

Pennine Link

Members Quarterly Journal - Issue 148 - Spring 2004



HUDDERSFIELD
CANAL
SOCIETY

Huddersfield Canal Society Ltd

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The views expressed in Pennine Link are not necessarily those of Huddersfield Canal Society Ltd

Pennine Link

Spring 2004 Issue 148



R Gough

Currently undergoing a refit, what will 2004 have in store for the Standedge Visitor Centre?

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Front Cover: The Tameside Canal Boat Trust's 'Still Waters' running trips for the public over the Easter holidays; skippered and crewed by Society volunteers Allan Knott (helm), Pam Romanski and Paul Peacock (crew). Photo: R Gough



Editorial

Welcome to the Spring issue of Pennine Link. We have had it printed as a special colour issue and we hope to maintain this high standard.

Apart from making the magazine more interesting for our members we are also hoping to make it more attractive to our present and future advertisers. Your Council is committed to increasing revenue from advertising and we believe there is good potential for this within the canal fraternity.

We send out 1000 copies many of which are read by several people. Included in this circulation are MEPs, MPs, local councillors, leading companies and other influential bodies. If you know anyone who would benefit from advertising with us, please ask them to get in touch with Dr Bob at the office.

The article about Irish canals by members Iain Spencer and Emma Baker talks about the canal built on porous limestone that never held water. Before this is dismissed as just another Irish story can I say that it is quite true, but to avoid falling out with my friends from over the water can I point out that the engineer who surveyed the route and designed the Canal was English!

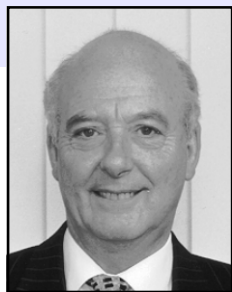
Congratulations to the two new societies set up to restore branches from the Ashton Canal to Stockport and through Crime Lake to Hollinwood. Both go through public parks and get away from the congested main roads in the Manchester Conurbation. What a delight it

will be for the whole population to have a canal towpath running through these areas for walkers and families to enjoy, as well as the new routes for the boater who has already been everywhere. If the Hollinwood one completes its proposed extension to the Rochdale Canal this will make the 'Ring of Roses' a far more pleasant trip without the necessity to go through Manchester with all its attendant problems. (Unless, of course, you want to sample '*la dolce vita*' around Canal Street)

The Society's Council of Management had its last meeting at the Tunnel End pub, Marsden. Best pint of Black Sheep bitter I've had for a long time. They also had the beer from a Mossley Brewery that I didn't know, but Alwyn assured me that it was good. This is just to remind boaters (or walkers) using the canal that although the Standedge Visitor Centre is closed (temporarily we hope) the pub at the top of the slope is still open for food as well as drink and you will receive a very warm welcome from landlords, Gary and Bev. The Council is holding its next meeting at the same place and that is a big recommendation!

We have taken advantage of the colour pages in this issue to reprint last year's photographic competition successes. Each year, we are conscious of not really doing the results justice and after the recent Extra Ordinary General Meeting, where many of the entries were projected for the audience, it was obvious there was a 'popular demand' for colour reproduction. And what better way to look forward to the new boating season, now that Spring is here!

Brian Minor



Chairman's Annual Report

Your Council of Management (Board) has met seven times during the year with good attendances. Three long-serving members have resigned from the

Board – John Sully, who was our Honorary Treasurer, Alec Ramsden, our Press Officer and Alan Brett. To these we offer our thanks for their years of committed service to the Society. Our new Honorary Treasurer is Steve Picot who became a director on 30th April 2003. Eric Crossland who was a director of HCS Restoration for many years and David Stubbs, East Side Boats Co-ordinator will be eligible for election to the Board at the AGM.

At an Extraordinary General Meeting on 22nd January 2004, past Chairman David Sumner was unanimously elected President of the Society. This is a new post and is established to honour a member who has given exceptional service over many years. We were delighted that David was awarded the MBE in the 2004 New Year's Honours List for his sterling work on behalf of the Society.

During the year, HCS Restoration Limited was closed and all assets transferred to the holding company.

Several meetings between HCS directors and British Waterways' representatives have taken place with a view to improving cooperation between HCS volunteers and BW project managers. Activity in this respect had been delayed due to radical organisational changes affecting BW personnel. These have now been completed and we have identified several projects on which we expect to be in a position to start work during the 2004 season. I am pleased to report that our relationship with BW is cordial at all levels.

During the year we introduced three working sub-groups to improve our management of Promotions, Boats and Administration.

The structure appears to be working satisfactorily. Our level of membership has remained constant at just below the 700 mark.

Dr Robert (Bob) Gough has coped well with the administration and is our sole remaining employee since Frank Smith left us in June 2003. Bob is also administrator to the Tameside Canals Trust that operates their trip boat from Portland Basin on the West side. Among many initiatives, Bob has developed a PC controlled presentation package including slide scanner, laptop and projector for members giving presentations to outside bodies.

Pennine Link, our quarterly magazine, has retained its high standard. Your board is actively seeking additional sources of advertising revenue to help cover the increasing cost of production.

This has been a busy period for your Administration sub-group. Since the year end they have completed a fundamental re-investment of funds, streamlined or updated many of our office procedures and prepared for the sale of our Mossley Road offices. At the time of writing, an offer has been accepted from a building company who have agreed that the Society may have continued use of an area on the ground floor pending our identification of suitable canal-side office facilities.

I wish to thank all our members for continuing to support us and to your Board members who have assiduously carried out the company's policies and complied with its legal responsibilities.

In the coming financial year our objectives will include increasing membership, raising revenue from trading and advertising and, most importantly, working with BW to improve the facilities offered by the Huddersfield Canal to all its users.

Neville Kenyon
Chairman



Keith's Disconnected Jottings

The Pocklington Canal etc.

I have been reminded that in my meanderings about waterway restoration I have said little about the

Pocklington Canal, a 9 mile-long Yorkshire waterway built between 1815 and 1818, which is entirely rural, unspoilt and has been largely unchanged for nearly two hundred years.

More than thirty-odd years ago, volunteers formed the Pocklington Canal Amenity Society to save the then derelict canal from being filled in by tipping. They won that battle and began restoration of the canal's derelict locks. Only a small team, the Society are still fighting to complete the last three locks and 3 miles of the canal at Canal Head, Pocklington. The slow speed of progress has probably limited what I might have said about the canal.

At the same time as I was reminded about the Pocklington, I was reading a book about the Stroudwater Navigation in the south west of England. I found myself thinking about the contrast between the restoration of the Huddersfield Narrow and Rochdale Canals and the very limited progress made there by the Cotswold Canals Trust since its formation as a canal society in 1972.

Yet the Cotswold Canals Trust has four-times as many members as HCS. It is a very professional organisation with very clear ideas of what it wants to see achieved, and a proper understanding of the political task involved in restoring the Stroudwater and the Thames and Severn Canals. Similar comments apply too to the completion of restoration of the Montgomery Canal where progress has been slow, beset by difficulties

caused by the ecological importance of sites and punctuated by false hopes of grants that turned out to be illusory.

The Stroudwater (and its continuation, the Thames & Severn) seem likely to make progress now with British Waterways involvement and hopes of Heritage Lottery funding, if the Heritage Lottery Fund can find support of the level required, but the similarities between the problems faced in restoring the Stroudwater, the Pocklington and the Montgomery are striking. All of these canals are supported by committed and competent restoration societies or trusts and none has physical problems of the scale and cost to restore as were found on the Huddersfield or Rochdale. Yet in comparison, the rate of progress has been remarkably slow.

What then is the difference? What strikes me about all of these slow movers is that they are rural canals. I know that on the ground a great deal of the Rochdale and the Huddersfield Narrow pass through rural areas, but the sheer fact that they are important in urban areas was significant. I doubt that either canal would have been in a position to be completed by Millennium funding if a great deal of work had not already been carried out by Job Creation schemes and government or European grants.

