". We are still well on course for April 2001!

And in "Waterway", the IWA glossy

magazine, another BW inspired piece on Narrow Canal progress; an interesting and provocative two page article on "Where have all the youngsters gone?" which I might well consider reproducing; a mention for us in "waterway cuttings" and yet another piece - a letter this time - about canal opportunities for youth.

And just as I was about to end this item, a piece of news from the IWA local branch magazine "Manchester Packet". It seems that the Wooden Canal Boat Society (see Plink No.130) are establishing themselves on canal-side (OUR canal) land at Knowl Street, Stalybridge from where they intend to rebuild, maintain and operate their historical boats and use them for various purposes, including collecting scrap metal and take it to a depot on the Trent and Mersey Canal. A real commercial use! It's all beginning to happen!

Ken Wright



More weird and wonderful waterway words which you will really wonder at!

NIP - On the River Trent an area of narrows.

PACKET (sometimes fly-boat) - An express passenger boat (also carrying small parcels). These could be equipped with a feature like a scythe on the bow which threatened the rope of any other boat which did not immediately give right of way!

RANTERS, FLASHERS - Term for gate paddles in some areas.

ROCKING - Boatmen's term for a rocky cutting (especially Shropshire Union)

SNATCHER - A short towing line from a motor boat to a butty (unpowered).

SNUBBER - A long towing line from a motor boat to a butty (unpowered).

SPILE - The curve and bevel of a boat's planking.

STOP - A shallow lock between two different canals to ensure that one company did not lose water to the other or on the BCN (Birmingham canals) a narrow section where boats were 'gauged' i.e. assessed for tolls.

STRETCHER - St. John not needed - this one refers to a chain which stops the sides of a boat from spreading when loaded.

SWEEP - Not a brush but a large oar used to steer a lighter or barge.

TACKLE - A boat horse's harness.

TYING POINT - A shallow area on a river - the highest point achievable by any particular boat, thus the tying point can be in different places for different draught boats.

And that's all for WORDS, unless John Harwood comes up with some more!

Harwood's Panama

A MAN A PLAN A CANAL – PANAMA A canal with a palindrome

Ever since an accurate map of the world was finalised it was clear that (from a shipping point of view) a canal had to be built between the Pacific and Atlantic oceans. Although many had dreamt about this, Ferdinand de Lesseps who, being fresh from his triumph at Suez was obviously considered to be the engineer of the day, put the first serious plan forward. De Lesseps plan was for a sea level cut through Panama, but the final plan accepted was that of Adolphe Godin de Lepinay de Brusly, who promoted the building of connecting artificial lakes with locks between, and at the ocean inlets.

The French started the building of the canal in the late 1870s and had got as far as the removal of 78 million cubic yards of earth before they were defeated by lack of planning, finances and disease. By 1904 the USA made a further start by firstly solving the tropical disease

problems which had so plagued the French attempt. At the height of building, 50,000 labourers were at work, whilst 100,000 had moved into Panama looking for work in connection with the project. All told, by the time the canal was opened in 1914 (ahead of schedule), it had cost about 28,000 lives (early on due mainly to sickness, but latterly to accident) and about \$350 million.

Comparing our canal with the Panama obviously makes for interesting statistics. The Panama locks are 1000 ft long by 110ft wide and would thus accommodate about 224 full size narrowboats. A ship travelling the canal takes about eight hours (for the forty mile length) but I cannot imagine any traversing the HNC in that time! A boat transiting the HNC would use two lockfuls of water – say 50,000 gallons whilst a ship passing through Panama will use 52 million gallons!

A rather large ship passes through Mira Flor lock with the aid of four 'mules'.



Ship Canal Cruises - 2000

We've said in previous years what a good day out a trip on the Manchester Ship Canal provides.



Departing from Liverpool on Saturdays and Salford Quays on Sundays, along with a couple of special midweek dates, the six hour cruise along the 35 miles stretch of canal includes a lively commentary throughout, giving a revealing insight into the facts, history and the dramas of one of Britain's major waterways.

