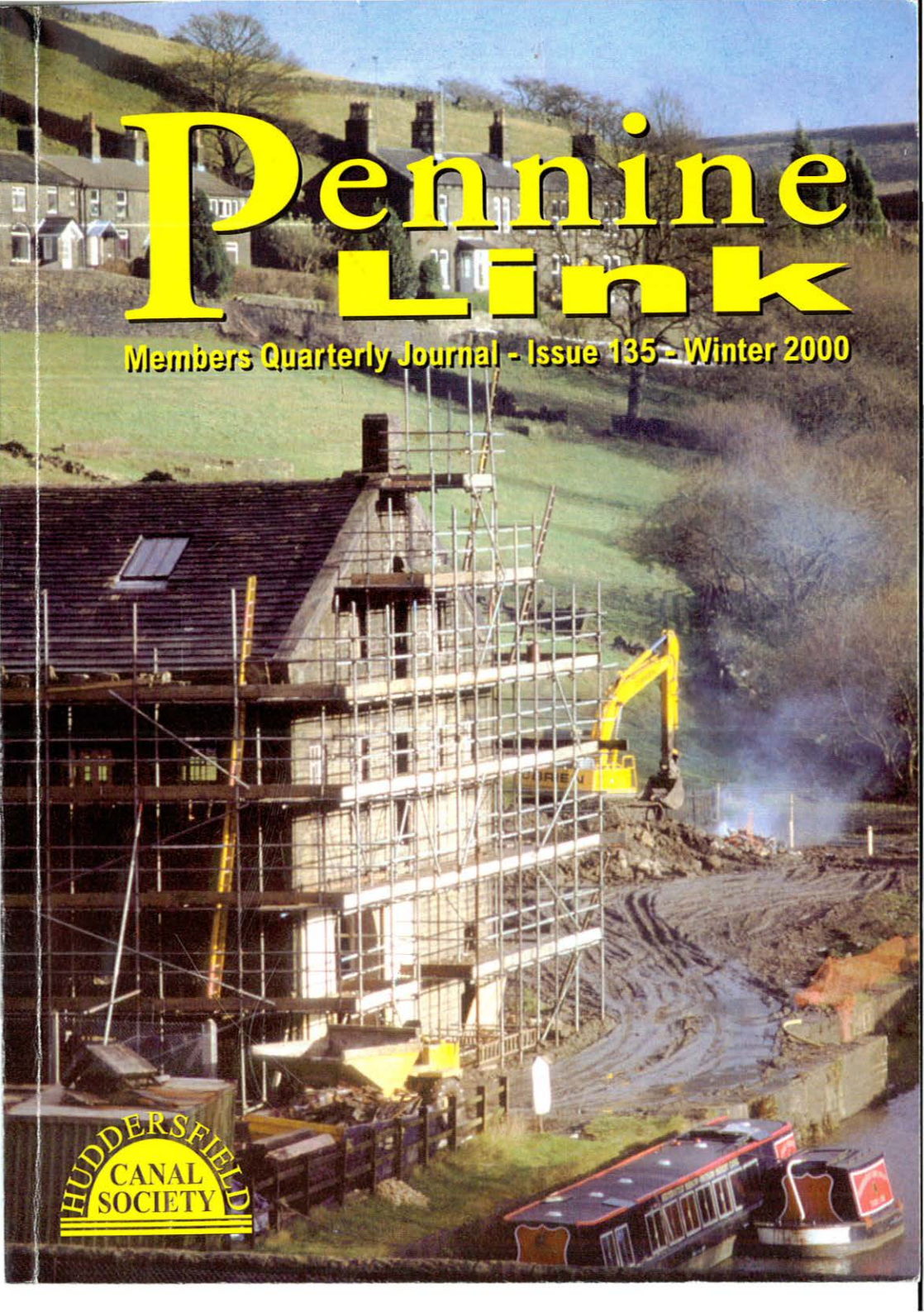


Pennine Link

Members Quarterly Journal - Issue 135 - Winter 2000



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CANAL
SOCIETY

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*The opinions expressed in Pennine Link are not necessarily those of the Huddersfield Canal Society.
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Pennine Link

Winter 2000 Issue 135



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at Lock 5W

Tom Rolt Plaque

Memorial
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A wonderfully evocative read courtesy of the prestigious American periodical, Smithsonian.

Photo Competition 2000

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The results of this year's photographic competition.

Front Cover: A welcome sight indeed! Work is well underway on British Waterway's warehouse at Marsden which will become the Standedge Visitor Centre. Great care is being taken to restore this listed building and restore it to its former glory. Work on the three storey gable has included reconstruction of the chiney stack. The tug and butty Standedge Pioneer is moored in the foreground waiting to be transported to Portland Basin and operate public trips. Unfortunately, until a rather large hole at Marsden station is repaired, the boats cannot be safely craned out for transport.

Back Cover: A dramatic view at High Street bridge workings, Uppermill. The first four concrete box culvert units have been lowered into place before their final fixing. A further nine units will be added to complete the culvert structure.

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Editorial

No news is good news, they say! Well, we've not exactly had NO news recently but the press have been very quiet on

the restoration front. Still, I suppose it does get a bit repetitive – "aren't they doing well" – all the time. What surprised Bob and me was that the Oldham Chronicle was interested in us – yet again – winning the Tom Rolt Award. And wanting to photograph us. By now I would have expected total exclusion or, at most, a "library picture". Just wait 'til the "openings" and especially "the big one" come round. There'll be plenty of 'media' activity then, no doubt.

Things are moving though, off the scene, as it were. We get several mentions when Oldham's attractiveness to the Commonwealth Games in 2002 is mentioned. Huddersfield and Rochdale canals and tourism in Saddleworth are being promoted to get money-spending visitors into our area by the thousands.

Geo Projects, who deal in map-making for specialist interests, are busy making a new map of the HNC, which featured in an article in December's "Canal Boat and Inland Waterways".

Our canal, along with the Rochdale and Anderton Lift, has begun to appear in "Lists of Stoppages" published for the information of the boating fraternity. Not with a "pending restoration" end-date, but with a specific month and year. Doesn't seem much, I know, but after more than 25 years

Talking about boating – it is a direction Pennine Link must head for and, as a sort of introduction, we are re-printing an article I mentioned briefly last time. That very erudite American organization, The Smithsonian Institution, has an extremely glossy and beautifully presented magazine called, not surprisingly, The Smithsonian. In June this year they published an article on the British waterway system which is a very well-written introduction to our canals and particularly to canal people and boats. I am delighted to have negotiated the right to let you see this article, in full, and I must record my personal thanks to Andrea Georgiou in Washington, D.C., for her help and to Susan Hornick, the writer and Michael Freeman, the photographer, for their permission to publish their work – free of charge. As everyone seems to say these days – ENJOY!

As things stand I have had a lot of nice comments about my time as editor but none of them has encouraged me to carry on beyond next year, sometime! And we do need a replacement – as soon as possible – to get to know the ropes, simple as they are while Bob is around to do the clever stuff! Don't be shy, it is a very rewarding role and if you are the least bit interested, give me a call and talk about it.



It only remains for me to say, in full confidence of your reading this in mid-December, all the very best from us here at Plink for a very happy Christmas and a canal-filled 2001.

Ken Wright





Chairman's Report

On the 25th of November, I was invited to speak at the 5th IWA National Conference for Waterways Societies in Birmingham and entitled my

presentation "Is there Life after Restoration?". This is a particularly timely question as we fast approach completing the 'Impossible Restoration'. Indeed, some may say that as we have achieved our aim, our future could appear redundant. But, I'm sure you will be pleased to hear that the Society is committed to the future and has voted to continue *ad infinitum*. Our plans for the future are bound into two important agreements:

1. A **Joint Venture Agreement** between Huddersfield Canal Company, British Waterways Board (BW), Kirklees Council and Huddersfield Canal Society (HCS) for the development and operation of a Standedge Visitor Centre.

The funding bodies are Kirklees, BW, HCS and the Millennium Commission. The owners are BW and a Standedge Visitor Centre Advisory Committee will be established with HCS as a member. Phase I, which will open in April 2001, provides an interpretative centre and launching point for the tunnel trip. Phase II fully utilises and restores the whole building.

HCS intends to play a major role in the Standedge Visitor Centre and will have a presence on site, assist with design and provision of interpretative material and operate a water taxi from Marsden Station to the Visitor Centre.

2. An **Alliance Charter Memorandum of Understanding** associated with the Huddersfield Narrow Canal and Standedge Visitor Centre.

This ground-breaking charter between British Waterways and the Society was signed on the 29th of November.

The main provisions are:

- * To appoint a Volunteer Coordination Officer (VCO) jointly funded by BW and HCS. Our General Secretary, Frank Smith, will take up this post in the New Year, dividing his time between BW and HCS offices. He will be responsible for coordinating the volunteer workforce in tasks associated with the Visitor Centre and the Canal.

- * BW are to take over the HCS dredging fleet, repaint it in their livery with an agreed logo and make it available for volunteers' efforts.

- * BW are to discuss accommodation provision at the Visitor Centre with HCS.

- * HCS is to provide a water taxi to ferry visitors from Marsden Station to the Visitor Centre.

- * HCS is to recruit volunteer staff to work under the direction of the VCO.

- * The lease on the Wool Road Transhipment Shed will be surrendered to BW, though the VCO will control booking, use and access to the building for the existing user groups. The facility is to be used by BW for the lock/tunnel keeper, toilets and a pump out facility for boaters.

We are now less than six months from the completion of the restoration of the Canal - fifty three years after the last recorded passage by Robert Aickman in Ailsa Craig and only twenty seven years after the formation of the Canal Society.

Originally dubbed 'The Impossible Restoration', we have proved by determination and a refusal to take 'no' for an answer, it can be done. It eventually was made possible by a true partnership of a nationalised industry, local authorities and the voluntary sector, and we will show that there is indeed 'life after restoration'.

David Sumner



Huddersfield Canal Company Report

As we approach the start of year 1 of the new Millennium, work on the 'impossible

restoration' is moving rapidly to a climax. By Christmas it is anticipated that the structural repairs to Standedge Tunnel will be complete, the construction work through Slaithwaite and at High Street Uppermill will be finished and water will return to the canal in the centre of Stalybridge. We've come a long way in a very short time and it is a credit to our engineers and contractor's staff and operatives that the major changes have been achieved with the minimum of disruption to the communities involved. The photographs will again give members the best impression of the restoration activity along the canal.

Starting from the current end of navigation at Staley Wharf, Stalybridge the final new structure on the town centre restoration, Caroline Street Bridge, is well underway with the pre-cast units in place and wing walls under construction. Lock 5W has received its gates thus completing a remarkable restoration of the two hundred year old lock which at one time was going to be abandoned in favour of a new course around the former sports hall. The new tail end of the lock is clad with reclaimed stone to marry it with the original masonry to good effect. Elsewhere work is concentrating on the towpath, pavement and retaining wall finishes. The aim is to fill the canal just before Christmas so that the towpath can be opened for the holiday period. This will still leave some above water

accommodation work principally around Caroline House and lock 4W for completion in January. The upstream lead into lock 7W is complete, the lock has received its gates, and this section, known as Portland Place, is now back in water. Comparing the first photographs of canal restoration in Stalybridge in Plink 131 there has been a major transformation in the town in 12 months.