The Job Creation schemes were much more ambitious than anything found on largely rural waterways was and the grants were more readily available for regeneration work in these areas than in areas that are more rural. Not a very striking observation, maybe, but it does explain a lot, and it sets in context the issues faced by restorers of these canals, and the amazing tenacity displayed by many volunteers over many years.

The Ashby Canal

At last, after years of preparatory work, Leicestershire County Council has applied for an Order under the Transport & Works Act to authorise extension of the navigable section of the Ashby Canal from the existing terminus at Snarestone to Measham. The deadline for objections or representations about the order to be made to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs was 29 March, so a decision can, theoretically, be made soon. The wheels of government, however, move slowly, but let us hope that approval is given, and that leads on to successful applications for grants to allow the canal to be reconstructed.

The Liverpool Canal Link

British Waterways have submitted a planning application to build the planned new 3½ mile-long canal across the famous Pier Head area of the Liverpool waterfront to link the city's Central and South Docks. This would allow boats to cruise from the Leeds & Liverpool Canal into the centre of the city and to a new terminus at Albert Dock. It is hoped that the canal will open in Spring 2007, a year in advance of Liverpool being the European Capital of Culture in 2008.

The new canal is expected to attract an extra 200,000 visitors to the Liverpool waterfront annually, who will spend an additional £1.9m in the area, and an additional £2.2m is anticipated as being spent on boating activities. Jointly these factors should create an additional 200 jobs, and bring new inland waterway-based life to the empty docks.

Runcorn Rally

IWA is to hold a National Campaign Rally on the Runcorn Arm of the Bridgewater Canal in Runcorn from 25th to 27th June, with the aim of campaigning for the restoration of the Runcorn locks and the Runcorn and Weston Canal.

The original locks were built by the Duke of Bridgewater to join the Bridgewater Canal to the river Mersey in 1773, and a second parallel flight opened in 1827. The Runcorn and Weston canal provided a link to the Weaver Navigation. Both sets of locks had to be abandoned when the approach road to the Runcorn/Widnes Bridge destroyed the canal, and lockgates taken from here were used in restoration of the Upper Avon Navigation. The line of the original locks can still be seen, however, and much of the Runcorn and Weston Canal is still in water.

The restoration of these locks and the link to the Weaver could have significance far beyond the immediate area, by creating a new link for boaters that could connect to the Trent & Mersey Canal via the Anderton Boat Lift. A proposal to build a new Runcorn to Widnes Bridge requires a new road layout that could provide an opportunity to provide for the restoration of the lock flight, and the Halton Borough Council support the campaign to restore the waterway because of its economic and environmental benefits.

The Ashton Canal

Locally, the most important news is the formation of two new restoration societies to campaign for the restoration of the Hollinwood and Stockport Branches of the Ashton Canal. (See *references elsewhere in this issue*). These new Societies, the Hollinwood Canal Society and the Manchester and Stockport Canal Society, deserve our support. Inevitably acronyms come to the fore and another HCS may well cause confusion, though the alternative of HBCS has its own associations albeit anagrammatic. A Society member has suggested HoCS and HuCS, but either way, we shall watch the development of the new HCS and MSCS with great interest.

Keith Gibson

HCS Council News

I finished off the notes in the last Plink with a comment about otters having been seen in the canal in Mossley and Slaithwaite. Our 'green' correspondent, Press Officer Dave Finnis, assures me that the spotted animals were either mink or "wet dachshunds". My two (frequently) wet dachshunds are not amused.

Council has had an exciting time over the last month or two, with our ex-chairman getting his gong – and becoming our first President – and hosting the highly successful social gathering where Bob Gough excelled himself with our new computerised lantern slide presentation. Enough of that – to business.

10th December 2003

The sale of our Ashton office has been put into the hands of an estate agent and three offers have been made so far. Intention is to negotiate a lease back of part of the building for two years. Failing that we might have to move into temporary premises.

The Society's financial situation remains healthy. We are switching our investments to capital growth, which will give us substantial benefits over a ten year period.

The Society's Land Rover has now been sold.

A new list of 'talks' has been set up and volunteers are sought to present the Society's canal story with our newly acquired state of the art projection system. We will now only operate within the canal's three local authority areas (there are bound to be some exceptions)

and we will charge a fee based on the number in the audience.

The volunteers are still frustrated by not having a working programme from British Waterways. Meetings are taking place to overcome this. In the meantime we are clearing vegetation and saplings from the canal edge on the East side. There is something of a stalemate on the provision of bridge number plates.

We have been to the first 'User Groups', organised by British Waterways, since their re-organisation. Quite a different approach between East and West sides. The Society has still to establish the best way of working under the separate BW regions.

It was reported that Saddleworth Museum has opened a well-publicised exhibition on 'canal mania', mainly aimed at children and open from November 2003 to Easter 2004. The publicity recognised the Society's £500 donation to the museum, being the profit from the choral and brass band concert in June 2001, organised by Oldham Council to celebrate the opening of the canal. The exhibits will eventually form part of a 'canal corner' in the main museum.

The Boat Group have organised a Society event for 22nd January, 2004. A chance for members to meet the Council, to have a slide presentation, and (subject to all the admin. being completed) to elect David Sumner as the Society's first President.

BW have officially closed the transhipment shed until its future use is properly established but, at our request, are allowing the two long-standing art groups to continue to use the building.

The Society is now receiving details of planning applications for canalside development from all three local authorities.

We have agreed formally to support the Wooden Canal Boat Trust in their bid to develop a canalside site in Stalybridge and also to support member Ed Mortimer in his efforts to raise interest in the restoration of the Hollinwood Branch of the Ashton Canal.

4th February 2004

The sale of the Mossley Road office is going through, the Society having received an offer from a local builder. We get three year's rent free use of the ground floor.

Three meetings have been arranged with BW – one to discuss 'on the job' items on the West side, the second to discuss strategic liaison matters on the West side, the third to discuss Society/BW relationships on the East side.

The resignation of Alec Ramsden was accepted by Council. Alec was a long-standing important member of the Society and, as a professional journalist, made an enormous contribution to publicising our efforts over the years.

The Social Evening and Extraordinary General Meeting was highly successful. David Sumner was elected as our first President and, additionally, we were able to congratulate him on the award of an MBE, for services to canal restoration.

Our investment situation has now been sorted out.

The volunteers are still involved with clearing vegetation on the East side and there is still no news from BW of a works

programme nor of progress with bridge plates.

The Promotions Group is getting the Society involved in the 30th birthday of the re-opening of Marple Locks.

The Boat Group are pursuing ways of improving business at Portland Basin on the West side, but the 'shuttle' operation at Marsden is suspended due to the temporary closure of the Standedge Visitor Centre. It may be possible to run trips in Slaithwaite or Huddersfield instead.

The 'Oldham Group', an Oldham Council group of officers concerned with the regeneration of the canal corridor, is being resurrected with Society and BW representatives as permanent members.

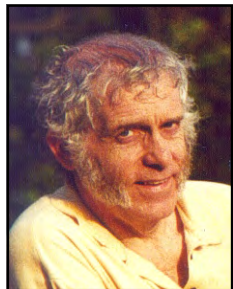
British Waterways have closed Standedge Visitor Centre for economic reasons and to allow a re-organisation of the exhibits and facilities. The Society, as a stakeholder, is being fully involved in the deliberations.

The Society has agreed to sponsor the Horseboating Society for the 2004 season, which includes the 150th birthday of horseboat 'Maria' the oldest surviving wooden narrowboat on the British canal system.

Further to our offering support to Ed Mortimer in his efforts on the Hollinwood Branch canal, a public meeting was to be arranged for February 21st to consider forming a new canal restoration society. Step forward HCS?

Ken Wright

Volunteer Work Parties



It is some time since anything appeared in Pennine Link about volunteer activity on the Canal. There are a number of reasons for this, but mainly we have not had a

substantial work programme for some time.

Over the winter we have been cutting the considerable number of saplings that have started to sprout at the towpath edge, working on the East side. This is a job that will certainly be welcomed by Sue Day, when she makes her annual trip

through the canal with her horse-boat. From the number and size of those we have taken out on certain lengths, I am amazed that she managed to make the journey last year.