There's a bar and catering facilities with refreshments and snacks and you can sit

back and relax and take in the sights and sounds.

The price includes bus transport from the end of the journey back to the starting point.

And, at £23 for the round trip, a jolly good day out.

There's a glossy leaflet available, too, giving details of all the cruises run by Mersey Ferries, available from travel agents and tourist information centres or by 'phoning 0151 330 1444.

There are plenty of available dates on the Ship Canal, up to the 17th September.



TELEPHONE BOOKING

0151 330 1444

Panama cont'd ...

All ships passing through must carry a pilot (there are 240) and are helped through the locks by electric locomotives (called mules) running on rails along the lockside – there will be at least four mules per ship but up to ten will be used for the largest. Each lock gate is 65' wide and 7' thick – the gates weigh between 400 and 750 tons according to the depth of the lock. Tolls are obviously payable – the largest ever, being \$440,000 – the smallest, 36c, by someone who swam the canal!

Throughout its life the canal has been a political hot potato, with the US having control over the canal 'zone' under a treaty which was never actually signed on behalf of Panama. The end of the last century, however, brought all treaties to fruition and the canal has now become entirely Panamanian.

As this is in all terms the busiest canal in the world, thank heaven it is still working 24 hours a day – should this fall into dereliction, what a restoration project that would be!

John Harwood

Photo Competition 2000

THERE'S PLENTY GOING ON FOR A MASSIVE ENTRY IN THE PHOTOGRAPHIC COMPETITION THIS YEAR. GET SHOOTING NOW!

Following the success of last year's competition, we are again waiving the place and time rules of previous years! Any inland waterway shot, worldwide, from the invention of the camera to the present day will qualify - the only other criteria being that the photographer must be (or be directly related to) a bona fide member of HCS.

And there's ANOTHER PAIR OF BINOCULARS!

Yes, member Anthony Carter who runs ARCADE PHOTO SERVICES, IMPERIAL ARCADE, NEW STREET, HUDDERSFIELD has again generously offered a pair of binoculars as a tempting prize for the overall winner of our competition. And there will be other cash prizes again, their size being solely dependent upon the number of entries! Last year's prizes were boosted by part of the money award Pennine Link got from the Inland Waterways Association. We're trying to win that one again, naturally!

RULES

Prints only, black & white or colour - winning entries will be published in Pennine Link in black and white. Minimum size 6" x 4", maximum 8" x 6". Any canal-related subject is acceptable in the following categories:-

- a) Huddersfield Narrow - Senior
- b) Huddersfield Narrow - Junior (16 or under)
- c) Other waterways - Senior
- d) Other waterways - Junior (16 or under)

Open only to bona fide members of HCS and their immediate families. Entry fee of 50p per print. Postage required for return of prints.

HOW TO ENTER

1. Send your prints (maximum 5 per person in each category) to:-

PHOTO COMPETITION
HUDDERSFIELD CANAL SOCIETY
239 MOSSLEY ROAD
ASHTON-U-LYNE OL6 6LN

2. Include details of the photographs (captions if you so wish) and age of the photographer if 16 or under.

3. Include your name and address and the name of the HCS member you are related to.

4. Include return postage if you want your prints back.

5. Include P.O. or cheque (payable to HCS) totalling 50p for each print submitted.

6. CLOSING DATE - 17th November 2000

PRIZES

The judge will again be Geoffrey Hope, Past President of Oldham Photographic Society who will write a critical comment for each print submitted.

There will be a winner and a runner-up in each of the four categories a) to d) and each will receive a certificate and a cash prize. There will also be certificates for "highly commended" and "commended" categories.

The overall winner will receive the Pennine Link Challenge Shield for one year, a replica to keep, a pair of binoculars and a signed certificate.

All winning prints will be published in Pennine Link, with the judge's comments.

Any queries to: The Editor, Ken Wright.
Tel: 01457 873599



Last year's Winner:

Left: Anthony Carter presents winner Tony Briggs with the Pentax binoculars.

Below: Editor Ken Wright presents Tony Briggs with the Challenge Shield, replica and certificate. The new Wool Road bridge forms an excellent backdrop.