British Waterways has restarted dredging work between Frenches and Mann's Wharf. Dredgings from the team working at Frenches are going to a commercial tip. A new canalside dredgings facility is being developed in a field near Division Bridge to take some of the material.

At High Street Bridge Uppermill, the concrete piled retaining wall has been constructed and pre-cast units for the bridge extension are now in place. Disruption to traffic flow has been kept to a minimum and the project team received a round of applause at a recent public meeting convened to explain progress.

At Standedge Tunnel all of the rock bolts have now been installed. Work is continuing on the removal of heavy debris from rock falls, establishment of emergency access adits and some side wall relining. The design for three tug boats and towed passenger modules (one for the Standedge Visitor Centre trip and one for boat crews) is being finalised between British Waterways and the Bristol-based builder. Trials have also been conducted at Shire Cruisers, Sowerby Bridge on the double-triangle shaped air-filled buffers to be fitted between boats on the towed convoy.

Despite the inclement weather work is progressing well on the re-roofing of the Tunnel End warehouse for Standedge Visitor Centre. Many timber joists have been repaired, partitions have been removed and the stone inside thoroughly cleaned. Headland Design Associates have been engaged by British Waterways to design and construct the interpretative displays, which will be installed in the ground floor of the warehouse building. April 12th 2001 has been targeted for opening of the centre in order to catch Easter visitors.

At Slaithwaite the end of construction is in sight after a year of swift progress. Lock 22E has received its gates. The final sections of canal channel are being formed downstream of lock 23W and below Platt Lane Bridge. The latter is being constructed during a complete road closure. Old Bank Bridge is in use and finishes are progressing on the towpath, pavement and exposed areas of retaining wall. Fine ashlar stone has been laid to give a high quality finish to the parapets at Britannia Road and Old Bank bridges. Everyone I speak to is complimentary about the standard of work and the way in which it has been managed.

The completion of Lees Mill Bridge, Holme Mill Bridge, Golcar Aqueduct and Mark Bottoms Bridge was marked by the erection of a plaque on 20th November by The Mayor of Kirklees, Councillor Ann Denham and British Waterways' Regional Director Derek Cochrane.

In Huddersfield, at Sellers Engineers, the reinforced structure of lock 3E is nearing completion. The large two-storey replacement grinding shed and electrician's shop is substantially complete and the massive grinding machines are being

transferred from the old accommodation. The redundant building can then be demolished to enable the final length of tunnel to be built. Work will continue into April 2001 but is on target to permit the canal to reopen on time. At nearby Bates Mill the new lock 2E has received its gates. The contractor is preparing the joints between the concrete piles of the tunnel walls prior to sealing with sprayed concrete. The sheet piled channel between Queen Street South bridge and the old lock 2E is well advanced.

On the 'secondary restoration' front, British Waterways has two dredging teams working in the Colne Valley, one at West Slaithwaite and one at Milnsbridge. The maintenance team is also attending to any minor repairs to gates and mechanisms in readiness for through navigation in May 2001.

Media coverage is starting to increase after a relatively quiet spell during the late summer. Local papers have continued to chronicle progress on construction work. TV companies have visited Tunnel End and Stalybridge and correspondents from waterway magazines have called in for updates whilst in the area covering the Rochdale Canal launch. Behind the scenes partners are considering how and when to stage opening events and it is hoped that news of a grand canal opening will be available soon.

At this stage of the second Canal Age, inland waterways and regeneration are becoming even more inextricably linked. It will be a matter of deep satisfaction to the Huddersfield Canal Society pioneers that the route they charted many others are following. Enjoy the festive season and raise a glass to your intrepid colleagues for their 26 years of vision.





Stalybridge

Top Left: The last bridge on the Stalybridge Town Centre Scheme, Caroline St., is taking shape with the first box culvert units in place. The castellated wall to the right is adjacent to the Wharf Tavern, Staly Wharf. (AS)

Top Right: The large cofferdam excavation across Caroline St. The new factory units beside Staly Wharf in the right background, occupied by Peak Tools and the Hyde Group, are bringing new jobs to the area. (AS)

Upper Middle Left: Caroline St. bridge excavation with a mini-excavator removing spoil down to the bottom of the towpath ramp. The tail end of the new Lock 4W is visible centre left. (AS)

Middle Right: Callis Mill fitting new lock gates to the restored Lock 5W. The downstream approach has been attractively clad in reclaimed stone. Developer's proposals for Longland's Mill in the right background are eagerly awaited. (AS)

Lower Middle Left: The Armentières Square service road has had to be repaired. Here, a surfacing gang place and form an imprint in proprietary modified bitumen thin-layer surfacing. (AS)

Bottom Left: Following the permanent closure of Trinity St., this section of canal channel has been constructed to link Lock 6W in Armentières Square with the Delta section. (AS)

Bottom Right: The balance beam for Lock 7W is installed beside Mottram Road. Stone facing to the curved towpath ramp is complete, as is paving to one side of the lock itself. (AS)





High Street, Uppermill

Above: Contractor drilling for the installation of raking anchors to tie back the line of concrete piles supporting High Street. (AS)

Right: For once, the unexpected has proved rather useful! During the excavations at the downstream side of High Street, the blocky remains of a second stone arch were uncovered. The stone arch restored during phase 1 of the project is clearly visible. The second arch has since been restored and meant fewer of the expensive concrete units had to be used. (AS)





High Street, Uppermill

Above: The second phase of road bridge construction at High Street involves the installation of a pre-cast concrete box culvert. In this view, the first 4 units have been off loaded from the road side and are awaiting location against the unit in the foreground. Services, including fibre optic telephone lines are clearly visible traversing the works. A new canal channel will be constructed in the direction of the excavator to link with the existing canal. (AS)

Left: A more dramatic view of the first 4 box culvert units, looking upstream. A further 9 units are yet to arrive and complete the road bridge structure. (AS)





Standedge Tunnel and Visitor Centre

Top Left: One of four Emergency Exit adits inside Standedge Tunnel which are to be fitted with lighting and emergency equipment. (BW)

Top Right: The tunnel portal at Marsden; a Grade II* structure which has been reconstructed stone by stone. (AS)

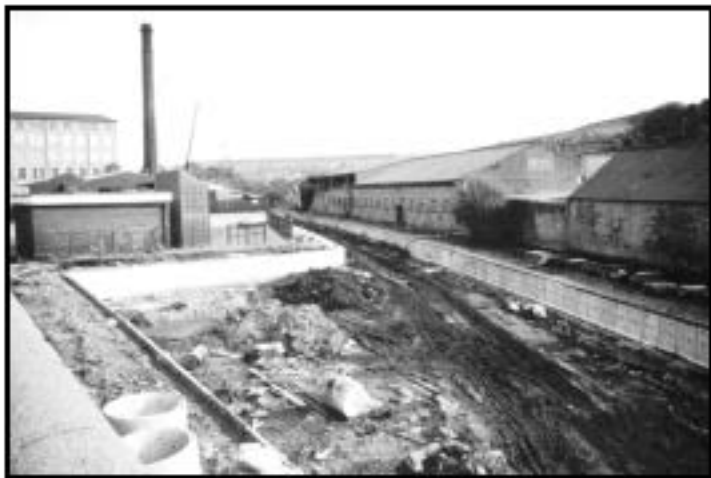
Middle Left: The Tunnel End Warehouse at Marsden, destined to become the new Standedge Visitor Centre, surrounded by scaffolding with roofing of the first half in progress. (AS)

Middle Right: The Visitor Centre restoration work is progressing well. Here the roof tile relaying is in progress on the refurbished southern half of the warehouse. New, heritage style, roof lights have been installed. The tiles on the northern half of the roof have yet to be stripped. (BW)

Bottom Left: Work to the three storey gable of the new Visitor Centre involves reconstruction of the chimney stack. (AS)

Bottom Right: Restoration work on the first floor of the warehouse. New joist ends have been spliced into place and the stone work has been cleaned. (BW)





Slaithwaite Town Centre

Top Left: With Old Bank bridge in use, the temporary access to the south side of the canal has been removed. A transitional reinforced concrete section is being built between the original wash walls downstream of Lock 23E and the new bridge. (AS)

Top Right: The landing stage embayment above Britannia Road bridge will allow a refuge for boats before they proceed down the narrow section to Lock 22E. (AS)

Middle Left: Precast concrete units have been used to construct the winding hole wash walls. (AS)

Middle Right: The completed reinforced concrete barrel to Lock 21E. The tail gate recesses are in the centre and the nearer sections of wall will link to the new Platt Lane bridge. (AS)

Bottom Left: Inlet pipes for the ground paddles at the head end of lock 21E. In the background, the channel structure has been completed through to Lock 22E. (AS)

Bottom Right: The new deepened channel between the old Lock 21 (in the distance) and Platt Lane bridge. The sheet piling is a permanent installation and the view shows a reinforced concrete facing structure is under construction. (AS)





Holme Mill, Milnsbridge & Sellers

Top Left: Assembled group after the unveiling of a plaque at Holme Mill Bridge to commemorate the completion of three bridges and the Golcar Aqueduct. Left to right: John Denham (Mayor's Consort), Mayor of Kirklees, Cllr. Ann Denham, Derek Cochrane (British Waterways), Cllr. Gordon Beever, Cllr. David Ridgway (also an HCC member), Keith Gibson (HCS & HCC), Cllr. Ian McLellan and Ian Hall of Yorkshire Forward. Mel Munday kindly provided one of his historic vehicles, a three wheel Scammell Tractor Unit, to add interest to the event. (AS)

Top Right: Blue Boar Farm Developing team assembled at Milnsbridge basin after commencing secondary restoration work for British Waterways. The dredger boat is a wide one which splits into two narrow sections for taking through narrow canal bridge holes. (AS)

Bottom Left: The completed reinforced concrete lock barrel at Sellers Lock 3E with head gate chamber reinforcement fixed in position. (AS)

Middle Right: Sellers Combined building complete except for the roller shutter doors. The original two storey building, to the left of the church spire, will be demolished in December, once all the equipment has been moved into the new building. This view looks along the line of the completed first section of canal tunnel. (AS)

Bottom Right: The new ground floor Grinding Workshop at Sellers showing the bed of the original 14metre long Wide Cylinder Grinder after being moved into place from the original workshop. (AS)







Bates & Co

Top Left: The new, relocated Lock 2E upstream of Bates & Co. in the once 'lost' section of canal. The channel has been dredged to Chapel Hill bridge in the distance, which is the start of the Sellers section. (AS)

Top Right: Following the Bates tunnel breakthrough under Queen Street South bridge, excavation commenced to deepen the canal channel. Although the bridge had previously been underpinned by grouting, a 7.5t weight limit was imposed temporarily. (AS)

Upper Middle Left: A view taken whilst standing in the new deepened channel looking straight along the Bates tunnel. The old sewer is evident to the right having been replaced by the deeper diversion. The exposed rock on the right hand side will be faced by a stone wall. The new concrete angled wall will receive facing stone in keeping with the Grade II listed structure above. (AS)

Lower Middle Left: Sheet piling of the deepened concrete channel commences near to Queen Street South bridge.