The last steady programme of work that we carried out was painting of locks on the west side. Over the last two summers, we have painted most of the locks from Grove Road up to Uppermill, avoiding those installed most recently, such as 12W near Scout, which were painted with a special paint that allows the wood to “breathe”.

It is likely that we will start fortnightly work parties on this activity again after Easter and if anyone is able to join in (roughly on alternate Sundays), please



give me a ring on 01484 534666. We now have some of the special paint, but this can only be used when there is no threat of rain, so we may have to pick our sites accordingly.

The other job that we have carried out since the canal re-opened is a twice-yearly oiling and greasing of the paddle gear and gate collars. This is due for doing again before the season starts and I am checking that BW, with their new “split” organisation, still require this work. Again, anyone who is interested in joining us should give me a ring, though we are still limited to Sundays at present, I’m afraid.

Another long-standing volunteer project that many people may recall was the

Below left: All ‘spick and span’ - Lock 14W, Mossley freshly painted and ready for the season.

Below: Next up for a volunteers’ paint job - the gates and gearing on the Diggle Flight.

fitting of bridge number plates. Most of these have been manufactured and are sitting in the garage with our van, but there has been a lengthy debate about methods of fixing, Health and Safety and Listed Building Consent, among other issues.

The present situation differs on the two sides of the hill. On the West, it is likely that BW will now fit the plates, as the H.& S. issues seem insoluble. Unfortunately, on the East side, many of the bridges are listed and it will be necessary for someone (probably BW as “owners”?) to apply for permission.

Either way this job, which we had planned on occupying us for the last two winters, looks unlikely to materialise as a volunteer activity.

Trevor Ellis



Notice of the 2004 A.G.M.

HUDDERSFIELD CANAL SOCIETY LIMITED

Notice is hereby given that the Twenty Fourth Annual General Meeting of the above named Company will held at Delph Band Club, Lawton Square, Delph on Thursday the 10th day of June, 2004 at 7.30p.m. to transact the following business:

1. To approve the Minutes of the 2003 Annual General Meeting.
2. To receive and adopt the Accounts for the Company for the year ending 31st December, 2003 together with the Report of the Council of Management and of the Auditors thereon.
3. To re-elect Mazars of Huddersfield as Auditors and to authorise the Council of Management to fix their remuneration.
4. To re-elect Mr. A. Ogborn as a member of The Council of Management retiring by rotation.
5. To re-elect Mr. K. Wright as a member of The Council of Management retiring by rotation.
6. To re-elect Mr. K. Noble as a member of The Council of Management retiring by rotation.
7. To elect Mr. E. Crosland as an additional member of The Council of Management.
8. To confirm the appointment of Mr. D. Stubbs co-opted during the year.
9. To consider any other nominations.
10. Any other business.

DATED the 29th day of March, 2004
By Order of the Council

J. M. Fryer, Company Secretary

N.B.

A member entitled to attend and vote at the Meeting is entitled to appoint a proxy to attend and vote on his/her behalf. A proxy must be a Member of the Company.

The meeting will include a presentation by John Courtman of the Park Bridge Heritage Centre and refreshments, in the form of hot beef muffins, will be provided.

The 27th Tameside Canals Festival

Portland Basin, Ashton-under-Lyne

9th, 10th & 11th July, 2004



Tameside Canals Festival needs YOU!

If you've got some time on your hands and you'd like to help Willow Wood hospice raise funds whilst having a good time, then the voluntary Committee organising the annual Tameside Canals Festival to be held at Portland Basin on 9th, 10th and 11th of July, would like to hear from you!

Committee member Peter Hawley explained: "Our committee is made up of ordinary people who volunteer their time freely to help organise this tremendous family weekend. We have a great time and we're proud to raise funds for the local hospice (over £12,000 in the last two years!). However, we could do with a couple of new members to share the load, and would love to hear from anyone who would like to find out more. We're looking for all kinds of skills from plumbing and electrics, to marketing and people to stuff envelopes!"

"We meet at the Wharf Tavern on Caroline Street in Stalybridge at 8pm on the third Wednesday of each month and everyone is welcome to join us".

If anyone wants to speak to Peter before going along to a meeting they can contact him on 0161 339 3040.

Peter Hawley

Press Officer

Tameside Canals Festival Organising Committee

0161-339 3040

07970 456266

Other Contacts:

Boats & Moorings: Aggie Pettit - 0161 330 0926

Craft Tent & Trade Stands: Sue Ruffley - 0161 330 9810

HCS Crews News



By the time you read this, we should have heard the sound of the first cuckoo and marine diesels starting up after the long dark days of Winter. I find

this the best time of year to recruit new boat crew, or renew the interest of those who haven't done any volunteer boat trips for some time, on the *Marsden Shuttle* at Tunnel End, or on *Still Waters* at Portland Basin.

Cruising usually restarts in earnest by Easter time, so if you fancy having a go at being helmsman, cabin crew or both, please contact David Stubbs (East) or myself (West) and we will arrange with you to have a familiarity cruise. Our details are inside the front cover.

Although the Standedge Visitor Centre and the Waters Edge restaurant are temporarily closed, subject to review, we hope to be operating the *Marsden Shuttle* as usual this season, so check the latest

situation with David, giving him your availability dates if possible.

Also, Bev and Gary Earnshaw, licencees of the Tunnel End Inn, recently dropped me a line to say that they are still doing business as usual, keen to allay patrons' impressions that there is a temporary closure on Tunnel End generally. They now have a larger dining area available, which also serves as a meeting room should you wish to sample a pint of Black Sheep, other speciality beers or Bev's homemade steak and ale pies. Telephone 01484 844 636 for enquiries.

On the West side, remember that the trip boat operates every Sunday afternoon during the season (Easter through to October), Public Holidays and during the school holidays when a workshop or free public event is taking place at Portland Basin Museum.

Don't forget, HCS members travel FREE on production of their valid membership card!

Allan Knott

West Side Boat Co-ordinator

Still Waters on the Peak Forest Canal



Walking Around the Narrow

It may seem a little odd that, as an employee of the Canal Society, I don't have a boat nor enjoy boating, cannot swim and am quite frightened of water! However, I do enjoy walking, especially along canal towpaths with their fascinating flora and fauna, and unique architecture.

But of course, unless you fancy the challenge of a real marathon, it is not easy to make a complete towpath circular. No doubt there are exceptions and my father and I did a Rochdale to Manchester, Ashton to Fairfield, Hollinwood Branch (route of!) to Rochdale tour a few years ago. Generally, it's either a case of there and back, and there's a lot to be said for the contrasting views ahead and behind, or finding a linking circular route that incorporates the canal.

