

Pennine Link

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Pennine *Link*

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Cover Photo: *Huddersfield Daily Examiner*



Editorial

Well - after the Lord Mayor's show comes - me!!

Congratulations to Ken Wright for that marvelous end of party edition of

Plink, full colour and with everything to shout about, congratulations and thanks to him for the standard of this magazine and for the accolades it received under him. I hope I can get somewhere near that standard. Thanks to Ken for the advice and tips he has passed on to me.

Due to this 'promotion' from Festivals Officer to Editor, I was one of the group from the Society presented to Prince Charles on the 3rd September. (See page 14) Being there really under false pretences, I gave the Prince a copy of the last Plink edited by Ken to read on the way back to London.

One thing that has astounded me is the number of letters you have written to the magazine, please keep them coming, it is nice to know that you care so much about the canal and its future, this is really the only way the Council can find out what the ordinary member of the Society wants us to do. You can e.mail these to me if you wish, saves the cost of a stamp!

A few brief words about me for those of you who have not run into me at Canal Festivals or other gatherings. I have been a member of HCS for 19 years, I wasn't in at the beginning mainly because I didn't know anything about the aims of the Society until fellow second row Hugh Wainwright brought me down to the Ashton Canals Festival in 1982. I joined the Society at that weekend although I

have only the haziest of memories about actually joining due to the problem of needing to check on the activities of CAMRA at frequent intervals.

I have played Rugby for most of my life, currently being president of veterans club EGOR for whom I still turn out. I am very involved in Rugby administration, being on the Lancashire County Cup committee and Secretary to a league in South Lancashire and Cheshire.

I have had a bus pass for a couple of years but am still working part time, my wife keeps frightening me with a list of the jobs that want doing round the house when I finally stop, so I keep on going!

My wife, Ann, was also on the Festival committees at various times and my daughter Fiona was Sales Officer for the Society until the arrival of the two Grandchildren curbed her activities. George, the oldest, was at one time the youngest individual member of HCS

I am somewhat non politically correct. Over the years articles I have written for this magazine have been bowdlerised by the various editors to avoid universal castigation and gatherings of ladies and others outside the offices waving banners and throwing stones. I have no doubt however that as Dr Bob is still keeping a watchful eye over the production some of my articles will be toned down for human consumption. Incidentally can I say that I am highly delighted that Bob Gough is still with Plink as Assistant Editor, it is his draughtsmanship and use of electronic methods that makes the pages easy and interesting to read, as well as his eye for a good picture.

cont'd ...



Chairman's Remarks

From the first through passage on the 9th of April, to the official opening on the 3rd of September, we have seen celebra-

tions along the whole Canal. Each event had its own character. Councillor Ann Denham, Mayor of Kirklees, opened the new tunnels in Huddersfield from her own boat 'Ogley' on the 1st of May, Councillor Christine Wheeler, Mayor of Oldham, performed the opening ceremony for the Canal in Saddleworth on the 18th of May and George Greener, Chairman of British Waterways, opened the Standedge Visitor Centre on the 25th of May. Certainly the most spectacular opening event was the Stalybridge Renaissance Festival on the 28th of May,

which celebrated both a reopened canal and rejuvenated Town Centre.

Our turn came with the Society's Link Day on the 21st of July when we invited every member to a long celebration centred around Tunnel End. I felt that the natural venue for 'our day' must be at the new Visitor Centre. Over 270 members attended and with coach trips to key sites led by council members, trips into the tunnel for every attendee, a barbecue and entertainment; the day was deemed a great success. Perhaps the most historically significant event of the day was the first public through tunnel trip from East to West and then West to East.

British Waterways' contribution to the success of the day was to make the Visitor Centre 'open house' to the Society and making the new passenger module

cont'd ... One theme I will be pushing for the first few issues is one I want your help with. This is the simple one of where do we go now? The canal is open, boats are moving, I have been through the tunnel (although I haven't yet got the 'T' shirt!), what is the future of the Society. Do we go along *en masse* and join Margaret and John Fletcher in their efforts to restore the Manchester Bolton and Bury Canal, or do we form a new Society to restore the Manchester and Salford Junction canal - now that would be FUN! Restoration would only mean demolishing Granada Studios, part of G Mex and tunnelling under the Bridgewater Hall!

My personal thoughts are that we go back to our beginnings and become a pressure group once again. There is a lot wrong with the restored canal, locks that cannot

take full sized boats, lock gates that need refurbishment, pounds that need dredging and towpaths that need maintenance. The Society still has a vital role in pushing the various official bodies whose responsibility these jobs are, to make sure they are done. Over the past few years the Society has of necessity become a partner with all these official bodies to work together in ensuring restoration. I do not think we should sever all these links, quite the contrary, but I do think we must be able to stand back and point out our friends' problems. If they do not recognise the quiet word in the ear, then a full scale campaign needs to be waged.

I await your feelings on this future of the Society with interest.

Brian Minor

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available for our exclusive use. David Fletcher (BW's CEO) was as excited as I was to undertake this first official through passage. I am very grateful to Derek Cochrane and his team for ensuring that the day ran smoothly and was such a success. The contribution and enthusiasm of his Tunnel End team matched our thrill of celebrating what has become a unique story of 27 years of campaigning.

After only three weeks notice of the event, His Royal Highness, Prince Charles, opened the whole Canal on 3rd September. He arrived by Royal train at Marsden and after greeting our trip boat crews at Lock 42, the Royal party, led by David Fletcher, walked to the Visitor Centre. He was introduced to all our partners and after briefly meeting members of Council, I accompanied him with Chris Wilkinson, Judith Donovan, David Fletcher and Derek Cochrane for a very short trip into the Tunnel.

David Fletcher welcomed His Royal Highness to the Huddersfield Narrow Canal and reminded him that in the next 12 months, more miles of canal will have been opened than in any period of history. The Prince of Wales paid tribute to our organisation and noted that the Tunnel now links, by navigable waterway, two sections of Yorkshire. A splendid day.

This opening is not the final event. In October, Kirklees Council will celebrate the Canal with festivities (yet to be announced) and next year, the IWA National Rally will be held on the Huddersfield, following our rally in Stalybridge. So, 2001 has seen our dream come true. Next year will see the first full year of operation of our Canal. There are teething troubles to overcome. There have been some minor difficulties to navigation. But it is OPEN!

I thank all members past and present for your support. We have seen the Impossible Restoration completed. Without you, the Canal would have been lost forever and the Tame and Colne valleys poorer for that. The canal system will grow by 10% over the next year or so. Without the example shown by the Society, it is doubtful if some of the schemes would have happened. More will follow, and you can be justly proud of your contribution.

However, we still need you. We have a unique role to play in our Alliance with British Waterways and we can now all enjoy the fruits of our labours. I hope to see many of you again over the coming years.

David Sumner

STOP PRESS

We are delighted to report that once again Pennine Link has won the Tom Rolt Award for the best Canal Society and Trust magazine for 2001.

The Award was presented at this year's IWA National Rally at Milton Keynes and Society Treasurer, John Sully, was on hand to accept the accolade.

It is of special significance to our previous Editor, Ken Wright, who now has the unique status of winning the Award outright three years running.

Members can be forgiven for thinking this is becoming something of a habit as the Society has won, or jointly won, the Tom Rolt Award a total of eight times in the ten years of entering.

Bob Gough



Once Upon a Time

As members may be aware, HCS Restoration Ltd Chairman, Keith Gibson, is currently working on the second draft of his book about the history of the Huddersfield Canal Society. Keith's notes give a fascinating 'behind the scenes' account of the Society's role in achieving the impossible! Once upon a time, a Canal Society was formed

1974 - HCS formed

Bob Dewey approached the Chairman of Inland Waterways Association (IWA) West Riding Branch, Margaret Sinfield. She arranged meetings with Bob, John Maynard and Ralph Kirkham. They decided to form Huddersfield Canal Society (HCS) with John Maynard as Chairman and Bob Dewey as Secretary. First step - a public meeting at the Zetland Hotel, Huddersfield attended by a large number of people, particularly ex-Peak Forest Canal Society types who had been involved in restoring the Peak Forest and the Ashton Canals, and who wanted to start digging as soon as possible. But volunteers could not restore the Huddersfield Narrow.

They saved the canal from further destruction. How?

Publicity - Dave Finnis

Events - Festivals etc. People such as Peter Freeman (who invented 'The Diggles') etc.

Constant news exposure led to large Society membership, and political clout.

Local authorities (LAs) embodied canal protection in their planning policies. Here, I think that they were almost knocking on an open door: The LAs were desperate for something to relieve

problems of the valleys, and had few other brilliant ideas; then Inland Waterways Amenity Advisory Council (IWAAC) produced a report recommending they adopt this policy. That, possibly more than HCS, might have persuaded them.

1979 - A Change of gear

HCS became a Company and a registered Charity. John Maynard was replaced as chairman by Chris Farrar. Decided on demonstration projects at two key locations:

Restoration of the locks at Uppermill - by volunteers.

Restoration and opening of the cottages at Tunnel End as a Visitor Centre.

Took time to organise - work started in 1981.

Uppermill - meetings with British Waterways (BW) (David Pyrah was influential in allowing 'an exploratory dig'), with Greater Manchester Council (GMC), re future maintenance, and with the Parish Council (including a public meeting in Uppermill Civic Hall) under the control of David Sumner. When work started, Graham Maskell was in charge of working parties, with Laurence Sullivan, Trevor Ellis, Bob Dewey and others as regular

workers. I even handled a spade occasionally (not very effectively!)

Tunnel End Cottages - similar process led by Trevor Ellis with Bob Dewey and others - persuaded West Yorkshire County Council to take on the project in partnership with HCS, although the Society's involvement naturally reduced as the Centre became established.

The Job Creation Schemes

David Sumner persuaded me to take on the task of developing larger restoration schemes. At a time with 3 million unemployed, Job Creation schemes were the obvious way to go. They were being used elsewhere, but not on BW canals. But first I wrote the Jobs Report, calculating that a restored canal would create about 260 jobs (mainly related to work on the canal, boats and serving boaters etc.). This was the key to gaining credibility.

Marsden - Slaithwaite

I produced a glossy report recommending restoration from Marsden to Slaithwaite, with help from Dave Finnis (photos), and Sue McBride (graphics) based on a survey carried out by me, Dave Finnis, Bob Dewey, Trevor Ellis and Eric Crosland. I wrote letters to Kirklees Planning, West Yorkshire Recreation & Arts (who we needed to set up the scheme), to all MPs, MEPs, Local Councillors, and members of the appropriate committees at Kirklees and West Yorkshire. David Sumner and Trevor Ellis led the lobbying, Dave Finnis cycled the length of the canal with John Sully, then Chairman of West Yorkshire Recreation & Arts Committee, who then organised a trip to see the similar scheme on the Rochdale for West Yorkshire and Kirklees members. HCS's proposals were agreed to remarkably quickly, and work

started that eventually reached right down to Huddersfield.

Ashton - Stalybridge

A much more contorted history. David Sumner (or a substitute such as me!) was attending the Tame Valley Officers Working Party on a regular basis, and talking to planners, especially at GMC, and the thought developed that this stretch might be possible for volunteers after Uppermill. Waterways Recovery Group (WRG) were asked to investigate a 'Big Dig' approach. Alan Jervis worked out what had to be done and costs - but this had to be abandoned because water supply had to be maintained to the Peak Forest and Ashton canals, and I set about writing a second glossy report, with Alan providing the technical information and photos. Similar publicity, lobbying etc. led by David Sumner, led to GMC deciding to carry out the scheme using Derelict Land Grant (DLG) money. Long discussions between them and Department of the Environment (DoE) - failed. John Hey (Tameside Council Manpower Services Commission (MSC) co-ordinator) was desperately looking for projects, and was introduced to David Sumner by Duncan McIlroy (Tame Valley Warden). From this meeting developed the Tameside Canals Development Association (TCDA) - an informal grouping of Tameside Council, Peak Forest Canal Society (in its dying stages) and HCS. A Tameside Councillor, Frank Ruffley was Chairman (and stayed with us for a long time after leaving the council!). David and myself were HCS representatives. I produced reports and work programmes. Steve Whitby appointed as Manager. Work began on Peak Forest Canal, and on valley environmental projects, but we were not able to start on

the Huddersfield Narrow until Alec Thomson (BW Special Employment Schemes Manager - and an ally) was able to negotiate with BW unions to allow a second MSC scheme to start, and GMC had agreed to enter into a maintenance agreement. All this took time, during which I agreed with GMC planners that they would put in £45,000 pa for plant/materials costs etc. Eventually work started, and the canal was restored to Ashton. To take on this more demanding work, a Company was required - Tameside Canals Ltd (which was set up as a subsidiary of HCS).

Uppermill infilled stretch

As part of the Uppermill scheme, Bob Dewey arranged design of, and planning permission to build, a new channel between Wool Road and the Brownhill Visitor Centre, where the canal had been infilled for road widening. I scratched around to try to get grants (my file is pretty thick!) with a lot of encouraging noises, but no real success, until suddenly, out of the blue, during discussions re Ashton-Stalybridge project, GMC offered to take over the scheme. They did, and it was finished shortly after they were 'Thatchered' to death.