Bottom Left: The once familiar view of the Bates blockage now shows the reinforcement cages and shuttering in place for the first sections of pile capping beams. Temporary staging has been built out either side of the new deep channel. Temporary tunnel lights are visible below the arch. (AS)

Bottom Right: The deepened channel downstream of Queen Street South bridge with the original Lock 2E in the distance. The lock will be retained as a feature, with boats travelling through at the lower pound level. The sheet piles are permanent and the temporary props will be replaced by feature permanent ones in due course. The concrete base of the channel is being cast in bays. (AS)

Photo credits: AS - Alan Stophor BW - British Waterways KMC - Kirklees Metropolitan Council



NEW OPPORTUNITIES ON OUR NEWEST ATTRACTION

Tunnel Guides/Pilots (Full or Part-time)

c.£6.00 per hour

**MARSDEN,
HUDDERSFIELD**



British Waterways

British Waterways is committed to unlocking the potential of some of the UK's most important assets. Stretching for over 2,000 miles, our waterways and their surrounding buildings are of vital historical, cultural and environmental importance. Standedge Tunnel is Britain's highest, longest and deepest canal tunnel. Now, as we prepare to re-open the tunnel and our brand new interactive Standedge Visitor Centre in Marsden, we are looking for people to help ensure every visitor has an enjoyable and informative experience.

You will be responsible for greeting customers, piloting boats in and out of the tunnel and providing a lively and informative commentary to bring the canal and tunnel to life. You will also need to conduct a safety talk, answer questions and carry out a range of general duties, including safety checks and basic boat maintenance.

We are looking for people with excellent customer care and presentation skills along with a flexible approach as you will be required to work weekends. Maintenance and first aid skills would be an advantage, as would experience in a leisure environment and an interest in boats. Full training will be given, a uniform will be provided and you will have the opportunity to join us on a full or part-time basis working between 17 and 42 hours per week.

If you would like to play a key role in ensuring the success of our newest visitor attraction, please send your CV and covering letter, quoting ref: 322/00, to Clare Burns, Assistant Personnel Manager, British Waterways, Fearnos Wharf, Neptune Street, Leeds LS9 8PB. Alternatively email your application to vacancy@britishwaterways.co.uk

Closing date for applications: 22nd December 2000.

www.britishwaterways.co.uk

Prototype Polypropylene Plug

Here, at last, courtesy of "Moving Road" the magazine of our friends at Calder Navigation Society, are some photos of the first test of the polypropylene buffer proposed (can't get away from the 'p's!) for Standedge tunnel. I was told of the trials, which took place at the end of August at Shire

Cruisers in Sowerby Bridge, but was unfortunately away at the time and unable to attend.

Each "buffer" is about 250mm (10") thick, is inflated and floats on the water, being held in place by light ropes to suitable points on both boats, the boats themselves being held together by their mooring ropes. The designers are devising a universal shape to fit a range of different



stern ends – the other end will obviously be a V-shape to fit the conventional bow.

Apparently the trial was a modified success and the designers went away to make minor alterations, confident that they were well on the way to a final solution.

Ken Wright

Photos: K. Noble



Harwood's Kiel

John Harwood takes a short trip along the Kiel Canal

I think this is the first time the Vikings have cropped up in a canal article but perhaps the day had to come. Yes, they used to portage their longboats on rollers across the Danish peninsula on what (roughly speaking) is now the course of the Kiel Canal but it was not until 1784 that the Eider Canal was constructed from Kiel to the Eider lakes to be later redeveloped between 1887 and 1895 into what (with later deepening and widening) we know today as the Kiel Canal.

Today's canal was built originally to serve German military needs, saving hundreds of miles on the trip around the coast of Denmark into the Baltic Sea. Like Panama its history follows the political history of its area being built originally by the German government, internationalised following the first World War, renationalised by Hitler and subsequently operated according to the Treaty of Versailles (1919).

At 61 miles long (or 59 by another source), 338 feet wide and 37 feet deep it isn't one of the biggest canals in the world but it is the busiest as ships pass under its seven high level (140foot) bridges including a railway which actually climbs a spiral course to gain the height to cross the canal. Locks are used only at either end, mainly to account for the tidal difference between the two seas.

When we bear in mind that the Baltic has the following sizeable ports - Copenhagen, Kiel, Lubeck, Szczecin, Gdansk, Gdynia, Kalingrad, St Petersburg, Kronstadt, Riga, Tallin, Helsinki, Stockholm, Karlskrona and Malmo not to mention connections with and via the White Sea-Baltic Canal, the Volga-Baltic waterway and the Volga - Don Canal, one can appreciate the volume of cargo moving along this significant waterway.

A postcard of about 1900 portrays the naval role of the Kiel Canal. A lavish gold-embossed head of the Kaiser on the left is surrounded by a gold wreath. Above is the German eagle carrying a gold crown, and beside it the legend 'Our Future lies on the Water'. A warship passing through the canal and the naval gun, at bottom left, emphasises where that future is to lie.



Bits & Pieces

Events at Marsden Mechanics

We are pleased to recommend events at Marsden Mechanics, *"this small pocket of culture, nestling in the foothills of the Pennines"*. Once said about a theatre I was involved with but just as apposite here.

Ken Wright



2001

Saturday January 13th

Last Night's Fun
The traditional music of Ireland with fresh arrangements and new interpretations.

Saturday January 27th

Fine Time Fontayne is Richard Matthewman
Growing up in a South Yorkshire pit village

Saturday February 3rd

Neil Gore in The Flower of Gloster
The story of a journey on the canals in Edwardian England

Friday February 9th

Alma Del Barrio
A cracking Salsa Band

Saturday March 3rd

NTC Touring Theatre Company presents
Mary Barton by Elizabeth Gaskell

Friday March 16th

The Rocky Mountain Ploughboys
Goodtime acoustic Roots music

Licensed bar for all events
All enquiries and bookings to the Mikron
Theatre office Tel/Fax 01484 843701
e-mail: admin@mikron.org.uk

Society Members Come to Rescue of Boating MP

Whilst on the River Thames Huddersfield Canal Society members Keith and Margaret Sykes on their narrowboat "Morning Mist" came to the rescue of Candy Atherton, Labour Member of Parliament for Falmouth and treasurer of the Parliamentary Waterways Group after her narrowboat, the appropriately named "The Honourable Lady", had broken down at Temple Lock near Marlow.

On Sunday 29th July 2000 "The Honourable Lady" had failed to restart after rising up Temple Lock and had to be pulled onto the lock approaches. "Morning Mist" being the next narrowboat to come through was approached for a tow to a nearby marina and obliged. With both boats "breasted up" the Member of Parliament's boat was taken to a marina near Hurley for repair.

Rolt Memorial Plaque

On July 18th the IWA Chester Branch, in conjunction with British Waterways, held a ceremony at Tower Wharf in Chester to commemorate one of the founders of the inland waterway movement, Tom Rolt, or LTC Rolt as he was known to his many readers. Rolt was born in Chester and his widow, Sonia Rolt, performed the unveiling.

The principal speaker at the event was HNC's friend, actor Timothy West, who has already been enlisted to perform the vocal commentary to OUR restoration video. Tim's speech at the unveiling was a masterpiece and I am delighted to reproduce it here – courtesy of IWA "Waterways" magazine.

"I first heard of Tom Rolt when I was on a walking tour of Wales with a friend who was particularly anxious that we should visit the narrow-gauge Talylyn Railway in Merionethshire.

The year was 1951, and the fortunes of this little seven-mile line were probably at their lowest ebb since it opened in 1866. When we reached the terminus at Towyn, it was to find the station closed, no sign or news of a train, and the steady downpour characteristic of that part of Wales; and we repaired to the Corbett Arms for refreshment. There I asked one of the locals about the railway.

"There's some daft bugger called Rolt", was the reply. "Thinks he's going to run it himself". I learned that in fact a Preservation Society was to be formed, and the railway having slipped through the net of 1948 Nationalised Control, a group of interested and qualified people could be assembled to take over this historic line with its original locomotives and rolling stock, repair it and operate it as a going concern, and all because of this daft bugger called Rolt. Who was he? I was to find out very soon.

By a curious quirk of fate, the following day when I was browsing through a second-hand bookshop in Dolgellau, I saw a book called 'Narrow Boat' by one LTC Rolt. Could this be the same man? I didn't know, but I'm afraid the book was quite cheap so I bought it.

I don't know how many of you will know what I mean when I say that reading this account of a man's introduction to life on the inland waterways reminded me sharply of the same excitement I'd felt as a child when reading Arthur Ransome's 'Swallows and Amazons' – a fascination with a world of which I then knew nothing, and couldn't wait to find out by exploring it myself.

And just as Tom Rolt's espousal of the Talylyn Railway led others to follow suit with other forgotten railways, ("the craze will never last", said the sceptics, "it'll burn itself out" – today there are 46 such Preservations Societies, and the list is growing), so that little book led indirectly to the foundation of the Inland Waterways Association and a national interest that has reached the point where there are now more craft plying our canal system than ever there were in the heyday of its commercial life.

It's obvious that no man, or woman, would have been able to stimulate such far-reaching interest in two such recondite subjects, at a period in our history not remarkable for its spirit of adventure, by personal enthusiasm alone.

Rolt was both engineer and writer. Now, professional writers who dabble in engineering are uncommon, but not unknown. Professional engineers with a gift for putting occasional pen to paper are encountered scarcely more frequently; but someone who can work passionately, and at times poetically, but also knowledgeably and

comprehensively, about engineers and engineering, a man who can have you holding your breath as you read the account of the first span of Brunel's Saltash Bridge being lifted into place – that is a very special writer, with a very persuasive mission statement.

I was asked to speak not only about Tom Rolt the writer and Tom Rolt the engineer, but about Tom Rolt the man. I never actually met him; so I hope his family and friends will forgive me if I simply mention a few of my own probably faulty impressions gained from reading his autobiography.

Determined, enthusiastic, single-minded even, perhaps to the point of intolerance. Generous and appreciative with those people and things that deserved his generosity and appreciation. That he fell in love with someone who was trained as an actress and was knowledgeable about narrow boats seems to me to indicate a peculiar wisdom and discernment. Sociable, with like-minded spirits, but perhaps valuing peace and tranquility so highly that he could do without human company for longer periods than can most of us. Essentially a sufferer from what we might call Betjeman's Syndrome – wistfully repining for much that has been swept away by the march of progress, but not simply giving way to maudlin nostalgia; instead, producing valuable arguments for the retention of a particular building, the salvation of a local craft skill, the restoration of some facility that had thoughtlessly been sacrificed for short term gain, and trying to get something done about it.

