

PENNINE LINK



SEASON'S GREETINGS

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Editorial

Even though the canal season is over and most boaters are batted down at home, we seem to have got a bumper issue for you this quarter.

Three articles describing cruises during the summer will help to brighten the dark nights until the next time you need to get away from the phone, the car, the neighbours, the television or whatever it is you escape from and wind down on the water. Might give you ideas for places to cruise next year. Thanks to John Sully, Ken and Anne Wright and to Andrew Shortridge for his Scottish Marathon.

I was involved with the talks with BW on canal dimensions recently (report is on page 16). Probably the most important part was the sense of getting the job done that came through from all parties. We, as a Society, will continue to press BW to make the canal open for all boats, after all that is one of the things we were created for, but the sort of 'Yah-Boo' that has gone on previously is simply counter-productive.

Congratulations to John Fletcher on his election to the Chairmanship of the IWA and to his wife Margaret on becoming Chairman of the North West IWA. John and Margaret are the force behind the Manchester, Bolton and Bury restoration and both are members of HCS. John is a very 'hands on' character and I think he will be a force for change within the IWA. Can I wish them both every success and enjoyment during their time in office.

One of the HCS Council's decisions recently has been to put into place a method of recognising the work done within the Society by volunteers. The basic idea is that whenever a set amount of voluntary time

has been put in the society will recognise it in some way. Many other charities and organisations are doing similar schemes. This will be starting in the New Year, and although a good proportion of you will have done many, many hours of effort in the past and the council recognises that this work has been done unsung, it is difficult to make estimates. So therefore a starting date of the 1st January was decided for the new scheme.

Whilst talking about the Council, we have lost one lady and gained another. Jo Young having retired from Membership Secretary didn't want to stay on Council without a specific job, so she, to our regret, has resigned from the Council. We all wish her the best of luck with all the other voluntary bodies she is helping to run! Our loss is their gain. Mo O'Neill who by charm (and a bit of bullying) has been organising the boat crews very successfully on the East Side since taking over from Bob Reed has been co-opted to the Council. Having seen Mo in action I expect she will bring some fresh ideas to our deliberations (as well as reducing the average age somewhat!)

I was involved, as an ex-Commonwealth games volunteer, with the recent 'Skills City' show put on by the Prince of Wales Trust. Over 90,000 youngsters came through in the four days of the show and were given an experience of what it is like to work in various trades. I was rather surprised that BW were not amongst the exhibitors. I met a couple of members of the Society among the volunteers, and another lady who is a volunteer at the Saddleworth Museum who reads Plink. Greetings to them all - I hope you have recovered!

Incidentally those of you who live in the Manchester area might have heard the odd appeal for members being put out on BBC GMR. This has come about because I am



Chairman's Report

We campaigned to restore the Huddersfield Narrow Canal to rebuild our waterway but also to help regenerate the

Colne and Tame Valleys. We forecast that restoration of the canal would do just that. In recognition of the regeneration of Stalybridge, the Civic Trust awarded a commendation to Tameside MBC. Now it's Yorkshire's turn and the office of the Deputy Prime Minister has nominated the Huddersfield Narrow Canal Restoration, Slaithwaite Village as a finalist for the 2002 Awards for Urban Renaissance.

I received a signed certificate on behalf of HCS in the company of British Waterways, Kirklees MC and the Colne Valley Tennant last month. You will read elsewhere in this issue more details of the Award provided by Alec Ramsden. Suffice to say on behalf of HCS to everyone, "we told you so".

We knew the scheme would attract attention but to feature on Songs of Praise, was a surprise. I was grateful to Ken Stephenson – the producers of the video *"The Impossible Dream"* – for arranging this. Again, we were recognized by millions.

The NWA Waterways Conference this year majored on restoration. Keith chaired a discussion on where to go next

and David Fletcher, soon to retire, stated societies should contact HCS for help and advice. I am now a council member of the Sankey Council Restoration Society. Our experience will help this organisation and at my first meeting it became clear that they (we) could achieve the impossible if everybody believed in themselves. BW's Chairman visited the canal in October and I now believe that in the next 10 years or so, this canal will be restored provided a link to the main networks can be achieved.

Investment in the Huddersfield Narrow Canal is now essential to improve facilities for visitors and we are committed to provide £50,000 towards visitor facilities in 2003. I shall detail these in future issues, including a revamp of the Standedge Visitor Centre to cater for adults as well as children.

Next year will be the second full year of operation. Already, over 800 boats traversed the summit. Boat movements encourage regeneration schemes and bring life to the valleys.

BW and HCS and our partners are committed to improve the waterway year on year. 2003 will see further developments to encourage its use.

*Happy Christmas and
Best Wishes for 2003*

David Sumner

(with another hat on!) doing a voluntary job helping out on the 'Action Line' broadcasts. This puts out details of various charities and community project happenings and so I included the Canal Society on the list.

Finally as this is the Christmas Issue - hope you all like the cover - can I wish everyone a Happy and Joyful Christmas and a Prosperous New Year.

Brian Minor



SOCIETY VOLUNTEERS

'Wanted'

From its formation in 1974, the Society has relied upon its volunteers to manage its resources, promote restoration, and maintain momentum, continuity and general interest. As a result, 27 years and 12 days later the dream, which was once dubbed 'The Impossible Restoration', became a reality when the H.N.C. was re-opened to navigation in May 2001.

The financial cost to the Society escalated over the years as restoration gained pace. Coincidentally, the Society both started and finished its restoration work on the Uppermill to Dobcross section. The initial project undertaken by volunteers cost a few hundred pounds, whereas the final and similar scheme completed by the Society's subsidiary company, H.C.S. Restoration Limited, cost approximately £300,000.

Although the day-to-day restoration work was taken over by the Society's full-time workforce, members continued to undertake smaller canal projects. Other volunteers, as now, crewed and maintained trip boats, and organised the various annual canal festivals, e.g. Ashton ran for 24 years.

Although the canal has re-opened there is still work to be done. The Society's aim, in support of British Waterways, is to enhance, maintain and develop the Huddersfield Narrow. For example, we hope to provide additional mooring rings, bollards, seats, signs, bridge plates and service stations for boaters etc, i.e. items which we could not provide at the time.

This is why we need more volunteers than ever before, a few hours once or twice a month can make all the difference. Any member requiring further information or an update on any of the Society's activities, with a view to volunteering their services, please contact the Society's Ashton office.





Keith's Disconnected Jottings

A real rag bag this issue! Starting with people, Lady Knollys has been appointed for a third three year term as Chairman of the Inland

Waterways Advisory

Council. Her success in delivering advice to British Waterways and the Government, particularly through the Council's report on restoration priorities, seems to have been recognised.

The second largest navigation authority after British Waterways, the Environment Agency, responsible, for instance for the River Thames, has been much criticised for having no discernible policy for boating beyond keeping its expenditure on navigation down. 'Our Vision for the Environment: Making it Happen', the Agency's recently published draft strategy for the years to 2007, gives some hope of a better deal. It includes objectives to promote navigation, fisheries and other recreation on the Agency's rivers, to develop a plan for delivering waterway regeneration, and to boost tourism and recreation by promoting better access to the waterways and higher standards of navigation management. Time will tell whether this means anything, but, for my money, it is a nonsense that responsibility for inland navigation continues to be divided between different bodies on different stretches of water. Robert Aickman was right when, in the early days of the Inland Waterways Association half a century ago, he put forward the idea of a national waterways conservancy. Interestingly Dave Fletcher, the retiring (not that you would notice!) Chief Executive of British Waterways, told the Association's National Conference for Waterway Societies on 23 November that he still holds out hopes for a more integrated controlling body eventually.

Dave treated delegates to the conference with his vision of how the inland waterways will have changed by 2020. He reckons they will be universally perceived as being at the heart of towns and cities, with the waterway structures in good shape and the twentieth century backlog of maintenance a thing of the past. There will be twice as many boats using the system, and income from new developments and from maintenance agreements with local authorities will ensure that the waterways are properly funded. We will be well on the way to having opened an extra 1,000 miles of restored or new waterways. Tens of billions of pounds of regeneration will have happened along the waterway corridors, creating thousands of new jobs, but volunteers will still be important for their knowledge, enthusiasm, and to provide value for money help to the navigation authorities. Societies like HCS will, in Dave's view, have become much closer partners with national and local authorities, and be used to increasing rates of change as the century progresses. Sounds too good to be true, doesn't it! It depends on continuing political good will towards the waterways, which the waterways movement will have to work for, and continuing vigilance on our part to ensure that all of the new development and greater use of the waterways respects their heritage. That was the major attraction of waterways to many of us in the first place.

Before the extra thousand or so miles of waterway come into use there is a long way to go. British Waterways and the Waterways Trust are beginning to see how their so-called Tranche II schemes to follow on from the Huddersfield Narrow etc, might be paid for, and the extent of work required. Interestingly, in early discussions, the Heritage Lottery Fund have asked for proof that the benefits put forward to justify the

funding of restoration in earlier grant applications has actually happened. Although BW could simply say 'look at Stalybridge,' it will be some years before the full impact of restoration of our canal is realised. Anyway, it makes more sense to investigate the waterway that had a huge Heritage Lottery grant, so BW is planning to commission a consultant's study of the benefits actually achieved since the re-opening of the Kennet & Avon Canal in 1990. That should prove what we have said all along about the regenerative effects of waterway restoration on the riparian communities. I hope the results will be widely publicised.

There is news of schemes at the very early stages. Over 100 walkers turned out for a sponsored walk organised by the Friends of the Cromford Canal between Northern Basin at Langley Mill, where the derelict Cromford Canal leaves the Erewash canal, through Ironville to the canal's terminus in the World Heritage Site of Cromford, including a ride on the preserved railway past Butterley Tunnel. In the early days of HCS huge amounts of time and effort spent by many people organising such events were crucial, not just to raise money, but, more important, to raise the profile and public awareness of the canal. It is good to see that the Friends of Cromford are pursuing the same aims.

Yet another new group has appeared on the national waterways map, the Friends of the Leominster Canal, to look after the interests of that secluded rural waterway. Only 18 miles of this 46 mile long project to build a canal from the Severn at Stourport via Leominster into rural Herefordshire were completed, with the canal company throwing in the towel when they could not find the money to repair the damage when Southnet Tunnel collapsed. Despite a century and a half of decay since any of the canal was used or maintained, much remains and the Friends intend to form a Society to ensure the stabilisation of what

remains and the preservation of the route. Who knows, in time, they might even expand their aims to include completing the original vision, although it will not be easy to find money to build a canal in rural Herefordshire.

Further north, but still in the rural West Midlands, it is good to see that the Shrewsbury & Newport Canals Trust have been offered a grant by the IWA towards the cost of a feasibility study into the restoration of the canal between the Shropshire Union at Norbury Junction and Shrewsbury. Hopefully the Trust will be able to raise the rest of the money needed. This study could be the key to beginning serious restoration of this 25 mile long canal that was closed by the LMS Railway in 1944 by powers granted under the same Act of Parliament that allowed closure of the Huddersfield Narrow.

And that's just the sort of study our friends in the Barnsley, Dearne & Dove Canals Trust need to make progress with their canals. Last year representatives of two of their riparian local authorities saw the Huddersfield Narrow and met representatives of our local authorities to look at what had been achieved especially in Slaithwaite and Stalybridge. Wakefield and Rotherham Councils, the Royston & Carlton Community Partnership, Walton Parish Council, British Waterways, UK Coal, the IWA and the Canals Trust have all agreed to enter into a consortium to progress restoration of the canals. All that's needed now is for Barnsley Council to join in the consortium. Members of that Council's Scrutiny Commission have at last visited our canal and met our local authorities to see for themselves what can be done. Hopefully, the Council will now decide to play their rightful part, and progress can at last be made on these canals.

Keith Gibson

WOW Questionnaire

WOW Questionnaire

November 2002



Dear Canal Society Member,

As you may know, the Inland Waterways Association, The Waterways Trust and British Waterways have joined forces to fund WOW which is working to enthuse and involve children and young people in the waterways.

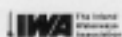
One of our aims is to address the problem of vandalism and anti - social behaviour that sometimes occurs around the waterways. As part of this we would like to gather accurate information on the type of incidents your members have witnessed in the last twelve months. This information will then be used to identify the most frequent type of anti - social behaviour on the waterways and the areas in which it occurs. Once WOW has received this information it will then be looking to put together strategies for addressing these problems.

Enclosed with this letter is a copy of the WOW questionnaire. We would be grateful if you could photocopy it and pass it on to members of your society for completion.