Diggle - Locks 31 & 32W

I obtained permission for volunteers to move to these locks after Uppermill. They became almost a lifetime obsession to Trevor Ellis who managed their restoration, with such HCS notables as Eric Crosland. A long process, because they were largely rebuilt, unlike the 'cosmetic' approach at Uppermill, and because volunteers were thinner on the ground, feeling less needed now work was moving ahead on the canal.

The Joint Committee

Jim Saunders of WS Atkins approached the Society with a suggestion that a Cost Benefit study was needed to bring in real money. He knew that we were thinking on similar lines, because he obtained copies of my earlier reports whilst re-searching for the study they were doing on the Montgomery Canal. It was convenient for him to meet David and myself, usually at The Old Bridge in Holmfirth where he stayed when doing other work for Atkins in this part of the world. We saw this as an opportunity to get the two County Councils, and three District Councils together. Jim wrote a glossy report for this meeting (with some help from David & me). Chaired by BW 'old school' Director of Leisure, Bob Cotton, who, despite his natural wish to play down any BW involvement, saw that it would be better if the Local Authorities were more involved. It was a success in that it led to the forming of the Huddersfield Narrow Joint Committee - but didn't get Jim the work he hoped for.

The GMC Grant

All of this needed money. The Society had accumulated rather more than most similar societies from Festivals, sponsored walks, pub crawls etc. and sponsorship (lock gates, "Benjamin Outram" etc). Enough for us to feel confident we could take over TCDA as Tameside Canals Ltd. - but not enough to achieve real progress unless the GMC grants continued. I discussed this with Steve Ankers (GMC planner), and (probably more important!) David Sumner talked to Councillor Peter Scott (Chairman GMC Planning). It was agreed that GMC would endow a Trust to continue work. I produced a 5 year programme based on assumption that

MSC schemes continued. GMC costed bridges, and we agreed on a figure of £1.2m which with interest, could produce a useful amount of restoration. Their legal people eventually concluded that they could not legally set up a Trust, and that the only possible recipient was HCS. So - a few days before the demise of the County Council we received a cheque. That was the key to everything that followed. Ex- County Councillors John Sully, Allen Brett, Peter Scott & Garth Pratt came on to HCS Council - to 'safeguard' the money. (John and Allen are still there!)

Wakefield Road

West Yorkshire County Council also left an endowment, in the form of the restoration of Wakefield Road Bridge - a 6 lane highway bridge was always going to be a major obstacle - so this present, largely the result of John Sully and Garth Pratt's machinations at the County Council, was a huge benefit.

The Benefits Study & Stalybridge

After the County's disappearance, I began the first of many west side Work Programmes (now with increasing help from Steve Whitby) that were put to the Joint Committee (as the Job creation scheme regimes changed), Tameside Canals began work between Stalybridge and Mossley, and we persuaded the Committee that we should invest some of the GMC money in a Benefits Study that could be used as independent evidence (unlike my Jobs report that was clearly partial). L&R Leisure Consultants were appointed by HCS, and eventually produced a report - that more or less confirmed what I had said - but I couldn't get them to look at the jobs and benefits likely to result from

an improved waterside environment (which irritated me, as I thought I had written the brief for their appointment to include that!) They also suggested the Standedge Experience in some detail, and that HCS needed full time staff (which we knew!). At the same time, Jim Saunders got a partial reward for his efforts when HCS appointed them to look at the options for a route through Stalybridge. Not surprisingly, Tameside Council chose a version of the River Route (they couldn't risk alienating Delta Metals, and Millwood Rubber - two large employers whose buildings blocked the route of the canal.)

Employment Training

The Job creation schemes ran into difficulties as government put more and more emphasis on training, and less on massaging the unemployment figures. Kirklees side stepped the issue as much as possible, by having few trainees, and finding the money for full time staff, we couldn't do that with Tameside Canals, where the political clout of being one of the largest and most successful MSC schemes mattered in Tameside - so we were soon into training in a big way, even filling a room in our office with computers to teach computing skills, because we had to provide a range of skills to stay in the game. But this was costing the Society - work slowed on site as we were diverting staff to training, and the wage bill was astronomical. European money seemed the answer - if we could get it.

Mike Thompson

David Sumner and I realised that we could not do all that was needed to apply for European money without the full time help suggested by L&R's report. I approached Mike Thompson, an ex-

colleague who had been the County Planning Officer in South Yorkshire before being forced into early retirement. He took on the task with energy and wisdom unseen before in HCS whilst it relied on volunteers, befriending the appropriate people in the DoE regional office, and giving them confidence in the Society. Then we appointed Frank Smith - as a general factotum etc. Mike 'trained' Steve Whitby in the black arts of grant applications. Between them they brought in relatively small sums (by later standards) but enough to keep work going.

Standedge Tunnel

Mike's biggest achievement was to get the Ove Arup survey of the tunnel off the ground. Again by getting it 50% European funded, and with money from the Sports Council - so the local authorities and the Society did not have to dig too deep in their pockets. This took him several years of quiet slogging away - and noisy intervention, such as presentations to MPs in the House of Commons (aided and abetted by David Sumner).

The Oldham MSC scheme

Over a period of five or six years I negotiated with Oldham planners to start a second west side MSC scheme - based on survey work done years before by a group I had set up under Peter Freeman, that we had been discouraged from producing as a third glossy report at the time because BW clearly would not have a third scheme on the canal. Eventually this led to the start of work on a small scheme in Greenfield (with HCS paying for plant & materials) - but it was a failure, because they simply could not get trainees in 'wealthy' Saddleworth. Eventually we agreed to merge the two schemes, and

change the name of Tameside Canals Ltd. to HCS Restoration Ltd. I took over as Chairman shortly afterwards, when Frank Ruffley's health took a turn for the worse.

Derelict Land Grant

Changes to the rules allowing DLG to be used for canal restoration made re-opening almost a certainty. Between us, Mike Thomson, Steve Whitby and myself sorted out what had to be done, who to persuade, and talked to the DoE and then with Oldham and Tameside who accepted yet another work programme we had written. That really was it - except the DLG scheme was transferred to a new quango, English Partnerships, and they wanted more up to date proof. So I wrote another brief for consultants, and Coopers & Lybrand were appointed by the Society to look again at the benefits. This time, there were things to see on the ground, and they interviewed developers and landowners, and produced an astounding number of jobs as being likely to result.

So we got the money for the Diggle flight of locks, road bridges in Saddleworth etc. But not much in Kirklees, where the Council didn't want the Society to 'help' (or meddle?), and where the DoE Regional Office were putting their money into coalfield regeneration. In fact most of the DLG we got in Kirklees was obtained by the Society! The Kirklees MSC scheme reached the end of its life - but hadn't quite finished work. Lock 24E at Slaithwaite was unfinished, as was Lock 1E. Kirklees appointed HCS Restoration to tackle Lock 1, and, then Lock 23E, and we obtained DLG to complete Lock 24E (which was a sod, with its guillotine gate! - Ken Wright spent hours and hours with BW engineers, and our consultant trying to sort it out!) I actually cut the tape! -

Probably the one and only part of the canal that will be formally opened by an HCS member!

The Millennium Scheme

As time went by on the DLG schemes, the Society depended more and more on Steve Whitby and professional advisors like Mike Thompson (although Mike was not too keen on being paid - he thought we had better things to do with our money.) How to go for the big schemes was the next issue. The Lottery had come into being, and English Partnerships made it clear that they would not grant-aid 100% of the large schemes. We looked at what was possible, and decided to have a crack at the Millennium lottery - in agreement with the local authorities and BW. But EP jump-started us (and the Rochdale) to go for the first round, whereas we wanted a few more months to develop the bid in the second round. It was a shambles! For the first time, we were not properly prepared. Tameside did their own thing with a bid for Stalybridge, and HCS submitted a bid for the rest of the canal. Failed - not enough detail. Funnily enough the almost identical Rochdale bid succeeded! (A different case officer at the Millennium Commission!) So we tried again with a joint approach, and Tameside eventually abandoning the Stalybridge River route - with a lot of heavy weight lobbying. The huge amount of number crunching was done by Steve Whitby who, quite correctly, said that this would mean the end of his job. Consultants for everything you can imagine were appointed - the HCS money came in very useful, and eventually we succeeded. Then we had to spend another two years on reports, surveys etc., etc. to get English Partner-

ships to honour their 'informal offer' to match Millennium Commission money. Apart from attending loads of meetings (with Ken Wright chairing the engineers group), lobbying and writing cheques, HCS was sidelined now - the big boys took over! And the rest, as they say, is history!

David Sumner and I are on the Canal Company Board - where we hear what was in the papers the week before, and have no more real say in what happens than our colleagues the Councillors. But that was inevitable I suppose. The saddest thing was that, despite a lot of effort by Ken Wright and myself, we couldn't keep HCS Restoration going, and had to sack most of our staff, including Steve Whitby - who probably put as much as anyone into the Millennium bid.

Keith Gibson
Chairman, HCS Restoration Ltd

Footnote:

An important thing that needs to be stressed is that, despite arguments and rows, HCS was a team effort. What David Sumner did best, or Mike Thompson did, or Steve Whitby did, or Ken Wright did, or even or I did, could not have happened without a large membership giving us clout, without huge amounts of publicity and PR, and without Festivals and trip boats etc. ensuring the message got across to the public, politicians and funding agencies, which allowed us to realise the Impossible Dream.

The Years in Between

Ken Wright sorts out a bit of history.

An awful lot of the media hype since the re-opening of the canal in May, and including the BBC video, has centred on the “£30 million cost of restoring the canal” and generally giving the impression that it all started with the grant of Millennium money in December 1996.

Let me remind you, as if you need the reminder, that a great deal of work was done in the years between 1982, when the first bits of exploratory digging began in Uppermill, and Millennium “boom time” in 1997/98.

I have no doubt many will want to correct me but this is my list of that now often forgotten great effort. And remember, **ALL** the work listed here was carried out in a period when people in high places were still certain, in their own minds, that through navigation would never fully materialize.

The motivation was to provide work in Job Creation Schemes, where the labour came very cheaply. And the necessary drive came from Ian Preston on the East side and Steve Whitby on the West side. Also a large amount of work was done by our own volunteers, where the labour costs were even less!

This makes the theoretical cost of restoring the canal more like £50 million, which other restoration groups might bear in mind when doing ‘back of an envelope’ estimates!

THE LIST

ALL lock restoration except:

- East Side 1, 2, 3.
- West Side 4, 5, 6, 7, 21, 24.

ALL dredging except:

- East Side, Huddersfield end.
- West Side, Wade Lock to Mann’s Wharf; Diggle.

*Bailey Street Bridge, Stalybridge
Staley Wharf and channel
Heyrod channel
Grove Road Bridge
Scout Tunnel to Lock 12 landslip
Mann’s Wharf Bridge renewal
Frenches Bridge renewal
Wool Road concrete channel
Wool Road slipway
Transshipment Warehouse
Tunnel End Cottages
Guillotine Gate (23E)
Pack Horse Bridge (23E)
Milnsbridge Bridge
Wickes’ Channel, Huddersfield
Wakefield Road Bridge, Huddersfield.*

Ken Wright



A Royal Seal of Approval



On the waterfront ... a crowd looks on as Prince Charles is shown along the towpath (sadly foregoing the Society's Water Taxi, Ed) on the right from Marsden Station to Standedge Visitor Centre.

Photo by kind permission of Huddersfield Daily Examiner.

Well, the canal is definitely now reopened! On Monday the 3rd September, HRH Prince Charles came to Tunnel End, walked down the towpath, had a trip into the tunnel and unveiled a plaque commemorating the event.

The opening was organised by British Waterways and was done at very short notice as a gap in HRH's schedule came up during a visit to Yorkshire. Security considerations also mean that notice of visits is generally kept to a minimum. The size of the Visitor Centre and the number of organisations that had to be represented kept the number of guests down. It was finally decided that 7 members of

each group, the three Local Authorities, the Millennium Commission, English Partnerships, British Waterways, engineering groups and of course HCS, should be in the presentation group. Volunteer Co-ordinator, Frank Smith, submitted several brief biographies to BW and they decided that our group should consist of Chairman David Sumner, Vice Chairman Trevor Ellis, Restoration Chairman Keith Gibson, Press Officer David Finnis, Membership Secretary Josephine (Jo) Young, Volunteer Co-ordinator, Frank Smith (with a foot in both camps - BW & HCS) and me, Pennine Link Editor, Brian Minor.



Volunteer Society Boat Crew (left to right) Mark Nield, Bob Reed and Ronnie Rose are presented to HRH Prince Charles.



You never know who you'll meet on the towpath!
Mr & Mrs Wood aboard their narrowboat 'Mary Ellen' can't believe their good fortune in meeting Prince Charles.



After walking the towpath, the Prince is clearly impressed by Vinnie the Vole's fish that got away!



The Prince, entourage and media head for cover in the Standedge Visitor Centre

The day started very early, as the Royal visit was due to commence at 9.30, it meant every person officially invited to the opening had to be at the Visitor Centre by 9.00 a.m. and for someone like me, with a 32 mile drive to get there, meant the alarm was set for somewhat before 6.00 a.m. The day was like all Marsden weather - wet!