What the Papers Say

A real pile this time and a vote of thanks to my Colne Valley collector for really pushing the boat out. And, since he is pushing his own boat out shortly for a summer cruise, Colne Valley news may be limited for an issue or two! Still nothing from Tameside, they are so modest nobody bothers to send me anything. Perhaps as well, otherwise this item would take over the magazine. As it is these notes represent over 700 column inches of free publicity!

To simplify matters I have abbreviated the papers' names as follows:-

O/M CHRON - Oldham Evening Chronicle

EXAM - Huddersfield Daily Examiner

CV CHRON - Colne Valley Chronicle

CV CHRON - Feb 11

Alan Stopher, project director, counters claims that, in Slaithwaite, "most residents oppose the venture. (This was in the early days of the temporary one-way system).

CV CHRON - Feb 18

Long letter to the editor from David Littlewood, Active Project Director, Colne Valley Trust, supporting Alan Stopher's article of Feb. 11, under the headline "Stop moaning, be positive about canal".

O/M CHRON - Feb 21

Under the headline "Narrow-minded councillors!" (*Pun! Ed*) Photo and caption of visit to canal by local authority members of the Standing Conference of South Pennine Authorities (SCOSPA) which deals with a wide range of topics in Oldham, Bradford, Kirklees, Calderdale, Lancashire county and Burnley.

EXAM - Feb 23

Letter to the editor suggesting a light railway along the canal line would be more appropriate in the 21st Century. "It is a shame these people lack real vision to move forward, but keep clinging to an old mud channel in the ground."

EXAM - Feb 24

Letter to the editor "Canal doubts". Lost cherry trees, health and safety, litter and rats, children falling in, who will be responsible? - This is all after a considerable PR exercise.

CU CHRON - Feb 25

Hard-hit businesses in Slaithwaite seeking compensation.

EXAM - Feb 29

Another plea for compensation. "No" says council.

O/M CHRON - Feb 29

Oldham Council give Canal Society £5,000 lottery money for a work of art canal-side in Saddleworth.

O/M CHRON - Feb 29

Saddleworth Parish Council send letters of thanks to Oldham's engineering boss, Philip Barrett and the chief site engineer Ms. Freda Rashid, for excellence in the Wool Road works (*I would also have sent one to the contractors DCT, who have done a magnificent job with good humour and consideration. Ed*)

FOCUS

Colne Valley West Lib-Dems Publ. - Feb

Slaithwaite is Open (! *Ed*).

O/M CHRON - Mar 2

Announcement of "Great Public Debate on canal works", talk and slide show by Frank Smith, Society Secretary - at Slaithwaite. (*Brave man! Ed*).

O/M CHRON - Mar 8

Letter to the editor "Wade Lock Chaos". New traffic signals at Wade Lock works, generally working very well, have some teething troubles.

CV CHRON - Mar 10

Report on Frank Smith's talk - he is reported as saying "We can never persuade them (*the sceptics. Ed*) that the canal is anything other than what they say it is". *Hmm.*

"A full account of the great debate (*50 residents turned up. Ed*) will be featured in next week's Chronicle - order your copy now."

EXAM - Mar 15

Excellent report and pictures following "press day" at Sellers and Bates in Huddersfield.

CV CHRON - Mar 17

Report on the "great debate" - as promised. Very positive.

CV CHRON - Mar 17

Slaithwaite business people demand rate reduction during restoration work.

DAILY TELEGRAPH (No less! Ed.) - Mar 18

Superb photo of inside Standedge Tunnel (*some people can get in! Still, the photographer is KIPPA Matthews - perhaps he/she swam in! Ed.*) Plus a very romantic article - "It is raining hard outside and water from the moor above cascades down a sheer hole like a power shower."

O/M CHRON - Mar 24

"Plain sailing for canal work. Traffic grid lock fails to appear." Photo of the remains of the old arch at Wade Lock. More about the rail halt at Diggle.

EXAM - Mar 27

Possible commercial traffic on Broad Canal to Huddersfield incinerator.