The effectiveness of the questionnaire depends on the volume of responses received. Therefore, please encourage your society members to fill in and return it to us.

Many thanks in advance,

The WOW team.



British Waterways



The Waterways Trust

The Society received this request recently and members will have noticed the questionnaire enclosed with this issue. Please help the 'team' by completing it, if appropriate. As with so many problems, unless a group knows about them, it is difficult for the group to act effectively.

Cruising the South Pennine Ring - Part 2

Society Treasurer and intrepid cruiser John Sully and his wife Cynthia, conclude their account of taking the first hire boat around the newly opened South Pennine Ring of waterways. All photos - J Sully.

Littleborough to Hebden Bridge

On Thursday July 25, the day of the opening of the Commonwealth Games, we were waiting for our new crew members to arrive when Ray McDonald, Lock Keeper for the Summit flight, passed to unlock Lock 48 and I said that we would make our way up. He is living in the lock cottage beside Lock 37 (West Summit), which has been purchased by BW for the Lock Keeper. He has moved over from Burnley on the Leeds and Liverpool Canal. Locks 37 and 36 East Summit are generally kept closed and boaters are advised to ring the Lock Keeper when they are at either end to help with their passage.

Ray was very helpful. He said that some locks on the flight need to be kept full of water after boats have passed to protect them and on the flight showed some of the unusual locks.

Our two helpers arrived in separate cars at different times so Peter set off with us and Tricia left her car at Summit and walked down to meet us. We passed through Lock 48 without any problems. However, on Lock 47 (Littleborough Higher) I was using a light windlass. The gate was old and the

paddle gear very difficult and the windlass ended in the canal. Just after that, Ray appeared again and said he sold windlasses from his cottage. He told us that the water point just above Lock 47 at Durn on the non towpath side was in operation. Ray helped us through the lock and later appeared with a windlass, which we were able to purchase. The water point was the first we had reached since passing one at the bottom of the Ashton Canal and three days after we had picked up water. Ray helped us through some of the locks. He was particularly keen to take us through Lock 41 (First below) because the pound above has to be treated like a staircase lock. Previously there were side pounds for this pound but they have gone and when the lock is filled the pound is almost completely emptied. The way to overcome this is to fill Lock 40 (Punchbowl) and after Lock 41 has started to be filled to empty Lock 40 so that there is enough water in the pound for the boat to move out of Lock 41. If a boat is going down the pound below Lock 40 has to be empty otherwise water will overflow and



flood the adjoining land. We moored on mooring rings on the non towpath side just below Lock 38 from where we could walk up a path and cross over the lock and walk up to Lock 37 (West Summit) and the adjoining Summit Pub for lunch, where Ray's wife is a bar maid.

As Arriva were on strike there were very few trains from Littleborough. So we drove to Rochdale and caught a train to Manchester Victoria and the tram to Castlefield. We were just in time to photograph the Queen's Jubilee Baton arrive up the Bridgewater Canal on the LS Lowry and be handed over to the British Waterways Passenger Boat, Edwin Clark to be carried up the locks 92 and 91 on the Rochdale Canal.

The following day Ray met us at Lock 38 and showed us how the remarkable air holes work on the Rochdale Canal. These were incorporated into a number of locks but the best remaining example is at lock 38. He went up to Lock 37 (West Summit) and opened the paddles in a different way and a stream of water came down the canal. This fed into holes on either side of the top gates of Lock 38 and the lock began to fill with water. We took a photograph (*left*) of the water pouring into the lock with no top paddles open. Eventually to completely fill the lock the paddles were raised. At Lock 37 (West Summit) we were given the 37th certificate to say that we had cruised to Summit on the Rochdale Canal (*pictured right*). More boats have been

through than that after the opening on 1 July, but not all boaters wanted a certificate.

The weather had improved and for the rest of our cruise we had bright sunshine. The sun was behind us most of the time back to Sowerby Bridge and the Canal became more and more attractive as it headed for the hills and Calderdale. The Summit pound, only 2 miles long, is 600 feet up with hills on either side. It holds more water as before the construction of Tuel Lane Lock 36 (East Summit) and 37 (West Summit) were the deepest locks on the canal. Just below Lock 36 is Warland Swing Bridge on the boundary between Yorkshire and Lancashire. This was restored in 1990 with a great ceremony as the boats of the Mayors of Rochdale and Calderdale touched at the bridge. There are walks from this bridge and we had a chance to photograph the canal from higher above. The guide to navigation issued by BW said that the Lock 34 Lower Warland is limited to craft of 13 feet 6 inches and can only take one narrow boat at a time. BW has now discovered that Calderdale had widened the lock and it can be used by 2 narrowboats as the



photograph I took of 2 narrowboats in the lock shows (right). We moored for the night above the Lock 30 (Winter But Lee) at Walsden with views up and down the valley.

The following day we continued through Lock 30 and 29 (Nip Square) to a water point on the non towpath side just above Lock 28 (Travis Mill). After working through 79 wide locks on our own we were joined by another boat for this lock and the next. We reached Lock 23 (Gauxholme Middle), where we took photographs of trains passing over the spectacular Gauxholme Railway Bridge (pictured right). With the sun behind us the view down the locks to Todmorden was breathtaking. Children turned up at Lock 21 (Shade) and when I emptied the lock for the boat asked me to fill it again so they could go swimming in it! (I declined).

At Todmorden we reached Lock 19 (Library - pictured right), which was the first lock to be restored





Verdant cruising below Todmorden.

the Sunday for the first time since we started Cynthia and I were on our own.

It was very hot in Hebden Bridge and we had no desire to rush to Sowerby Bridge. Two Shire Cruisers boats passed us heading towards

East of the Pennines. It was shorter than originally built and in 1995 a Derelict Land Grant allowed a guillotine gate to be fitted. Leaving Todmorden Stoodley Pike could briefly be seen. Below Lock 13 (Callis) is Callis Mill where the MSC scheme for the Rochdale Canal restoration was based. Since BW has taken responsibility for the Calderdale section five members of staff have transferred from Callis Mill to BW. We moored for the night at Stubbing Wharf and found room right outside the pub. We were in time to enjoy a pub meal beside the towpath. Peter and Tricia left us and on

Manchester. The first was intending to do the ring in the reverse direction from us and the second was intending to go to Manchester and back in a week. Eventually at 1630 two boats passed us at a café beside the canal heading for the 2 Stubbing locks and so I asked them to leave the top gates of the two Stubbing Locks open so that we could come down. We were joined by a fibre glass boat for these two locks and the next two locks which made the journey easy. We continued through Falling Royd Tunnel. There is a curve in it and boaters are advised to take care when passing through.



We moored for the evening at the Luddendenfoot moorings but the grass was so overgrown we could only find one mooring ring. On the final morning we cruised to Sowerby Bridge. At Tuel Lane

Idyllic Hotel location below Lock 7 (Broad Bottom Lock)

Lock we met Nigel Stevens of Shire Cruisers, who was taking the boat Northumberland back to Sowerby Bridge, so we travelled down the last three locks with him (*pictured right*).

Conclusion

We were glad of additional crew members for the fortnight's cruise, which included 198 locks. We were helped by the BW staff through locks on both the Huddersfield Narrow and the Rochdale Canal, which saved time. Our grandchildren enjoyed helping with the locks, which are not as difficult as might be expected. We had no problems keeping to our rough timetable and would have had to go up and down the big nine in Manchester if we had booked our passage from Piccadilly Basin on the Wednesday. The South Pennine Ring is an excellent ring and probably the best in the country with its spectacular Pennine scenery. The Huddersfield Narrow Canal rises to 650 feet above sea level and the views from the Marsden and Diggle flights are spectacular. The trip through Standedge Tunnel is not to be missed. Both the Rochdale and Huddersfield Narrow Canals have new tunnels and particularly exciting are the ones under Bates and Sellers in Huddersfield. On both canals there is the contrast between spectacular scenery and buildings from the industrial revolution. Piccadilly Village on the Ashton Canal shows the potential for housing development along both the Rochdale and Ashton Canal in East Manchester. The commissioning phase of



the Rochdale Canal will continue until the end of October and after that it will be decided whether there will be escorted passages on the Rochdale. We were surprised how few boats were using the Huddersfield Narrow Canal with sometimes only 1 or 2 boats going through the Tunnel. BW have been very busy in 2002 making sure that the Rochdale Canal was open on July 1, a remarkable achievement. They will spend more time in consolidating work on the Huddersfield Narrow Canal, which means repairing lock gates so that they do not leak so badly. On the Calderdale section of the Rochdale Canal many new gates have been fitted and the locks here are able to retain their water. Even though no boat had passed for some time the lock remains full and the gates could be pushed open without more water being added. The easier way to travel on the Huddersfield Narrow Canal is from West to East. We went the other way to suit our crew and because we did not know how accurate our timing would be on the Rochdale Canal. With BW help we think that it is possible to cruise the Rochdale Canal between Sowerby Bridge and Piccadilly Basin in four days and the

Huddersfield Narrow in four days. We spent over a day taking the boat to Marple away from the Ring although we did not take it up and down the Rochdale Big Nine. The South Pennine Ring is well worth cruising.

Shire Cruisers

This was the third 'first' we achieved with Shire Cruisers.

In 1985 we were the first to hire Rochdale Pioneer from Hebden Bridge. The limit of our navigation was Copperas Bridge in the west and Falling Royd Bridge in the east.

In 2001 we were the first to take a hire boat 'Leicester' along the Huddersfield Narrow Canal. We were the first boat into Slaithwaite in either direction and the first from East to West until Diggle and in 2002 we were the first to take a hire boat round the South Pennine Ring. This was the same Leicester.

BW information

As we were one of the first Shire Cruisers boats to do the Rochdale, our passage through the Tunnel and from Manchester was booked by Shire Cruisers. They now send details of the telephone numbers to ring in advance and leave the hirers to fix the bookings. Even though the IWA Rally was not far ahead, there seemed more flexibility in booking the Tunnel than booking the passage on the Rochdale Eighteen. There was plenty of water in the Rochdale Canal, but 2002 has been an exceptional summer, as the TV coverage of the closing ceremony of the Commonwealth Games illustrated, with the rain pouring down!

Closure of Locks, Rochdale Canal

Locks 48,49,53,54,63,64,65, locked overnight, open 0830 to 1800. (Locks 36

&37 East and West Summit) - please ring the lock keeper on 077331 24596 to arrange passage between 0830 and 1800.

Deepdale swing bridge is locked overnight.

Lock 47 "Durn" on west summit limited to 13'8". Two boats cannot share this lock.

Tuel Lane Lock, Sowerby Bridge is staffed seven days a week between 0800 and 1700.

Falling Royd Tunnel has a curve preventing boaters seeing one portal from the other. Sound the horn, proceed dead slow and keep to the centre of the channel.

M62 crossing, between lock 52 and new lock 53. **Do not disembark from the boat anywhere in this section. BW staff will operate the locks.**

Slattocks Flight (Locks 54 to 63) Mooring within this flight is not allowed because of the many short pounds. All journeys should be completed through the flight by 1800.

Booking through the **Rochdale 18 Locks**, 66 to 83 through Manchester, are subject to pre-booked passage. Passages set off at 0830 and 0900 from Lock 66 and Lock 83. For passage, ring the Manchester office on 0161 819 5847 to book as far in advance as possible as spaces each day are limited. The flight is locked up except for booked passages at the fixed times.

Boaters are advised to break their journey at the following point on the West Side:

Boat & Horses, Chadderton
Slattocks Top Lock (Above Lock 54)
Littleborough (below Lock 48)

cont'd ...

Tackling the Squeeze

I attended a meeting held at Marsden with BW to discuss the problems on the reopened canal. Present were Tom Rowe, Mike Marshall and Joe Murphy from BW, John Fletcher (National Chairman) and Dennis Suleman from the IWA, Rupert Smedley from the Historic Narrow Boat Owners, Keith Noble with three hats on representing Calder navigation, IWA (NE) and HCS; and me.

Joe Murphy has spent a considerable amount of time using laser technology to check the size and profiles of all the locks on the canal and then used the same technique to look at the 'pinch points' and the 'wriggles' where the tunnel is over 7ft but slight bends make it impossible to take a full sized boat through.

The problem is that the canal restoration did not have the funds to do a complete rebuild on every lock and throughout the tunnel. When the bid for funding was put in cost assumptions were made which reflected the historical cost of restoration done by HCS (Restoration) Ltd. As this always had a large element of volunteer effort in it the estimate was less than the full commercial cost and, of course, there was always the thought that if the bid was too high it could have been turned down.