Prince Charles was due to arrive at Marsden station by the Royal Train and the line at the station was being patrolled by what looked like half Railtrack's staff! The Canal Society's boat crews were running two newly painted trip boats and all the crews were in their new all-weather gear and looking very smart. I got a lift to the Visitor Centre in one of the boats as I didn't fancy a towpath walk in the pouring rain. We signed in at the Centre and were given a name badge, an itinerary and a commemorative plaque. The plaque was in a very swish box which I felt was a little bit unnecessary. We were told not to stand watching the door for HRH to come in as

British Waterways



*As read in the best circles:
Prince Charles with Pennine Link and tea.*

he didn't like people looking as though they were waiting for him! The Royal Train went past the Visitor Centre - all ten carriages of it - and 15 minutes later HRH plus Lord Lieutenant plus Kirklees Mayor and a host of BW and security people came walking down the towpath with umbrellas up. The Prince spoke to many of the people waiting in the rain outside the

Centre before coming in and joining us.

With a cup of tea in his hand he circulated, shook hands with everyone and spoke to each group for several minutes, Frank was wearing an Army Regimental tie, which the Prince recognised, I gave him a copy of the last Plink and he

seemed to be impressed

when I told him that it was produced every 3 months. He seemed to be very well briefed on what was happening and seemed to be enjoying himself with us. The

impression he left us with was that he is the sort of guy who would be good company to have a couple of beers with!





Bob Gough

The Prince, always keen to meet the public, negotiates a sea of brollies and waterproofs. Undeterred by the Marsden weather, the crowds enjoy the opportunity to get close to His Royal Highness and maybe have a word or two.



Bob Gough



Bob Gough



The Prince boards British Waterways' passenger module for a short trip into the Standedge Tunnel and once on board (below), BW's trip guide Fred Carter (far left) checks on his special passengers, left to right, HRH Prince Charles, David Sumner, BW CEO, David Fletcher and BW NW Region Manager, Derek Cochrane.



Leaving the Visitor Centre, the Prince walked to the cottages, talking to as many of the crowd as he could and shaking every outstretched hand, this, still in the pouring rain. He boarded the tunnel boat together with Chairman David Sumner and BW's C.E.O. David Fletcher and

sundry large security men, one of whom stood on the back; I warned him to keep his head down in the Tunnel! Earlier in the morning, police frogmen had checked in the Tunnel for obstructions. A short trip, with full commentary from BW's Fred Carter, took him into the Tunnel.

After returning, the party went on to the foot bridge where a canopy had been set up courtesy of the National Trust, a speech from David Fletcher (containing a quick mention of HCS) a reply by the Prince, who had been well briefed by the Lord Lieutenant, saying that the Tunnel lead from one part

The Prince unveils a waymarker to commemorate the official opening of the Huddersfield Narrow Canal before BW's David Fletcher presents him with a framed watercolour of Tunnel End and, poised on top of the p.a. speaker to the left, a weighty block of Standedge rock (Millstone Grit) suitably labelled for the occasion!



John Sully

of Yorkshire to another, greeted with rapture by the Yorkshiremen in the crowd and stony silence by us Lancastrians! He then unveiled a plaque which will be fixed to the Visitor Centre wall in the future. Then a wave to the crowds, into a well polished car and away, approximately half an hour later than planned.

The whole day had been a super example of well behaved informality with the Prince and the good crowd enjoying themselves. The only blot was right at the end when several of us tried to photograph the plaque unveiling, the security men became a little heavy handed, in fact I thought I was going to have my collar felt at one stage! I think that this was caused by positioning the 'getaway cars' too near the plaque, if they had been 10 or 15 yards further up the lane there would



John Sully

have been no problems. Even the TV people had to do a little bit of re-enactment to film the actual unveiling.

The whole morning had been well organised, the canal is well and truly launched, thanks to the staff at the Visitor Centre and of course thanks to our Royal Visitor - but can I remind him that when he becomes King he also takes the title of Duke of Lancaster!

Brian Minor

Horseboating Society News

Sue Day, Chairperson of the Society writes:

Achievements 2001 on the Huddersfield Narrow:

1st horsedrawn cargo since 1940's:

Load - 3 ton girder, bricks and beer

Nb Olive with Bonnie/Queenie

1st boat passage since 1948:

Nb Maria with Bonny/Queenie

1st cargo over the summit and through Standedge Tunnel since 1921:

Nb Lilith with Queenie

1st horsedrawn hotelboat since restoration:

Butty Castle with Bonny/Queenie

A Special Edition of the Huddersfield Daily Examiner:

The local newspaper has produced a special supplement devoted to the Huddersfield Narrow Canal. The large front cover colour picture is of nb Maria and Queenie with crew. Copies can be obtained from the Examiner Office: 01484 430000 for 70p and p+p. (We also have a stock at the Society offices, Ed)

Talks:

Sue Day gave a talk from her wheelchair (*recovering from a broken leg, Ed*) at the Saddleworth Museum about horseboating. Thanks to all those who have helped by sending slides and video to make this possible. Proceeds went to the Horseboating Society.

Future Horseboating Talks:

2001

November 2nd, Sue Day at IWA, Stoke-on-Trent, Red Bull, 8pm

November 16th, Sue Day at Boat Museum Society, Ellesmere Port Boat Museum, 7.30pm

December 10th, Sue Day at IWA Manchester, Dukes 92, Castlefield, Manchester, 8.00pm

2002

February 6th, Sue Day at Tudor Cruising Club, Ukrainian Club, Audenshaw, Manchester

February 12th, Sue Day at IWA Chester, Ellesmere Port Boat Museum

For further information about joining the Horseboating Society, please contact the Membership Secretary, Ray Butler, on 0161 221 3062.



Brian Minor

Intrepid horseboating woman, Sue Day, is forced to put her feet up after her unfortunate leg breaking accident on the towpath. Others may say she is taking her role as Chairperson a little too literally!

Letters to the Editor

First one this issue from founder member Margaret Sinfield enclosing press cuttings.

I expect you'll get umpteen cuttings identical to these, but better lots than none. Plink is excellent. It keeps us far flung folk up-to-date You do a splendid job; please keep it up.

Best wishes,

Margaret Sinfield

Praise for my predecessor Ken, hope you will still be saying nice things about Plink after I have done my worst! Incidentally many thanks for the cuttings, to everyone who sends them in, a big 'thank you'. I cannot see every paper and am bound to miss something in the ones I do see.

Dear Mr Wright,

Many thanks for several years ago drawing our attention in Plink to cruises on the Manchester Ship Canal. Yesterday we eventually got round to making the trip on MV Royal Daffodil and had a most enjoyable time. As you retire from being Editor I hope you find time to go boating (In Capitals) - it does seem that that aspect of things often takes a back seat in matters of canal restoration.

N. Sutcliffe (1883)

Yes, Mr Sutcliffe, now that Ken has been put out to pasture we all hope he indulges himself a little. I went on the Ship Canal cruise a few years ago, it was very enjoyable, a one way trip to Liverpool and then back by coach to Manchester.

Now something rather more disturbing from our founder Chairman

Dear Sir,

May I first of all congratulate the organisers of Link Day. I had a really enjoyable time and met many old friends; well done all. (Even got the weather right!)

On a more serious note and following Mike Lucas's piece in issue No. 137. Mike wrote to BW regarding the width of Wade Lock and received a reply which- amongst other things - stated "The cost of restoring the canal to 7ft 1 in would be £20M " I would like to know how this figure was come by; is it an inspired guess or a calculated estimate. After all, the locks up to Wade lock were passed by Tyseley and without doing a detailed survey, we do not know what is involved. Is a complete rebuild required or only one wall, or is it just an odd high spot knocking off.

The letter from BW also states "As you know the Canal Society established 6ft 10ins as the optimum dimension back in 1974" I was more involved in the Society in those days than I am now and have no recollection of any such arrangement. Any way would the mighty BWB (as it was then) have taken any notice of our fledgling Society? Actually this was the time that they wrote to us and said "I am afraid that there can be no question of restoring this canal for through navigation". Can BW substantiate their claim?

Finally do we now meekly accept BW's tacit decision to do nothing about our Narrow canal or work towards the eventual restoration to full width so in the future ALL Narrow Boats can freely cruise our unique waterway?

What do other members think?

What are the Council going to do?

Yours faithfully,

J.K. Maynard

I have seen copies of e-mails between Ken and members of user groups (unfortunately not for publication) where BW have said that they have restored to 7ft 4ins, but that HCS only restored to 6ft 10ins. ALL lock restoration done by HCS Restoration Ltd starting with Lock 2 in Stalybridge was done under the eagle eye of BW and to their specifications. Tyseley certainly had no problems in passing through the locks restored by the Society on the way to Uppermill. Wade Lock was restored by contractors under the control of BW engineers.

john.brierley1@virgin.net writes

After the canal opening I was looking forward more than usual to the next issue of Plink. I had been around in Huddersfield on opening day and afterwards and it seemed to me that HCS members would be getting a proper report on the shambles which unfolded.

Of course, the opening is a fantastic achievement which is rightly celebrated in the Celebratory Issue, but can we be told a proper tale about the problems?

On opening day there was hardly any water and the progress of the opening boats was extremely slow. Many boats could not get past the first lock and moored overnight. Their water completely vanished during the night and they were high and dry in the morning. The Huddersfield Examiner reported that BW had said that this was because boats were only travelling upstream and that there would be no problems in normal operation!

I work at Turnbridge and have spoken to many boaters who have told terrible tales of water shortage, narrow places and a dearth of facilities between Aspley and Tunnel End. It appears that very little thought has been given to the question of water supply.

I know that vandalism has always been a problem, but could we members be told about it?

Alec Ramsden wrote an excellent letter to the Examiner soon after the opening complaining, quite rightly, that the opening had been conducted by the Great and Good and that HCS appeared to have been completely ignored.

He was also very critical of BW until the opening was imminent. Should this letter not have been printed in Plink because many members will not have seen it.

I have been to Tunnel End at Marsden and it was terribly disappointing. The "professionals" had clearly moved in and I thought the exhibits very poor. There was a indifferent video about the canal, concentrated exclusively on Thomas Telford if I remember rightly. What about "The Impossible Dream"? If there was any mention of HCS in the displays I failed to see it although there was a small unmanned tent outside.

All in all, a real let-down for the Society which is absolutely tragic.

Do any other members have the same views about the lack of recognition of the HCS, and about the lack of information in Plink, or am I a lone, miserable, carping, old bugger?

Best regards

John Brierley, Huddersfield

John, you are not. There are many things wrong with the reopened canal and it is no good glossing over the faults. Every

member would like it to be perfect, but the time scale of the final days of restoration meant that many things were somewhat rushed. It is up to us to keep having a gentle push at the authorities such as BW to get everything right, we can only do the corrections through them and probably friendly co-operation will have better results than trying to bang heads.

Ken.Brockway@care4free.net writes:

Sorry it's taken so long to say a big thank you to everyone who helped organise the members day.

Linda and I had a great day. The coach trip was excellent, it was so much easier to be escorted to all the sites with no worries about finding our way around an area still not fully familiar to us from Nottingham. Special thanks to our guide Frank Smith who, if he's made redundant would make a splendid tour guide.

We liked the trip into the tunnel, it was a bit short but then the full three hours would, we think, be too much on those hard plastic seats, perhaps boaters are advised to take a cushion from their own boat.

The bar-b-q was excellent, please convey our appreciation to the caterers. We stayed in the area for a few days and on Sunday had a full day at the museum of photography at Bradford. Then Monday we returned to Huddersfield, where Linda looked at the town shops and market while Ken took the train to Marsden and walked back along the canal.

**Ken and Linda Brockway,
Nottingham**

'Thanks to Ken and Linda for your appreciative letter, I thought everyone involved in the organisation did a great job. (See article on page 34)

Linda Lilley writes:

My family and I recently travelled along the length of the Huddersfield Narrow Canal, on board our boat Sante. We left our moorings at Sawley and cruised up the Trent and Mersey, Macclesfield and Peak Forest to reach your canal and then continued home along the Huddersfield Broad, the Calder and Hebble, Aire and Calder and the River Trent. The journey took us about a month (including a detour to Lincoln) and we had a great time.

We think that you have a marvellous canal - the scenery was stunning, the locks (many stone mason marks to see) and paddle gear were most interesting and everyone we met was so helpful and eager to talk about how the canal used to be and how things have changed. The men who took the boats through the tunnel were very kind, my 5 year old son was in tears as they towed the boats through and the 'tug man' cheered him up by suggesting we took a particular timed trip boat into the tunnel, to see the headlights of the convoy. We did have a few problems with low water, stiff paddle gear, leaking gates and lack of 'rubbish facilities' - but the BW staff were brilliant and these were only minor problems and did not distract from the glorious scenery and the 'special feel' we got from travelling on such a recently opened gem of a canal. Our boat went through the tunnel on 4th August and the man at the Marsden end told me we were the 200th boat through (I think that was really to shut me up as I'd asked what exact number we were!)

We'd be interested to know if and when you have some plaques for completing the Huddersfield Narrow, or certificates or whatever! We just feel that it was such a fantastic experience that we'd like to have some other permanent reminder as well as the many photos we took.