CV CHRON - Mar 31

Report on award of Kenneth Goodwin trophy to HCS.

THE DALESMAN - March

Comprehensive story with pictures about the canal, the restoration process and the

future.

O/M CHRON - APR 3

Article and photos of presentation of Kenneth Goodwin trophy at Wool Road. (*See elsewhere for more detail. The Chron. photos were terrible - they had just acquired new digital cameras! Ed.*)

EXAM - Apr 4

National Waterways Festival 2002 in Huddersfield?

O/M CHRON - Apr 4

Nice unofficial leak of info. about Wade Lock successfully took any steam there might have been from ensuing public meeting. No more Bailey Bridge. No more long closures. Old stone arch, rebuilt, will provide by-pass of new work.

O/M CHRON - Apr 11

Northern Scrapbook reports on future of HCS, new partnership with BW and need for volunteers, including our office address. "British Waterways is acknowledging - far too late for some - part of the debt it owes to people like the founding fathers of HCS. Without them, the canal would still be overgrown and unused". *Nice one, Chron!*

O/M CHRON - Apr 12

Main news article on the same lines as above, quoting comments in the last issue of Pennine Link.

EXAM - Apr 14

Plea for sponsors for bridges. Report on HCS fund-raising for future canal enhancement schemes.

ADVERTISER - Apr 16

Description of work, with photo, of Wade Lock.

O/M CHRON - Apr 18

Notice of publication of information leaflet on Wade Lock for benefit of residents of Uppermill, Greenfield and elsewhere.

EXAM - Apr 20

"Restoration work on the Huddersfield Narrow Canal at Slaithwaite is on schedule and has caused less disruption than originally feared."

(No comment! Ed)

EXAM - Apr 21

Not our canal but about canal use.

Air cadets canoed from Huddersfield to Brighouse with a "Millennium Scroll" that is working its way round and will eventually join others to form a map of the country.

CV CHRON - Apr 21

"ON COURSE".

Report on Slaithwaite scheme progress.

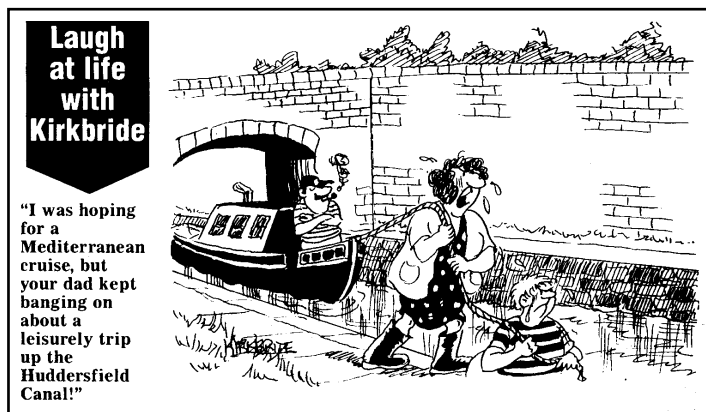
O/M CHRON - Apr

25

"Saddleworth's new era as a waterside haven for canal enthusiasts (and lots of others. Ed) will be dawning soon."

O/M CHRON - Apr 28

They say you've made it when you get into a cartoon. How about this then:-



Reproduced by kind permission of Jack Kirkbride and the Oldham Chronicle

Ken Wright

In Case Anyone Asks

The Huddersfield Canal Society is one of 136 active canal societies in the country who have helped to restore over 2,000 miles of canals back to working order.

Next to Crowther's Mill at Slaithwaite is the guillotine lock. It is the only working guillotine gate on a narrow canal in the country.

The canal was built between 1794 and 1811 by Derbyshire engineer, Benjamin Outram. (But finished by Thomas Telford) It is the highest canal in the country with its summit 196m (645ft) above sea level.

There are 74 locks along its 32km (20 mile) length between Ashton-under-Lyne and Huddersfield.

The canal crosses the Pennines through Britain's highest, longest and deepest canal tunnel, Standedge, which is listed in the Guinness Book of Records.