Within these financial constraints the BW engineers under Tom Rowe had to complete the last phase of the restoration watching the pennies and unable to rebuild completely and deserve every praise for their efforts.

This means that many locks are under 7ft, but all are bigger than 6ft 10ins. Normal measurements will show many of the undersized locks to be 7ft, but with laser measurement the leans and bends all show up restricting the boat dimensions. Another problem is that unless a boat is completely upright, and not listing slightly to one side, even a 6ft 10ins boat can stick.

So we are now at the state where the canal is navigable for the majority of boats on the system and doubts hang over the rest.

John Fletcher asked if there could be some form of gauging at the two ends of the canal. The difficulty is that cursory inspection does not always reveal the widest point. There is also the problem of profile. Modern narrow boats are much squarer and higher than their predecessors. This means that in tunnels the water has had to be slightly lowered to enable them to go through. A difference of 6" lower can lead to problems for boats with a square

cont'd from page 15

Huddersfield Narrow Canal

Standedge Tunnel

Marsden to Diggle

Be at the Marsden Portal at 0800 for passage through at 0930.

Boaters should be below Lock 32e no later than 1300 on the day before passage through the Standedge Tunnel.

Diggle to Marsden

Boaters should be at Lock 24w no later than 0830 on the morning of passage through the Tunnel.

Boaters not intending to pass through the Tunnel are not allowed beyond Lock 32e on the East Side and beyond 24w on the West side. These two locks are padlocked after the boats have passed.

To book a passage, contact the Standedge Visitor Centre 01484 844298.

In event of any difficulty on the above two canals and the Ashton Canal phone BW on 0161 819 5847. The phone number for the Huddersfield Broad Canal and the Calder and Hebble Navigation is 01977 554351. In an emergency, the 'out of hours' for all the canals is 0800 4799947.

John Sully

profile under water, as the canal tunnels are like Victorian sewers, egg shaped, with the same bend under water as above. Tom Rowe made the offer to any boat owner who is possibly over the limit to contact BW and they will advise and if necessary escort the boat through the possible sticking points.

BW have issued the following statement to confirm this offer:-

Craft over 6ft 10ins width may navigate the canal from 1st January 2003 by prior arrangement with the Waterway Office. This booking will allow British Waterways to advise of the current status of all structures, which ones are passable with care and which will not yet accommodate a 7ft craft in any circumstances and should not be attempted. It will also allow local staff to be ready to assist customers should they encounter difficulties at any location.

Following on from this complete survey, BW have been able to cost out the necessary repairs to bring the waterway to 7ft width and 70ft length cruising. Although this is well under the original figures being bandied about in the press it is still in excess of the monies available for maintenance. There was a certain amount of disagreement on these costs – principally from me! – but BW felt they had put down current commercial prices for the jobs.

Tom Rowe made the very good point that as the majority of narrow boats on the system can navigate the canal, shouldn't they spend their resources on improvements such as sanitary stations, mooring rings etc for the boaters who are currently using the canal. The meeting was divided on this.

We were also assured that whenever the funds allow for a complete rebuild the locks will be made to a 7ft 4ins standard.

There have been between 7 and 800 movements through the tunnel this year. This has resulted in, so we were told, only 6 claims for damage to boats and most of these were for minor items. Frankly if boaters went through under their own control the

percentage being damaged would be far higher than this.

We took a trip into the tunnel to look at some of the 'pinch' points and I was very impressed by the improvement in the degree of control by the boat handlers compared with the first through crossing I made last year. This is now a very professional operation.

I felt that this was a very worthwhile exercise, we were able to question BW and discuss the problems together. One thing all present decided was counter productive was the tendency of boaters and canal societies to criticise BW without looking at the facts, BW to blame the Canal Society for getting the measurements wrong and boaters for incompetence. Frankly this attitude gets nowhere. We have to work together to persuade government of the importance of the waterway and the necessity of more funds to complete the restoration to original specifications. The BW people are not ogres, but competent people trying to do a job with inadequate funds. Boaters are, in the main, efficient handlers of their craft. Between us this canal will become one that sets an example to any group seeking to improve their environment.

I have a copy of the profiles of each lock made by Joe Murphy. I am leaving this in the Ashton Office for any member who wishes to study the navigable size of each lock. It also has the costings for each phase of the up-grading. These figures are not yet openly available as they may change.

Brian Minor

Post Script

Finally – Can all of us in the Canal Society offer our congratulations to Tom Rowe who has won the deserved accolade of being runner up in the 'New Civil Engineers' Engineering Manager of the Year awards for his work on the Huddersfield Narrow and Rochdale Canals. Having 'I made the Ring 'o Roses work' as an epitaph would be enough for many people. I hope that Tom has many other triumphs to add to this before the necessary stone mason starts carving! Ed.

A Family Day Out on the Canals

STALYBRIDGE TO DOBCROSS!

Half term and what better way to spend a day out with the family than on the canal – our canal. Anyway we thought it was about time the Grandchildren found out what fun canalling can be and began to share our love of the inland waterways. They were no strangers to river boating as they live not too far from the Wey & Arun, so a trip seemed a splendid idea and at long last we were getting the chance to actually sail part of the Huddersfield Narrow.

Ken arranged with member Ed Mortimer to hire his super little 32ft. trip boat Otter, complete with small galley and loo, on Monday 28th October and, as a favour, to do the one way trip from Stalybridge to Dobcross. The day dawned fine and sunny, for a change, and off we set for Stalybridge complete with enough food and drink to satisfy an army. Tesco's car park was our rendezvous and a good place to do a last minute shop – fresh baked baguettes to go with the mammoth sized lamb stew I had made for lunch.

The family hadn't seen Stalybridge since its regeneration, so while Ken sorted out the ins and outs of the boat with Ed, the rest of us went for a walk as far as Staley Wharf – much admiration at what has been done and what is obviously going to be done.

Great excitement from the children as we set off, sides rolled up to let in the sun. Ken steering with the occasional help from Elliot (grandson) and Pip (daughter), Andy (son-in-law) and yours truly locking with occasional help from Elliot. Granddaughter Honor was in charge of the food and drink and helping with the dogs with



A very happy grandson

occasional help from Elliot. As you may have gathered our 8-year old grandson is a bundle of energy and likes being into everything!

The first lock had already been primed for us by Ed and having three handcuff keys and windlasses on board certainly saved us time. What a joy to have narrow locks. Some of the beams were extremely heavy to open but not having proper heel grips or none at all or not extending far enough made life a wee bit difficult. I am sorry now that I didn't keep a log so that I could report paddles, and there were quite a few, which weren't working. Anyway none of that marred the enjoyment of the day. How different everything looks from the canal – areas that you have known since childhood take on a whole new perspective. "Where are we now?" was a constant question and when told, the reply inevitably was "Are we really, I never



This really is Mossley!

would have guessed, it all looks so different". Especially around Mossley Sewage Works! It is a beautiful stretch of canal and to quote John Lower's book '... the canal throws off its industrial image, contouring along the side of a green valley with views ahead of the high Pennine hills'. It is interesting too with plenty to observe and ponder. Going through the pylon at Heyrod made Elliot's day!

We were all congratulating ourselves on having picked such a marvellous, sunny and warm day when the clouds started to roll up and very quickly the heavens opened. Of course we were prepared with stout shoes and walking boots, waterproofs – you name it we had it – and weren't we glad. By the time we got to Lock 9W it was really bucketing down, but stouthearted that we are Andy and I soldiered on. A halt was called – the lock was filled with a BW workboat and was

being surveyed to check the widths. We sheltered under the trees hoping that it wouldn't be too long before we were on the move again – well we did have to make Dobcross and the Transshipment Shed before it got dark!! The BW men carried on valiantly in the pouring rain. "Can't we call it a day?" was the plaintive cry from one of the workmen, but no, not even the rain was going to get in the way of the important surveying job. Anyway, as it was going to take longer than they thought, and as the rain was easing up from a downpour to a steady deluge, BW took pity on us, backed out of the lock and let us through. The towpath was a bit awash most of the way – well we had had a lot of rain the previous week, but you don't go dressed in your Sunday best to go canalling so it really didn't matter how muddy and wet we got! I think it was Lock 10W or 11W where the towpath became a torrent, water pouring from a pipe in the bank, streaming across the towpath and became a veritable waterfall just before the lock – quite an impressive sight. Elliot thought it great fun, he didn't mind getting wet at all. It was at this lock that a great opportunity for an entrant in the Plink Photo Competition was missed. As Andy and I were waiting for the lock to fill, brief hot sun on our backs, we were enveloped in a cloud of rising steam (we were wet through at the time!), but by the time a camera was found we had moved, the sun had gone in and the cloud had disappeared. Maybe next year!

On through Scout Tunnel – loud tootings of the horn (by you know who) as we went through – and onto Mossley. It is only from the canal that you can really appreciate just how steep the hills are on which Mossley is built. Past The Roaches and The Tollemache, well worth a stop,

but unfortunately not for us this trip, to Lock 16W where we brought the boat up and sat in the lock and had our very welcome lamb stew lunch, plus beers and hot drinks, home-made cookies and chocolate. Just as we had started to eat the heavens opened again with a vengeance. It was a short, very sharp, shower lasting as long as it took us to have our lunch and just as we were ready to set off, the sun came out.

This particular stretch of the canal up to Uppermill and the Transshipment Shed we know particularly well having walked it regularly over the years. We were in the middle of priming Lock 18W when a BW man appeared. "Are you coming back today?" he said and when we answered "no" and that we were finishing at the Transshipment Shed he said "Just as well, I'm emptying the pound". Half an hour later and we would have been in a pickle and well and truly stuck! Apparently BW are still having trouble here with leakage into neighbouring cellars!

We made a brief stop to say "hello" to our friends who live by the canal at Mann's Wharf Bridge – they knew we were coming and were waiting for us on the lawn. Unfortunately we couldn't stay long as it was getting quite dark, even though it was only early in the afternoon (the clocks had gone back the day before). What a sad sight greeted us as we went through the bridge. Moored in the reeds, looking very unloved and unwanted was the Society's dredger, full of water.

Ken was quite angry and upset. He has spent hundreds of hours on this machine which, by now, was supposed to have been restored, repainted by BW and put back in use by Society volunteers. On through Uppermill reaching the Transshipment Shed at 3.30pm.

And so ended our trip. Despite the weather we had had a terrific time. The grandchildren had enjoyed themselves and were eager for more. They had helped with locks, steered briefly, got wet, muddy and generally bedraggled but didn't mind. They thought having their lunch on board a boat in the pouring rain great fun and the whole day quite an adventure. The dogs were wet and muddy too but had enjoyed their walks. Pip and Andy said it had been a splendid idea and definitely wanted to do more. "How long would it take to go the other way to Manchester?" was Andy's question. A lot longer was the reply. Apart from a couple of short rides Andy and I had walked and locked the whole way. It really didn't seem far. Even though we had had so much rain the towpaths weren't bad at all and the locks generally were reasonable to operate. We were so



BW checking lock widths; very Heath Robinson but very effective

pleased that we had had the opportunity to sail a part of our canal. From Ken's point of view the boat was a dream to handle. Only one big drawback - a very narrow trad stern and a long handled tiller made getting on and off the boat difficult. As longtime hirers we believe that ALL leisure boats should have "cruiser" sterns so that party members can "party"! The bucket chairs on the boat were comfortable, the galley equipped with mugs, kettle, etc. and the loo more than adequate. We would certainly recommend hiring this boat for a super day out. The boat has hardly been seen before in Uppermill and two groups of people spoke to us about it before copying down Ed's 'phone number. Which is 0161 303 7635 Or you can ring Dick on 01457 831038 At the time we took the boat out the cost was £70 for weekdays and £90 for weekend days and a discount for members is negotiable! Compared with the £50 dayrate for a plastic "bath" on the Broads this is terrific value. The boat is equipped for twelve persons.

We made the boat as secure as we could, mooring on the shed side, and reluctantly left. Come next Summer I have a feeling

that we will be hiring the boat again with our friends – they are in for a real treat!

On the technical side the canal really isn't bad! Shortage of mooring rings, bollards, etc. didn't worry us. There are several types of paddle and even more types of paddle locking devices but these just help to make for interest. Canal depth is a bit suspect between Division Bridge and Uppermill but this boat draws very little so we were only slightly affected. Heel grips are a problem – non-existent or not extending far enough for people who operate balance beams properly, i.e. with the bum! And I withdraw my comment about the towpath! OK if you are already wet through, but hardly fit for use as a normal footpath. "Saddleworth Promenade", from the Museum to the Transhipment Warehouse needs a small fortune spending on it and I am sure BW would be grateful for the odd contribution, say £100,000!