Sorry about such a long letter, but there is so much to say about the Huddersfield Narrow. Good luck with everything, and well done for all that you've done already.

Linda Lilley, Derbyshire

P.S. Do you allow 'foreigners from Derbyshire' to join the Huddersfield Canal Society?

Thanks Linda for the letter. After the problems that, according to the Press, have befallen all the boaters on the canal, it makes us feel it was all worth while in getting a letter like yours.

Council is discussing an 'end to end' plaque and hopefully we will have some news about one shortly. In the meantime, we do still have a good stock of the 'Staley Wharf' plaque, which was produced in 1996 for boaters who made it to the then limit of navigation. At £6 incl. p&p, we were pleased to receive your request for two plaques, Linda, and hope they have arrived safely.

As for members, we have them in most parts of the world and Derbyshire, in spite of their police force's hatred of motorists, isn't all that foreign! I will ask Jo Young to send you a membership application form.

Ed Thickbroom writes:

First congratulations on the reopening of the Huddersfield Narrow. Very well done,

a triumph for enthusiasm over apathy.

I am an engineering student at Huddersfield University and have been following the restoration over the last two years with interest.

The problems with vandalism on some parts of the canal and the ongoing maintenance could, I believe, be helped by a Sponsorship Scheme. This scheme already operates in Birmingham.

Essentially local people and organisations sponsor a section of canal, not necessarily financially, but by investing time in the canal, cleaning rubbish, keeping an eye out for vandals and other problems.

I have a British Waterways' publication which covers the scheme. I would be prepared to sponsor the canal from the University up to the first tunnel at Bates, as I spend most of my working week along this section.

I will be joining your Society as soon as the next installment of my student loan appears in a few weeks time!!

Again congratulations and very well done.

Ed Thickbroom (n9956573@hud.ac.uk.)

An interesting idea Ed, which corresponds in part to our Volunteer Bureau activities: viz. the Canal Liaison Team. We will be interested to see British Waterways' publication which will give us some insights into their sponsorship scheme.

Dear Sir,
My family and I recently travelled along the length of the Huddersfield Narrow Canal, on board our boat Santé. We left our moorings at Sawley and cruised up the Trent & Mersey, Macclesfield & ... to reach your ... along the Huddersfield Broad,

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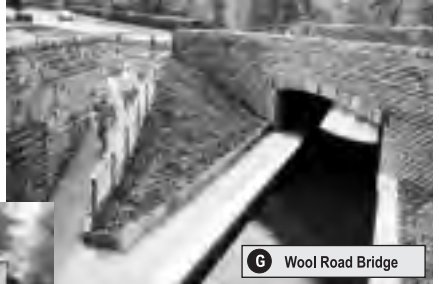
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The Huddersfield Narrow Canal



F Approaching L21W



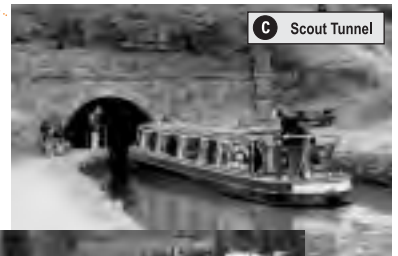
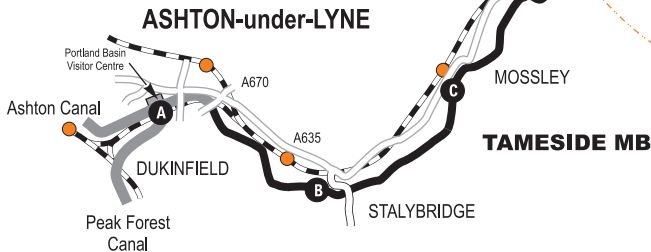
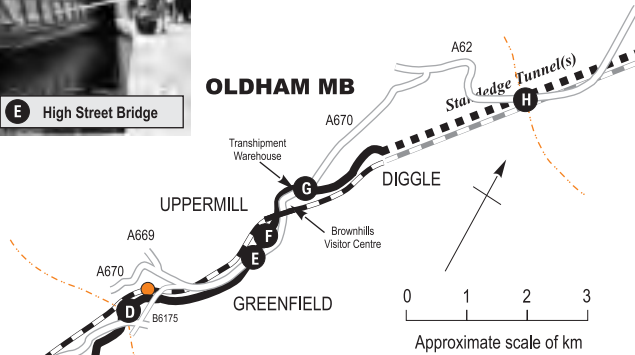
G Wool Road Bridge



E High Street Bridge



D Division Bridge Aqueduct



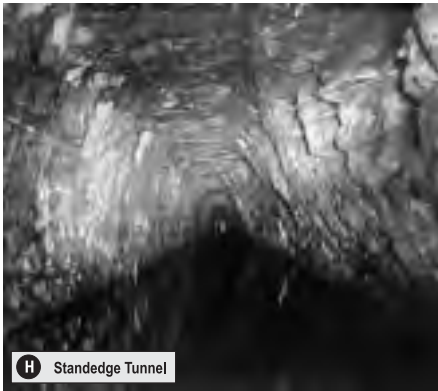
C Scout Tunnel



A Portland Basin Museum



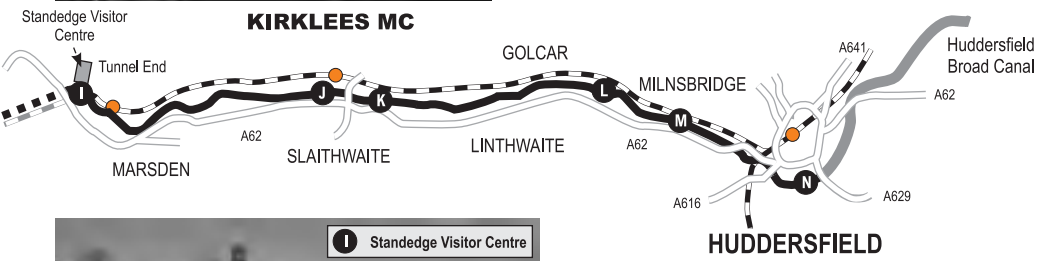
B Stalybridge Town Centre



H Standedge Tunnel



N Approach to Bates tunnel



I Standedge Visitor Centre



L Golcar Aqueduct



J Guillotine gate, L24E



K Slaithwaite Town Centre



M Mark Bottoms Bridge



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IWA News

August 8th: IWA has given a grant of £8,000 to the Wilts and Berks Canal. This will help to fund a project officer.

Christmas card and gift list sent to me. It includes a card of the canal at Uppermill (at £3.30 for 10). Fame at last!

The IWA AGM is at Banbury in conjunction with the Banbury boat gathering over the weekend of September 28th, 29th and 30th.

The August bulletin gives various changes of personnel, well known local boat builder and Brass Band enthusiast, Kevin Wadsworth of Warble Narrow Boats has been appointed as a new director to National Waterways Festivals Ltd.

A new acquisition at Ellesmere Port, to be restored, is a West Country Keel used to carry coal to Yorkshire Power stations.

An interesting statistic is that of their membership; 66% are boat owners, but only 33% are interested in restoration work.

Must say that statistic surprises me - over two thirds of the IWA membership are not interested in restoration - yet all the boat owners I know are rational intelligent people, they cannot possibly NOT be interested.

IWA has awarded a £3,000 grant to the Derby canal to help fund a navigable culvert near Wilmorton College Derby.

Report from the Manchester Branch newsletter that next year will see the reopening of the Anderton Boat Lift and the Rochdale Canal, the opening of the Ribble Link, a Mersey River Festival, a River Weaver event and a Festival to support the Commonwealth Games (main stadium between the Rochdale and Ashton Canals)

In the same issue are the remarks of the Regional Chairman (who is also a member of HCS) John Fletcher about the reopening of the HNC *'for those who attempt it this year I caution them to remember what it was like trying to fight across the Kennet and Avon Canal the first year that was open. Canals need regular boat traffic for a period before they bed in, even without the problems of innovative design which site constraints have forced on this particular restoration. There are still*

several sites I need to visit but I have been instrumental in passing to the managers reports of difficulties and as a result the men in green have been sorting out initial difficul-

ties - with the greatest of good humour and courtesy'.

Rather interestingly, I see that the meeting of 8th April 2002 will be 'The Impossible Restoration' with the speaker being BW's very own Julie Maund and she will be describing the restoration of the Huddersfield Narrow.

Brian Minor



A Grand Change of Heart

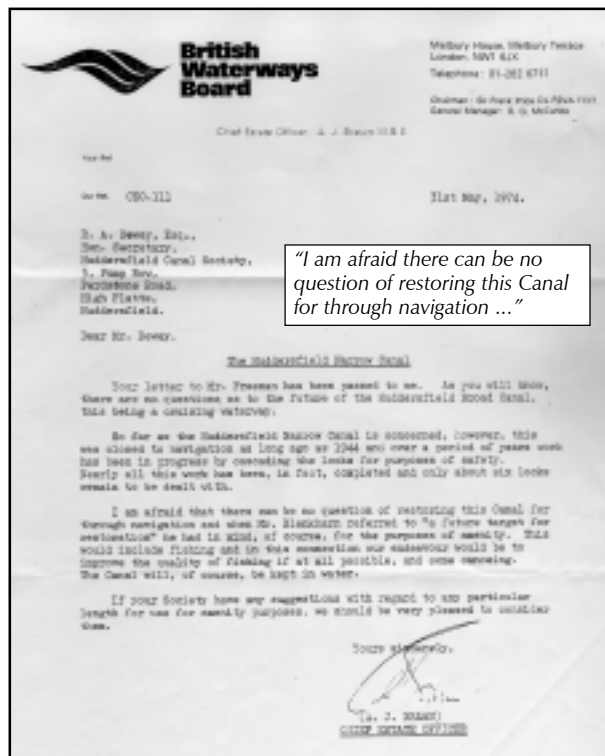
Although this year's Society Annual General Meeting at the Wool Road Transhipment Warehouse followed its usual order of business, Council member, Alec Ramsden (on the right), took advantage of the occasion to make a special presentation to the Society's first Chairman, John Maynard.



John was presented with a framed letter from the British

Waterways Board (below) dated 31st May, 1974, in which the then Chief Estate Officer

A. J. Brawn gave a less than encouraging view on the possibility of restoring the Huddersfield Narrow Canal in a reply to Bob Dewey, Secretary of the fledgling Huddersfield Canal Society.



But times and attitudes change, and after a long, hard struggle, the spirit of partnership has won through.

British Waterways, in partnership with the local authorities of Tameside, Oldham and Kirklees, and the Canal Society, under the auspices of the Huddersfield Canal Company, have managed the final £30m project to complete the restoration of the Narrow to through navigation.

A grand change of heart that has enabled the Society to realise its Impossible Dream.

Bob Gough

Canal Society Link Day

The opening of the canal was celebrated by the Society with a 'Link Day' on the 21st of July.

All members were invited, though there was the proviso that only 250 could be accommodated. In the event some 270 people paid their £5.00 and joined in the fun. This £5.00 was the best value I have seen for a very long time! The event was heavily subsidised by the Society and one or two nameless sponsors.

It started with a gathering at Marsden railway Station, where we were met by a fleet of coaches. The VIP's and some of the Council members (of whom I was one) were to go the full length of the Tunnel, other coaches took Society members on a tour of the canal with guides who knew what had happened at each place and knew (most) of the answers.

I was on the return trip from Diggle to Marsden, so our party waited whilst the first group was taken to Tunnel End for the inaugural trip in BW's Passenger Module through the tunnel. While they were going through, we were first taken to Huddersfield, where Garth Pratt gave us chapter and verse of the building of the Wakefield Road bridge. On, then, to Slaithwaite where we walked the length of the restored canal through the village and had a cup of tea at the Moonraker Floating Tea-room. Back into the coach to the

summit, pausing to look (from the road) at the restored Red Brook Engine house and then on to Wool Road for a quick inspection and finally to Stalybridge for a walk up through the town, accompanied by Pete Rawson from Tameside Engineers' Department. Interestingly, our party counted amongst its number some of the original Society members; first Chairman John Maynard, original Secretary Bob Dewey and Derek Walker, who did the original survey through Stalybridge. Derek pointed out that the Canal had actually not been put in the position he had recommended twenty odd years ago! Then off of to Diggle for the tunnel passage.

The trip took three and a half hours and I have to say that Fred Carter (BW) has really found his niche as guide on the trip!

We were about half an hour late arriving and thought we would have missed the speeches, but David Sumner must have realised this and delayed things slightly, thereby saving our disappointment! The Marsden Band were driven into the Warehouse by the elements, but they were excellent entertainment both inside as well as out.

The BBQ was rather slow in service; I think the caterers hadn't realized that everyone would want feeding at the same time. This led to an enormous queue and some rather underdone kebabs! However, everyone was fed, finally and sufficiently. Even though the rain fell on us, most people wore clothing for the climatic conditions and kept smiling right to the end. The beer brewed for the occasion, 'Standedge Admiral', was excellent and I have nothing but praise for the bar staff who worked so hard to stem the thirsts during the evening.