More than 50 people were killed during its 16 year construction. This was mainly because of the cutting of the Standedge Tunnel through the Pennines.

The tunnel, from Diggle to Marsden, is nearly 5200m (3¼ miles) in length and was a great achievement at a time when sophisticated equipment had not been developed. Only a combination of human endeavour and unpredictable explosives were the means of blasting through the Pennine stone.

Letters to the Editor

If you moan long enough! After years of complaining about the lack of correspondence I get NINE for this issue - one of which must be the shortest on record! Two, asking a stream of questions were from old regular Joseph Yeomans, who is now living in Co. Mayo and feeling rather detached from his old stamping ground in Stalybridge. He is concerned about water supply, disabled access and possible future commercial traffic and I hope I have answered his questions satisfactorily.

As for the rest - here they are.

From Bernhard Weiss in Germany via e-mail.

Hello Ken,

As we have now gained access to the 21st Century communication media I did not hesitate to visit the HCS Homepage plus other canal-related links. Very well done, indeed. My son and I are presently trying something - we will inform you as soon as something

worth visiting has been completed.

Attached you will find a contribution towards canal art: a stained glass door done by Gerhild in many, many hours.

Best regards,

Bernhard.

And here is a reproduction of Gerhild's door which cannot do justice to the coloured original.

The next letter is to be taken very seriously. It is the second time members have had doubts about renewing their membership because of the situation regarding Standedge Tunnel. I leave the letter, and my reply to speak for themselves.

Dear Mr. Wright,

I doubt whether this letter will get into your excellent magazine but I feel that the time has come when one ought to start to make one's views known somewhere.

My wife and I became members of HCS in 1980 and I was involved in digging out at Dungebooth and Lime Kiln locks. At the 1980 Ashton rally we "cruised" from Dukinfield basin to "touch the bar on the Huddersfield Canal" at Eli Whalley's wharf - a distance of not much more than ¼ mile but so weeded it took over 1½ hours. Unfortunately business took us away from the area but we have attended practically every rally or festival at Portland Street basin since then in "Impala". We have been proud to say we are members of HCS and what we hoped would be achieved.

Our boating activities go back further, to 1970, and we have cruised practically every connected navigable canal in England and Wales with only one exception. I also fish!

I make these points only to show our commitment to the waterways, restoration, angling and the environment. Now to the main purpose in writing.

Mary was born within a stone's throw of the Basin and we both lived in Dukinfield until we were into our 20s. In the 1940s, the canal was our playground as children and we have always held the dream of cruising the whole of the Huddersfield which until recently seemed achievable but this dream has now vanished following the announced arrangements at Standedge.

We would have been very reluctant to allow our steel boat to be towed in convoy through the tunnel (and particularly



unmanned) but we now have a 38' Dobson's narrowbeam fibreglass cruiser and there are no circumstances under which we could allow this boat to be towed in convoy, especially with steel boats. Needless to say this boat, which has been on the canal system for 30 years and carries no less than 9 IWA silver swords for campaign cruising, has been through most useable tunnels on the system.

Not many boat owners will be overjoyed at the prospect of their unmanned boat being towed and this could put the whole future of the canal in jeopardy. Even without this stumbling block a lot of boat owners will consider this canal to be hard work and a lot of thought will go into whether to use it as a through route. Most long distance cruisers will want to use it (if only once as an achievement) but to have to be towed is anathema and this constraint could easily swing the balance against its use.

The failure to have argued this out properly with British Waterways may in the long term cause this canal to be underused with the inevitable consequences.

If we are now being exhorted as individuals to take up this problem ourselves with British Waterways we have to assume that the Society Officials have now washed their hands of the matter, effectively implying that nothing more can be done. Our Officials of course are to be congratulated on the outstanding progress they have made so far.

Our personal aim in being members of the Society was to achieve through navigation of the canal, the implication being that this would be on the same basis and standard as all other canals (with the exception of Dudley which has its own problems). It goes without saying that we would cruise our own boat the full length of the navigation if we could.

Admittedly of late we have not been as active as many but he serves who also stands and waits. Alas, our waiting is in vain and there seems little point in renewing our membership.