Anne Wright

As a PS I should apologise for not having given more "touristy" information. But there is plenty! John Lower's Boater's and Walkers Guide is excellent even though it is ready for revision.

There is also a mass of information at Saddleworth Museum and Informatin Centre and also at Brownhill Visitor centre on the canalside at Dobcross.

All photos: A Wright



A very wet "Otter"

2002 Photographic Competition - Results

Even with the shortest possible notice we have done better than ever this year! 95 entries from 18 photographers and the quality continues to improve. The judge, Geoff Hope, past president of Oldham Photographic Society says "I know that I say that the standard of this Competition gets higher every year but this year our entries have excelled themselves. The pictures have been judged on a random mix of the following 3 items:-

Pictorial Content ... *Is the result pleasing to the eye of the viewer? Does it convey the photographer's thoughts.*

Informative ... *What does the picture tell us about the event or location?*

Technical Quality ... *Is it sharp where it should be? Is the exposure correct? Was it a difficult subject to portray?*

I would like to thank and compliment every one of the entrants on the standard of their work and also for the pleasure that I have had looking at their pictures. I have written what I hope will be a helpful comment for every entrant, and remember it is only the opinion of one person. As always I am pleased to discuss any matter or problem that any entrant may wish to bring up to help them enjoy their hobby of photography (01457 873700).

By far the strongest section was Category C (Other Waterways) and it would be nice to see more Junior entries. I am sure we have a lot of budding Patrick Lichfields out there somewhere! Hands up, where are you?"

Only two junior entries but Geoff is true to his word and the winner will receive THE JUDGE'S PRIZE - a pair of mini binoculars.

As usual, all contributors will receive a copy of the judge's notes on each of the photographs they entered.

RESULTS

Category 'A' - HNC - Senior

WINNER

Brian Minor, Eccles

Our Editor wins with "Pennine Link Festival – Wooden Boat Society"

RUNNER-UP

Emily Thompson, Saddleworth
"Standedge Tunnel"

Commended: Brian Minor, Don Parnell, Joan Ogborn

Category 'B' - HNC - Junior

WINNER

James Archer (10), Linthwaite
"Approaching Lock 19E"

Category 'C' - Other Waterways - Senior

WINNER, OVERALL WINNER, CHALLENGE SHIELD WINNER:

Julian Morgan, Guildford
"Coxes Mill, R. Wey Navigation"

RUNNER-UP

Alan Kempster, Kilmarnock
"Falkirk Wheel"

Highly Commended: Don Parnell

Commended: Julian Morgan (2), Alwyn Ogborn,

Category 'D' - Other Waterways - Junior

WINNER (AND BEST JUNIOR)

Richard Lower, Chesterfield
"Llangollen Canal"



"Wooden Boat Society"

Plenty to look at and hold one's attention in this excellent photograph. Exposure perfect, very sharp, excellent composition and content!

"Standedge Tunnel"

An ambitious picture that the photographer has captured well. Despite the technical difficulties of lighting the result is very good. Very well exposed with none of the close up detail "burnt out" by the flash. The picture content is also very informative; very good result!



"Falkirk Wheel"

A super picture of this engineering marvel. The narrow boat gives the picture scale and a purpose and the onlookers in the foreground help to give depth to the picture. The lighting, exposure and composition are all excellent. A super entry.



cont'd from page 22 Overall winner, Life Member Julian Morgan, will receive the Challenge Shield, to hold for one year, a replica to keep, a signed certificate and A PAIR OF BINOCULARS kindly donated by ARCADE PHOTO SERVICES, IMPERIAL ARCADE, HUDDERSFIELD.

The other winners will receive a cash prize of £30 and the runners-up a cash prize of £20, together with a signed certificate. All "Commendeds" will get a signed certificate.

Richard Lower, as best junior, will receive a PAIR OF MINI-BINOCULARS, presented as THE JUDGE'S PRIZE, by judge Geoff Hope.

Once again, thank you to all who took the trouble to enter this year. As Geoff has said, the standard continues to rise and I regret that the monochrome reproductions of the winners hardly do them justice.

Ken Wright



"Approaching Lock 19E"

Good attempt at a difficult late evening shot. Very good try but try not to cut the stem of the boat off, as it is one of the most colourful and interesting parts of shot. Always have a good last minute check in the view finder to make sure what is there is what you want before pressing the shutter. Nice shot!



“Foxes Mill”

Another lovely picture with a very interesting threatening sky yet the foreground beautifully lit. Note how the cross-lighting from the left brings out the texture of the mill. Altogether you have captured all the conditions a photographer dreams about – perfect exposure and razor sharp.



"Llangollen Canal"

A lovely picture, very well composed with the narrowboat in just the right position and with the towpath leading the viewers into the picture giving great depth. On top of all this the Autumn colours are breathtaking and the resultant coloured reflections in the canal complete this lovely photograph.

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The Huddersfield Narrow Canal



F Approaching L21W



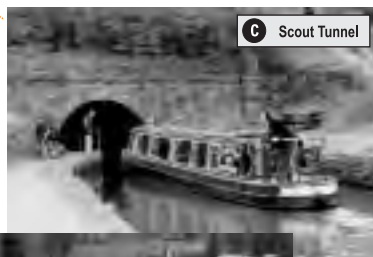
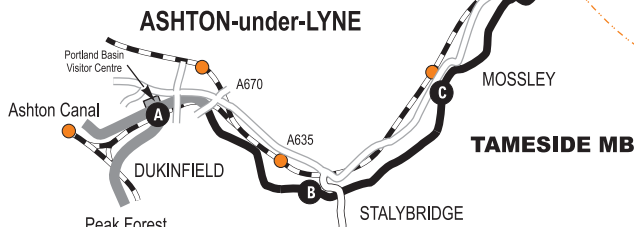
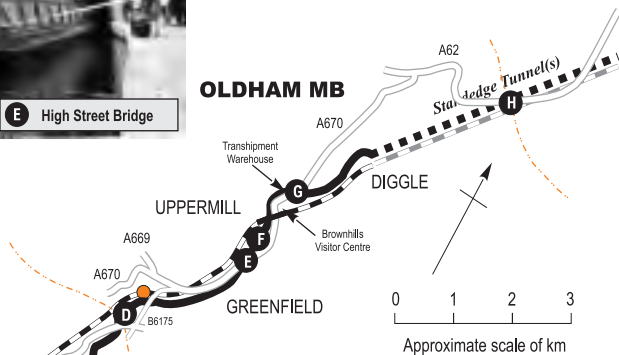
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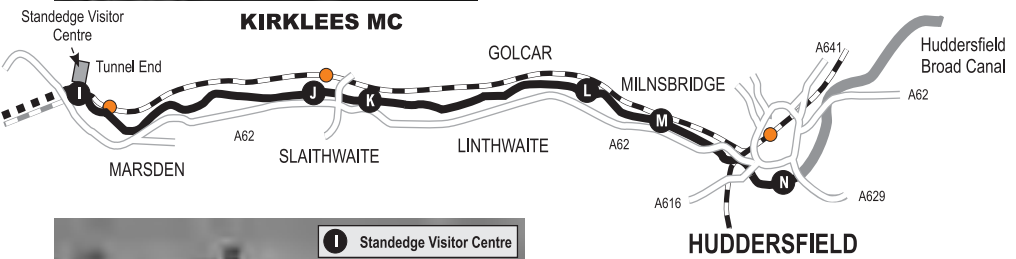
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The Wife's Tale (41-ish)

You will possibly recall that Ken wrote in the last Plink about us winning a holiday on a brand new 62 foot semi-trad hire boat from Challenger Syndicates – a new venture for them. Well, this is the tale of our free week.

Saturday 21ST September, 2002

Hot sun all day
Son Simon and partner Kathryn
Long haired dachshunds Bill and Neil

NANTWICH BASIN

Left home at 9.15 and arrived at Nantwich at 10.30 on the dot. John Morrish from Challenger was there, as were five of Challenger's shared owner-ship boats, all looking very smart. I stowed away while Ken went for son Simon and his partner Kathryn, who were stranded at Nantwich station, having come from home in Chester by train. Ken tells me the station could be mistaken for an Indian restaurant (it is!) and taxis are non-existent. I found a place for everything – just. The boat is plush – and I mean plush. All fittings of superior quality, all linen provided, towels, bedding, dish cloths, tea towels, crockery, cutlery – enough for eight. Kitchen knives sharp and a delight to use – I could go on! Only bin liners seemed to be missing but plastic bags are aplenty. A nice touch was a lovely arrangement of flowers, a box of Terry's All Gold and a bottle of bubbly – all with the compliments

of Challenger.

From a technical point of view the boat couldn't be better but I'll leave that (and any details of the odd criticism) to HIM for later!

The boat layout is a luxurious two, a friendly 4 or a very familiar 6! Explanation – starting at the back, main cabin with an easily operated extending double bed complete with washbasin, wardrobe and own loo (now that's luxury). A connecting door, the only one, separates the rest of the boat. Next a bathroom with superb house-sized fully tiled shower, galley with everything one could want including a microwave, a raised dining area (converting to a double bed), lounge area with L-shaped seating (also converts to a double bed), a selection of tables (!) and a stove and TV. The two forward sleeping areas are only separated by a curtain (hence the 'very familiar' tag). Deep pile carpets, royal blue with a small gold pattern, on the floor and half way up the walls (quite normal in narrowboats) with light blue suede-like wall covering above. The seat coverings were in a deep salmon pink, the



'Blackbird' at Beeston

curtains mainly the same colour but with a pattern containing blue flowers. I never did get used to the d[cor]! Definitely the most luxurious boat we've ever sailed in – and I nearly forgot – radio/CD player in the main lounge AND another in the rear bedroom!

Left the yard at 12.15. Barbridge Inn (we're on the Shropshire Union Canal!) 1.15. Able to sit outside with our drinks and excellent lunch. Moored at Tilstone Bank at about 4.30. Met up with some Americans picking up boats at Bunbury – we were the guinea pigs for a demonstration of locking. "Where's the first pub?" Was the only technical question HE was asked! Booze and bed.

Sunday 22nd September, 2002

SUN AGAIN

Reasonable night, very comfortable bed. Very firmly moored – well, TOO firmly, the pound had dropped during the night and we were well stuck on the bottom. BW man appeared "going to let some water down" just as we managed to get off. Hoping to shop for lovely pies etc. at Beeston Stone Lock but they were shut (not permanently, I hope). BW men



'Beeston Stone Lock - typical circular workman's 'hut' on left

operating Beeston Iron Lock and we had to get off the boat as it went through, for safety reasons. (One of the bottom gates was falling apart and the collar had snapped, all held in place by a steel harness. The other bottom gate had to be handled very carefully!). Also the lock sides are moving inwards so stoppage inevitable soon. Arrived at Shady Oak (well remembered) at 11.40, had a good lunch and off by 1.00pm. Afternoon turned cloudy but cheered up later. Walked from bridges 114-115 past dozens of moored boats, some very sad



cases. Stopped briefly at Egg Bridge for S & K to get papers. In Chester and at one of our favourite pubs, Old Harkers, for a pint before tackling the Northgate staircase which we did easily with S and K's help (it was Kathryn's first "staircase", not counting Bunbury Pair, which is easy!). Arrived at Simon's canalside house at 6.45 – and got off the boat 15 minutes later. We could have the front or the back of the boat within jumping distance of the bank, but not

both! We did our best but still had the gangplank at full stretch! Very precarious for HIM, carrying the 15kg dogs! Bill chased the cats, but then he would. Nice walk along the towpath. Had a sandwich tea and watched TV with the odd glass of wine. Led to much hilarity negotiating the plank for the dogs' final 'lawning', especially by torchlight. More drinks and bed. TV awful to tune here – even with the boat's sophisticated amplified aerial.

Monday 23rd September, 2002

CHESTER

Woke to a cloudless blue sky and wall-to-wall sun. No problems getting the dogs down the plank! Up at 8.15, breakfast, etc. Simon and Kathryn up later – they had slept in their own bed – Simon went for papers and took photos of the boat, against the house, from the opposite side of the canal. Off at 10.00 to Ellesmere Port but actually winded at Bridge 145 due to lack of time and moored up at Bridge 137 so that we could lunch at the Bunbury Arms at Stoak. Superb food and



Telford's Warehouse Bar/Restaurant/Night Club at Chester Basin

one for the memory bank. It is only a few minutes from Cheshire Oaks shopping complex (and the Cheshire Fairoaks Caravan Club site!). Left at 2.45 and moored up at 3.20 for a nice zizz in the sun! Very hot. Off again at 4.30 and moored at Simon's again 5.30ish. Decided to stay as had managed to get the front end near the bank and added Simon's ladder to the plank for extra safety. Left the dogs on board while we went to Si's for a lovely hot bath then back on board for drinks, sandwiches and lots of laughter. S & K left at 9.45 – they both have jobs with v. early starts.