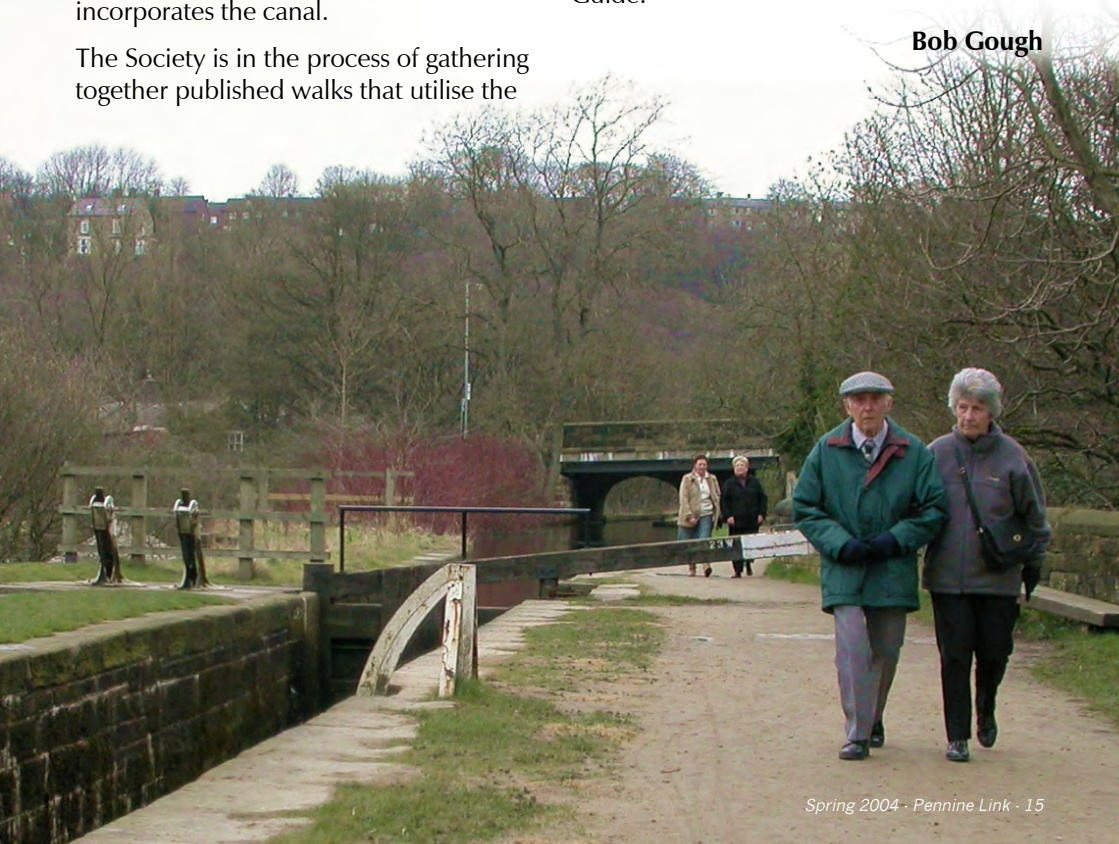
The Society is in the process of gathering together published walks that utilise the

Huddersfield Narrow Canal, but is also keen to know of any other routes that are favourites of our members. Our initial aim is to publish such lesser known walks, involving the Narrow, for the enjoyment of others.

For those who would like to contribute, simply detail the general route, estimate the distance or walking time and perhaps note some features that particularly appeal to you.

Please send your contribution to: Narrow Walks, Huddersfield Canal Society, 239 Mossley Road, Ashton-u-Lyne, Lancashire, OL6 6LN. This information will also be very useful for one of the Society's long term projects: producing a new Towpath Guide.

Bob Gough



An Irish Canal Hunt

Society members Dr Emma Baker and Iain Spencer, take advantage of their holiday in Ireland to go searching for some canals; Iain writes:

Having a week in Ireland, we decided to camp near to Cong, County Galway. Reading the Rough Guide to Ireland we were interested to see that a dry canal ran through the town.

The Canal was built in 1840 to link Lough Corrib and Lough Mask as a Famine relief project. This would have allowed easy passage for freight and, I suppose, passengers.

The canal was dug, the lock chambers were made and it wasn't until they tried to fill it with water that somebody realised there was a rather large problem. The rock that canal was cut through was Limestone and this is very porous. It was abandoned before it ever was used. A truly 'Impossible Restoration'.

It didn't take us long to discover a lock, without gates but with everything else present. It was huge and I was dwarfed by it (for those that don't know me I am 6ft 6). It seems that it could have been a ship canal!

Our appetites wetted, so to speak, and the journey home to do, we planned the return drive to Dublin so that we could see a proper canal in water. Plan A was to stop for lunch at Ballinasloe, take a walk down the Grand Canal and then continue our drive to Dublin. Dinner was taken, car was moved to a free car park where we could stay as long as needed and we set off looking for the canal.

After walking around what seemed to be the ring road we ended back by the car. So we decided to go into the Tourist Information Centre. A good idea I hear some say. However this also took some finding! It seemed that none of the locals knew about the canal or the Tourist Information Centre.

Eventually we found it and went in. The resultant conversation with the Tourism Officer was a bit bizarre. Not only did we find out a bit about the canal and that it wasn't in water and as far as she knew there wasn't any restoration going on, we also found out that the following week she was off to see her sister who lived in Lancaster, and she was interested in canals.

She then talked about the Ribble Link and about canals in this country. We mentioned the Narrow and she seemed fascinated with Standedge Tunnel. It was definitely true that this lady had kissed the Blarney Stone. Just as I thought we were destined to spend the rest of our lives in this Tourist Information Centre, her 'phone rang and we made our quick escape.

Armed with our new knowledge, about the canal not her sister, we went back to the town and found the only trace visible. It was a very nice stone building which was once the stables sitting forlornly at the side of a football pitch.

Not to be put off we quickly adopted Plan B, to go to Kilbeggan, tour the Whiskey Distillery and then walk down the Kilbeggan branch of the Grand Canal that ended near the town. It was used to bring

in the raw materials for the Distillery. Having toured the Distillery and sampled the wares, (we changed drivers here so I had the chauffeur's sample!) we asked where the canal was. It didn't bode well when one of the people didn't know that there was a canal near the town, the other person thought it was "just up the road a bit". Back in the car we perused the map and set off.

I saw a faded sign for the harbour and we quickly pulled in and drove up the track to the Wharf. There was the Warehouse nicely converted into offices, standing next to a nice wharf area. The only thing the canal lacked apart from boats was water! Not to be put out too much we wandered down the towpath for about a mile until the midges forced a retreat.

At least we had improved on the last attempt and now feeling more adventurous we embraced Plan C. This was to go just to the east of Tullamore where the

branch joined the main line of the Grand Canal. However due to a total lack of signs, a common problem it seems in Ireland, and an incompetent (me) navigator we missed our intended destination, but stumbled onto the canal very much by accident further along the line. At least here the Grand Canal was in water and used as a holiday route. We quickly picnicked on its banks and left for Dublin and the ferry home, safe in the knowledge that there was a canal with water in.

Oh by the way, if you ever leave for Ireland from Liverpool you go through a fantastic sea lock. It took our boat an hour to go down it when we sailed over to Dublin. Thankfully there aren't seventy-four that big on the Narrow!

**Iain Spencer
Emma Baker**

*Boats would be nice, but there again, so would water!
The Wharf at Kilbeggan.*



Spencer & Baker



*J Morgan - Strep-Thieu
canal lift, Belgium*



R Jones - Standedge Visitor Centre, Marsden



D Broadbent - 'Tunnel End with Train'



A Crosby - 'A Sunny Morn', High Peak Canal

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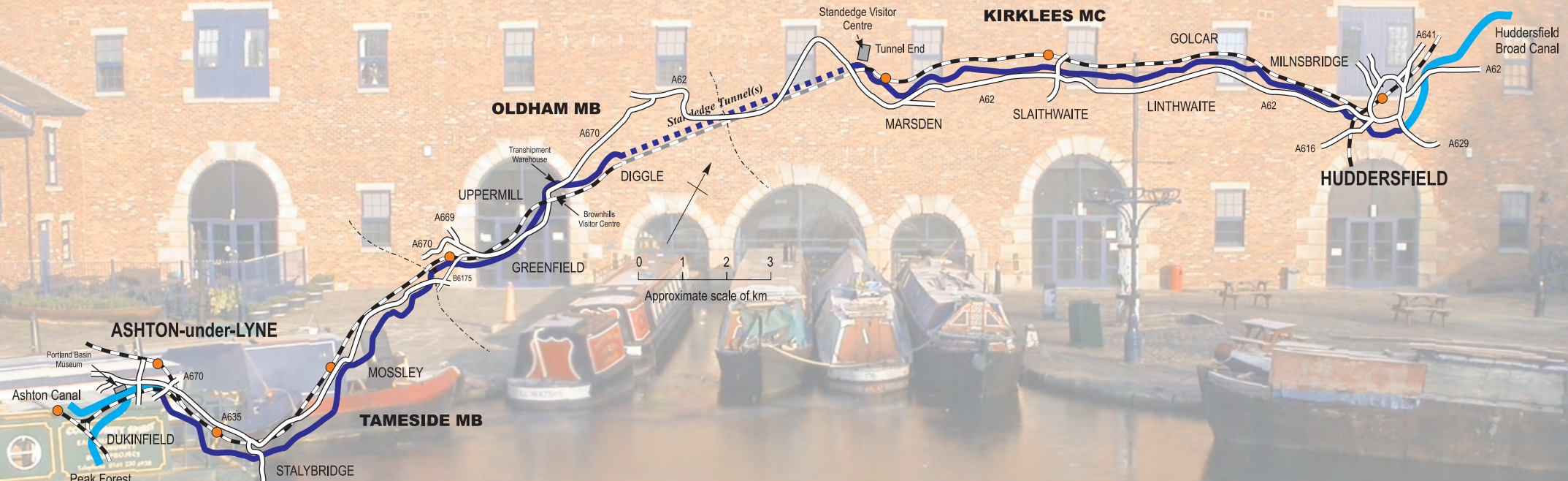
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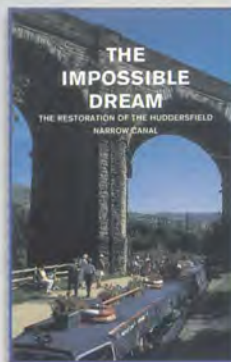
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HCS Videos