Yours sincerely,

Rowland & Mary Hilton, Southport.

Dear Mr. Hilton,

Re: Standedge Tunnel

Thank you for your letter of 24th March which will definitely get into our "excellent magazine". You will know that I regularly plead for members to write to me and I don't care whether the letters are favourable or not. In fact I prefer a bit of controversy!

Your comments about the Society's official attitude towards the operation of the tunnel are noted but, in fact, the two over-riding factors put to us are difficult, if not impossible, to dispute.

- 1. The poor air quality created in the tunnel by several diesel engines would be unacceptable for the 2 - 2½ hour journey.*
- 2. Railtrack are adamant that there must be no uncontrolled access to the side adits between the canal tunnel and the operational railway tunnel (or tunnels if the proposed improvement in freight movement comes about).*

In view of the above the Society has decided to wait until final proposals on the towing arrangements are announced before making further comment. In the meantime boaters' interests in the progress of the tunnel are being expressed at the User Group meetings with BW, where boating members of HCS and other cruising societies are regular participants.

Regarding the passage of fibreglass boats through the tunnel, the current proposal is that they will be placed at the end of the line of boats to avoid crushing accidents. The system of connecting boats together and providing lateral restraint is still being developed and any scepticism we might have about such a proposal must be 'put on hold' until the final arrangements are announced.

There will also be a substantial length of timber fenders within the tunnel to retain boats in the centre of the channel.

BW have been in contact with several insurance companies, following doubts raised in the User Group, and have been assured that a normal boat insurance should cover it for passage through the tunnel in a controlled convoy.

I, too, have steered most of the tunnels on the canal system and thoroughly enjoyed the experience. But in the Standedge Tunnel a steerer is not in sight of one wall or the other, or the roof, for quite considerable lengths, which must be very disorientating. And the journey is 2 - 2½ hours, most of the time without sight of either end. I think I might prefer to 'chicken out' on this one, sitting in the comfort of a warm tug, listening to the commentary and watching the restoration video!

I hope that you will accept that the Society is 'up to speed' on the tunnel, awaiting the final arrangements with keen anticipation.

Yours sincerely, KW

And now for the shortest ever! I was tempted to reply in like vein but decided against.

Dear Editor,

With the opening of the canal, will there be enough water? Has there been any research?

Yours truly,

W. Campbell, Shaw, Oldham.

Dear Mr. Campbell,

Thank you for your letter of 8th April. The answer to your questions is "Yes" and "yes"!

British Waterways have a programme of works to ensure that all the reservoirs and water carriers are in first class order by the time of the canal re-opening and have also got arrangements to back-pump water into the reservoirs from elsewhere, if necessary.

Furthermore there is an operational plan, which will be put into place if required, to stop boats going too far "up the hill" from either side if they are not going through the Standedge Tunnel. This will prevent unnecessary use of water from the top pound. Hopefully this restriction will never be required.

Clearly these proposals have only come about after intensive research by hydraulics engineers at British Waterways.

I trust this answers your questions more fully.

Yours sincerely, KW

The following letter is one to gladden the heart.

Dear Mr. Wright,

I was born in 1925 on the side of the Staffs and Worcs canal with the (then) LMS West Coast Railway line 100 yards away so you will understand that I am a canal and railway enthusiast. We don't have many canals in Norfolk, only the Broads and rivers which, from April to October, are the "M25" of Norfolk.

On a recent weekend two of us came to Huddersfield and on the Friday afternoon walked the "Narrow" from Slaithwaite to Tunnel End. What a delight (despite the weather forecast - it was sunny and cold - excellent for walking).

It is a beautiful section of the canal, interesting locks, bridges, canal cottages, lovely views along the valley and an excellent towpath.

We then walked back to Slaithwaite from Marsden along that section of the Colne Valley Walk (North) but on the NE side of the canal. Again a delightful experience and not too wet underfoot.

Saturday we took the train to Greenfield and walked back along the "Narrow" to Diggle. Again what a delight - especially the Diggle Flight of locks - even with the few diversions. Then we walked over the Standedge Tunnel - following the ventilation shafts - heavy going!