Occasionally in his writing, we sense a spiritual quandary about

our responsibility to the world as we find it – to what extent should we use our God-given skills to improve the lot of our fellow beings before we find that our labours have resulted in an offence to nature. Was the Industrial Revolution – so much of which Tom Rolt recognised as beautiful, majestic, triumphant – inevitable? Should we have recognised the seeds of poverty, ecological damage and social discontent at the same time as we harvested those of national prosperity? Would it have been any different if we had?

Such dark moments occasionally shadow his writing like spots on the sun, but they are the underlying concerns of a man who thought very deeply about what he was doing and saying.

If he were with us now, I think he might gasp at the volume of traffic on the canal system, but I hope he would also look proudly at the evidence of his achievement, which is more I believe than that of any other single individual in bringing about this historic last-ditch revival to the life of our canals, and so giving pleasure, employment and meaning to the lives of so many people today."

Sonia Rolt, Timothy West, IWA Chairman, Richard Drake, and Chester Branch Chairman, Ron Evans, at the plaque unveiling.

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Restoration Progress - Winter 2000

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

11 Scout Tunnel
'Internal repairs'
Work completed May 2000

18 Division Bridge Aqueduct
'Structural repairs'
Work completed May 2000

17 Mann's Wharf to Frenches
'Dredging'
Work restarted, completion February 2001

16 Frenches to High Street
'Dredging'
Work restarted, completion February 2001

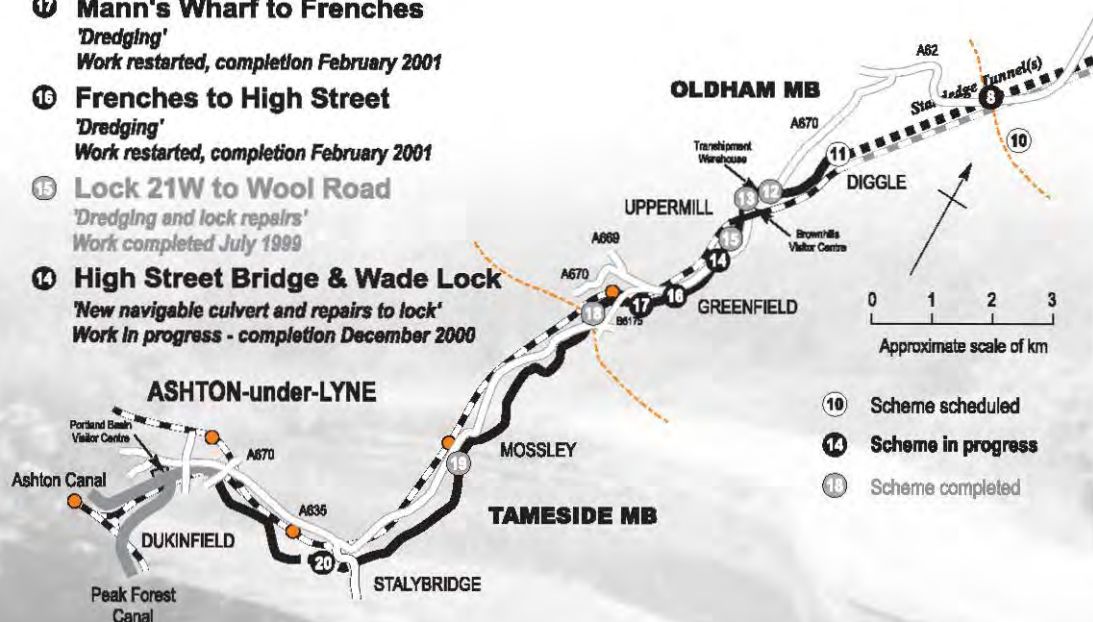
15 Lock 21W to Wool Road
'Dredging and lock repairs'
Work completed July 1999

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

13 Old Sag Aqueduct
'Structural repairs'
Work completed May 2000

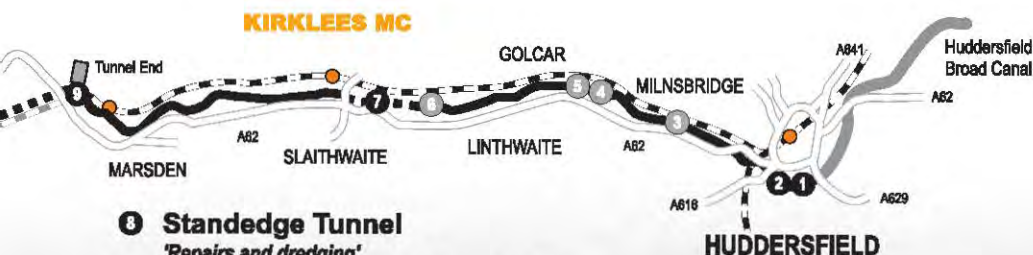
12 Wool Road Bridge & Lock 24W
'New navigable culvert and repairs to lock'
Work completed May 2000

11 Lock 32W to Ward Lane
'Dredging'
4th Quarter 2000 to 1st Quarter 2001



- ⑩ **Water Supply Works**
'Improvements to canal feeders'
4th Quarter 2000 to 1st Quarter 2001
- ① **Standedge Visitor Centre**
'Visitor/Heritage Centre'
Work in progress - completion April 2001

- ⑤ **Holme Mill Bridge**
'Replacement bridge'
Work completed July 2000
- ④ **Golcar Aqueduct**
'Structural repairs'
Work completed July 2000



- ⑧ **Standedge Tunnel**
'Repairs and dredging'
Work in progress - completion December 2000
- ⑦ **Slaithwaite Town Centre**
'New section of canal on old line'
Work in progress - completion December 2000
- ⑨ **Lees Mill Bridge**
'Replacement bridge'
Work completed July 2000

- ③ **Mark Bottoms Bridge**
'New bridge'
Work completed July 2000
- ② **Sellers & Co**
'New section of canal through mill yard'
Work in progress - completion April 2001
- ① **Bates & Co**
'Navigable culvert under building'
Work in progress - completion April 2001





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ENTHUSIASTS ARE
REDISCOVERING THE
VAST SYSTEM OF
NARROW CANALS
THAT CONNECTS
ENGLAND'S BYWAYS
AND BACKWAYS

BY SUSAN HORNIK

WHEN LINDA ANFUSO WAS GROWING UP IN UPSTATE New York, not far from the St. Lawrence Seaway, she read about the dwindling number of English boat men and women still living on canals with their families and hauling cargo as they had for almost two centuries. Enchanted by the depiction of their dying way of life and the graceful charm of the canals meandering through a timeless countryside of hedgerows and thatched villages, she dreamed of living on one of the gaily painted "narrow boats" that the families called home.

Twenty-five years later, Linda, now a painter and university lecturer, and her husband, Dennis, a cartoonist and writer, have realized her childhood dream. On a sunny day in May, they sit on the small deck of their red and green seven-foot-wide boat, Ann, in Browning's Pool, a pond-size junction of two canals in the heart of West London's Little Venice district. Surrounded by the boats of other waterway aficionados, they're enjoying one of a score of the country's annual narrow boat festivals, trading stories with friends about engine failures and lock repairs. On the towpaths and nearby grassy banks, craftspeople in tents hawk painted tinware, handwoven rope fenders and homemade ginger fudge. The air is filled with the smell of frying sausages and onions. One booth advertises narrow boats to rent or buy. Another sells pots of herbs and flowers, popular adornments for the boats' flat roofs.

The Anfusos spend half of each year writing and sketching in their floating studio and

PHOTOGRAPHS BY MICHAEL FREEMAN

Time pauses in England's Napton-on-the-Hill (opposite), where brightly coloured 'narrow boats' still run the Oxford Canal in the shadow of the lockkeeper's cottage.



home, puttering at a leisurely four miles per hour around England's canals. Today Linda is wearing traditional canal finery, as enthusiasts sometimes do: a brimmed black bonnet, a plum moiré silk blouse with leg-o'-mutton sleeves and an ankle-length skirt of black linen. "There's a sense of community here that our parents and grandparents talked about, but we never knew," she says.

More than 60 years ago the desire to salvage the canals, and keep alive the sense of community, camaraderie and tradition that they foster, inspired another dreamer. Tom Rolt, an English engineer, motorized the Cressy, an old Shropshire fly boat - canal jargon for a narrow boat built by the Shropshire Union Canal Company to haul cargo day and night using relays of horses. Rolt wrote a passionate celebration of his 400-mile odyssey along the Oxford and other heartland canals. The tranquillity of the hidden England that he described and the unique art, language and folkways of the boatmen he met helped spark a movement that has led to the restoration of well over half of the 4,000 miles of crumbling waterways. Though too late to save the coal-carrying boat families Rolt extolled, a new canal-based community has sprung up with



Above: Jim Jackson guides the *Symposium* through London on Regent's Canal. Below: Duncan Price demonstrates the taxing art of legging a narrow boat through a tunnel. Opposite, above: Val Todd serves tea on the Huddersfield Canal in West Yorkshire. Opposite, below: Boatbuilder Nigel Jackson leans on a narrow boat designed to break ice.



its own activities and fiercely loyal enthusiasts. "It's not for a privileged few," says Brian Collings, an interpretation officer at the Stoke Bruerne canal museum. "There's something for all - wildlife, towpaths for walkers, unique scenery for artists, industrial archaeology, fishing." Some boats have been turned into floating art galleries, tea shops and studios. Lock houses have reopened as pubs. Last year, 250,000 vacationers rented canal boats for floating holidays.



A half-hour's stroll from Little Venice on the former horse towpath, journalist and author Jim Jackson is readying his narrow boat, one of a dozen moored end-to-end in the middle of Regent's Park on Regent's Canal, for a cruise up the Grand Union. Nearby boats are a medley of red, maroon and green. Some have painted diamond patterns on their bows or rose swags on their cabins. Like all the others, Jackson's boat, a sedate navy blue, has its name - *Symposium* - writ large on its side in scrolled and shaded lettering, reminiscent of a circus wagon.

Jackson, a fit, 60-year-old New Mexico native, switches on the motor and casts off the mooring lines, then grabs the tiller and jockeys the awkwardly thin 50-footer into a tight semicircle and heads southwest, past the Arabian oryx grazing on the hillside at the London Zoo in Regent's Park. The *Symposium* glides underneath the Macclesfield Bridge, where decades of wear from horse-drawn towropes have left thumb-size grooves in the Doric columns, and into the dank, mineral-stained Maida Hill Tunnel. It is as though the outside world has been swallowed by darkness. Some 270 yards long, the tunnel is not much wider than one boat, and the ceiling is low enough to touch. In the

pitch darkness the puttering of the engine becomes a pounding echo, the smell of diesel smoke grows acrid and the temperature plummets. The crumbling brick and patched concrete walls are a reminder of an earlier age when a green and rural England came face-to-face with its gritty industrial future.