The beauty of the day was the chance to meet and talk to so many of the 'ordinary' members of the Society who through distance or lack of opportunity have not been as closely involved as they would have liked. The fact that you were supporting in spirit mattered when the Society talked to local authorities or to

Society members inspect the new Lock 4W in Stalybridge and have the added bonus of a boat in transit.



Ken Brockway

Government Departments. No politician wants to alienate over a thousand voters on an issue like this! Your tacit support meant that we always negotiated from a position of strength. Also, what a lovely lot you all are! People had arrived from all over the country, I spoke to one member from Norfolk who was struck by the lack of graffiti in Huddersfield.

I was offered, for Plink, pictures of American canals, I talked to Company Directors and to Pensioners, but the best thing about the day was the number of youngsters who were present. Getting the next generation involved is the most certain way to make sure that the canals are never again allowed to be forgotten.

Praises to Bob Reed who was the co-ordinator of the whole event, a super job, well done. Thanks to Frank and Bob from the office, for working on their days off, thanks to Alan Knott and the guys from the boat crews for ferrying



John Sully

Something of a 'Rogues Gallery' ! Left to right: Present Chairman, David Sumner; first Chairman, John Maynard; first Secretary, Bob Dewey; Society stalwarts Dave Finnis (current Press Officer) and Garth Pratt.

up and down, thanks to the various coach drivers who seem to have enjoyed their day out and thanks to the BW staff at Marsden for entering into the spirit of the day.

Brian Minor

Vinnie the Water Vole is on hand to see the VIPs safely on to BW's passenger module for the inaugural Tunnel through trip from Marsden to Diggle.



John Sully

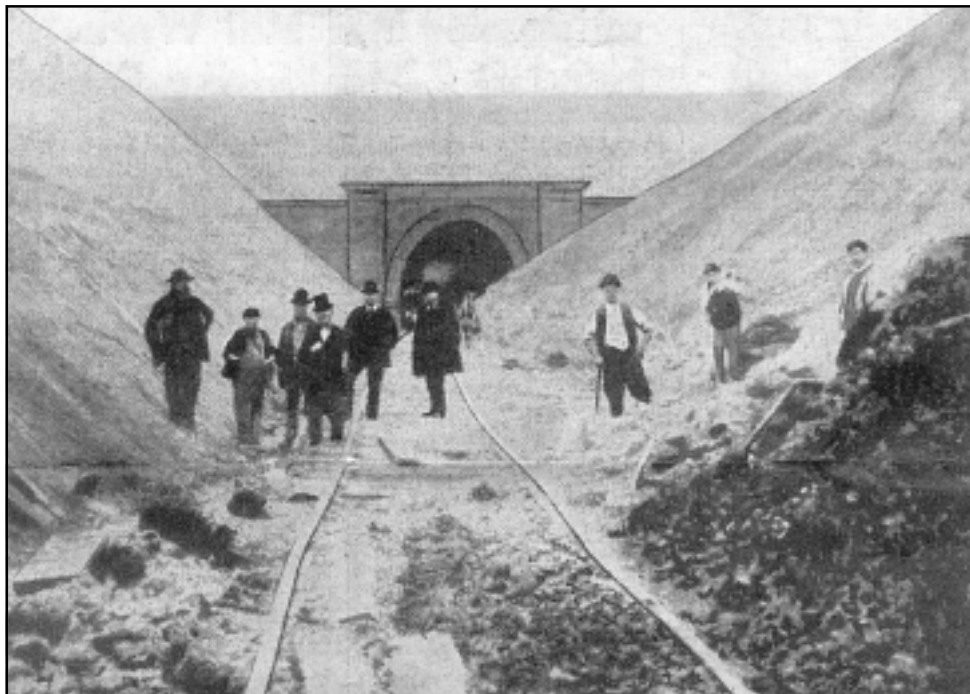
Below: Worth waiting for. A convivial queue for the barbeque.



Brian Minor

10 - THE REPORTER, FRIDAY, JANUARY 6, 1939

Many thanks to Mrs Sylvia Potter of Greenfield who found this cutting from, we think, the Colne Valley Reporter, amongst some old papers and sent it to us. The photo illustrating the article appears to have been 'doctored' - the portal in the centre background and the profile of the excavated cutting seem to have been drawn in - perhaps for emphasis.



This photograph (reproduced from the L.M.S. Magazine), showing the construction of Stanedge Tunnel, is believed to be one of the earliest railway photographs ever taken.

The Story of Stanedge Tunnel

Regarded as a superb example of the pluck and foresight of British engineering enterprise, Stanedge Tunnel is still a fascinating subject. Unlike some famous tunnels Stanedge is unique in that actually four tunnels - three railway and one canal - have been bored through the hill from Diggle to Marsden.

These four tunnels are almost in line with each other over a great part of the length and the Stanedge tunnel is practically the third longest railway tunnel in Great Britain.

For many years yet it will remain one of the greatest feats of British engineering skill that has been promoted and carried to a successful issue

because of the enormous task of carrying a waterway through Stanedge hills.

THE WATERWAYS OF ENGLAND

Towards the end of the eighteenth century the boom in canal building in England was significant of a great trade revival and a general awakening to the fact that it was possible to carry large quantities of merchandise from one town to another by water at a much cheaper rate than by road.

The waterways of this country became a recognised medium for the transit of every variety of goods. Canals were linked up with navigable rivers and rivers with seaports and the

outer world. The making of the canal in Colne Valley was undertaken by an enterprising company known as the Huddersfield and Ashton Canal Co.

Up to the year 1811, all boat traffic on the canal terminated east and west at the respective wharfs of Marsden and Diggle, and as a consequence each place became a depot of considerable activity.

Warehouse Hill basin, as its name implies, was the local dockyard in Marsden, and Warehouse Lane with the old Snailhorn Bridge pointing in that direction was the main artery of business.

PACK HORSES IN USE

When goods were destined for Lancashire, pack horses and carts were called into requisition to negotiate the intervening distance over the Stanedge hills.

The conveyance of commodities was most laborious and added greatly to the cost of transit.

So congested did the traffic become that the problem of cutting a tunnel large enough to allow boats to go through became most urgent.

After much inspection and investigation by expert engineers, a provisional draft of the proposal was presented to Parliament and received the Commons sanction in 1794. A supplementary Act was found necessary and passed through without opposition in 1880.

However on closer investigation these Acts proved insufficient and a third appeal was made to Parliament resulting in the Act of 1804, which cleared the way once and for all for the work to be carried through to completion.

BORING UNDER STANEDGE

To face the prospect of cutting a hole 3 miles 171 yards in length, and large enough to allow boats of fair tonnage to travel through, required great confidence and determination on the part of the promoters.

The excavators had to work mainly with the old fashioned implements of pick and shovel, aided by an unlimited supply of gunpowder.

Enormous quantities of rock had to be blasted and carried out load by load to each narrow exit.

The vast masses of debris brought from the bowels of the earth on the Marsden side were tipped into a great hollow not far from the present railway station. The heaps eventually settled down and to all intents and purposes became part and parcel of the surrounding contour. A row of houses are now built upon the site.

AN EERIE EXPERIENCE

Both entrances to the canal tunnel are arched for some considerable distance, and further in-sections remain in a natural rocky state, giving one the impression of gigantic caverns.

In one place so large is the quarried space that a boat can turn round or allow another to pass with ease.

These dark mysterious openings produce an eerie feeling in the traveller's mind and he is not sorry when he has safely emerged into the light and warmth of open day.

WALKING ON THE ROOF

The boat has to be propelled by a very primitive arrangement. Whenever the arch shows itself the men in charge lie upon their backs and walk along the roof of the tunnel, thus securing a slow but perceptible motion.

In other places a boathook comes in handy for pressing against the rocky sides and in other parts the craft has simply to crawl by the impetus of its own weight, or the swell of the water.

With a couple of good 'leggers' as the boatmen are called, the trip can be made in about three-and-a-half to four hours.

The water tunnel was actually commenced in 1794 and completed in 1811 at a cost of £217,000. It was opened for traffic on April 4th 1811, and was in continuous use up to the period of the late war.

LOSS OF LIFE

The entrance to the tunnel at Marsden is 436 feet above the canal water level at Huddersfield and 656 feet above sea level.

This gradient necessitated the building of many locks.

The canal is fed from a number of reservoirs in the neighbourhood, notably the Haigh, Tunnel End, Redbrook, Swillers (Swine Clough), Cuppoth (Cupwith) and Sparth. A large waterfall of 480 feet from the surface at Redbrook contributes some 27 gallons per minute to the grand supply which further serves another purpose by clearing the railway tunnel of smoke and so promotes a much needed ventilation.

During the period of the tunnel's construction there was a serious loss of human life. In an old register belonging to a church we find this entry:

"June 5th 1803 - The death of one George Sparth, a respectable member of society, who was killed in the tunnel in an instant by an explosion of gunpowder, and one, Thomas Whitehead, of Puleside, who was killed at the same time."

Upwards of 1000 persons attended the interment. Surely this was a record attendance for a funeral in those days.

THE RAILWAY TUNNELS

From 1811 to 1845, the water tunnel did splendid service as the principal route between East Lancashire and the West Riding. Much heavier merchandise could be transferred by boat than by road, and as a consequence heavy trade flourished.

Ultimately with the advent of the railway from Leeds to Manchester in 1849, the canal business began to lose its prestige, and soon its glories were eclipsed.

To stop all competition the railway company eventually purchased the waterway from the original owners at a very heavy cost, and so diverted practically all the goods traffic, and further secured a much more rapid and voluminous exchange of merchandise.

When the railway came to be built, Stanedge had to be penetrated again, this time with a single tunnel on the south side. This great undertaking was commenced in 1845 and opened for traffic on November 1st 1848 at a total cost of £202,688

The full length is exactly three miles 66 yards and is as straight as an arrow.

NINE FATAL ACCIDENTS

The entire undertaking was contracted for, and nine fatal accidents occurred during its construction. A pilot engine always ran before every train to see if the way of the tunnel was clear.

The enormous increase of railway traffic soon brought about a severe congestion and a second single tunnel was decided upon on the north side, parallel with the first.

This tunnel was also built by contract from a firm in Carlisle. They began the work in 1868 and completed it in 1870. The total length is three miles 59 yards, or seven yards shorter than its sister tunnel. The cost of the undertaking was £121,500. Four shafts allow for the escape of smoke at different places.

The third and last railway tunnel is a double one, and was constructed by the L & N.W. Railway. They commenced excavations in 1890 and completed their magnificent task in 1894. The length is three miles 62 yards.

No hills or mountains in any part of the world have been so bored through at a given point as these old Pennines which form the backbone of England.

A rather fascinating cutting featuring the dated spelling of 'Stanedge'. The writer rather got himself in a little bit of a twist over the dates, giving the impression that the tunnel was a afterthought. However the rest is factual as far as I can see. It also illustrates the irony that the canal tunnel enabled the much speedier construction of its nemesis, the railway tunnels. One interesting thing is the report of the funeral of George Sparth described as a respectable member of Society, but no such such description was given to his fellow sufferer in the same explosion Thomas Whitehead. One wonders what poor Thomas had done or not done!

Brian Minor

HNC's First Day Hire Boat

We'd said we'd do it for years. We'd both successfully run day boats separately elsewhere, so why not run one together, now we were both living near the Huddersfield Narrow Canal? Was it a silly idea, with all the locks, and the wet climate? But then this canal wasn't restored just for looking at, it was restored for people to use, and what better way of using and enjoying it than with a self-steer day boat? The time had come for Ed and myself, Dick, to stop talking about it and just do it!

When Ed approached British Waterways they were nervous of first-time hirers using the locks. But I'd done it before, at Warwick (wide locks, busy canal!) and found that with simple, positive, patient instruction, novice hirers coped just fine with the locks. So, after numerous letters and months of waiting, we were given permission. Tameside MBC have been very keen on our project from the outset.

Now we needed a boat! John Pinder of Bromsgrove built the shell, and Guy Holding at Portland Basin Marina fitted it out, with assistance from us and many others. Choosing a name was tricky, AILSA being early hot favourite, but OTTER finally got our vote.

Last minute jobs piled up. We'd advertised free trips on the first Sunday in August at Armentieres Square, so the boat had to be there, in spite of the rain as we left Ashton, and the cooling system needing topping up every twenty minutes! (Now sorted!) As if by magic, the sun appeared as we arrived in Stalybridge, as did the local folks, in fact 234 of them, necessitating 22 (short) trips.

Mike Marshall, Deputy Project Manager for British Waterways, has given us a two-months trial with 'Otter'. He is keen to see the newly-restored canal being used. 'Otter' is the very first day boat to be offered on this canal. She represents an investment in your waterway of around £15,000, so please come along and try the boat and the canal for yourself.

'Otter' is 32 feet long, with a toilet, washing-up and cooking facilities, and a large covered open seating area at the front, equipped with table and chairs, and protected by versatile canopies. Hires run from 9.00am to 6.00pm, from Armentieres Square, Stalybridge, and are for up to twelve people on a self-steer basis. Prices include tuition in operating the boat and the locks. So far, most hirers have cruised up to Roaches Lock and back; and thoroughly enjoyed themselves! Happy boating!