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



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

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The Hollinwood Branch

Doesn't time fly when you're having fun? In our Spring 2003 edition of Pennine Link, Society member, Ed Mortimer, mused over a future for the abandoned Hollinwood Branch of the Ashton Canal. Versions of the article appeared in other magazines and recently things have developed into the formation of the Hollinwood Canal Society. Ed Mortimer now tells of an eventful year.

Walking the Past

My article in Plink about walking the Hollinwood Branch (and ideas of reopening it) created a lot of interest. One person wrote 'I was thrilled to find your article in the latest Plink'. But I realised unless someone did something, nothing more was actually going to happen. The canal would remain derelict and forgotten.

So, what could I actually do next? I had spoken to Oldham Countryside Service and they were interested in the idea, so the obvious next step, was to meet with

Oldham Council.

Meeting Oldham Council

If Oldham Council were opposed to restoring the canal in Daisy Nook Country Park, there seemed little point in fighting. So I arranged a meeting with Steve Smith, the manager for parks and open spaces for Oldham Council to see what he thought.

But was a senior council manager really going to have the vision of what a restored canal could be like?

And agree to put his and other council effort into exploring the idea?

And be willing to have the disruption to the Country Park?

And cope with Navvies style canal working parties?

And be agreeable to the demolition of 'his' visitor and countryside centre (built on the canal bed) ?



Did the manager for Oldham MBC really agree that this Visitor Centre could be 'relocated'?

Answering 'yes' to any of these questions did not seem very likely, but I knew I had to try. The Hollinwood Branch was not lost and forgotten yet.

The meeting went very well. 'You canal people are wonderful', he said. Steve knew about the Huddersfield restoration, and he knew Stalybridge, so he was happy with everything I said. I did not believe what had happened.

'Have we agreed to try to reopen the canal?' I asked.

'Yes' he replied, 'but you'd need to be a society'

'Well there are four of us' I replied.

'Then you are a society already'

A Society is Born

Clearly what was needed was more than four interested people, and so posters were put up locally announcing a meeting. And on 21 February 2004 a public meeting was held in the Countryside Centre at Daisy

Nook where 33 people became the first members of the Hollinwood Canal Society.

Before the meeting we had wondered about local objections. The 'canal is dangerous, breeds rats, and children and dogs can drown in it' response never happened. Bob Gough, Martin Clark, and I, had expected it. Frank Smith, the fourth member of the team, seemed less concerned (though I note that he sat inconspicuously in the audience just in case!).

Steve Smith (who couldn't attend) arranged for the centre staff to provide free tea and biscuits for everyone at the meeting. I wonder if he had expected to be providing 60 teas!

Work, work, and more work

Bob has worked on the maps and general administration tasks, Martin has worked away (until the early hours) on the website. Now all that is left to do is to raise the money and restore the canal!



The whole route has been sold off. Some places, like this, have been re-developed. This is no easy restoration.

There clearly was a lot of work to do and by now I'd somehow ended up working full time on the project. I decided to see if anyone would actually pay me to do this full time job. After all, there were the inevitable studies and feasibilities to be done next.

Behind the Scenes

I decided to see if Tameside Council would actually pay me for the next stages of the preliminary study work; well, it was worth asking! No, they wouldn't give me £3000, but if I could find half, then they would contribute the other half from the Social Enterprise Project Fund. Steve Smith (Oldham Council) agreed to contribute half, so this is how I became 'employed' by the Society. By the end of April 2004, the Society has to provide a preliminary feasibility for the restoration proposals.

What has been done so far

Many people have done a lot of hours of work. What has been done so far includes the following:

1. Roy Sutton, who is the consultant

engineer for the Inland Waterways Association, has looked at the route and has done a massive amount of free work for the Society. Roy is now preparing an estimate of costs and viability for the scheme.

2. The Society has been set up (as a company limited by guarantee) and has applied to become a charity.

3. The Huddersfield Canal Society, the Rochdale Canal Society, and British Waterways have all confirmed their willingness to support where they can. Local interest and support has been obtained, with a working party arranged within Daisy Nook Country Park in the Autumn.

4. Habitat and wildlife issues are being studied (part of the canal route is a SSSI). Funding is being assembled for an independent Environmental Impact Assessment.

5. Oldham Council is considering the viability of a Heritage Lottery bid. Negotiations are ongoing to now protect the integrity of the remaining line.



6. Oldham planning department and the local MP are considering the implications of reopening the canal and creating a new link to the Rochdale Canal.

Future Threats

The immediate threats include:

1. The route is not yet protected and so developments, especially in Failsworth, could make the creation of a new through route very difficult.

2. In Droylsden there is the possibility that Manchester Road Bridge could be demolished as part of the construction of the Metrolink extension to Ashton.

To help with overcoming these threats it is important to be seen to have members who support the restoration. This was seen in the early days of the restoration of the Huddersfield Narrow.

So if you want to support this new Society the contact details are:

Hollinwood Canal Society, 68 Knowl Street, Stalybridge, Cheshire, SK15 3AJ

Telephone: 0161 303 7635

Or visit the website:

www.hollinwoodcanal.co.uk

(Membership is £5 per year; an application form can be downloaded)

They said that the Huddersfield Narrow was the 'Impossible Restoration'. I'm not sure what you'd call the Hollinwood Canal restoration!

Forthcoming Events:

Sunday 20th June - 2.00pm

A walk around the canals (and other places) near Daisy Nook. Approx 4 miles. Meet at the Countryside Centre, Daisy Nook.

Sunday 15th August - 2.00pm

Open, derelict and forgotten canals around Droylsden. A circular walk including the Medlock Valley. Approx 4 miles. Meet at Droylsden Library front entrance.

Ed Mortimer



The Society has permission to start work in the Autumn on clearing some of the trees damaging the structures.

The National Trust - Walk on the Wild Side

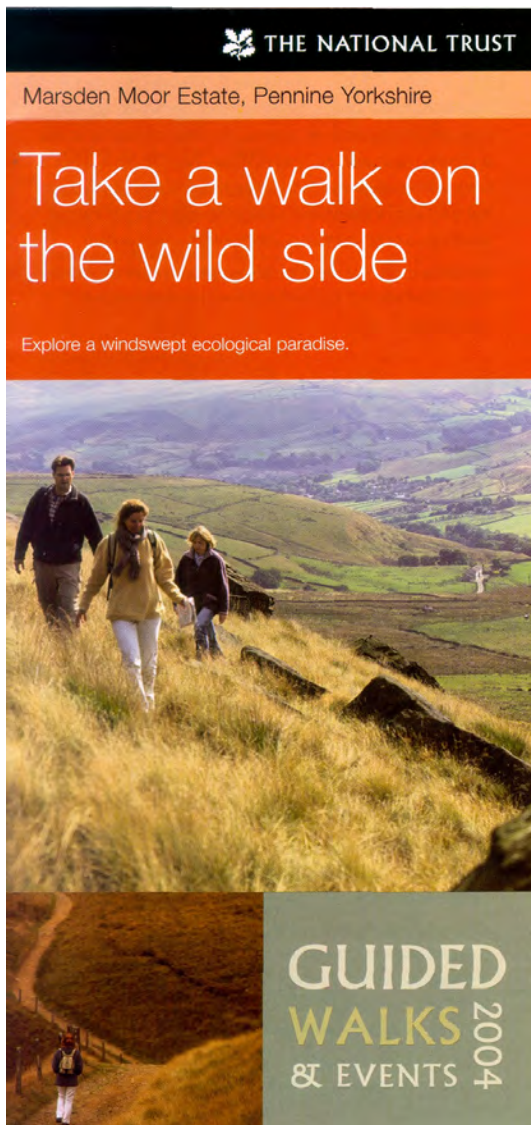
Do you want to do something different this year?