Two hundred years ago the rapidly expanding tentacles of the waterway system fostered not community but wrenching change. When England's main rivers, notably the Severn, Thames, Trent and Mersey, were connected to an extensive network of

canals, rural villages found themselves suddenly in contact with the outside world, extras in the extraordinary drama that was England's great industrial - and social - revolution.

Today's enthusiasts are only the most recent in a long line of passionate actors who have contributed to the canals' colorful history. In 1758 the third Duke of Bridgewater had the radical notion of building a private canal connecting his coal mines to the cotton mills of Manchester six miles away. The 22-year-old duke, fresh from an unhappy love affair with the Duchess of Hamilton in London, threw himself into the project. As belief in his canal grew into an obsession, his personal fortune dwindled, and he mortgaged his estates, sold his house in London and borrowed from relatives, manufacturers and local farmers alike to finance the ever-more ambitious undertaking (the canal would eventually extend 46 miles).

To construct his canal, the duke employed the equally single-minded millwright James Brindley, who had a reputation for inventiveness with mechanical devices. Since the civil engineering profession was in its infancy and detailed contour maps of England did not exist, Brindley had to do his own surveying, and design and build as he went along. A man of no formal education, he modeled aqueducts in cheese, and dug a

trial lock in his backyard. When faced with a challenging problem, he would take to his bed, sometimes for days, emerging only when he had solved the engineering difficulty. Until his death at 55 he had played a role in every major canal project in Britain.

Brindley's designs set the norm for canals in the English Midlands. They closely followed the contours of the landscape. And although he built the duke's canal wide enough for river barges, his later canals were unusually narrow, with locks only 7½ feet wide, to save money during excavation and use a minimum of water. They were also shallow, 8 feet deep at most. Lock width and canal depth in turn dictated the development of the 7-foot-wide, 70-foot-long narrow boat, which needed little water in relation to its carrying capacity of some 30 tons, and was cheap to make and fast to build.

Besides historic charm, narrow boats hold a less tangible appeal: for permanent and weekend liveaboards, hopping onboard makes the world suddenly simpler, cozier and more manageable. Modern cabins generally extend almost the length of the vessel, downright roomy compared with the original boats' cramped cabins that were jammed typically behind a long cargo hold. Still, like a page out of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, everything inside the cabin is slightly out of scale - a miniaturized version

*The canal system's most
astounding engineering
feat may well be the
Pontcysyllte Aqueduct
in Wales, a dizzying
1,000-foot traverse of
the River Dee. Nineteen
slender stone arches prop
the cast-iron trough and
accompanying towpath
126 feet above the
surface of the river.*



Right: This pair of sleek, seven-foot-wide canal boats will take 25 minutes to climb 60 feet in the Bingley Five Rise locks on the Leeds & Liverpool Canal in Yorkshire. Below: Swan's neck, Turk's head and rosette knots adorn a canal boat's rudder and tiller. Opposite: Sixteen of the 29 locks on the Caen Hill section of the Kennet and Avon Canal, outside Bristol, assume the shape of a staircase, an obstacle course that takes a canal boat four hours to negotiate at a rate of climb equal to one inch for every 30 inches traveled.



of life on land. A couple of steps down from Jim Jackson's tiny foredeck, a combination living room, study and kitchen has polished ash cupboards, shelves and a dining nook built-in for convenience. Other boats, like the Anfusus', have all the modern amenities in a long forward cabin, but preserve a traditional 10-by- 6-foot back sleeping cabin with a coal stove, a cupboard door that drops down into a bed, walls painted with fake oak graining, and built-in benches and cupboards decorated with Sheraton rose-and-castle designs.

Rows of windows on both walls of Jackson's boat offer glimpses of canal life - joggers, a 50-seat puppet theater barge, a floating tea shop. A narrow hallway leads past a compact bathroom and shower to a sleeping area barely large enough to squeeze in a double bed.

From there, four steps head up to the afterdeck, roomy enough for a party of six, where Jackson mans the tiller and jokes with canal regulars as he motors by. In truth, with the canal just large enough for one boat to pass in each direction, the *Symposium* all but steers itself. Even at a flat-out four miles per hour, there's hardly a wake, and the slow pace and rhythmic pounding of the engine are hypnotic.



*When England's main
rivers were connected to
an extensive network of
canals, rural villages
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the outside world.*

Back in 1761 when the Bridgewater Canal opened, it made the duke a rich man and captured the popular imagination not for its serenity but for its novelty and the economic opportunities it offered. On seeing this engineering marvel, Josiah Wedgwood, the porcelain manufacturer, exclaimed, "To behold ten of these locks all at a view, with their Gates, Acqeducts, Cisterns, Sluices, bridges, &c. the whole seems to be the work of the Titans, rather than the production of our Pigmy race of beings...." He immediately realized the advantages canals offered. Coal brought by land had cost 65 pence a ton; by canal it cost 35 pence.

Inspired, Wedgwood organized a group of Staffordshire potters and merchants from Liverpool in the 1760s into a joint stock company to finance a canal that would

transport goods between Liverpool warehouses on the Mersey River and the pottery factories. An innovator throughout his long career (he was apprenticed at age 9), Wedgwood had experimented extensively with different clays

and glazes until his pottery rivaled European delftware. But in his desire to increase output, he faced a problem common to the budding manufacturers of his day: a transport bottleneck.

Raw materials of flint, clay and china stone were taken by sea from the southeast coast of England to the Mersey, loaded onto barges for a trip up the Weaver River and then hauled by packhorse over nearly impassable roads to the potteries. The trip to market for his delicate porcelain was even more treacherous. Roads at the time, according to one frustrated observer, were "narrow, deep, circuitous, miry and inconvenient."

James Brindley spent 11 years building Wedgwood's 93-mile-long Trent & Mersey Canal, which today wends its way through both half-timbered villages and industrial towns. Its success, upon opening in 1777, initiated a period of frenzied canal building.

Like the Trent & Mersey, each canal offers boaters a unique view of the pageantry of England's history. Jim Jackson regales his crew-for-the-day with a favorite tale about the Macclesfield Bridge. During the era of horse-drawn loads, a narrow boat carrying sugar, nuts, fuel and gunpowder caught fire and exploded with such force that it blew up the bridge, damaged nearby homes and killed the crew. The Doric pillars, which survived, now support the new bridge. Just before angling the *Symposium* into the Paddington arm of the Grand Union, Jackson points out an old yellow-brick tollhouse, recently renovated. Most canals were local or regional enterprises with separate gauges, designs and management, and each company charged a separate toll of so many pence per ton per mile.

As Jackson steers the boat slightly northwest, the blocks of elegant Victorian mansions give way to industrial warehouses, then rural countryside, dotted every few hundred feet with fishermen sitting on foot-high tackle boxes and dangling poles some 20 feet long

that they pull up as the boat glides underneath.

By the early 1790s, more than 50 canals were under construction. Owners of potteries, textile mills, ironworks and brickyards quickly realized the importance of obtaining canalside sites. A horse pulling a barge could move more than 15 times as much cargo as one pulling a wagon on a good road. Former hamlets became bustling commercial centers. One early account marveled, "Houses, warehouses and inns...sprang up as if by magic."

Everyone from wigmakers to vicars scrambled to buy canal shares. As the speculative bubble grew, con men sold impractical schemes, canals were constructed with little thought to adequate water supply and companies soon began to go bankrupt. Some canal projects had to be scrapped entirely.

Nowadays, groups of trained volunteers aid local trusts around the country tackling ambitious restorations that range from cleaning up abandoned canals and repairing bridges to refitting lock gates and building back-pumping mechanisms. On a typical weekend at the Lichfield and Hatherton Canal, north of Birmingham, Eddie Jones, a hearty radio engineer with ginger hair and a matching beard, is leading 15 volunteers from the Kent and East Sussex Canal Restoration Group (KESCRG). The volunteers, who range from 20-somethings to retirees, are rebricking the foundation bridge at the Tamworth Road Lock. The canal, formerly filled in and recently redug, resembles a busy construction site. Although these workers use bulldozers and backhoes, they respect the past. When the Droitwich Canal, one of Brindley's earliest designs, was on the verge of collapse, volunteers worked with historians to replicate the canal's

Linacre Bridge. "We even adjusted the mortar mix to 18th-century standards," says 22-year KESCRG veteran Ken Parish.

After Brindley's death - and befitting the country's growing wealth - engineers built progressively grander canals with dramatic series of locks, arched bridges and soaring aqueducts. The one heart-stopping moment in the Symposium's trip on the Grand Union occurs high atop the prosaically named North Circular Aqueduct. Floating in a boat on a ribbon of water while looking down a hundred feet at cars whizzing along a superhighway gives new meaning to the word "vertigo." Worse, because the water level of the canal is only some six inches below the narrow towpath, there's a feeling that a sudden wave could slosh the entire boatload over the edge and into the speeding traffic below. Jackson helpfully points out that the 12-inch space between the boat floor and its flat bottom is packed with paving stones for ballast, so that nothing short of an earthquake could send the boat over the side of the bridge.

The canal system's ultimate high, according to boaters and engineers alike, is the Pontcysyllte Aqueduct, just over the border in Wales. The 1,000-foot-long cast-iron trough is supported by 19 slender stone arches, each with a 45-foot span. The canal, towering above the River Dee, has a towpath and railing on one side and a sheer 126-foot drop on the other. Upon viewing the Pontcysyllte, completed in November 1805, poet Sir Walter Scott called it "the most impressive work of art" he had ever seen.

Building the aqueducts, bridges, locks and canals was the task of thousands of anonymous workers equipped mainly with gunpowder, axe, shovel and spade. By the 1790s an estimated 50,000 men worked

on canal navigations, hence their nickname of navigators (or navvies).

Although battling the waters of the swirling Dee challenged builders, no job was more dangerous than the digging, shoring up and mucking out of tunnels. Fifty men died blasting out the Standedge, northeast of Manchester and England's longest at more than three miles. Crews worked for 16 years, often by candlelight, 638 feet below the Pennine Mountains and hauled up sludge in buckets through shafts. The tunnel, which first opened in 1811, is now under reconstruction.

Outfitted in hard hats, overalls and knee-high Wellingtons, project engineer John Hallam and his crew have spent eight months slogging through 30,000 tons of muck, collapsed rock and silt. They have reinforced the tunnel walls with stainless steel bolts to prevent cave-ins and are now using centrifuges at each end to separate the water from sludge that measures six feet deep in places.