Watched the news, HE took the dogs to "inspect the moorings". Bill now v. adept on the plank, Neil not so sure but OK once coaxed. And so to bed – late!

Next time – the completion of the journey and HIS views on the boat – and that bow thruster!

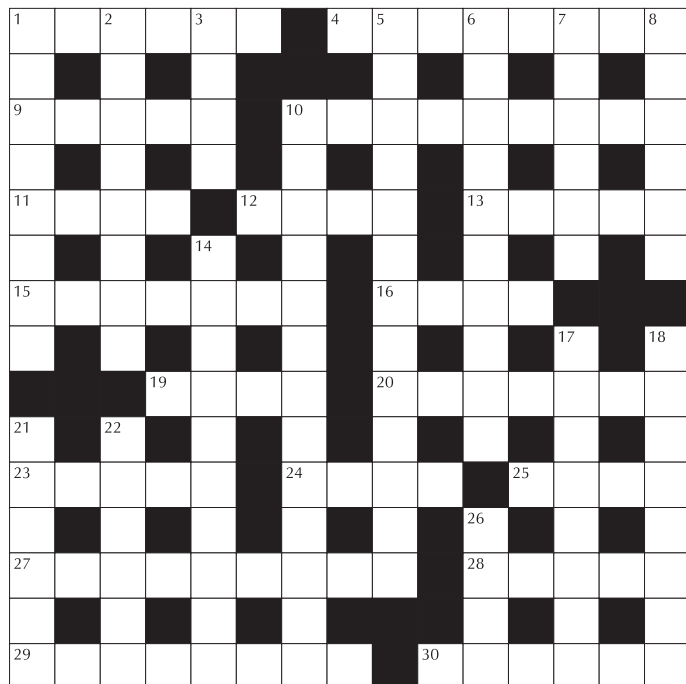
Anne Wright



'Bunbury Arms at Stoak, near Ellesmere Port

All photos: A Wright

Canal Crossword - 39



Across

- 1 Hey lag, help Old Father Thames with some waterway maintenance above King's lock (6)
- 4 Red foals in training for hauling boats beyond the present limit of navigation on Kyme Eau? (8)
- 9 In wry tones they discussed the flooding of the river alongside the Chesterfield canal in Worksop (5)
- 10 I had vandals stoning me where the Wilts and Berks used to join the K & A (9)
- 11 With no flustering I removed the string from the chimney (4)
- 12 Where the heart is (4)
- 13 Load lifting bird? (5)
- 15 Reeds placed in a big house east of Walsall? (7)
- 16 Habitual fisherman without his bait might help in pulling a loaded boat? (4)
- 19 Chopping a bit off a bird gives one the bird (4)
- 20 Fire waste in a valley near Aldershot (7)
- 23 Fletcher's river flowing by Lower Bittell reservoir? (5)
- 24 Lockage with the cog removed might explain why a boat sank (4)

- 25 Sailing vessel favoured by a high ranking army officer in short? (4)
- 27 Reg cried a bucketful of tears at failing to navigate a BCN branch (9)
- 28 Barnacle at last found obstructing where one would wish to tie the rope (5)
- 29 Lass wind up the paddle (8)
- 30 Sunbonnet no nut would wear on the Thames above Wallingford (6)
- ## Down
- 1 A London canal that's in the Union? (8)
- 2 Trash tug on the Leeds and Liverpool below the M6 (8)
- 3 In the Mediterranean find a volcano with it's remainder missing (4)
- 5 One should be capable at helm before cruising the Thames past where the Archbishop of Canterbury lives (7,6)
- 6 Mill at Burscough on the L & L where the last commercial boat deliveries were made (10)
- 7 I would sooner be out rambling along towpaths designed by a great canal builder (8)
- 8 Boats converged at a sluice with a cog removed (6)
- 10 Lockless pan on a BCN branch (4,4,5)
- 14 Original power source at Claverton (10)
- 17 Cranberries Ben took off the likes of Fellows, Morton and Clayton (8)
- 18 A market on a canal where they assess heavy weights? (8)
- 21 An Irish navigation and a useful canal builders piece of equipment (6)
- 22 Centreboards with traces removed are necessary when navigating the River Avon where it is crossed by the M5 (6)
- 26 Take care when making land measurements (4)

Solution on Page 54

Operation & Maintenance of the HNC

Now that we are coming to the end of our second year of operation, I thought it would be useful to explain some of the work that has gone on in the background, to help make this years operation of the canal run as smooth as possible for our customers. Preparations actually started in the autumn last year, when we started to think about the implications of opening the Rochdale Canal in the same year as having the National festival, in Huddersfield.

Initially our thoughts were on how we could cope with the additional demand for passage through Standedge Tunnel.

Options considered included running passages 24 hours a day and doubling up the convoys by using the spare tug. In the end we settled for increasing the number of boats taken through in one go, to eight. This was achieved by adding the spare tug, in the middle of the convoy to provide additional power and manoeuvrability (See photo opposite). This worked very well and we managed to cope with the additional demand. In total, we took around 250 boats through the tunnel in August and September alone.

As I have said on previous occasions, water will always be high on the agenda of issues on the canal. Indeed, this provided us with a significant challenge to keep

the canal operational with the expected increase in demand. Right from the beginning of the year, this involved daily decisions being made to ensure water was used wisely, canal feeds and rainfall used in preference to reservoirs to save supplies and a significant amount of improvements to feeder channels were carried out. All in all I believe this worked very well and we had very few problems with low water levels throughout the busy period.

Following our first operational season, we spent a lot of time carrying out running repairs to the locks. This has involved replacing a number of paddles, cills,



British Waterways

What the Papers Said

Not a great amount in the press this quarter - many thanks to everyone who sent me cuttings - especially to Alan Knott, Keith Sykes and Ken Wright.

Huddersfield Daily Examiner

September 13th

Picture of CNS trip boat being used to help open a training centre in Huddersfield. *Eds note* Incidentally I hope the boat didn't actually cast off as I can count 14 people on board!

September 17th

Nice photograph of Council members Alec Ramsden and Keith Gibson waving windlasses in the air accompanying a nice article about the society and what we have done under the heading 'Raising town's profile'

September 24th

Page of winners of the community awards for 2002. The winner in the category 'Raising Huddersfield's profile' was the Huddersfield Canal Society. Pictured, were

balance beams and footbridges. The majority of the gates on the 74 locks on the canal are not new but are being used functionally for the first time since being installed during the pre-restoration period. These works have certainly made the operation run more smoothly during this season.

I must pay tribute to our staff, who have worked hard throughout, to ensure that all customers enjoy their experience on the canal. To help with the increase in demand, additional staff were temporarily brought in from other parts of the region, my thanks also go to them for their assistance. I would also like to thank the volunteers for the help throughout the

John Maynard, Chris Farrar and Alec Ramsden raising what looked like suspiciously *empty* glasses in a toast to our success.

Can't see Alec having an empty one for too long! Ed.

September 26th

Article about Ronnie Barnes, one of the last people to actually 'leg' a boat through Standedge Tunnel. He is now 83, but looks extremely spry in the picture. He had a trip on Sue Day's boat and the picture was taken at Marsden in the lock next to the station.

October 10th

Article stating that the restoration of the Canal is in the running for a National award for Urban Renaissance. There are four competitors for this award according to the article.

October 16th

Nice photograph of four local artists on the lock gate at Slaithwaite accompanies an

year and look forward to our relationship continuing in the future.

Finally, I believe the exercise was a resounding success. We coped with the additional demand very well and boats were not unduly delayed in the trip to and from the festival site.

Michael Marshall

Project Manager - British Waterways



British Waterways

article about the new works of art commissioned by the Colne Valley trust to be placed alongside the newly reopened canal.

Colne Valley Express and Chronicle

October 4th

Article written by same man (Tony Gardner) about Ronnie Barnes the last legger through the tunnel. The article is almost the same as in the HDE, but has an additional photograph showing Sue Day in all her usual finery using a mobile phone!

Same Issue

Article about, and a couple of pictures of, the programme on TV 'Songs of Praise' which went out at the end of September.

I missed the programme as I was in Anglesey and the reception was impossible for this channel there, but I have been told that it was one of the best put out under this heading. Ed.

October 25th

Article about the four local artists who are creating works of art to be placed alongside the canal, illustrated by the same Paul Welch photograph as in the HDE.

November 8th

Nice picture of Sandra McCash and Mike Marshall (both from British Waterways) proudly holding the Yorkshire Tourist Boards White Rose Award presented to the Standedge Centre.

November 8th

Picture and article about yet another art work to be erected alongside the canal in the Colne Valley. This one is to take the form of a giant conical spool to represent the once booming textile industry.. Several local schools are also involved in the manufacture of this sculpture.

Tameside Advertiser

September 22nd

Letter to the editor complaining about how overgrown the towpath is between Bailey Street and Clarence Street, and that the canal itself is full of rubbish. The photograph with it shows a 'planked off' lock full of rubbish.

It might well be that the lock was about to be cleaned out or the picture is not a recent one. I certainly have not seen that amount of rubbish anywhere in the canal since reopening.

Tameside Reporter

October 10th

In contrast to the last cutting is an article saying that the canal in Tameside has gained top score in annual survey of water quality in canals and rivers. It goes on to say that the canal between Millbrook and Ashton scored an 'A' grade. It appears that no other water in the Tameside area gained this 'A' grade.

New Civil Engineer

September 12th

Picture of youngsters from Halifax Grammar School being given a tour of the tunnel by Costains.

October 3rd

List of the projects for the BCI civil engineering awards a couple of British Waterways schemes on the short list.

October 24th

Letter from our very own Keith Noble putting the editor right about canal reopenings!

October 31st

A picture of Tom Rowe (BW) saying that he is in line for for an engineering award for the work on the restoration.

South Pennine Canals Quiz

Society Council member and Honorary Secretary of the Calder Navigation Society, Keith Noble, sent us this request from the newly revived annual South Pennine Canals Quiz.

Dear Frank,

You will recall that earlier this year we revived the quiz for canal societies and boat clubs east of the Pennines. The event was held in March and one of the South Pennine Boat Club's teams won.

As winners, it falls to SPBC to organise the 'return match' and they have done so for 8.00pm on Saturday March 8th 2003 at

the South Pennine Boat Club, Battyeford, Mirfield.

I do hope that HCS will send a team or teams and would ask you to publicise the event in Pennine Link.

May the best team win!

Keith Noble

If there are any members in the area who would like to make up an HCS team for a convivial night's quizzing, please let us know here in the Society's office by St Valentine's Day at the latest, so we can field a team or two.

Oldham Chronicle

October 1st

Interesting idea for musicians to play in Standedge tunnel to try out the acoustics.

October 8th

Account of meeting of Diggle councillors to form the Diggle Framework centred on the reopened canal and the opportunities for increased tourism.

Same issue

Story of how one in ten children are convinced that canals were built for ducks and that one in eight thought they were there to catch rainwater. One in 20 think there are octopuses in the canals and over half do not realise that they are man made.

October 10th

Account of how the rebuilt canal is in line for an Urban Renaissance Award.

October 30th

Account and picture of how Standedge Visitor Centre is a finalist in the Yorkshire tourism Boards Awards.

Quite a lot about the bridge over the Rochdale Canal in Failsworth that is regarded as a traffic hazard by almost everyone.

November 5th

Report on scheme before Oldham Council for redevelopment at Frenches Wharf was rejected by Saddleworth Planning Committee.

Letter to the editor in a subsequent issue was very much opposed.

November 12th

Paragraph about a fire alarm in the tunnel delaying trains for an hour.

STOP PRESS

New Civil Engineer - November 21st

List of awards made in the 2002 Historic Bridge and Infrastructure category listed two waterways projects amongst the nine recognised. They were the Anderton Boat Lift and the Standedge Tunnel. Congratulations to BW for this recognition.

Brian Minor

Raising Town's Profile - We're Tops

HCS has beaten off tough competition to win a prestigious award which recognises the "stand alone" efforts of its pioneers to re-open the Narrow Canal.

"An impossible dream became reality" said a citation read out at a glittering dinner at Huddersfield's MacAlpine Stadium. It was attended by representatives of nominated organisations short-listed for Community Project awards presented by the Huddersfield Daily Examiner.