If so, why don't you TAKE A WALK ON THE WILD SIDE with the National Trust at Marsden Moor. David L Finnis, Property Manager (and the Canal Society's Press Officer) says "We have yet another whole year packed with events and guided walks - there is sure to be something for everyone".

For the 'moor' experienced walkers why not join us on one of our long, hard walks. Meet us at Marsden and be prepared to go "Over t' Top" on a 10 mile hard, linear walk back to Marsden. Or, for those of you who prefer to take things a little easier, why not join us on one of our relaxing "Midweek Stress Buster" strolls.

Not forgetting the kids, why not bring them to meet Trusty the Hedgehog on "Kite Day" and learn how to make and fly your own kite. Or let them treat their favourite teddy to a fun-filled day of teddy activities on "Kids 'n' Bears" day.

For something special in 2004 "Exploring Standedge" is an exciting opportunity to discover more about the highest, longest and deepest canal tunnel in Britain. In conjunction with British Waterways, a guided boat trip through the tunnel has been arranged together with a 6 mile walk tracing the footsteps of the 'Standedge Admiral'. The day concludes with a two-course meal.



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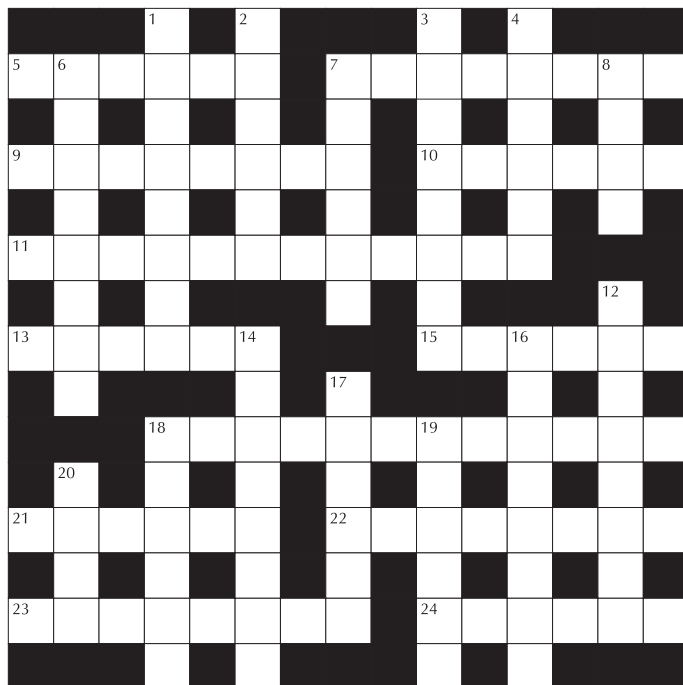
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GUIDED WALKS 2004 & EVENTS

Our successful annual "Spring Plant Fair" will yet again offer a huge variety of plants for sale to help banish those winter blues.

Details of all the events can be found on the Marsden website at:
www.nationaltrust.org.uk/marsdenmoor

Canal Crossword - 43



22 Reed roof covering a small village beside the Kennet and Avon Canal near Monkey Marsh lock (8)

23 Grease we saw entering the Shroppie near Atherley (treated of course) (8)

24 K & A swing bridge nearly below the M4 (6)

Down

1 So becalm a boat in a Devon estuary (8)

2 Beds on boats (6)

3 MP Ann nearly found at a flight of locks in Bath (8)

4 Man with a canal bridge named after him in the very centre of Birmingham (6)

Across

5 Envoy agents setting out on sea journey (6)

7 Iran tram shows the way to triple hulled sailing (8)

9 A brook found on the way up the Caldon? (8)

10 I got lost in America leaving only my photos to look at (6)

11 Hobo boat? (5,7)

13 With a cent in the East Midlands, buy calcined lime to effect a bond (6)

15 Where to buy cakes beside the Bridgewater? (6)

18 Crossing arch on arrival at a capital railway station (7,5)

21 Alerts sent to a dealer in Sodium Chloride (6)

6 GU lock found below the M4 (8)

7 Soft boat (6)

8 Leeds's river (4)

12 Every hen shall lay eggs for a canal engineer (8)

14 Radar Tom used to level rails bringing goods to the canal (8)

16 Crocodile tears editor shed when seeing such a small boat win a race (8)

17 Cable network within a pie shows how lock gates are held in place (6)

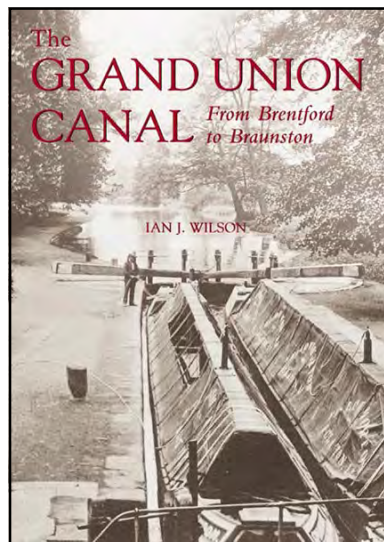
18 Severance boat? (6)

19 Leila came away from gallantries when researching funding for canal restoration (6)

20 Scandinavian caught burrowing beneath the Trent & Mersey canal near Middlewich (4)

Solution on Page 46

Book Reviews



The Grand Union Canal by Ian Wilson

A pictorial account of the Grand Union Canal, the book consists of postcards and photographs from the collection of the author, Ian Wilson and are arranged running from the South at Brentford to North at Braunston.

Ian has been a member of the Grand Union Canal Society for many years and chairman for part of that time so his comments on the pictures are therefore authoritative. Obviously the older ones are before his time, some date from the end of the nineteenth century, but the more recent ones have his personal touch.

This book, printed in black and white, would make an excellent companion for anyone walking or boating this stretch of canal. It gives a great deal of background and historical information and increases the enjoyment of the trip. Several 'then and now' pictures are printed, one appealed to me particularly of a pub in Berkhamsted that has lost its frontage, but seemed to be doing good business with current narrow boat owners.

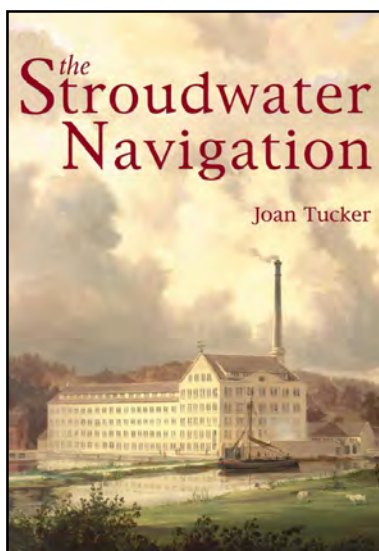
Brian Minor

The Stroudwater Navigation by Joan Tucker.

The derelict eight mile-long canal from the Severn at Framilode to Stroud, where it makes an end-on junction with the equally derelict Thames and Severn Canal, opened in 1799. It claims to be unique in being still owned by the original canal company, unless one counts the Rochdale Canal still owned by the Rochdale Canal Company. But The Waterways Trust, as a necessary step in the large-scale restoration works carried out on the Rochdale for the Millennium, acquired the Rochdale Canal Company, and, prior to that, the Rochdale company had for many years been a subsidiary of a property development company.