Dick Amende & Ed Mortimer

Enquiries: 0161-303-7635

*Below: Dick Amende pilots 'Otter' through Stalybridge.
Below Right: On board the 'Otter' with its spacious seating.*



Safe & Friendly Cruising - Part 2

Our celebratory Issue 137 was a little pushed for space, and certain articles had to be put on hold, but now here is the second of three articles reproducing, in full, "Some thoughts on boating etiquette for the experienced and less experienced boater". This time it's "bridges" and "working locks".

Bridges

Racing an oncoming boat to be first through a bridge is rarely productive - you will probably both have to stop, or worse, you will crash. Much more relaxing to give way and signal the other boat to come through. You'll soon learn to judge who is nearest the bridge and thus has priority! Alternatively, use the rule that the boat nearest the towing path, and therefore with the deepest water, gives way. On rivers and canals with a current, boats travelling upstream should give way to those coming downstream.

Working Locks

Locks offer some of the best opportunities for contact with other boaters. Some of your most memorable and useful conversations will be with others using the lock. Proper and efficient operation helps everyone. At busy times be aware there might be a queue to use the locks and actively enquire rather than pass others who may be queueing. Leave plenty of space (at least 70') behind you for the next arrivals at lock landings to moor safely.

Whilst waiting to use a lock after someone else, why not have a couple of your crew go to help at the lock. It makes for a

friendly few minutes, it shares out the work and they will enjoy the company - they may even learn something! Offering to help a (slow) solo boater will usually be appreciated and will help you along too! If you are helping someone, try not to take over the entire job and make sure you are not just passing on bad habits! Open top paddles slowly.

Beware those who say 'we're in no hurry' or 'I've all the time in the world'. They'll probably want you out as fast as possible and work the paddles like demented demons (do you do it yourself, perhaps?!)

Always try to share wide locks between two (or even more!) narrow beam boats - it makes less work for a start! If one crew seems to be less proficient, use the opportunity to share your experience productively. There are no rules about who goes in first - you can't close the gates until you are both in! Some thoughts are - full length boat first and get behind gate, boat with bow thrusters first - it may have more control over bows whilst the second boat comes in; longest boat first; steel boat before fibreglass etc. Discuss your options with each other and have a plan, especially for a flight of locks. Then you'll be efficient, safe and have fun! Don't force on people the idea of travelling through a broad flight roped together side by side ('breasted') - hire craft are not insured for it - and it can look like showing off! It is not much quicker, and anyway, who's in a hurry?

If a flight is busy in your direction, resist the temptation to re-set the lock for your boat to use if there is an oncoming boat a couple of locks away. You will only waste water and probably get into a queue in

the next pounds where you'll get in the way of other traffic. On some flights, you could even flood or drain the pound. If you see a boat coming, leave the gates open for them - it is a courtesy and less work for you!

Better still, actively look for a boat coming, even to the extent of going to a nearby bend to look. It is no fun having a lock gate slammed in your face when it was ready for you! Always let an oncoming boat use your

next lock if it is set for them, even if they are a couple of locks or several hundred yards away.

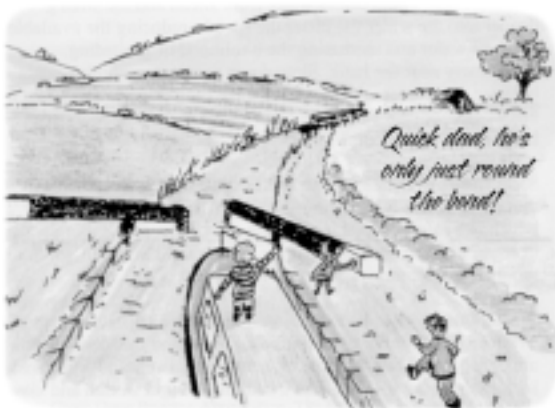
If you can, travel a flight of locks with at least one crew member working ahead so approaching boats will know you are coming - this saves water and can avoid accusations of stealing locks where in fact the other boaters did not know you were there. Do not work more than one lock ahead to avoid delaying an oncoming boat unnecessarily, unless the next couple of locks are already in your favour. Where intervening pounds are short, ensure the lock below is filling as the upper one is emptying, it saves water.

Normally you should close paddles and gates, unless there are specific instructions not to do so. Keep the boat well forward of the top cill going down and be aware of the danger of the front fender fouling beams or handrails of gates as the water

risers or falls. Do not push open any gates with the boat; wait until water levels are the same on both sides of the gate.

Except at signed moorings, don't moor in between locks on recognised lock flights;

it can lead to wastage of water. On a narrow lock flight this creates an obstruction to navigating a *butty* (unpowered boat normally towed by a motor boat) which is usually pulled by a long



rope from lock to lock in the traditional way. If you have no option, please be considerate to such craft and keep your roof adornments (especially aials) down during daylight hours.

On rack and pinion mechanisms, set the safety catch before starting to wind a paddle. Never leave windlasses on paddle gear if you are not winding the paddle - they can fly off and damage limbs and heads (bystanders as well as yours). Never jump down on to a boat from a lock side - if you slip you could be squashed. Always have at least one person attending the boat to ensure it does not get caught on cills etc. Avoid contact with either set of gates. An unwatched boat is usually the one where an accident could ensue. The steerer should stay in control of the boat.

Next time - supervision of children and dogs, engines and generators, ropes, tunnels, going aground, meeting boats, etc.

2001 Photographic Competition

WAS THERE EVER MORE OPPORTUNITY FOR TAKING EXCITING PICTURES OF OUR CANAL?!

- * *BRIGHTLY COLOURED BOATS*
- * *CANALSIDE EVENTS*
- * *STANDEDGE VISITOR CENTRE*
- * *EVEN MINOR DISASTERS!*
- * *AND VINNIE THE WATER VOLE.*

This, the first notice of the annual photo competition, is a bit on the late side due to lack of space in our “celebratory” issue. We had to set aside several regular items to fit in all the extra bits so, with only this for a warning, GET SHOOTING or dig out those piles of waterway pictures and have a go!

The rules are the same as for last year, waiving the place and time rules of previous years. Any inland waterway shot, worldwide, from daguerreotype to digital will qualify - the only other criterion being that the photographer must be (or directly related to) a member of HCS.

And, once again, member ANTHONY CARTER from ARCADE PHOTO SERVICES, IMPERIAL ARCADE, NEW STREET, HUDDERSFIELD has generously offered a PAIR OF BINOCULARS as the major prize, to go with the Challenge Shield, replica and certificate.

Other winners will receive cash prizes and signed certificates. The size of the cash prizes will be determined by the number of entries, so **the more the merrier!**

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)*

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 Huddersfield Canal Society) totalling 50p for each print submitted.

6. CLOSING DATE:

FRIDAY 16TH NOVEMBER 2001

PRIZES

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

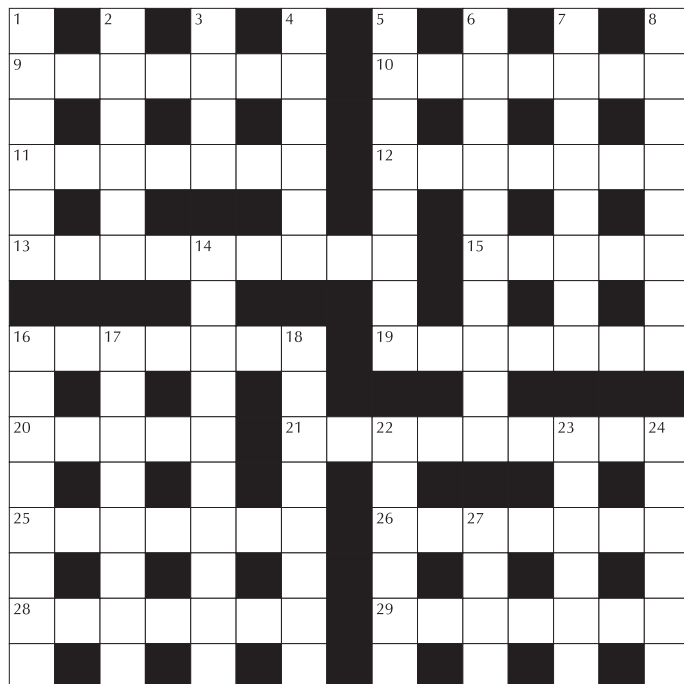
There will be a winner and a runner-up in each of the four categories a) to d) and each will receive a certificate and a cash prize. There will also be certificates for “highly commended” and “commended” categories.

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

All winning prints will be published in Pennine Link, with the Judge’s comments.

*Any queries to:- The Organiser, Ken Wright.
Tel: 01457 873599*

Canal Crossword - 34



28 Shorten a lock and a flood lock near Wakefield (7)

29 Inland island of the lower Trent (7)

Down

1 Waterborne without beet as a cargo in such a boat (6)

2 Frustrate efforts to place a rower's seat across the boat (6)

3 In which to perform ablutions at the western end of the Kennet and Avon (4)

4 Eye Mrs Liver Bird from the ferry (6)

5 Where to place a drunken sailor in need of hosing down (8)

6 Aunt's lino I used to keep the boat warm (10)

7 Marine industrial unit? (8)

8 Get in a pickle on the Trent and Mersey south of Burton (8)

14 Ten reasons given for navigating the tunnel on the Ashby canal (10)

Across

9 Where the railway crosses the Basingstoke canal find a connection between fire waste and a valley (7)

10 Find a coot run on a canal hugging the hillside (7)

11 On the approaches to Leek see the hills from which the water for the Macclesfield canal is gathered (7)

12 Loan put a strain on the finances of the Somerset Coal canal in reaching their proposed terminus (7)

13 Smaller version of Offa's offering, crossing the Llangollen canal at bridge 15 (5,4)

15 A lot removed from the side of a flatboat (5)

16 Arrows partner plays a part in pulling a horseless boat (7)

19 No winds blow at the junction of the Wilts and Berks and the former North Wiltshire canals (7)

20 Sing to your flowers and recite an ode to your battery (5)

21 It could secure the boat or it could help the Monty rise a few miles north of Welshpool (5,4)

25 Townies living on the Chesterfield canal near Drakeholes tunnel (7)

26 And write a Limerick about a mighty river (7)

16 Between Doncaster and Thorne find a lock, a junction and a bridge which share a name in part with the author of Dracula (8)

17 Near Maesbury Marsh on the Monty find sheep hair by large weight (8)

18 Scholarliness (no liars please) applied to monster studies (8)

22 His MBA achieved at a centre of sporting excellence on the Thames (6)

23 On the Nene below Northampton go public, educationally speaking (6)

24 Linen basket Basil missed whilst joining the Thames at Reading (6)

27 Towpath yet to be finished beside an Irish navigation (4)

Solution on page 53

What the Papers Said

I'm sure members are worldly-wise enough to know that the media do love the 'doom and gloom', so they will take these mixed press clippings in the spirit of a newly opened canal; besides, is your glass (or canal) half empty or half full? Ed.

Colne Valley Chronicle in May

Together with some other local papers, the Chronicle had a letter from former Press Officer of the Society Alec Ramsden being very critical of the guest lists at all the various opening ceremonies. He also criticised BW for stopping the Society holding a celebratory Festival in Stalybridge last May. There was a follow up with a letter from Alwyn Ogborn agreeing with Alec and particularly over the proposed festival (he was Chairman of the organising committee).

Huddersfield Daily Examiner - May 14th

Pledge from BW to increase the moorings and facilities on the canal after boaters had complained. It is unfortunately part of a five year plan and boaters want them now. One lady from Brighouse complained about the water shortage that meant she was grounded in Slaithwaite.

Oldham Chronicle - May 16th

Story of exhibition at Saddleworth Museum, 'Horse Boating, the Forgotten Transport' at which Society member Sue Day would be in attendance with her horse-drawn boat.

Stalybridge Reporter - May 17th

Article and picture about the plight of Mikron Theatre getting stuck in Uppermill. Their boat is an ex-working boat probably 7 ft wide. This is now too wide for the restored Wade Lock. The company had to go to the venue in Greenfield by van and then had to get help from the Society to dig out a winding hole. Quote from Alan Stopher, project manager, 'The maximum dimension guaranteed by BW is 6ft 10ins width ways, unfortunately Mikron's boat proved too big for the canal'

Oldham Chronicle - May 18th

Preview of the BBC programme on the story

of the restoration and how it would be broadcast on both sides of the Pennines. (*I was in Wales at the time and missed it! Ed*)

Oldham Chronicle - May 21st

Account of the official opening of the High Street bridge in Uppermill with good pictures of 'Pennine Moonraker' breaking the tape. Nice comments from Mayor of Oldham. Quote from Chairman David Sumner 'Sometimes dreams do come true'.

Oldham Chronicle - May 23rd

Account of opening of Standedge Visitor Centre by Lily Turner (daughter of David Whitehead, the fastest legger through the tunnel).

The Times - May 26th

Yes the Old Thunderer knows where we are! Short article on the tunnel reopening and the Visitor Centre at Marsden. There was also a leading article on the canals renaissance generally, though they do give the impression that most of the restoration is the result of work by BW.