Like Standedge, most tunnels had no towpath, so all boats had to be "legged" through, a skill now relegated to museum demonstrations. Boatmen would lie on their backs atop boards, moving the boat along by pushing against the wall with their hobnailed boots in a cadenced sidestepping rhythm. One company recommended that leggers "strap themselves to a short Cord affix'd to the Boat to prevent their being drown'd." In the English classic series Horatio Hornblower, Captain Hornblower himself is forced to leg through one of the most famous tunnels - the two-mile Sapperton - in "the strangest sort of mesmeric nightmare." His aching legs and wet feet, mixed with the deafening sound of cataracts of water cascading down on men and boat, made him appreciate his far more



Volunteers from the Dorset and Somerset canal Group have begun to clear away a century's worth of vegetation clogging a 17-foot-deep lock on a canal near Bath.

pleasant life on the high seas.

Unlike life at sea, on the canal wives often joined their husbands on the boats. They brought more than children and an extra pair of hands. By the mid-1800s the utilitarian narrow boat had bloomed into a garden of stylized roses. Fairy-tale castles amid lake and alpine scenes adorned chests, stools and doors. By bringing aboard a taste for the popular decorative motifs of the time, women gave each boat a unique identity.

During the 19th century, with families living on board, boat communities became increasingly closed and cut off. Generation after generation of the same families stayed on the canals, clinging to bygone fashions, language and mores. By the mid-19th century when the country had gone railway mad and the canals began a decline as slow and meandering as their channels, boat people were increasingly viewed as a rough and ignorant race. To the Victorians canal life seemed to foster drunkenness and violence. Boats and cargoes often crushed unwary family members, and drownings were not uncommon. One reformer claimed that more than 100,000 people lived on the canals "in a state of wretchedness, misery, immorality, cruelty and evil training."

Although the glory days of the narrow boats were brief, canal companies continued to

modernize the system through widening, straightening and redesigning locks. One of the most eccentric experiments in canal history is the Anderton vertical boat lift, built in 1875 to transfer boats between the Trent & Mersey Canal and the Weaver River, some 50 feet below. The 113-foot-high Rube Goldberg contraption contains a pair of water-filled iron tanks, each large enough to hold a narrow boat. Using counterbalanced, steam-powered hydraulic lifts, one tank would lower a boat while the second lifted one up. Volunteer engineers hope to complete the restoration of this remarkable mechanism by 2001.

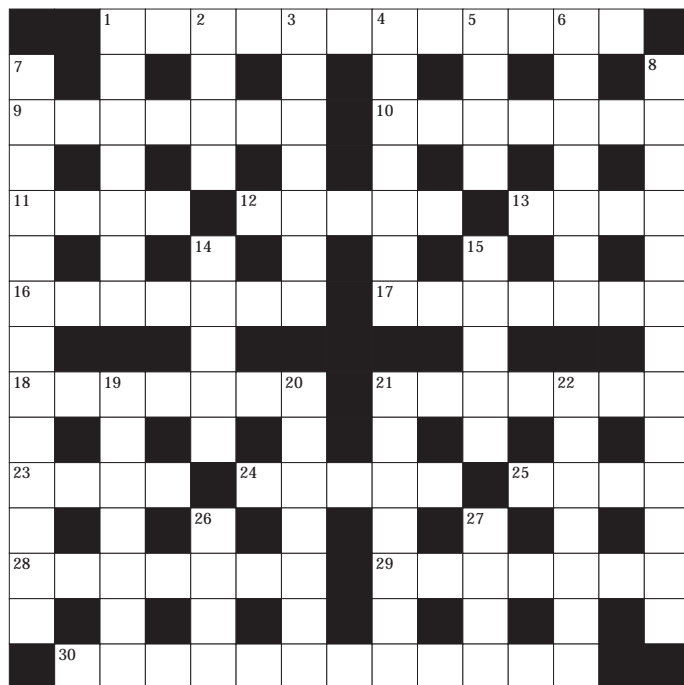
On the Grand Union, Jim Jackson and his sunburned guests wend their way back toward London. Bluebells nod on the banks in the midafternoon breeze. A gray heron inspects the boat's progress. The trip, less than 30 minutes at its farthest point from central London by train, has taken almost five hours. As one boat owner at the Little Venice festival said of canal travel, "You don't do it for getting there."

For the Anfusos and other liveaboards, the opportunity to savor the simple pleasures holds the most appeal. "We have such a network of friends," says Linda Anfuso. It's the kind of life that means she can tie a kerchief on the tiller for the milkman and wake up to a bottle of milk in the morning.

Perhaps Tom Rolt summed up the joys of life on the canals most eloquently more than a half-century ago when he wrote: "To step down from some busy thoroughfare onto the quiet towpath of a canal...is to step backward a hundred years or more and to see things in a different, and perhaps more balanced perspective."

This article originally appeared in Smithsonian in June 2000

Canal Crossword - 31



ACROSS

- 1 Cereal on a short weight at a penultimate lock on the SU (7,5).
- 9 Right handed crane he used for loading cattle on to boats (7).
- 10 A fighter who got his cargo loaded first (7).
- 11 Lines so straight they could be part of the Caledonian canal (4).
- 12 Birmingham University with it's own flight of locks (5).
- 13 In the River Kennet find a leg joint (4).
- 16 Abhors Ley lines that cross wrought iron canal bridges built here (7).
- 17 Part of a debutante in part of a coracle - disaster! (7).
- 18 R2D2 with a twitch? (7).
- 21 Asthmatic Scottish steamers (7).
- 23 Amphibious settler of promissory notes (4).
- 24 Direction to trim the joint between a pair of lock gates (5).

- 25 Direction to Dobbin (4).
- 28 Convenient country from which to fly a flag (7).
- 29 Melanesia, Polynesia and Micronesia collectively (7).
- 30 Donkey makes noisy objection to crossing water in Lincoln (8,4).

DOWN

- 1 Down Sir from the castle to the river (7).
- 2 Vocal phenomena common in tunnels! (4).
- 3 I've already explained - just put so much power on the lever see, else you'll find yourself in the Trent (7).
- 4 Pass□ place to cross the Avon? (7).
- 5 System found at the front of the boat (4).

- 6 Veg from certified farms make good cargo in boat (7).
- 7 Refelt enriched mill at Wigan Pier (13).
- 8 A North American volcano of 1980 with connections to one of our first navigations? (13).
- 14 River with a Coward's spirit crossed by the GU south of Solihull (5).
- 15 Able seaman found towards the stern (5).
- 19 To cry over spilt fat? (7).
- 20 Windy city on a great lake (7).
- 21 Level score in golf claimed by a courageous player on the Leeds & Liverpool (7).
- 22 No lathe could produce this form of alcohol (7).
- 26 Tory found in a wooden horse here? (4).
- 27 O (4).

Solution at the foot of page 55

HCS Council News

Two meetings to report this time. Quite a lot of 'i' dotting and 't' crossing going on. Progress is speeding up again now the deliberations into the various agreements have been concluded.

27th September, 2000

BRIDGE PLATES

At least 61, or 122 if on both approaches, needed. Calder Navigation Society would assist with cost at the Huddersfield Broad Canal end and, if made into an 'artistic' design, could perhaps be treated as a "percent for Art" project from the main restoration budget.

JOINT VENTURE AGREEMENT

The Council agreed to sign the final version of the Agreement for running the Standedge Visitor Centre.

ALLIANCE CHARTER

Our working arrangement with British Waterways. Now in a form we can accept and sign.

PER CENT FOR ARTS

This is the 1% of the total restoration budget allocated for canalside art events, of any kind from sculptures to brass band concerts, only needing another 1% to be found from elsewhere! All the HCC partners have been allocated a sum and are searching for ideas. (Our previous £5,000 donation to Mikron Theatre is an example). We are thinking of a sculpture depicting the Society's role in the restoration. Your editor would like a memorial to the workmen who died in driving Standedge Tunnel.

PAY

The permanent staff were given their annual rise in line with British Waterways – described in the Minutes as Annual Pay Revue – all singing, all dancing, presumably!

GENERAL

Other subjects discussed were:-

1. Moving of waste by canal (see Press reports).
2. Working with B.W. Training for volunteers by BW is being investigated.
3. We will attend the National Conference for Waterway Societies; Keith Noble being our rep.
4. Traffic management between Marsden Car Park and Standedge Visitor Centre is in hand.
5. The Editor of Pennine Link is to have a new computer. Well, one from the office a few years younger than the one he has now. (Small cheer from the WIFE who has been 'crashed' upon frequently by the old machine).

20th November, 2000

BRITISH WATERWAYS

Presentation to HCS Council by British Waterways on the Standedge Visitor Centre and operation of the Tunnel, in particular, the design of the tug and passenger modules, and a prototype buffer for separating and protecting boats being towed through the Tunnel currently on trial.

Ken Wright

IWA News

Necessarily short this time – we have other fish to fry, or puddings to make, or something!

Head Office Bulletins, monthly, press releases when required, six copies of the Christmas pressy list, lists of meetings, rallies, consultations – it goes on!

Best of all this time is a well produced – though awkward to handle at A3 folded – publication entitled “Safe and Friendly Cruising”, sub-titled “Some thoughts on boating etiquette for the experienced and less experienced boater, or *things you know you needed to know about boating but were afraid to ask!*”

Presented by (wait for it!) – The Association of Pleasure Craft Operators, The Association of Waterway Cruising Clubs, Great Ouse Boating Association, **The Inland Waterways Association**, The National Association of Boat Owners, Thames Hire Cruiser Association, supported by British Waterways and the Environment Agency. Very much a home-grown effort – “we are grateful to Ron Henshaw, of the Erewash Canal Preservation and Development Association for contributing the cartoons, and to Jessica Lucas, aged 9, for colouring them in!”

Tell you what – next issue I will start to let you have it in full. It is time we got down to more boating topics.

That doesn't leave much space for the news but here is a pricis.

IWA and English Nature are talking partnership over sensitive conservation areas on the Rochdale and there is lots more on the ecological front.

IWA have given the Lancaster a further £4,500.

IWA concerned about removing gate paddles instead of making them safe to use.

The National Festival at Waltham Abbey was a great success. 2001 is at Milton Keynes. Doesn't look as though we will be there to collect the Tom Rolt Award yet again!

Anderton Boat Lift appeal now on target for £250,000.

Our friends Timothy West and Prunella Scales were to open the Basin on the Herefordshire and Gloucester Canal, late September.

BW reckon national vandalism costs at £600,000 annually, and rising.

BW may be changing the workmens' uniforms yet again. Apparently the green is too easily seen and recognized!

National Conference for Waterway Societies fully booked.

Huddersfield Narrow Canal restoration doing nicely!

Ken Wright



**** FREE TO A GOOD HOME! ****

A virtually complete set of Waterways World magazines from the early Seventies to the latest edition! Marsden area, please contact - 01484 844171

What the Papers Say

We got off to a good start in August but from September onwards press reports have been a bit on the quiet side, not through lack of interest but, because everything is going so smoothly, there is not a lot that is "newsy".