This is a very different book to many waterways titles, being full of fascinating detail of the social history of the waterway. Who rented which property & when? What was the trade on the canal? What buildings were erected by the canal company and its tenants - even down to the detail of a shed or a single-storey extension to a lock keeper's cottage.

I was disappointed that the book did not tell the story of the Cotswold Canals Trust's fight to

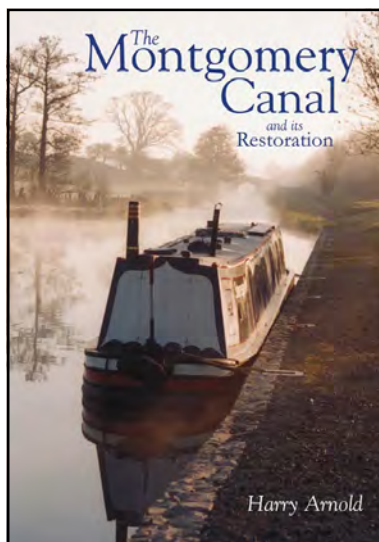
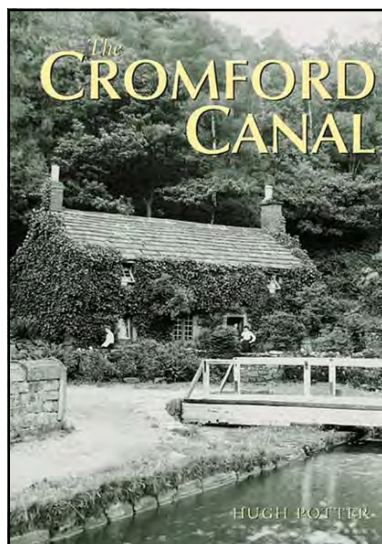


restore navigation to the canal which now seems likely to come to fruition through the involvement of British Waterways, but that was not the writer's intention.

Joan Tucker used mainly legal documents, personal reminiscences and census returns as the basis of this book; indeed the research she has carried out is astounding in its depth. For the past twenty years, she has been the Archives Director of the Company of Proprietors of the Stroudwater Navigation.

Maybe someone will research the HNC in the same manner, one day, so we can find out not just the names of the Directors of the historic Canal Company, but who they were and what their interests were, and learn more about the carriers on the canal and the boatmen.

I have also read Harry Arnold's *The Montgomery Canal and its restoration* and Hugh Potter's *The Cromford Canal*. Harry first came across the Montgomery Canal as a schoolboy in 1961 and has been involved one way or another in the proposals for restoring the canal ever since. Originally intended as a joint effort with founder of the Waterway Restoration Group, Graham Palmer, *The Montgomery Canal* has been a long time in gestation, and, sadly, Graham did not live to see it to completion.



Hugh Potter, apart from being the Editor of *Waterways World*, is the archivist to the Friends of the Cromford Canal and he lives alongside the canal. These books are both what I would term photo-albums, being comprised largely of photographs with only a short introductory text. Although historic photographs fascinate me, I am not really a fan of this type of book. I often feel a little cheated that there is so little text that I can read them in an hour or two.

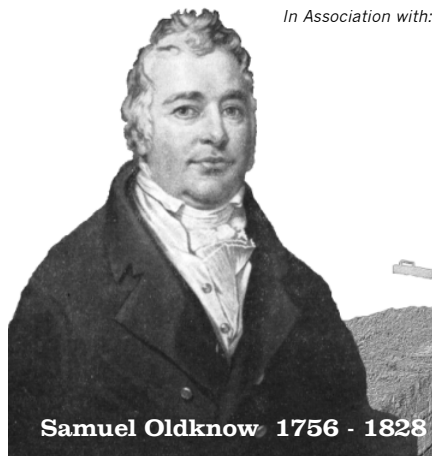
Harry and Hugh (as perhaps we should expect from their backgrounds) have produced the exceptions to this rule, however. Both books are superbly illustrated. They succeed in telling the stories of the canals in words and pictures and they amply repay reading several times over to pick up all of the detail in the informative captions.

All four books form part of the ever-increasing series of waterways titles from Tempus Publishing who, of course, published *Pennine Dreams*. Suggested retail prices are £16.99 for *The Stroudwater Navigation* and £12.99 for each of the other three titles.

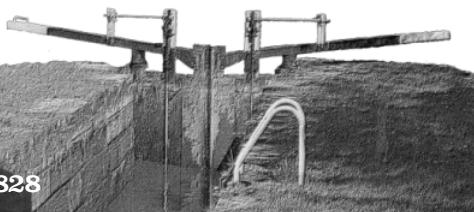
Keith Gibson

*Cover illustrations courtesy
of Tempus Publishing*

Marple Locks Bi-Centenary 1804 - 2004



In Association with:



A Celebration of 200 years - Saturday 3rd July 2004

In 1804 Samuel Oldknow boarded his boat 'Perseverance' and fittingly became the first man to navigate the newly built Marple flight of locks. Now, 200 years on, they are part of a thriving waterway that brings holidaymakers from all over the world to visit the area.

Much of the credit for this belongs to the supporters and campaigners who formed the Peak Forest Canal Society in 1964 and saved 'our locks' from destruction. The 30th anniversary of the re-opening occurred in April of this year.

On July 3rd there will be a day long celebration of the Bi-centenary of the original building of the locks along the length of the flight and in Marple Memorial Park.

Events will include ~ :

- **Guided Historical Tours**
- **Exhibition at Marple Library**
- **Gathering of Boats plus Boat Rides**
- **Displays & Fun Events**
- **Entertainment by Carver Theatre**
- **Exhibition of Local Art**
- **Watch Samuel Oldknow re-enact his trip down the locks on a 19th C. Narrowboat**
- **Funfair Rides**
- **Try Your Hand At Canoeing**
- **Craft & Heritage Stalls**
- **Listen to the Band**
- **Competitions**
- **British Waterways 'Wild On Water'**

And Much More.....

For further details, contact: Peter Clarke, 8 Waterside, Marple. Tel: 07736 724262

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HNC Christmas Quiz - The Result

Well, it seems a copy of Keith Gibson's 'Pennine Dreams' is still safe for a future prize-giving! Unfortunately, there were no entirely correct entries to our teasers. Maybe having 13 clues was an ill omen, or perhaps the Huddersfield Narrow has too esoteric associations or Ed Mortimer, who set the clues, was just being too clever by half!

Anyway, here are the answers to those cryptic clues. Bring back 'Spot the Difference', that's what I say!

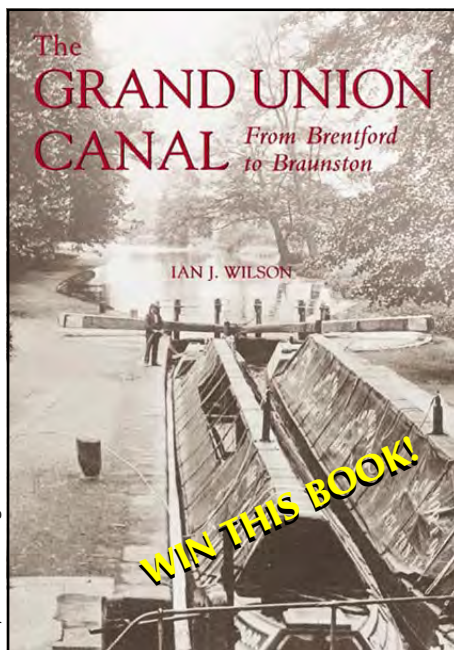
THE CLUES and ANSWERS

1. Bridge sounds like Christmas - **Knowl**
2. Fishy Lock - **Roaches Lock**
3. Some say you're looking Thinner - **Slaithwaite**
4. First of Four - **Standedge Canal Tunnel**
5. Home for a Planet - **Marsden**
6. Not new and Flat - **Old Sag**
7. Gentleman's Quay - **Manns Wharf**
8. Older Cub - **Scout**
9. Bridge liked by Mathematicians - **Division Bridge**
10. Hand-reared river Crossing - **Tame Aqueduct**
11. Black and white Dog Lock - **Spot Lock**
12. Pooh's Crossing - **Milnsbridge**
13. Soft Highway - **Wool Road**

Well, the Society has never been known to give up easily and we will not be disheartened by not having a winner for our Christmas quiz.