New Civil Engineer - May 31st

Mention of the reopening of the tunnel and the work done by contractor AMCO. All the dimensions were metric, so I didn't really understand it! length of tunnel is given as 5,200 metres and is part of the 32 Km Canal. It mentions clearing out 2 metres of silt which my grandson informs me is just over 6 feet.

Oldham Chronicle - June 4th Full column write up of the play 'Argy Bargy' put on at the transhipment shed by the Oldham Coliseum Community players. The reviewer mentions the £30M set for the play!

Oldham Chronicle - June 7th has long article and photograph of Frank Smith and David Finnis at Uppermill asking for volunteers for jobs around the canal. Text says that Frank is the first person in England to be employed jointly by BW and the Society - I didn't know that such an employment existed in Scotland, Ireland or Wales either!

Colne Valley Express & Chronicle - June 29th

Has a front page article bemoaning the lack of loos on the restored Canal under the heading of 'Valley Loos Blues!' It quotes Kirklees councillor David Ridgeway saying "The public toilets in Slaithwaite are awful and appalling" A graphic description of the state of the toilets followed! Councillor Ridgeway went on to say "I have received from British Waterways a shrug and they have walked away"

Frank Smith (HCS) replied saying that BW were responsible and that boaters had a key for the existing ones, although there is at present only the one at Dobcross. Julie Maund (BW) said they were in talks with Kirklees to try and improve the situation.

In the same issue is an article with picture of National Trust managers lead by HCS's David Finnis in the trip boat at Marsden. The article gives the impression that they actually went all the way through the Tunnel, although the quote from David that they " had an opportunity of taking an underground view of Marsden Moor on the Standedge Tunnel trip boat" shows that it was only a short trip.

Oldham Chronicle - July 23rd

List of sites for the 'sculptures' to be made from recycled items on the canal. The proposals are for the erection of these items at four places.

Oldham Chronicle - July 25th

Article with coloured pictures about the first boat through Standedge Tunnel with passengers. Quote from David Sumner thanking BW. *Main picture was a good one of past editor Alwyn Ogborn (but not so good of new wife Joan - they broke off their honeymoon to be on the trip - that is dedication! Ed)*

Oldham Chronicle - July 26th

Account of the boat sinking in the Tunnel whilst being towed through. Quote from Julie Maund (BW) that the boat appeared to have been pierced by something floating in the water, but that officials were investigating. It was expected that the tug service would be back in operation the next day.

Colne Valley Chronicle July 27th

Has a front page article headed 'High and Dry!' with a large picture of boats stuck on the bottom of a waterless canal at Marsden. It was caused because of a boat springing a leak whilst going through the Tunnel, necessitating the top pound being drained. Once again Julie Maund from BW was quoted at length telling how it happened and why they had to repair the boat in the Tunnel.

In the same issue article and picture about the 'Link Day' Picture showed David Sumner and David Fletcher (BW) having a glass of bubbly before heading into the Tunnel for the first passenger boat through. Apart from saying that the evening BBQ as at the Riverhead Brewery the facts were correct.

Huddersfield Daily Examiner (End of July)

Long article with picture of despondent boater, headlined 'Marooned on Canal' and is a long account of how Mr Martyn Coleman got stuck at Slaithwaite. He said "Debris, shallow waters and leaking locks were causing major problems" he also was quoted as saying "That boaters would not bother to use the the waterway if word got around and the problem was not tackled" He then listed his problems including an estimate of £1000.00 for boat repairs. A Slaithwaite man was quoted as saying that all the boaters coming through were complaining. A BW spokeswoman said "It was important to them to listen to complaints and if something needs fixing we can take action" The article ended with the BW number of 0161 819 5847 to call.

Merseytravel News Summer 2001

Has an article about a brand new section of canal to be constructed in Liverpool - we've got everyone going!

Oldham Chronicle - August

Short article defending the money spent on the canal restoration. Unlike the Dome, which failed miserably in what it was supposed to do i.e. regenerate a desolate bit of London's Docklands, it compares favourably with the £100M spent on the Lowry, which is helping to bring life back into a derelict area. The final sentence reads ' As

several studies have shown, the canal's benefits to the community are not only here now - the lovely old canal is perhaps the least of it - but they are largely still to come'

Letter asking why the laundrette in Uppermill is closing down now that it is especially important now that the HNC is open, as many boaters will use the facilities.

Oldham Chronicle - August 2nd

Mention that Oldham Rotarians were playing host to a group of young people and one of the delights for them was a canal boat trip on the Huddersfield Narrow Canal.

Oldham Chronicle - August 3rd

In the Angling notes is the notice that Cairo angling club are having a match on the Heyrod section of the canal as the rest of the canal is 'out of sorts'. Not quite sure what is meant by that comment!

Another article in the same issue is about the progress on the Rochdale Canal and the building of a lift bridge at Chadderton.

Rather interestingly a couple of letters about whether the canal is in Oldham or Saddleworth - both parties were claiming it!

I have a cutting without a date giving the details of the concert held in Uppermill with the Diggle Band and the Saddleworth Male Voice Choir, the whole compered by our own Ken Wright. I am sorry to have missed this concert, but it was the same night as the final meeting of the Tameside Festival Committee.

Manchester Evening News - August 10th

The country ramble this week starts at Marsden, goes over the top and comes back for a ride into the tunnel.

Huddersfield Examiner - August 10th

Front page story about the proposed Royal visit to the canal and his subsequent visit to the Examiner offices. It gave the date and the morning timing. *(This publicity means that any member in the Huddersfield area who missed the Prince's visit just wasn't taking notice of the local scene! Ed)*

Huddersfield Examiner - August 16th

A full report of the nb Hannah being sunk in a lock after getting hung up on a cill. The boat

belongs to Mr David Rimmer of Stockport and he was with his brother Alan, who had just arrived from Australia to have five weeks on the boat. Apparently they entered the lock and realised that there was insufficient water to get out. When they attempted to reverse down stream the front of the boat got hooked up and as the water ran out of the lock the rear of the boat flooded and sank. Mr Rimmer said he had been boating for four years and had never had a problem like this before.

Colne Valley Chronicle - August 24th

Front page article headed 'SINKING FEELING' Starting with the words "Safety fears were voiced this week as another narrow boat fell victim to 'dry lock' syndrome near Marsden". The picture showed the nb Hannah hung up on a cill and being pumped dry by BW workmen. The article quoted Frank Smith at length on the how the BW were likely to be soon getting to grips with the problem. He blamed the fact that some of the locks had been renovated over 15 years ago, the relative newness of the canal and the current shortage of reservoirs for the problem. For BW, Mike Marshall said they had identified four areas where problems could arise, he named boater error as the first of these and vandalism as second.

Second article inside described the 200th meeting of the Colne Valley Transport Association took place on a boat trip from Tunnel End. Accompanying photo showed boat, but was not able to identify it.

Oldham Chronicle - August 25th

Giving the usage figures of 400 boats having sailed on the HNC since reopening and that half have gone through the Tunnel. The Visitor Centre at Stanedge has had 15,000 visitors. These are figures supplied by BW.

Oldham Chronicle - August 25th

This is about the Royal visit for Monday 3rd September. Saying they hope that there is sufficient water to enable Prince Charles to take a boat ride into the Tunnel without fear of getting stuck! BW were quoted as saying that measures were being put into place to ensure that there would be plenty of water.

Oldham Chronicle - August 29th

Full page article and picture. Reporter Geoff Wood hired a narrow boat and cruised from Guide Bridge to Dobcross and back on a four day cruise. Quote "Beyond Stalybridge, you glide through an area of mature trees and lush undergrowth. It is hard to imagine on the approach to Mossley that we are so close to industrial areas. Through most of Mossley the canal stays green and remained so through Greenfield and Uppermill"

There is also a quote from the Tourism officer for Saddleworth and Oldham 'that Uppermill had certainly benefited since boats began traveling along the HNC, I think the Canal gives people an excuse to come to Uppermill. And businesses here are now benefiting.

Huddersfield Examiner - August 30th.

Another report of boats being left stranded because of water shortages. Six boats were stuck for up to three days, according to the story, on the stretch between Longroyd Bridge and Milnsbridge. One of the boats stuck was theatre company Chol Theatre who need their boat as a backcloth for their show. A BW spokeswoman blamed the problems on boaters who left paddles open for the lack of water.

(There has been a spate of these water shortage stories, in spite of the appallingly wet summer we have had. Some 400 boats are said to have used the canal with half going all the way through. There should have been little or no problems with this usage. I do not think much of the excuse of paddles left open, most of the boaters using the canal so far seem to have been experienced people who are unlikely to anything as daft as that. Even if they did it would only affect one pound and not stretches of the canal. Some of the gates leak, we knew this was going to happen as the locks were required to be left empty after restoration thus allowing the gates to dry out and warp. Ed)

The Engineer - August 23/30th

Article on the huge construction work costing £12m on the Falkirk Wheel joining the Forth and Clyde and the Union Canal in Scotland. This will be a trip well worth taking to view this in operation when it is finished.

Most of the nationals and the TV/Radio had the story of the cyclist who rode over a fisherman's rod on the Calder and Hebble and ended up by being thrown in the canal. *(Although there is the ever-present resentment between boaters and anglers, I think that the peace of the canals usually ensures that any disputes are only verbal! The Canal Society has had good relationships with the various angling clubs on the HNC. Canal restoration is for the good of all. Notably, the incident was caused by a cyclist. I have noticed that some cyclists do tend not to appreciate the slower pace of life on a canal towpath and try to ride far too fast for the conditions. This is not being critical of all cyclists, I ride a bike for exercise and enjoy off road paths, but some of the younger riders seem to be intolerant of other peoples' rights. Ed)*

Huddersfield Examiner - September 3rd

Front page lead story (as it should be!) about Prince Charles's visit to the Canal and to the Examiner office afterwards. Nice picture of Prince shaking hands with the crowd at Marsden Station. Article was a factual report of the visit, and was continued on to most of page three. Another couple of pictures here, as well as a very nice comment about HCS, quote "Prince Charles' visit to the HNC today is a tribute to the work of the never-say-die campaigners who helped bring about the £30M restoration. It was in 1974 that the Huddersfield Canal Society first dreamed of reopening the 26 mile waterway which runs from the town to Ashton-under-Lyne. The ambition soon became known as the Impossible Restoration because of the obstacles involved"

London Daily Telegraph - 4th September

Under the heading of Court Circular "His Royal Highness, Patron, the Waterways Trust, officially opened the Huddersfield Narrow Canal at Standedge Tunnel and visited the Standedge Visitors Centre" Its nice to be recognised right at the top!

Brian Minor

brian.minor@btinternet.com

Common Sense & Humility

At last we have a complete canal with water from end to end. A route from Lancashire to Yorkshire. But there are problems for boaters, and there is criticism of British Waterways and the partnership with the local authorities and HCS. We should have done more! We should have done better! I find myself asking: 'How?' 'When?' and 'Where was the money to come from?' Liaison may not always have been as good as we would have liked, and I can be every bit as critical of BW as anyone - about times they have not listened, or press releases that airbrush out all that HCS or the local authorities did before the Millennium scheme - but we must not forget that the people we are criticising worked miracles to get the Canal open by the 1st of May, and the very same people are now working just as hard to open the Rochdale Canal next year. And the lads on site have always been there - are still there - to sort out problems. A little bit of common sense and humility on our part would suggest that we need to be patient.

Two questions spring to mind. First of all what did you expect? Restoration of the canal has cost about £45m - its difficult to be precise when much of the early work also created jobs or provided training, and included environmental work - and with some of that on the Peak Forest Canal. It sounds a lot of money, but most of the time there was only just enough. Only in recent years has there been enough for work to be of the highest standard. And some of the early work was done nearly twenty years ago. It's not surprising that lockgates leak and paddle gear is difficult to work, or that more dredging is needed.

And with two hundred years of ground movements since the Canal was built, it's not surprising if some lock chambers are not quite parallel sided, or have high spots on the walls that squeeze any boat an inch or two wider than ideal. Even when locks were rebuilt, the walls were taken down only until sound material was reached and rebuilt from there. They would be checked to ensure the walls were at least seven feet apart - but there was never the money to completely rebuild locks to be absolutely certain that a 7' x 70' boat-shaped box would fit in the lock chamber. No doubt there are also leaks in the Canal - possibly some that would not be revealed until water started flowing because of boat movements or the emptying and filling of locks. And we know the Tunnel was always narrow - IWA founders Aickman and Rolt had a bit of a fright in their famous trip in 1948 when they could only squeeze *Ailsa Craig* through by prizing off the rubbing strips - and modern boats are much squarer in profile than were the working boats the canal was built for.

None of this is any different from the experience of other restored canals. All have been difficult to work at first. The Kennet and Avon was re-opened in 1990, but it is only now with £25,000,000 of Lottery funding that the canal is becoming easy to use. And unless boaters use the canal, the problems will not go away. Many will then resolve themselves simply through use - gaps between the timbers of most lockgates will seal as the wood expands through exposure to water, and paddle gear will become freer moving with use. But many of the problems will

require work - not £25,000,000 of work let me hasten to add. And that brings me to my second question. What happens next?