Others in the final three competing in the category for raising Huddersfield's profile were the new Kinggate Shopping Centre in Huddersfield, and the long established Holmfirth Art Week. And there was no doubt that HCS was a popular choice for the top spot.

"We got very generous applause and afterwards several people came up to me to say how pleased they were that, at long last, our efforts had been recognised and rewarded," said Alec Ramsden, who prepared and submitted the HCS case.

He was presented with the handsome, engraved glass trophy, by a representative of Kirklees Economic Development Services, which sponsored the raising the profile category, and was accompanied at the ceremony by founder chairman, John Maynard, and his successor, Chris Farrar.

Also at the dinner, to see the trophy being presented and to pass on her congratulations, was HCS long-term sponsor, Kathy Staff (Norah Battye of "Last of the Summer Wine" fame) who was there with other cast members to see a special lifetime achievement award presented to the television long-runner's creator and writer, Roy Clarke.

In his case for consideration by the judges, Alec took them back to the early days when pioneers met at the Zetland Hotel in

Huddersfield and decided to set out on the long road to what has been complete success in the end-to-end restoration of the canal.

The early volunteers refused to accept setbacks and active opposition, and a massive campaign was launched to win backing and practical help. The many and various steps taken on the winning road, were highlighted, culminating in the financial backing by the Millennium Commission and regeneration Agency, English Partnerships.

"I thought that with the canal being officially opened in 2002, being 'blessed' by a visit by Prince Charles, and the IWA National Rally coming to Huddersfield for the first time, it was appropriate that we should go for the award. I pointed out how jobs have been created, canalside businesses have sprung up, and the canal is now a leisure facility. It is known locally, regionally and nationally and the blueprint to success has been adopted by other canal restoration organisations. I'm glad I was proved right," said Alec.

Alec Ramsden





RAISING HUDDERSFIELD'S PROFILE

WINNER

AWARDED TO

Huddersfield Canal Society

R. M. M. M.
EDITOR



Presented at the McAlpine Stadium Monday September 23, 2002

Awards - And there's more!

News too of a second top award - a national one this time - for a restored section of the Narrow. And it's one in which another member of the Ramsden family (this time Graham, Alec's son), played a major role.

Graham, who is with Kirklees Planning Services, prepared and submitted a case for the Slaithwaite scheme to be considered for (posh title this) "The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister's Award for Urban Renaissance 2002".

The Slaithwaite scheme was one of four finalists, selected from over 70 entries, from all parts of the UK, presented at the Urban Summit held at the International Convention Centre, Birmingham. Graham also set up an interesting exhibition illustrating the scheme, with some striking before and after photographs, "reckon he could be a successor to David Bailey." said Alec - and it received high praise from DPM, John Prescott.

The Slaithwaite scheme was submitted, not merely as a canal restoration achievement, but also as an example of co-operation between organisations and active involvement by the local community. HCS, the Colne Valley Trust and British Waterways were included as partners and the judges, chaired by Mr Clive Dutton, Director of Regeneration, Gallagher Estates, commended the detailed work carried out and the use of materials.

The scheme had achieved a high level of excellence, and, like the other three finalists, illustrated how to build effective working partnerships, deliver sustainability and innovation, and enhance the quality of life of local people.

"We were particularly impressed by the physical and environmental regeneration that has produced a dramatic transformation

of the village. But this is not just an environmental scheme. It is bringing lasting benefits to the local community in the form of increased business through tourism and related activities. The scheme has been led by the community, and has clearly had a major input on the recovery of the village and its economy," said the judges report. The judges had earlier visited Slaithwaite and had been shown around by John Miller, as Kirklees project manager, who has been involved with the HCS restoration scheme from the start.

Graham's submission commented "Slaithwaite demonstrates a determined approach with the public view changing from one of opposition to almost universal support and praise for the transformation of the village centre today. From small beginnings the vision and hard work of many people have built the foundations of what will be the renaissance of Slaithwaite and the Colne Valley as a whole.

The restoration had improved the quality of life for local residents. The centre of the village had been transformed into a pleasant and attractive series of pedestrian dominated spaces linked by the vista of the restored canal. A major part of the complementary work in the village had been improvements to commercial premises, in partnership with English Heritage under a Heritage Economic Regeneration Scheme.

The award was presented at the Birmingham Summit by Mr Prescott, to Councillor Andrew Pinnock, Kirklees Cabinet Member for Regeneration, and he has written to the Deputy Prime Minister, promising him a "warm Yorkshire welcome", if he accepts an invitation to come and see for himself what has been achieved in Slaithwaite.



Left to right: Councillor Andrew Pinnock, John Miller - Kirklees Planning, Keith James - Colne Valley Trust, David Sumner - Huddersfield Canal Society, Mike Marshall - British Waterways.

G Ramsden

"Naturally we are delighted that we have been so highly praised for a scheme which combines the skills, forward thinking and enthusiasm of so many people. It is congratulations all round," said Cllr Pinnock.

And at a ceremony in Slaithwaite, he presented framed copies of the certificate to representatives of HCS, Colne Valley Trust and British Waterways.

Another trophy for the HCS "Hall of Fame!"

Alec Ramsden



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Review - Pennine Dreams

Ken Wright reviews the book by our very own restoration boss, Keith Gibson, recently published in softback by Tempus Publishing Ltd.

"There's a book in everyone" is more than likely an incorrect quotation. Certainly, if I added up all the words I've written for magazines and newsletters over the last 50 years I could probably fill a couple of volumes. But to do what Keith has done, start with a blank sheet of paper and tell the story of the Huddersfield Narrow, is tantamount to setting off up Kilimanjaro, at least!

But he has succeeded and in fine measure. Exactly 150 pages plus useful appendices and a comprehensive index, the book is everyman's guide to the canal, the story being told as TWO dreams. The first dream was that of crossing the Pennines in the first place and the opening fifty pages give us that history in detail from the building, through the working years to decline, decay and vandalism (genuine and official!) and ending with the formation of the Inland Waterways Association and the first stirrings of the restoration movement.

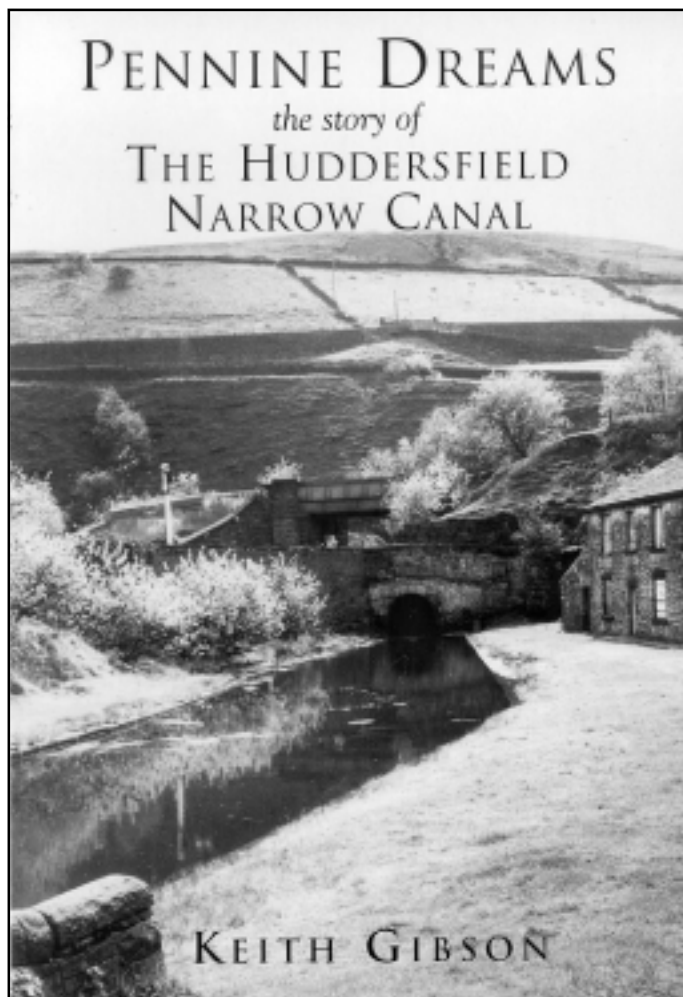
The second dream was OURS! The formation of the Society and the early campaigns to get people's attention and stop planning blight followed by the early attempts at restoration by volunteers, then the increased activity through government employment schemes. Money matters keep intruding, necessarily, and are deftly handled so that we realise their importance but do not allow them to divert us from the main thrust of the book.

The central section covering the formation of the Joint Committee, partnership working and the eventual Millennium funding success I found particularly interesting – and I was closely involved at the time! What I mean is that Keith has logged every stage in its logical sequence, making it a useful reminder of what we went through over a three or four year period and, I predict, being a valuable aid to restoration groups in the future. As an aside here we must remember that we were trail-blazers; the later restoration schemes have had and are having a relatively easier run, learning from our experience.

The last fifty or sixty pages concern the last run to completion, the openings and teething problems, the Lottery on TV, and a bit of general backslapping.

All the above may sound a bit academic and possibly boring. It is not; Keith has brought the subject to life by mentioning names at every conceivable opportunity. This book is as much about people as about what they were doing. There are references to 121 separate people in the Index and Appendix 2 is entitled "Restoring the Canal – Cast of Players". Appendix 1 is a fantastic bit of fact collecting – a complete run-down of every bit of restoration, starting at Ashton and running sequentially through to Huddersfield making any item easy to find. What the problem was, how it was solved and who solved it is also listed.

This book is eminently readable; I did it from cover to cover over two evenings. Mind you, there was a bit of self-interest in there; my name features 15 times, only beaten by Keith Gibson, David Sumner,



Keith has a way with words that, to my mind, puts this book in a class of its own. If I am biased, I don't care – try it and see for yourself.

I am ending by quoting from the introduction to the book, which gives a quick sample of its style.

“This is the story of a canal. Not just any canal, but a rather special canal ... built in the British Isles at Standedge under the Pennines ... by people who dreamt an impossible dream – that they might profit from a canal taking a collision course with the backbone of England!”

Ken Wright

Steve Whitby, Slaithwaite and Standedge Tunnel! And, not unusually, I provide the comic element with a photograph I submitted to get my Staley Wharf plaque, having got there by dredger and tug!

I haven't mentioned the pictures. There are dozens of photographs, some we have seen often before but no worse for that and many more are new and excellent. There are 130 of them altogether and they make an interesting story in themselves.

“Pennine Dreams” is published by Tempus Publishing Ltd. and is available from the Society office at £16.99 (p&p free to members, £1.50 to non-members) or from your local bookseller.
ISBN 0 7524 2751 Z.

Scottish Marathon - Part 1

For most people, especially non-boaters, the common conception of a canal boating holiday is one of casual progress, escaping from the stress-filled workplace. Society member, Andrew Shortridge, seems to have other ideas ... (all photos A Shortridge)

Six in the morning might not be the ideal starting time for a relaxing boating holiday but trailing a boat over three hundred miles to Scotland to do both the Lowlands Canals (The Forth & Clyde and the Union Canals) and the Caledonian Canal in the space of a week is not generally regarded as relaxing. So, why all three. For about four years now I had intended to cruise the Caledonian Canal. The only reason why I hadn't was that it had been deemed too far to travel for my fiancée Anne and her young son Ben. However, ever since cruising the Llangollen last year I had determined to do the Caledonian. Anne decided that she was not going to travel to Scotland, but my Mum decided that she was interested. (Indeed, it was with my Mum that I had cruised the Narrow in the first month of its re-opening, and Elicasu was the first cabin cruiser through Standedge since the re-opening – how many GRP boats will have been through the tunnel before?).

It was then that I heard about the Lowlands Canal and the Falkirk wheel. To me it seemed silly to trail the boat all the way up to Scotland and fail to see this unique structure. I reckoned that if I missed it this year it would be three to four years before I would have the chance to do it again. From here a plan started to formulate in my mind. The web site said that the Caledonian canal could be cruised one way in 2 ½ to 3 days, that therefore, allowing for three days travelling, would allow two days for the Lowlands canals and the Wheel. From speaking to the appropriate British

Waterways offices and spelling out my requirements a plan fell into place. The Caledonian Canal would be relatively easy to do. There was a slipway at Caley Marine at Inverness and I obtained permission to use the slipway of LochAber Yacht Club at Fort William. There was a reasonably regular bus service between Inverness and Fort William and I could leave my car and trailer at either location.