I really must congratulate the Society and Canal Company and all involved for what has already been done on the "Narrow". Ours was a most enjoyable experience and we look forward to completion when we shall visit again and endeavour to complete the walk from Huddersfield to Stalybridge and a boat through the tunnel!!

I have walked sections of many canals in the Midlands and the "Narrow" is going to be one of the best, on completion.

Finally we met so many friendly and helpful

“locals” up there who directed us on our way across the Colne Valley Walk and over Standedge tunnel. Nice people.

I could write much more about the delights of the “Narrow” but don’t want to take up too much space if you want to publish my few observations.

Keep the good work going and we look forward to April 2001.

Yours sincerely,

Vic Edwards, Norwich.

The next letter was a brief one from Barry Garthwaite of Oakes, Huddersfield, who sent me a copy of the “Dalesman” article referred to in “What the Papers Say”. Very interesting and informative for those not “in the know” but, as always, peppered with inaccuracies. I quote (In Marsden) “tourists will leave their cars near the train station and have a choice of routes, either a walk UP THE BANK(?) OR A RIVERBOAT. THE WATER-BASED OPTION WILL SAIL STRAIGHT INSIDE THE CENTRE, BEFORE BEING ELETRONICALLY ELEVATED FROM THE WATER TO FLOOR LEVEL. QUITE AN ARRIVAL”. Quite!

Our Colne Valley correspondent, Keith Sykes, asks some pertinent questions about through navigation on the “east side”. The answers to his questions will be found in Alan Stopher’s progress article. Keith separately asked for information on future events, openings, rallies, etc., to which Frank Smith replies:

The organisation of HCS festivals for 2001 is still in a state of flux. Although the restoration project is on schedule for completion in April, a period of time will be required to commission the canal. With this, and awaiting a date and venue for the ‘official opening’, it is very difficult to plan anything for definite at this stage. Frank Smith.

Keith’s letter follows:

Dear Ken,

The Bits in Between

It is good to know that the works on the main blockages are progressing on time for completion, as living in Slaithwaite I am having to take a fair amount of stick, in good humour so far, about the disruption that is being caused. With comments like “Nobody will want to come up all those locks from Huddersfield to Slaithwaite”. I only hope that by April 2001 boats can also get through “the bits in between”, those presently being cleared blockages, to reach Slaithwaite or else the locals may be proved right.

It is now some years since the locks between Huddersfield and Marsden were restored by the Society and the experience of our recent annual Scout expeditions down the canal from Marsden towards Slaithwaite indicate that lock gates and paddles will need some work doing on them, as well as dredging down the middle of some sections further east, to allow through navigation from Huddersfield to Marsden and onwards to Ashton.

I appreciate that work has already been done by BW over this last winter at Marsden with the dredging of the summit pound and the Marsden flight of locks but the BW dredger, tug and two mud hoppers have now remained in that flight unused for the past two months.

Is there any indication of what amount of work is to be done, when and by whom on “the bits in between” on the east side so as to be able to ensure that through navigation will be possible from April 2001.

Yours sincerely,

Keith W. Sykes, Slaithwaite.

And, finally, a lovely one from Council member, Alec Ramsden, who joins John Harwood in having “a bit of a beef” about Old Father Thames!

Dear Ken,

And that makes two of us - Thames travellers who won’t be making a return visit to the so called Queen of England’s waterways.

I can echo John Harwood's sentiments (Plink 132) of "a memorable journey but not one which will be repeated in a hurry." As seasoned canallers (over forty hirings in twenty-six years) covering most parts of the country we decided on an early Spring outing. April 7 to 14 was the chosen time; April 9 to 12 was actuality. Cost of hiring a 34ft by 14ft plastic tub was £468 - including £18 for television, £50 for fuel deposit and £12 for car parking, expenses which are usually included in charges made by canal based hire boat firms. We did, however, get fifty quid back as a goodwill gesture after a never to be forgotten cruise.