8 Aug – Huddersfield Daily Examiner

Report on the start of work to convert the Tunnel End warehouse into a visitor centre. Some interesting historical highlights, too – for instance the Duke of Wellington's Regiment had a post there during the '39-'45 war, to protect the "important transport route". Considering that canal traffic had more or less finished by then somebody had a cushy number!

9 Aug – Oldham Chronicle

Similar but not so interesting.

10 Aug – Examiner

Report on Slaithwaite being ahead of schedule.

10 Aug – Oldham Chronicle

Rochdale Canal restoration now assured.

11 Aug – Colne Valley Chronicle

National Trust "Kids 'n' Bears", canalside Teddy Bears' Picnic.

11 Aug – Colne Valley Chronicle

"Canal Work Steams Ahead". Slaithwaite "way ahead of schedule", Christmas instead of Feb/March finish.

12 Aug – SADDLEWORTH PARISH COUNCIL NEWS

Full page (A5!) report on the restoration of the canal in Uppermill and the opening of the completed works at Wool Road – DIGGLE! It's in Dobcross, as far as most of us are aware.

18 Aug – Examiner

"Canal's a cut below the rest". Good headline for a story about the tunnels under

Sellers' and Bates' factories. (*I think these tunnels will be the canal's 'piece de resistance' Boaters can do them unaccompanied and for free! Ed*).

25 Aug – Oldham Chronicle

"Canal work is sailing along". Good report and pictures of progress at High Street, Uppermill.

30 Aug – Oldham Chronicle

Rochdale Canal restoration assured – AGAIN!

31 Aug – Examiner

Interesting report on the possibility of reopening Huddersfield BROAD Canal as a commercial waterway, bringing in rubbish to be disposed of at Huddersfield Incinerator.

12 Sept – Examiner

Volunteers from Holsets, a large engineering company on the Broad Canal bankside in Huddersfield, took part in a canalside clean-up near their works, involving families, too. Very community spirited, with money being given to charity and future clean-ups on the River Colne.

15 Sept – Colne Valley Chronicle

Prospective Slaithwaite MP praises contractors for restoring two-way traffic on Britannia Road so quickly.

15 Sept – Colne Valley Chronicle

Slaithwaite Community Association are planning to bury a Millennium Time Capsule as part of the completion of the canal work in the town.

8 Oct – DOBCROSS DIARY

Report on the effect of the canal restoration on Dobcross village – a plea for volunteers from the local community.

20 Oct – Oldham Chronicle

Report on the removal of charges on the

Letters to the Editor

I've had eight letters since I last wrote this piece – unfortunately two of them are not for publication! Nothing nasty, just that some members prefer to get things off their collective chests without their names being banded about the rest of the readership. Standedge Tunnel still gets most attention, needless to say, and I have commented as we go along.

First, from old friend of Plink, German member Bernhard Weiss.

Dear Ken,

I have received the latest edition of Plink – informative as ever. I do regret that you are to retire from your post as editor of the society magazine.

Looking at the back page of Plink I can see that you have another member in Germany (although I would tell from his name and place that he is over here with the army and his stay is only of a temporary nature).

I am inviting you to visit our own website <http://members.aol.com/kanalpage>.

There you will find a German presentation of English canals – with a special focus to the Huddersfield Narrow.

Best regards, **Bernhard.**

The next one was not for publication but brought up several points about Standedge Tunnel operation that were new or a new slant on previous thoughts. I have to say that it is far too late now to complain to me, or the Society. Decisions have been made and are being implemented. Any future comments, suggestions or criticisms should be levelled at British Waterways either personally or through the User Group meetings, where boating clubs are represented. One hope recently expressed is that, as the operation of the tunnel settles down and becomes routine there may be some opportunity for “specialist” through, unaided trips, possibly in convoy. I'm afraid I shall have to say – at least for the time being! – after this issue “this correspondence is now closed”. See the tunnel article elsewhere in this Plink.

Another ‘operational’ one but relating to open water on the east side.

Dear Editor,

As a member for many years I have been enthralled to see the rebuilding of the canal. However on my latest trip along the towpath from Paddock to Marsden I was appalled to see the state of the pounds both upstream and downstream of Milnsbridge.

What the Papers say cont'd ... Rochdale Nine locks in Manchester following the takeover of the Rochdale by the Waterways Trust (and British Waterways). The cost was about £30, similar to that proposed for Standedge Tunnel, so perhaps some of the sting will be taken out of the cost of the through journey! Ed.

27 Oct – Oldham Chronicle

“Royal treatment for a new canal”. Two good progress pictures of High Street, Uppermill, and a report on the hopes for a

royal opening of the whole canal, sometime in Spring/Summer 2001.

And, finally –

1 Nov – Oldham Chronicle

An excellent colour photograph of two very good-looking gents holding an award certificate for a highly regarded canal society magazine, which has won a national competition “a staggering seven times since submitting its first entry in 1992”.

Ken Wright

The amount of junk and general rubbish is truly horrific and one can only believe that it come from a different planet than those who throw anything and everything into canals. Equally worrying was the 300 metres or so full of weeds which will take months to dredge. I expected to see at least a mention of dredging in this area, in the last Plink, but there was none!

I know that there is a lot to do but if we are to open on time there is some serious work to do in this area.

**John Remfry,
Stocks Moor, Huddersfield.**

How very true! I am reliably informed that British Waterways are moving into this area soon and may be employing contractors to do the dredging. The reason it doesn't get mentioned in Plink is that we tend to concentrate on new restoration. What we have in Milnsbridge is maintenance of previously restored sections – what we have described as 'secondary restoration.' Ed.

Dear Ken and all,

On a recent visit we had a short stroll along the towpath between Mossley and the Royal George, it's looking good. We were particularly impressed by the excellent food at the Royal George and they were very welcoming to the children as well. I just thought I would drop you this quick missive to suggest an inclusion in any forthcoming guide to the narrow. (Some one must be doing one). Excellent range of bitters too. Do you need any more of an excuse to check it out for yourself?

It's all getting very exciting now isn't it?

All the best,

Malcolm Jenings (by E-mail)

Good one! I have checked in John Lower's "The South Pennine Ring" and the Royal

George has been missed. Mind you, the pub is a good half mile from the canal and, if all the pubs within that distance were included, the book would be considerably larger! I'm going to ask Keith Noble to do a "Wining on the Waterway" book to complement his "Curry on Canals" reviewed elsewhere in this issue! Ed.

Another old friend of Plink, correspondent and crossword compiler John Harwood, has the next go.

Dear Ken,

Several experiences on my four weeks cruising this year have left me with some thoughts on how the HNC might be used on reopening with particular respect to the boats on it and the people on them.

It seems to me that there are distinct signs of a boating hierarchy developing on the canals which seem to break down into several categories:-

1) Some 'working' boats including hotel and restored and working boats.

2) Boating BMWs.

3) Most of the rest of us including hirers.

In April I encountered a restored 'working' tug operating single-handed who had a very traditional way of opening lock gates – by ramming them, traditional yes, but desirable? Last September a hotel pair actually untied and moved our boat whilst we were asleep (well, we were asleep when he started!) and we were moored tight up to another boat. In September we followed a hotel pair for some time and the attitude of the crew to other boaters might best be described as 'surlly' – it was made quite clear that whatever they were planning to do next would be done whether it inconvenienced other boaters or not, this included sending a jet of prop wash across the footway of a shopping centre! Yes I know hotels have a schedule to keep (I have

read Katie Fforde) but in my humble opinion courtesy and a polite request moves progress much faster than arrogance.

"Boating BMWs" always have very smart, expensive looking boats, know that speed limits do not apply to them (although they do to everybody else), can moor wherever they please and have right of way at all bridges, funny - just like the roads!

Fortunately category three still includes most boaters by far (including a lot of working and hotel boats), those who realise that the cut is still (only just still) the last bastion of common interest and friendliness in this country, those who realise that in our common interest lies our greater interest. I look forward to meeting a lot of these and none of the others on the HNC.

Yours,

John Harwood, Hope Valley

You'll be lucky! Ed.

Another 'private' letter next, addressed officially to our membership secretary but again concerned at having to leave their own boat and travel in a passenger butty.

"Navigating the tunnel should be made as easy as possible in order to encourage as many through transits as possible. Making boaters leave to book and leave their boats for the transit will deter many."

I honestly think that BW have decided that their proposals satisfy all the health and safety requirements for an "easy" passage. The booking and cost rigmarole will hopefully be no worse than that recently removed from the Rochdale Nine locks in Manchester and that didn't seem to deter boaters from attempting the Cheshire Ring. The "pull" of Standedge will, I am sure, help to overcome the initial reluctance. This correspondence is now definitely closed! Ed.

Finally, here's a nice one.

Dear Editor,

I'm a very old new member and haven't lived here very long and don't get out much, but I really enjoy your Journal.

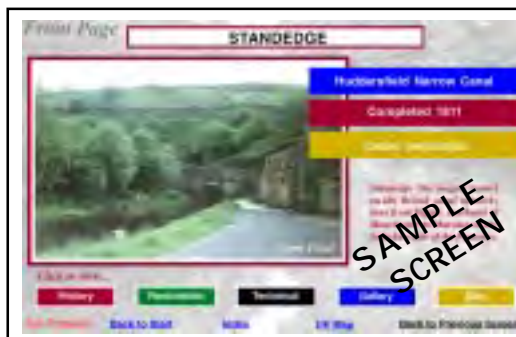
I am truly amazed at the amount of work which has been going on. I don't know the area, but with the help of the excellent pictures I get a feeling of awe that this huge project has been attempted.

I used to live near a stretch of reclaimed Wey & Arun canal, and knew all the "difficulties" they had in trying to buy bits of fields from the farmers.

Enough said!

Yours sincerely,

(Mrs.) Betty O'Clarey, Bury, Lancs.



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Photo Competition 2000 - Results

We had 60 entries this year, down on last year's 67 but generally of excellent quality, and again only one entry in the Junior categories. Our judge, Geoff Hope, past president of Oldham Photographic Society, has a word or two on that subject!

As usual, all contributors will receive a copy of the judge's notes on each photograph they entered and Geoff has said that anyone who wants any help or advice on photographic matters can contact him by letter to the Ashton office.

Thank you to all of you who took the trouble to enter the competition. Your reward is that the prizes are even better than last year's since, apart from the income from entry fees, I have decided to put in most of the money we got from "Canal and Riverboat" for winning the Tom Rolt Award.

RESULTS

Category 'A' HNC – Senior

WINNER, OVERALL WINNER,
CHALLENGE SHIELD WINNER:
Anita Crosby, Ashton-u-Lyne:
"A Lovely Day"

RUNNER-UP:
Paul Leeman, Huddersfield:
"A nice, shady, place"

HIGHLY COMMENDED: David Chadderton,
Grasscroft. COMMENDED: Alan Crosby,
Ashton-u-Lyne.