The Lowlands Canals were to be harder to plan for. Speaking to BW, I found out that the Union Canal had four locks and the Wheel, and the Forth and Clyde (despite having thirty nine locks) had only three between the Wheel site and Glasgow. The rest were split into a flight of sixteen on the descent from Falkirk to the Firth of Forth at Grangemouth and nineteen (not in one flight) on the descent from Maryhill in Glasgow to the Clyde at Bowling. Deciding to miss out on the heavily locked section was easy. I would not miss much on the flight down to the Forth and the stretch from Glasgow to the west, while it included a tunnel and the unique Dalmuir Drop lock, were through urban areas. The Dalmuir drop lock has arisen solely out of the restoration. During the canals disused years the bridge here was lowered and culverted. When restoration came, the bridge could not be heightened so the solution was to build a lock with the bridge in its middle. A boat enters the lock, water is drained out (to where, I know not) so the boat can sail underneath the bridge, whereupon the water level is raised again back to canal level. However, there are slipways in Glasgow and at the end of the canal in Edinburgh. The nearest one suitable for a boat my size on the Union was at Broxburn approx 10 miles from Edinburgh (the one near the terminus being suitable for boats up to 13 ft long). At Glasgow, there were

three slipways advertised but two were only suitable for smaller boats and the third would take larger boats but was said to be suitable for only four wheel drives. My car is a Mondeo diesel and whilst it will pull the boat OK, I need to be sure slipways are not too steep, preferably fully tarmaced (or concrete) and little or no silt in the canal (This is expanded upon later). Therefore the only option was the slipway at the BW basin at Auchinstarry that is nearer to Falkirk than Glasgow. I was told it would be OK (and reasonably safe) to leave my car and trailer in the car park of the leisure centre at Broxburn but travel between the two would involve two trains and a taxi ride at each end. On the bright side, Auchinstarry gave me some flexibility. If I got ahead of schedule I would have plenty of time to cruise into Glasgow and back. If I ran short of time I would just alter how far west we went accordingly.

I now knew it was possible. The planned route also had for me the great advantage of being slightly flexible and we would push as hard as possible the first three days and then possibly relax a bit. The first day was to be spent travelling North and launching the boat into the water at Broxburn. Any boating that day, whilst I hoped to do some, was to be treated as a bonus and if time permitted was to allow us to head towards the outskirts of Edinburgh. Sunday was planned to take us West to the Wheel that we would aim to do Monday morning (the logic being as it had to be booked it would enable us to cruise until late if needs be to get there). The rest of Monday could then be spent cruising as far west as time would allow, Monday night and Tuesday being set aside for car retrieval and travelling to Fort William. Fort William was where we were to launch Elicasu for that part of the voyage as Loch Linnhe is tidal. I needed to use the Caledonian Canal to wash any sea-water out of my outboard's mechanism. Wednesday to Friday could then be spent cruising using

Saturday to retrieve the car and start the homeward journey, which was to be completed on the Sunday.

I booked the first full week in July off for the trip. Work-loads would not permit me to take more than one week off but my boss knew that if things went wrong it might be the following Tuesday before I returned. It was as soon as possible after the opening of the Wheel at the end of May that both my Mum and myself were able to do the trip. (Anne had just listened to my plans, decided we were mad, and reaffirmed her decision not to travel).

This was how we had come to rise at 6am on a Saturday morning in early July to start a boating holiday. All had been prepared the night before, car packed, boat hitched, outboard fitted. The weather was fine, as was the weeks forecast, as we headed steadily, if not slowly, up the A1 to Scotch Corner and then onto the A66 to Penrith. Despite regularly pulling into lay-by's to let traffic through, a long trail of traffic soon re-developed behind us (my maximum speed being 50 mph but I tended to keep to about 45). On one occasion, not seeing a lay-by for some time, I wondered why the car behind was unwilling to overtake on what appeared suitable locations. Eventually, on a long straight, where the road became three lanes wide to service crossroads, he started to overtake me. As he drew alongside I realised he was towing a small sailing dinghy. I also realised that a third car was overtaking him, and there was an articulated lorry coming towards us complete madness!!

It was not until after 3pm that we arrived in Broxburn, and then we still had to find the slipway. Trying dismally to follow the directions I had been given, I actually ended up at the Broxburn BW yard. This proved to be of fortune. Not only were we given the directions to the slipway, but we were advised of the true distance to the Wheel.

It was also pointed out that it was well worth heading east first towards Edinburgh as far as the Scott Russell Aqueduct, even if it meant missing out on reaching Glasgow. Whilst I put the boat into the water my Mum walked down to the nearby leisure centre and arranged for me to leave my car and trailer there.

It was 6pm before we started cruising towards Edinburgh. I had calculated that so long as we were at Broxburn at 9am the following morning then we would be at the Wheel at about 4pm, in time to do the Wheel on the Sunday, and then Monday could be spent cruising towards Glasgow. There are currently no Nicholson's guide for Scotland and at the time of travelling to Scotland there was a 'Skipper's Guide' for the Caledonian Canal and the Forth and Clyde but not the Union Canal – I was told that one was at the printers but had not been published. Heading east we soon passed the BW yard we had visited earlier, then we passed under a new bridge under the M8, this had obviously been a culvert until the restoration had occurred. After we passed under this bridge we could see in the distance the impressive thirty-six arch Almond Valley viaduct that carries the Glasgow – Edinburgh Railway, and soon afterwards we approached the Almond Aqueduct (*pictured right*).

There are impressive views of this, a five arch aqueduct that has a sluice in its centre. From here water can be drained into the river below, and it has been known for creating icicles in severe winters. A famous 75 ft pillar of ice was created during the freeze of 1895 that attracted many spectators. Soon

afterwards we passed the Bridge Inn at Raitho. Despite having only been cruising for an hour we decided to stop here for a meal.

This pub does both restaurant and bar meals, and also doubles as the home of the Edinburgh Canal Centre. The centre operates two restaurant boats, 'Pride of the Union' and 'Pride of Belhaven', throughout the year and a vintage passenger launch, the 'Raitho Princess' during the summer.

Speaking to the landlord we found out that the trip boats run from Raitho eastwards to Broxburn and westwards to the Scott Russell aqueduct. Therefore the canal in this area was both deep and weed-free. We were warned that we might find cruising east of Broxburn more difficult – caused both by weeds and a shallow canal. (We were told by a boater we chatted to in this pub that the dredging on the canal pre re-opening had not been as efficient as it could have been, with the result that the bed of the canal resembled the Himalayas). Of more immediate relevance, we were advised that beyond the Scott Russell Aqueduct the canal runs alongside a housing estate and were therefore advised to moor up for the night before it. Before heading off we also purchased a map of the Lowlands Canals and a video of the Royal Opening of the





Falkirk Wheel. The map published by GEO Projects in conjunction with BW Scotland gives a lot of useful information about the canal and its surroundings and was useful for tracking progress on both canals.

We cruised for nearly another hour before crossing the Scott Russell aqueduct, immediately turning round, recrossing it and mooring for the night by the turning point. We then settled down for an early night after some sorting so we knew where things were. Whilst my Mum watched TV I spoke on the phone to Anne, who had gone with her Mum, step-father and sister to stay in a friends mobile home on a campsite in Lincoln. Whilst we were having a quiet night they were obviously enjoying a long night in the bar, from where I later received calls soliciting help in a bar-quiz they were competing in.

Unlike Anne and Denise (Anne's sister), we arose the following morning without a hangover. It was a good job, we started at 7am. We felt that this should mean that we would be at the Wheel by about 4pm (weeds and shallow canal permitting). We need never have worried. Apart from a short stretch of canal just west of Broxburn where we clipped the bottom three times in very quick succession we had no problems with depth – weeds were never a problem.

For those who have a cruiser, you will realise that cruisers suffer more from weeds than shallow canals. I can cruise in depths of just over a foot but weed that a narrow-boat can scythe through will lock an outboard's propellor. The Union Canal is well worth visiting, especially the eastern end. Stretches of it reminded me of the Upper Peak, Macclesfield and Lancaster Canals. At one point the canal widens to circle a little island with a miniature castle dedicated to Robert the Bruce. There are two stunning aqueducts on the Union, the already mentioned Almond aqueduct and the magnificent 12 arch Avon aqueduct (*pictured above left with Elicasu*) that carries the canal over the River Avon and the Avon valley.

At Linlithgow, the birth place of Mary Queen of Scots, we stopped for water. Chatting to a volunteer of the Linlithgow canal society, it transpires that the society has been running since the mid 1970's. In its early days, when it first offered trips on a short stretch of the canal, they were surprised by the demand. They wondered if there would be sufficient demand for the short trip offered. In the end they had to run four or five trips that day as people were fighting to get on the boat. Nowadays, it operates two trip boats, one of which (*pictured below*) is a replica of a Victorian steam packet boat.



About 3pm we entered Falkirk tunnel (*pictured right*), a short tunnel cut out of rock, with a towpath (reminiscent of Scout Tunnel on the Huddersfield Narrow). Each entrance was guarded by a volunteer from the St John Ambulance. This was the day of the annual Glasgow to Edinburgh cycle ride that runs the length of the canal. On clearing the tunnel we telephoned the Wheel to warn them of our imminent arrival. We were asked to go through to the staircase locks that lead down to the Wheel and to wait for assistance.



All the locks on the Lowlands and Caledonian Canals are worked for you by BW staff. We had phoned at 10am and had been told to re-phone when we had cleared the tunnel. You are supposed to give the lock-keeper at the Wheel 24 hours notice. The main reason for this is that the lock-gear on the staircase locks is removed each night. This is a safety precaution followed since the mindless act of vandalism that nearly spoilt the Royal opening of the Wheel. Vandals had flooded the Wheel's mechanism by tampering with the lock-gear at the staircase locks.

Arriving at the locks we went inside the top lock and waited for assistance. By the time the BW man had arrived 10 minutes later a group of over 40 people had gathered. When we had been worked through the locks we were instructed to moor up outside the locks. The idea was for us to wait whilst a trip boat, coming up the Wheel from the visitor centre, had come through to its winding point near the locks and returned down, before we were to go through. However, just as we were about to moor up, instructions were radioed through for us to proceed to the Wheel. Leaving the staircase locks the canal turns right through 90 degrees before it enters a short concrete tunnel. Exiting the tunnel we were given some instructions from the skipper of the passing trip boat before continuing onto the concrete aqueduct that leads to the Wheel.



IN...



DOWN...

Once on the Wheel, we had to tie up. The decision to tie to the starboard side was made for us by the wind. Even at this stage you do not notice the full magnitude of the Wheel itself, though the size of the visitor centre is noticeable.

The underwater gate behind us was raised to close us in and we were on our way. Slowly at first, the Wheel really does glide into action. It seemed to be over in no time but it must have been 5 minutes for us to be lowered. From there we travelled the 100 yards to the next lock where we met the Wheel-keeper. Here we were given the phone-number of the Grangemouth lock-keeper, under whose jurisdiction we were now falling. Grangemouth to Auchinstarry (20 locks – 1 swing bridge) is controlled from Grangemouth. The team based at Auchinstarry covers the section to Glasgow where another team will see you through the locks down to the Clyde. After speaking to the Wheel-keeper, we looked around the Visitor Centre. It is well worth a look. I have seen the visitor centres at Standedge, Anderton and Fort Augustus (on the Caledonian) and this one is the best by far. Some history of the canals and the old locks and a demonstration model of how the Wheel works. The trip boats from here are like ordinary boats but the eventual plan is for amphibious craft to take the visitors through the Wheel, to return on land.

We could have moored up at the Wheel but we decided to cruise up to Lock 16.

The top lock on the flight down to Grangemouth is less than 15 minutes cruise away. We moored up at the pontoon here, which we shared with the brightly coloured trip boat “The Bonny Barge”, together with an equally brightly coloured narrowboat, lived on by the former’s owner. He explained that we were basically safe here but every now and again he had stones thrown at his boat from the towpath on the opposite bank; invariably after closing time.

As it was only 6pm, I decided to walk down the flight towards Grangemouth. In forty-five minutes I had only walked about half the flight, and with rain threatening and supper still to eat I turned back. Whilst walking back I spoke to the lock-keeper at Grangemouth to arrange the following days itinerary. I didn’t realise it at the time, but whilst I was speaking to the lock-keeper the team of two who were to help us the following day were listening in. Whilst on the phone I had to ring off whilst he took another call. It later transpired this was from a boat travelling eastwards from the Clyde to the Forth. Getting back to the boat I was not popular; not for my late return but because we could not get a bar meal anywhere. It was Sunday night, after two long days, and all nearby local bars had stopped serving at 8pm. By now it was raining quite heavily so a Chinese takeaway on board, followed by a pint in the local pub were in order.