April 7 was a Friday. We had a call from the boatyard at Reading on the Thursday to say that the river was in flood and there was no point in travelling. Ditto on Friday. But on Saturday we were told that water levels had fallen and a Sunday start was possible. It was. Sunday afternoon was fine and sunny and we had a pleasant cruise to Pangbourne Fields admiring the variety of "No mooring" and "Private, keep off" signs sprouting prolifically (very reminiscent of the Avon).

Another fine day on the Monday and through Goring to Wallingford for an overnight stop. A convenient pub here - and we managed to beat the charge for mooring by finding a stretch of grass without a keep off sign. Tuesday too was ideal cruising weather, fine and fleetingly sunny. To Abingdon for the night and the ticket carrying wardens of the Vale of White Horse District Council caught us for the £4 mooring fee.

When mooring we had to step UP about a foot onto the towpath. In the morning the step was DOWN by more than a foot and a good three inches of melting snow covered the boat. The river was racing and as we were finishing breakfast the officer commanding the boatyard arrived by car and advised us that we should return to Reading, in a flotilla with three other boats, with a pilot in charge.

Winding the boat demonstrated the severity of the flow (we would have done it much more easily if left to our own devices) and swans

attempting to cross the waterway finished up 100 yards or more downstream. Leading the convoy and with the pilot, John Whiting, regaling us with tales of the river, we had no problems. Not so the "skipper" of the second boat. He had unfortunate experiences at the first two locks - and refused to go any further.

Landing stages at all the locks were under at least a foot of water and fields were flooded. Headroom at many of the opulent boathouses had been reduced to a few feet. But we made the return to Reading in record time. Upstream the journey had taken us about fifteen hours of leisurely cruising. Abingdon to Reading, taking in fourteen locks, was completed in five and a half hours. We decided to spend Wednesday night at the boatyard intending to visit relatives in the area the following day (after all we had time to spare), but it was a dry night - at least in the sense that there was no readily available pub. The boatyard was on an island - with no welcoming hostelry.

A direct contrast this, to the last time we had a washed out boating holiday. This was on the Avon, many years ago, and at least we were able to enjoy the hospitality of the marvellously unspoilt Berkeley Arms at Tewksbury.

No, I doubt very much that the Thames will be cruised again by the Ramsden family. It's back to the friendly canals, a solid, substantial 56-footer hired from a boatyard which is unpretentious and has a brochure which is not snobbishly class conscious.

I wrote for a selection from Thames boatyards and one (immediately discarded) read *"Our policy is to provide craft which are clean, smart, reliable and not spoilt by boatyard advertisements and slogans. Our craft are as individual as any private cruiser on the Thames. You, as skipper, will gain the benefit of this, as you will not be branded as 'just another hire craft' at the many places you will be visiting during your holiday."* Cheek.

Yours,

Alec Ramsden, Huddersfield.

The Back Page

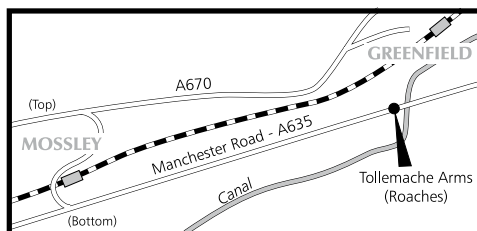
THE SOCIETY WELCOMES THE FOLLOWING NEW MEMBERS:

2558	Mr & Mrs Hill,
2559	Mr & Mrs Myatt,
2560	Mrs Miles,
2561	Mr Robinson,
2562	Mr & Mrs Grisdale,
2563	Mr Batten,
2564	Mr Heath,
2565	Mr & Mrs Hanson,
2566	Mr Noble,
2567	Mr & Ms Kerfoot & Byrne,
2568	Mr Woods,
2569	Mrs O'Clarey,
2570	Mr Clough,
2571	Mr & Mrs Probert,

WEST SIDE SOCIAL MEETINGS:

Similar to last year, it has been decided to suspend social meetings between June and September. Therefore, the date for the next meeting at the 'Tollemache Arms' will be 11th October.

The meeting will commence at 8.00pm.



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