Category 'B' HNC – Junior

WINNER:
Jonathan Coop (Age 15), Delph.
"Three Men in a Boat"

Category 'C' Other Waterways – Senior

WINNER:
Anne Wright, Dobcross:
"Mytholmroyd in Spring"

RUNNER-UP:
Alan Stopher, Huddersfield:
"Narrow Boats, River Thames"

HIGHLY COMMENDED: Anita Crosby,
Ashton-u-Lyne. COMMENDED: Anthony
Carter, Huddersfield, Alan Crosby, Ashton-u-
Lyne.

Awards will be sorted out shortly. Anita
Crosby, The overall winner will receive, in
addition to the Challenge shield (for one year),
a shield replica to keep, a signed certificate
and **A PAIR OF BINOCULARS**, kindly donated
by **Arcade Photo Services, Imperial Arcade,
New Street, Huddersfield.**

The other winners will receive a cash prize of
£30 and the runners-up a cash prize of £20,
together with a signed certificate. And the
"highly commendeds" and "commendeds" get
a signed certificate. Not bad for a small,
home-grown competition.

Now for the judge's notes – generally, and on
the winners' and runners'-up which are shown
against our black and white reproductions.

Category 'A'

First of all the entry for 'our own' canal.
Considering the historical implications of the
work being carried out on our own doorstep a
lot of 'pictorial' and even more important
'record' photographic opportunities appear to
have been missed.

Category 'B'

This section is for Juniors and I was rather
disappointed in only having one entry to
judge. Where are you all out there? You can't
all be walking around with your eyes shut.
There's more to life than Rap music, designer
jeans and trainers and walking round with a
mobile 'phone stuck to your ear! However,
the one entry we did receive is exceptional;
the quality both technically and in its
composition would make it a winner in any
company.

Category 'C'

A much bigger entry in this section with a
wide variation of subject, style, techniques
and location.



Category 'A' Winner, Overall Winner, Challenge Shield Winner
Title: "A lovely day, Dobcross viaduct"

A very good photograph of a very interesting section of 'our' canal. Beautiful lighting with lovely reflections in the water. The canal towpath on the left leads your eye through to the arch of the viaduct. It is a pity that the sky was a bit 'bald' that day but despite that I think that this is a splendid picture.



Above: Category 'B' Winner

Title: "Three men in a boat"

A super shot of an incident in the canal's life. I think we all wait in eager anticipation for the completion of this steam launch. This photograph will be a valuable addition to its history. Perfect exposure and perfect composition. A great picture by any standard. Congratulations.



Left: Category 'A' Runner-Up

Title: "A nice, shady place".

A very nice picture! Lovely canal scene with lots of interest. Bringing the ducks into the foreground increases the interest, and that coupled with the towpath as it moves into the picture with the lock in the background gives the shot great depth.



Left: Category 'C' Runner-Up

Title: "Narrow boats on the Thames" (Black and white)

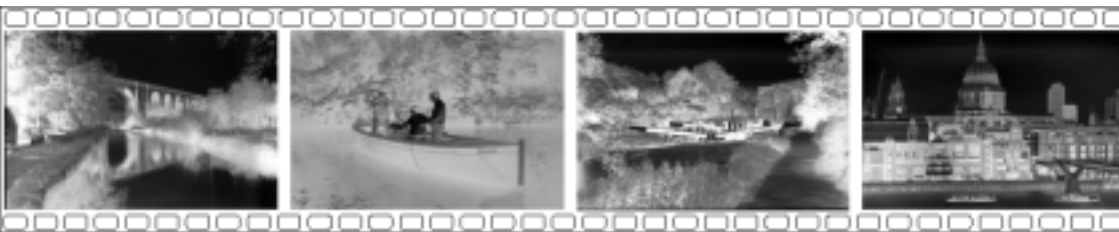
A super quality Monochrome picture, putting familiar craft in an unfamiliar setting. Lots of interest showing the permanence of old St Pauls along with the frailty of the modern 'Millennium Bridge'! Super sharp and beautifully exposed. Excellent work.



Above: Category 'C' Winner

Title: "Mytholmroyd in Spring"

Very well composed shot with the narrow boat and the locks taking centre spot in the picture. Try a 1cm. crop off the bottom; I think it helps to concentrate the viewer's interest on to the main subject. The human content also helps to complete this super entry. Sharp enough to be enlarged and framed. A picture that would be easy to live with.



And, finally, a puzzle photograph (right).
This won the 'highly commended' for David Chadderton from Grasscroft – but where is it?
Answer at the foot of the inside back cover.



Reviews

Curry on Canals - (publ. CNS, £2.75)

Without my glasses I thought I was in for a new bawdy, British comedy film but I quickly discovered I was looking at 'a guide for waterway users with an urge to eat curry' published by the Calder Navigation Society (as a fund-raiser I presumed!). In fact it has the smell of our old friend Keith Noble about it and I recall that he has been cajoling and pressurising many members of the waterway community nationwide to provide information. Indeed, in the introduction, Keith tells us that he narrowly avoided a night in the cells in Uxbridge when caught looking suspicious whilst looking for a curry. He decided then, ten years ago, to make life easier for future curry fanciers by producing this directory.

Advice on using the book is more on the lines of how to let a curry delivery person know where you are – bridge numbers are not always familiar to landlubbers – and delivering to a boat on a fast-flowing river with no towpaths could be tricky. Putting problems aside this is a lovely, lighthearted publication that is worth its weight in pilau rice – and (without checking too closely!) it appears that every cruising waterway in England, Scotland and Wales is covered.

Copies are available at bookshops and tourist outlets or direct by post from:-

Keith Noble,
The Dene, Triangle,
Sowerby Bridge,
West Yorkshire HX6 3EA

Price £2.75 – including postage.

Canal Heritage Collection

This is a gift catalogue – but with a difference. It comes from The Waterways Trust and bears their logo and that of British Waterways who, we are told, own the copyright to the ironware on offer. Waterways World are involved somewhere, too, and all profits are to aid the Trust's work.

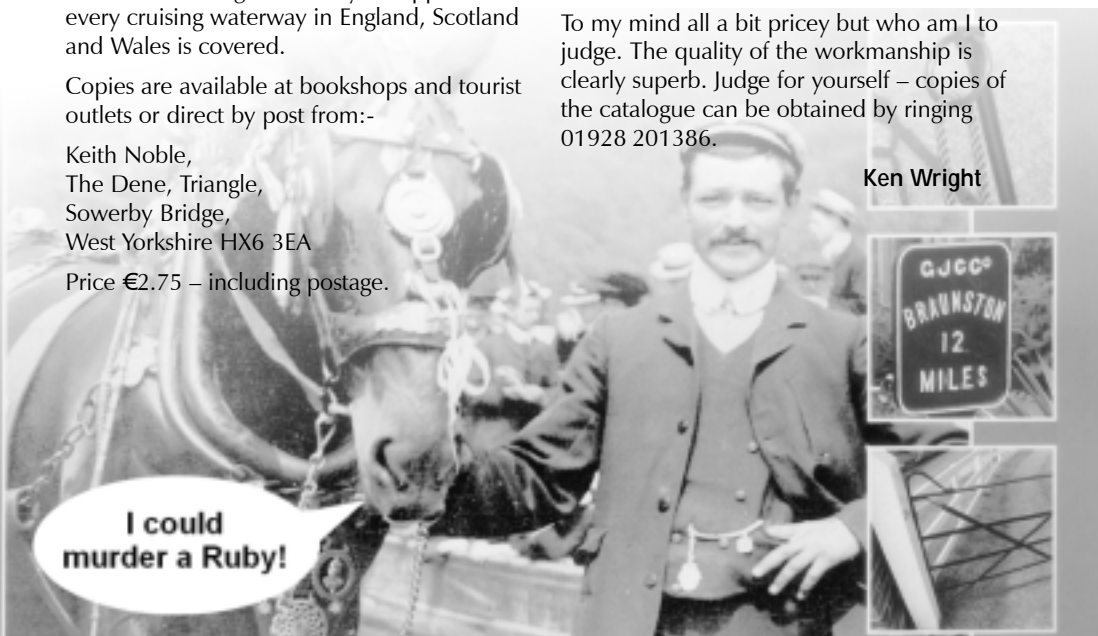
The catalogue is filled with canal artefacts, largely true replicas of existing canal furniture created by craftsmen working for British Waterways or who are Waterways Craft Guild members.

The items don't come cheap, of course! A set of fire irons made in the Blacksmith's shop at Gloucester's National Waterways Museum weighs 4kg and will set you back £94 including carriage. Or how would you like a Lancaster Canal "prohibited" sign (530mm x 660mm) weighing 19kg for £145. Then there's the Oxford Canal Gate (up to £347) or a Braunston mile post (£135).

Coming off the ironware there are also roses and castles transfers (pack of two £25), maps and drawings (£44.50 - £64.50) and a video (18mins. £16).

To my mind all a bit pricey but who am I to judge. The quality of the workmanship is clearly superb. Judge for yourself – copies of the catalogue can be obtained by ringing 01928 201386.

Ken Wright



I could murder a Ruby!

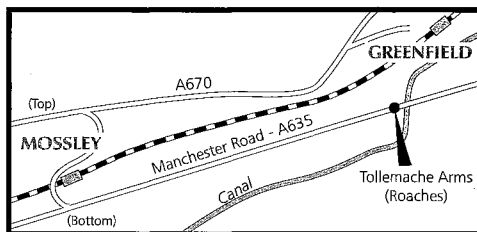
The Back Page

THE SOCIETY WELCOMES THE FOLLOWING NEW MEMBERS:

2586 Mr Dowling,
2587 Mr Scarth,
2588 Mr Hayes,
2589 Mr Shepherd,
2590 Mr & Mrs Hartley,
2591 Dr Bryant,
2592 Mr & Mrs Queenborough,
2593 Mr & Mrs Reid,
2594 Mr Roberts,
2595 Mr & Mrs Bain,
2596 Mr Pearson,
2597 Mr Brookes,
2598 Ms Bassham,
2599 Mr Black,
2600 Mr Booth,
2601 The Wellington,
2602 Mr Lavelle,
2603 Mr Taylor,

WEST SIDE SOCIAL MEETINGS:

As usual, the venue is the Tollemache Arms, Manchester Road, Mossley (Roaches) on the second Wednesday of the month commencing at 8.00pm. Forthcoming meetings are: 10th January, 14th February, 14th March.



PENNINE LINK ARCHIVE:

The following back issues are available free from John Maynard, 29 Thick Hollins Drive, Meltham, Yorkshire, HD7 3DL. Please send an A5 stamped, addressed envelope (44p) or A4 sized envelope (76p) for joint issue 81/82.

24, 25, 38, 47, 48, 54, 56, 58, 59, 64 to 66, 74, 75, 77, 79, 80 to 83, 85 to 89, 92 to 97, 99, 101, 103, 104, 117 to 119, 121 to 125, 129 to 131, 134.

These are the only back issues available, please do not request issues which are not on this list.

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Answer to the Mystery Picture: The foot tunnel under the canal near Dobcross Loom Works (Shaw's Pallets)