The Society has signed an agreement with BW that could see volunteers again working on the Canal. The local authorities are paying for the enhanced maintenance needed for a restored canal. And BW have a clear and obvious interest in the Canal's well-being. A partnership arrangement between BW, the local authorities and HCS that is in everybody's interests is now intended to replace the Huddersfield Canal Company which will be wound up. The first formal meeting of the partnership is likely to be towards the end of the year included within a Huddersfield Canal Company board meeting. Initially at least, the Directors of that Company will have to represent their parent organisations (that is, David and I will represent HCS), and the Board of the Canal Company will have to ratify any decisions taken. Only when the Canal Company is satisfied that a working partnership is in place (and also after agreement has been reached on any outstanding financial matters) can the Canal Company be wound up. That also will need the prior agreement of the

funding agencies that they too are satisfied that the new partnership will look after the Canal. Then the partnership arrangements between the local authorities, BW and HCS will formally replace official liaison through the Huddersfield Canal Company.

I hope that BW will be able to provide a list of problem sites to the first meeting of the partnership with suggestions for possible solutions, although I don't expect them to be able to provide realistic costings of all of the work needed so soon. I hope the partners will be able to consider this, and jointly see if work can be grouped in categories by type or location in a way that will enable us to see if any grants (possibly from sources we have not yet considered) could be accessed to resolve some issues. Then we need to establish an agreed order of priorities and rates of spending which I hope will lead to a programme of work to ensure the Canal is relatively easy to use (yes, even with all of those locks!) and problem free - rather sooner, I hope, than the ten or more years needed to resolve the problems of other restored canals.

Keith Gibson
Chairman, HCS Restoration

It is not the critic who counts, nor the man who points out how the strong man stumbles or where the doer of deeds could have done better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who knows great enthusiasm, great devotion and the triumph of achievement and who, at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while doing greatly - so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who know neither victory nor defeat

Harwood's Grand Canal

We've all heard of the Grand Canal, indeed perhaps some of us have stood on the 'Bridge of Sighs' over it but no marks for getting too far ahead because this Grand Canal is in China and is by far and away the biggest man made waterway ever (as a total mileage), putting even Suez and Panama to shame.

Linking Beijing in the north and Hangzhou in the south the canal is remarkable in, that despite being 1800 kilometres long, it has only 24 locks and 60 bridges. As with many matters of culture and heritage the Chinese put us to shame. Our canal era of 200 years ago is put into perspective by the Grand Canal, parts of which were built in the 4th and 5th Centuries BC ! Other parts were added over the centuries until completion in 610 AD.

Its major function initially was to connect the wheat and millet growing areas of the north with the rice growing areas of the south. In 608/9 AD however a branch was added to facilitate supplying troops on the northern frontiers. As ever with such projects the statistics are amazing -



over 6 million peasants were employed in construction, of whom about half died during the process.

In the 19th century a series of floods broke the dykes of the Huang Ho river causing great problems in the canal section between Suchow and Huai-yin which led to parts of the northern section falling into disuse. The Nationalist government started repairs and improvements after 1934 and in 1958,

under the Communist regime, with dredging, straightening and widening, a new 64 kilometre section was built. Locks were enlarged and brought up to modern day standards so that the whole canal is now navigable again, although the major part of the traffic is on the southern half. The canal is also used to move Yangtze water to the northern part of Kiangsu province for irrigation purposes enabling double cropping of rice in that area.

In 1999 archaeological excavations began at a site on the canal where eight sunken ships have been discovered. Two of the three excavated were timber measuring



Review - 'I'd Go Back Tomorrow' *by Mike Lucas*

This is a book that certainly knows who it's for! Lovers of canals, theatre, countryside, pubs, travel will all find much to enjoy. Since I like them all, I was sucker-bait.

This is the story of Thirty Years of the Mikron Theatre Company, the famous canal-based group whose intention is to take live "theatre" to people who would not normally get the opportunity to see acting in the flesh. The format is established and well-known. Four versatile actors (of both genders) act, sing, play instruments and operate the lights and sound, in front of a painted cloth suspended from a frame. Behind the cloth are all the costumes and knick-knacks needed for the four actors to create, between them, umpteen or more different characters. The plots of the plays are "conservation" based and mainly deal with industrial and transport history, and their effects on local communities. With lots of humour and catchy songs.

The author is the founder and artistic director of Mikron, Mike Lucas, who started

adult life as a lawyer but soon swapped for a "life upon the wicked stage".

I will not spoil a good read by going into too much detail. The reader is led through lots of trials and tribulations, much hilarity, loads of frustrations and discovers early on that Mikron boats have been getting stuck in locks long before Easter Saturday in Uppermill! A lot of time is spent in and around (mainly in) canalside pubs and there are many revealing facts about pub grub, rotten ale and unhelpful landlords!

And imagine all the actors who have lived aboard Mikron's boat over those thirty years, thrown together to navigate the country's canals in all weathers, and then having to go out and perform in front of perhaps a handful of not very willing observers. It would be foolish to imagine that all was always sweetness and light! There are very funny, sometimes not so funny tales of the days, weeks and months spent on the boats, most famously on *Tyesely* *contd...*



12.6 meters and another was 23.6 m. Also found was a 10.6m dugout canoe made from a single timber. Porcelain and other evidential finds have led to the conclusion that these ships date from a period between 960 and 1126. Other

sites have produced huge amounts of pottery, porcelain, ironware and coins all of which provide convincing evidence for the function of the canal as a major hub of communications and trade in the past.

John Harwood

Canal Celebration Concert

On Wednesday, 20th June 2001, the Society hosted a concert in Saddleworth Civic Hall in association with Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council. The aim of the concert was to celebrate the full re-opening of the canal in Saddleworth, and to thank the residents for their patience and good humour during the works.

The concert was supported financially by the National Lottery, through the Millennium Commission, and was a "Percent for Art" scheme. Where major construction works take place one percent of the project money is set aside to promote artistic projects to enhance the work and its environment. These projects can be visual or performing arts and "one-off" events or permanent features. Saddleworth is currently going through planning procedures for some canalside structures which will also be "Percent for Art" schemes.

The concert, compered by the writer, was a combination of vocal and brass band items,

performed by the Saddleworth Male Voice Choir and the Diggle Band, and started with a sung National Anthem and the newly commissioned brass fanfare "Waterways".

The choir, under their conductor Damian Cunningham and accompanist Sylvia Hoare, took first bite with "Alexander's Ragtime Band", O Waly! Waly!, Linden Lea and The Hippopotamus Song – a very enjoyable mixed bag!

The band, under musical director Alan Lawton, followed with the march "Mephistopheles", the overture "Carnival", the "Londonderry Air" and cornet soloist David Pogson's rendition of "Share my Volk".

Then followed the first highlight of the evening when the band played the stirring new concert march "Standedge", commissioned under the "Percent for Art" scheme and composed by Derek Broadbent, former musical director of

contd.. Mike's family features largely and the tragic illness and death of his co-founder, his wife Sarah, is very sensitively handled. We also follow son Sam from before the cradle to mature manhood and find a happy ending with the arrival on the scene of Lynne, Mike's new partner and one of Mikron's very efficient administrators.

It is very clear from the outset that Mikron's achievements have come about through a great deal of grit and determination. Mike Lucas has fought against incredible odds to keep Mikron (literally) afloat – the sections on funding problems are enough to frighten most people from ever trying anything similar. I can only quote the final paragraph of the book:-

"They say that boating and love of the waterways can become obsessive. Trying to

keep a small theatre company afloat can sometimes verge on madness. Okay, I confess - I am an obsessive madman. But I've always remembered not to let the bastards grind me down".

Highly recommended.

"I'd Go Back Tomorrow" is published by WayZgoose, and can be obtained by ringing the Mikron office on 01484 843701 or writing to Mikron, Marsden Mechanics, Marsden, Huddersfield HD7 6BW.

Price: £15 + £2 p & p (paperback); £20 + £2.50 p & p (hardback) or save the p & p by picking a copy up at one of Mikron's shows - the leaflet for the Autumn 2001 tour is now available from Mikron (a s.a.e. is much appreciated).

Ken Wright

Brighthouse and Rastrick Band and famous for his arrangement of the “Floral Dance” which got into the pop charts with Terry Wogan on vocals!

After a short interval, during which one lucky lady won a helicopter ride on a lucky ticket number, the choir entertained again with four songs varying from “When the Saints go marching in” to “Will ye no come back again” and the band played music from “Barnum”, “Shepherds’ Song”, a brilliant euphonium solo “Alpine Polka” by Phil Kerr and the Beatles “Ticket to Ride”.

The official final number was a rousing version of Gilbert and Sullivan’s “March of the Peers” from ‘Iolanthe’ performed by the massed wind of both choir and band.

Then came a nice surprise – an encore of march “Standedge”, conducted by the composer, Derek Broadbent, who just happened to be in the audience!

A rather disappointing half-full house had a fantastic night out – and all for a highly subsidised £3.50, much less than the price of similar concerts in this hall.

I had a ball, looking after the event, and would like to thank the choir, the band, Graham Birch from Oldham Council, our honoured guests, and the people who bothered to turn up (not a single member of HCS Council other than me, incidentally, although only David Sumner had a real reason that I know of!) for a super evening. And not forgetting my friend, member Stormin’ Norman Hayes and our wives, Anne and Brenda, who looked after ‘front of house’. One sad note was that when we came to bank the ticket money, there were two forged Scottish £20 notes in it, making £40 less for a proposed permanent canal display in Saddleworth Museum.



Ken Wright

Diggle Band have a new music stand ‘pelmet’ (pictured above) to go with their new signature tune - the march “Standedge”. Very appropriate choice.

Incidentally, it is hoped that the march and possibly the fanfare will feature in the restoration video being released soon.

Ken Wright

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Solution to Crossword 34

Review - A Guide to the HNC

This A5 32-page booklet has been produced for British Waterways and, at the time of writing, is the only official guide to the Huddersfield Narrow Canal. There is also John Lower's "South Pennine Ring" but the HNC section is now out of date. The BW guide is free, presumably funded partly from advertising, of which more later!

As with any guide of this kind, produced in something of a rush to coincide with the re-opening of the Canal, there are errors and omissions but, generally, it is an attractive and readable document, well printed, well illustrated in full colour and with clear well-drawn maps. The maps, however, give the impression that the location of pubs is every bit as important as the route, layout and navigational details of the Canal. The maps are splattered with little pictures of pint pots, all but obliterating any detail in places.

I suppose some readers - and it is not clear who the booklet is actually aimed at - would consider this vital information. I would have liked to see the odd restaurant, chip shop, Indian take-away, super-market, bakery or whatever shown as well. In any case serious drinkers are not interested in a picture of a pint pot. A pub's name and a hint as to what beer it sells is also vital information.

I digress. The booklet has sections on canal history and restoration as well as general information on navigating the Canal, with safety features carefully included. There are descriptions of places of interest, including Denshaw, for instance, which is nearly far enough away to be in a guide for the Rochdale Canal!

Photographs include one of the café in "Last of the Summer Wine" which is also a bit off the canal's beaten track.

Generally though, it's an interesting read and will give many people, like tourists and others who are not canal buffs, a good idea of what the Canal has to offer.

And that is what restoration was about, to offer opportunities to the Colne and Tame valleys to attract visitors, create jobs, advertise our existence.

Did I say advertise? Here I must offer a very serious criticism. I said earlier that the booklet was partly funded from advertising. One would have thought that the adverts might tell us the whereabouts of those eateries and shops and facilities that are missing from the maps. But **NO!** Possibly for those in Marsden but elsewhere, on the West side of the hill - zilch! Out of 24 advertisements, only one is for the West side and that is Tameside's Museum and Art Galleries. Whereas Marsden gets 7 (including 4 pubs), the rest of Colne Valley gets 4 and Huddersfield 7.

The remaining five are as far away from the Canal as Dewsbury and Brighouse and include a canal-hire base near Mirfield who, at the time of writing, are refusing to let boats use the Narrow because it is considered unfit for their boats.

Probably this is all due to some advertising agency who don't know the area (the publishers are from Morecambe) and clearly didn't get much guidance. Tell that to the Saddleworth Tourist Association!

Ken Wright

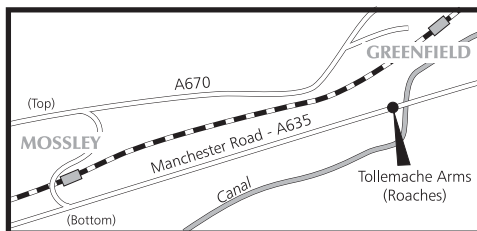
The Back Page

THE SOCIETY WELCOMES THE FOLLOWING NEW MEMBERS:

2631 Mr & Mrs Smith,
2632 Mr & Mrs Wood,
2633 Mr Kershaw,
2634 Mrs Kershaw,
2635 Mr & Mrs Atlass,
2636 Mr Wheeldon,
2637 Ms O'Neill,
2638 Mr Kempster,
2639 Mr Milsom,
2640 Dr Baker,

WEST SIDE SOCIAL MEETINGS:

As usual, the venue is the Tollemache Arms, Manchester Road, Mossley on the second Wednesday of the month commencing at 8.00pm. Forthcoming meetings for 2001 are: 14th November & 12th December.



PENNINE LINK BACK NUMBERS:

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