Andrew Shortridge

To be continued...



DOWN...

Letters to the Editor

Dear Mr Minor,

As I actually read the Summer 2002 Edition of 'PLINK' during a visit to the Huddersfield Narrow Canal earlier this year, I could not resist a response to the reference to "boaters' dubious practices" in the letter from M Miles.

One of the key elements of the funding proposal for restoration of the HNC will have been economic benefit to the locality. Part of this comes from the boaters who visit and spend their money in the area.

Another point is that a canal without any boats may be rather sterile and boring. So, I would suggest that having boats visit the canal following restoration is generally desirable.

However, boats come with boaters, and boaters need somewhere to put their rubbish, water taps to fill up their tanks and facilities for emptying their toilets. We were lucky enough to spend a couple of weeks on the HNC, but it seemed to us that many of your boating visitors travel through as quickly as they possibly can, taking just 3 or 4 days. This minimises their need for facilities but also reduces their economic contribution.

So what counts as dubious? Adding to the existing heap of rubbish at the Wool Road Sani Station? Doing shopping at Stalybridge Tesco one day and putting a bag of rubbish, including packaging from that shopping, in their bin the next day? Using the public toilets at Slaithwaite to carefully empty a porta potti? I would have done the same at Stalybridge once Armentieres Square was not full of visitors, but the facility was closed outside shopping hours.

It is clear that the Huddersfield Canal Society are working hard to rectify the lack of facilities, and hopefully BW have also taken notice that future restorations should

come more fully equipped. I was very happy to visit the Huddersfield Narrow Canal as it is now, and hope to come back one day to see the improvements.

Meanwhile, I will apologise if I did anything dubious or caused offence during my visit. However, I will also suggest that something be done about the dubious practices of some local dog owners, as I found the quantity of dog mess on the towpath definitely offensive.

Best regards,

Marty Seymour (Mrs)
Bedford

Mrs Seymour also included the following observations about her visit to the Huddersfield Narrow Canal, also sent to BW in response to their request for feedback from visitors to the South Pennine Ring.

We found bridges and lock entrances on the Huddersfield Narrow Canals to be frequently rather too overgrown.

We had been expecting difficult paddles on the Huddersfield Narrow, but actually found Marple Flight harder to work than most on the HNC. Of course, we did not to work the Diggle Flight, where we suspect the paddles probably are rather stiff. We found too many broken paddles on the HNC, and the hydraulic ones are very tedious. We thought there were too many paddle locks on the HNC, and found several paddles that had been locked while they were still open; it can be quite hard to see this with the hydraulic type. We found that our existing handcuff keys did not always work on the HNC paddle locks so we bought a new one, but it still did not always fit. We had great difficulty getting our handcuff key to unlock one of the paddles that we found locked while open. Other boaters were saying that their keys did not fit, too.

We had a few problems with lock 17W where the lock tail bridge was missing. We had only two low pounds and managed to scrounge enough water in each case to get our boat safely through. Most of the gates on the eastern side of the HNC seem to leak, and it is virtually impossible to open the top gate on lock 12E. All our guidebooks warned about the guillotine gate in Slaithwaite but NONE of them mentioned the really low, sloping bridge immediately below the guillotine. We thought this was the lowest bridge on the canal.

Our Pearsons Guide listed several mooring places on the HNC where we could not get our boat anywhere near to the towpath. We like to do this to reduce the likelihood of our cats falling into the water, but many other boaters will have good reason to expect a mooring place to provide towpath adjacency. The well-used moorings at Uppermill are alongside a very muddy bank. To avoid this disintegrating due to constant insertion of mooring stakes, urgent provision of some rings might be a good idea. Despite the apparent popularity of the Uppermill moorings, which were actively used during our visit, the Pennine Moonraker trip boat continues to roar past as if it is the only boat on the canal. I believe the operator should be encouraged to add 5 or 10 minutes to his trip times and to slow down while passing the moorings, particularly while they are so muddy and it is impossible to tie up securely.

Apart from Uppermill, the only reasonable moorings we found were at Stalybridge, Wool Road/Dobcross, above lock 17E and at Slaithwaite, where the adjacent 18 hour pallet factory and fire station do not make for a very peaceful time. At Slaithwaite, an apparently abandoned boat took up a lot of the precious space. Lack of suitable moorings on the HNC means that many boats simply do not stop. If the boats do

not stop, the canal locality will not gain the economic benefit from the boaters spending their money there. Several boaters who had been through the tunnel told us they were disappointed that they were not permitted to stop longer than overnight in the centre of Marsden. This is certainly one location on the HNC that may be missing out.

While we were very impressed by the engineering solutions adopted at Bates and Sellers, we found the current arrangements potentially rather dangerous. What a shame that the locks are located so near to the tunnels and that no passing places have been provided. On our way up, we needed to empty the lock at Bates. We found that our boat was sucked into the lock entrance by the force of the water, which then flowed fiercely in and out of our front cockpit through the drainage holes. Full reverse was needed to get the boat back and safely away from the lock.

There are also going to be problems with boats meeting head on, particularly in Sellers Tunnel. The ideal arrangement seems to be traffic lights similar to those on Brewery Gut in Reading, but this will cost money and therefore is likely to take some time. Meanwhile, a simple and cost effective approach is the introduction of permitted entry times. While traffic is limited and mainly travels in convoy and stopping places are few, it could be enough to say boats may ascend Bates and Sellers in the morning and descend in the afternoon. Otherwise, something like the permitted hours on Preston Brook tunnel could also work well.

The HNC seemed to us to be rather shallow, particularly on the eastern side. This meant that pounds had to be kept full, to provide sufficient depth for navigation, which in turn meant that fierce by-weirs run whenever locks are operated. With many lower lock landings being steps in the (overgrown) lock

mouth opposite or adjacent to the by-weir, the only way to avoid losing loads of paint off the boat seemed to be for the person working the locks to walk all the way. In due course, we hope that 'proper' lock landings will be provided and hopefully the canal depth can be increased to reduce the fierceness of the by-weirs.

With the short, shallow pounds on the HNC, we agree with the BW booklet that boats in convoy **must** be encouraged to leave a lock between each boat. We saw several convoys of boats following each other in very quick succession, to the extent that locks were turned against us because no-one expected any boats to be going in the opposite direction. People were emptying locks too soon, then going aground before entering the one below because 'their lockful' had gone over the by-weir. Overall, it seemed to us that the boaters were intent on getting from one end of the HNC to the other as quickly as possible. Hopefully, over time and with the provision of mooring places and boater facilities, people will want to spend longer enjoying the delights of the HNC.

We did feel that the shortness of the water supply on the HNC is not helped by the leaky bottom gates, paddle locks, broken paddles and short shallow pounds. Frequently, particularly on the eastern side, we found that the locks never really reached a level with the pound above and it was necessary to open the top gate regardless, before the boat went aground or the pound above was completely drained.

Both the HNC and the Rochdale had far too much dog mess on the towpath for our liking.

In places, there were a lot of lockside railings which seemed to make operating the lock more difficult. The offside railing at Sellers catches on the gate beam. In various places, the balance between railing, gate beam and tail bridge did not seem

quite right. It's no fun having to scramble over a wet gate beam to cross the bridge in the rain. The railings at Slaithwaite seem spot on whereas Stalybridge lockside railings look very pretty but there are so many of them it must be a nightmare for single-handers, and the gate ways are not in the right place at all.

We found many instances of top gates opening so far that the beam hangs over the lock threatening boat cabinsides.

We set off on our cruise knowing that facilities were likely to be very rare on the newly restored canal sections. We took our spare toilet cassette and made sure our water tank was full before entering these areas. We found appropriate places to leave our rubbish and emptied the toilet carefully at the public conveniences when necessary. We were surprised to hear other boaters complaining about the lack of facilities; surely they knew it would be like this? However, it did get us thinking about the situation. Going forward, we believe there will have to be a change in the approach to canal restoration. With so many schemes now in place, and yet the Kennet & Avon which reopened 12 years ago still probably not completely finished, how many more partial or ongoing restorations will there be? Why should a newly restored canal not include a decent water supply, full dredging, visitor moorings, lock landings, water points, sani stations/pump out, rubbish bins, diesel and gas supplies, watertight lock gates and sides, usable paddles? It is certainly something to think about.

In summary, we really enjoyed our cruise this summer. We relished the intellectual challenges of the fragile HNC and survived the physical challenges of the awesome Rochdale. It was very satisfying to complete the journey with our boat paintwork virtually intact and without ever using our long pole or our shore plank, or having to

call BW for help. We loved the scenery, and enjoyed our many conversations with local people. We hope to come back in future to see the changes you will make as these restorations progress. Perhaps we will even go through Standedge Tunnel when our currently new paintwork on the boat is due for replacement and we can carry our cat basket on board instead of our spare toilet cassette.

One final question. Why does everyone seem to refer to 'barges' when talking about narrow boats? As in the most common question, 'Hey mister, do you live on that barge?' Then there is the skip for 'Bargees' Rubbish' at Slaithwaite. Well done to



M Seymour

The Seymour's nb 'Mentor' near Lock 31E, HNC

Kirklees for providing the only skip on the navigation, but please change the sign (and empty the skip). Even the Standedge Experience offers model narrow boats for sale with signs saying 'Large Barge' and 'Small Barge'.

Marty Seymour

Dear Brian,

Thank you for an excellent Autumn issue (No 142). A few points arise from the contents.

Firstly at the IWA National Festival, the three trip boat operators had agreed to work to a common and cooperative policy so that passengers could gather in one place, see plenty of boat movement on the water and be able to board the next available boat irrespective of operator with a minimum of waiting time. Your comment on the photograph of me in 'The Examiner' helping with the CNS boat should be set off against the photograph on page 23 of Plink which shows Tony Allport, Boats Officer of CNS, helping to load passengers onto 'Marsden Shuttle' (probably under the supervision of Ronnie Rose). In any case I am a member of CNS. At this level, at festivals, co-operation really does work.

The Chairman, in his report, mentions an exploratory meeting with RCS and CNS to discuss a closer relationship and joint activities. We already have a joint Boatmaster training programme with the crew of the CNS boat. This gives CNS members access to an established training regime and to a class 'V' passenger vessel for test purposes and HCS members access to river navigation, guillotine, staircase, broad and river locks where any of these are missing from their experience. This is one clear benefit of cooperation. As an aside, how many other training organisations can offer this spread of experience?

May I suggest PRINK, Pennine Ring Link, for the agenda?

Yours sincerely

Robert Maycock
Shaw, Oldham

Locks, Docks and Beyond

Locks Docks and Beyond, the exhibition and play set up and performed by the youngsters of Slaithwaite has now gone one stage further.

With the help of Kim Strickson from Kirklees MBC they have devised a touring exhibition graphically describing the work that went into it and the results so far gained. This show had its opening in the Marsden Mechanics Hall on Saturday 16th November.

All the posters advertising the event, and the invitation cards for the guests were designed by the group. If the show comes to your area it is well worth a visit, we all complain about the youth of today, but



this proves that some of them at least do take an active interest in their surroundings and heritage.

Congratulations to all involved in the project, those of you of a sedentary disposition can look them up on the website they have made - www.locksdocks.com

Brian Minor



Still a mystery ... As there has been no response at all for information, or even speculation, about this historic photo, as featured in the last issue of Pennine Link, it is a little difficult to report any progress. But we'll keep showing it around.

Solution to Crossword 39

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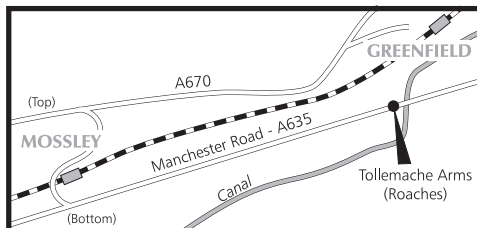
THE SOCIETY WELCOMES THE FOLLOWING NEW MEMBERS:

2662 Mr Garside, [REDACTED]

2663 Mr Dickinson, [REDACTED]

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 2003 are: 8th January, 12th February & 12th March.



PENNINE LINK BACK NUMBERS:

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The original 1992 video commissioned by the Canal Society. Copies are available from the Society offices, price £10.99 plus £1.95 p+p.



The new video, 'The Impossible Dream', is available from the Society offices, price £10.99 plus £1.95 p+p.

This video, commissioned by the Huddersfield Canal Company, tells the story of the complete restoration of the Huddersfield Narrow Canal, from an idea by enthusiasts in the early 1970's, through to the official re-opening by HRH the Prince of Wales, in September 2001.

Running time: 56 mins

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