So, when the Editor offered his review copy of 'The Grand Union Canal' as a prize for another competition, I considered something that would almost guarantee a winner!

I think we should pitch the task somewhat above the magazine favourite: "Please pick the glaringly obvious from the following three



choices", so here goes (*with apologies to Countdown*):

Using the 18 letters in the title 'THE GRAND UNION CANAL' make the longest word you can. Usual rules; no proper names or foreign words, in the event of a draw, the winner will be chosen at random from the winning entries.

Send your entry to: GUC Competition, Huddersfield Canal Society, 239 Mossley Road,

Ashton-u-Lyne, OL6 6LN. *Closing date for entries: 1st June 2004.*

Bob Gough



Left to right: Chairman, Neville Kenyon, Administrator, Bob Gough and Boat Co-ordinator, Allan Knott manning the tables at the Society's yard sale which raised around £80 from the disposal of surplus items.

Society Plaques for Sale



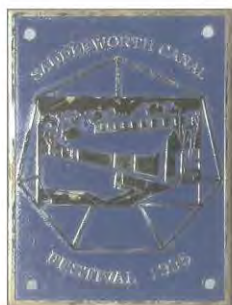
TCF 1999 - Qty ☐



SCF 1997 - Qty ☐



HCF 1996 - Qty ☐



SCF 1995 - Qty ☐



ACF 1989 - Qty ☐



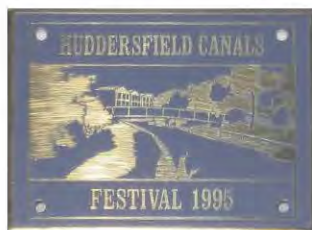
SCF 1996 - Qty ☐



Staley Wharf - Qty ☐



NTBF 1995 - Qty ☐



HCF 1995 - Qty ☐



3LR 1989 - Qty ☐

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Plaques shown 1/3 full size

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What the Papers Said

Huddersfield Daily Examiner

Kirklees Council are supporting British Waterways' plans for a new toilet and washroom facility by the Canal in Slaithwaite. Colne Valley Councillor David Ridgway has long supported the scheme and was pleased that progress had finally been made. (22/12/03)

Many of the local papers, quite rightly, highlight past Chairman David Sumner's award of the MBE and the Examiner quoted David as saying "It was like a red rag to a bull when I was told by British Waterways in the 1980's that the canal would not reopen." (31/12/03)

The Colne Valley Society plans to use funds raised by the selling of its publications and videos to provide seating and litter bins along the Narrow between Milnsbridge and Marsden. (10/01/04)

Closing for a 'rethink' was how the Examiner reported the temporary closure of the Standedge Visitor Centre. The Centre's five staff have been transferred to Leeds until the planned re-opening in the early Summer. (23/01/04) The waterways press has been a bit more upbeat using the term 'refit' for the temporary closure.

Colne Valley Chronicle

Paddock Community Forum is keen to see progress on plans for a cycle route along the Colne Valley from Huddersfield Town Centre to Tunnel End. The route aims to use sections of the Huddersfield Narrow, though agreement would have to be reached with British Waterways as cycling on the towpath is not currently permitted. (28/11/03)

The Millennium Commission's 'Out of Time' exhibition, last December, at the Tate Modern, featured a photograph of Standedge Tunnel representing one of only 40 out of the Commission's 200 projects chosen. Fame at last! (28/11/03)

Reporter and Chronicle

When a fifteen foot wall bounding the road down to the Ashton Canal from Cavendish Street collapsed some 18 months ago, British Waterways took the remedial step of shoring up the structure with a mass of loose stone. Since then, not only has there been a restriction to navigation, but the ready pile of missiles has been irresistible to trouble-makers assaulting the windows of the residential Cavendish Mill opposite. (12/2/04)

Oldham Evening Chronicle

Lock 85 at Piccadilly Locks on the Rochdale Canal is believed to have the oldest wooden gates on the system and at 35 years old, they are well overdue for replacement. Because of restricted headroom, British Waterways have had to use specialist lifting gear to remove them. (3/12/03)

A major piece and photo of David Sumner MBE, detailed his award and the history of our 'Impossible Restoration'. (31/12/03)

Quite predictably, there has been extensive coverage of the proposed development at Wellington Mills, Greenfield; several articles and readers discussion. The final go-ahead for the Tesco supermarket, houses, pub & hotel, retail and leisure units, and canal basin, will lie with

the Deputy PM, John Prescott. Several surveys of local residents showed opposition to the supermarket element of the development, fearing its impact on small, established traders in the area and the character of Greenfield itself. The boost to local employment prospects, affordable housing for first-time buyers and improved canal-side facilities could not be denied. **(Various)**

There seems to be some dissent between Oldham Council and British Waterways over the latter's maintenance programme for the Rochdale Canal towpath, in the light of £77k annual funding from the Council. However, a British Waterways representative will attend the next committee meeting on March 11th to discuss their programme of works. **(26/1/04)**

Surveys indicate that the Huddersfield Narrow Canal is becoming increasingly popular, not only with rising boat numbers, but walkers using the improved towpaths. **(28/1/04)**

The Society's EGM at Delph Band Club, where David Sumner was elected our first President, was reported, mentioning his MBE, Chairman Neville Kenyon's hopes for the future and the presentation by the Society's Administrator, Bob Gough. **(28/1/04)**

The Society has been 'clearing the decks' recently in anticipation of the office's new owners. There have been two attempts at 'yard sales' to dispose of surplus gear. The first produced an article in the Chronicle **(02/03/04)** with two large colour pictures and a classic tabloid illiterative headline 'Bible-find Baffles Boatmen' referring to a 19th century Rev John Brown bible found at the back of a cupboard. Our Chairman was featured with the bible - seeking inspiration for a

better turnout at the second sale. In the event, £78.50 was raised in sales.

Oldham Advertiser

A prominent article and picture highlighted the exhibition 'Canal Mania' at Saddleworth Museum, Uppermill, which was supported by a £500 donation from the Canal Society. The piece elegantly summarised the history of canals in Britain, the Huddersfield Narrow in particular and the work of the Society in its campaign of restoration. **(1/1/04)** Kirsty Mairs, the curator at the museum and who developed the Canal Mania exhibition, has moved on to the People's History Museum in Manchester's city centre. **(22/1/04)**

Litter and dog fouling on our local canals continues to elicit articles and correspondence. An article on 29/1/04 echoes the piece in the Evening Chronicle (26/1/04), citing Oldham Council's funding of maintenance work yielding few results.

Cllr. Jim Greenwood, chairman of the Chadderton Area Committee, was concerned about the problem of underage drinking adjacent to the canal and the resulting littering. British Waterways assured the Advertiser that they always respond to specific problems and the number of staff working on maintaining the Rochdale makes it one of the most labour intensive waterways in the region. **(5/2/04)** As our local British Waterways supervisor Iain Weston recently commented, clearing litter is one of those thankless tasks - when you don't do it, people complain, when you clear an area, no one notices.

*Cuttings collected by Dave Finnis, Allan Knott, Keith Sykes & Ken Wright.
Compiled by Bob Gough*

Ashton Canal - Hollinwood Branch

The Hollinwood Canal Society held its first public meeting on 21st February in the John Howarth Visitor Centre, Daisy Nook Country Park. About 50 people attended, many enrolling as members.

Steve Connolly, chairman of IWA's Manchester Branch, and Stephen Pugmire, a senior British Waterways engineer, were in attendance to offer their support.

The society aims to see the restoration of the Hollinwood and Fairbottom branches of the Ashton Canal through Daisy Nook Country Park, the re-connection of the canals in Daisy Nook with the Ashton Canal in Droylsden and the opening of a new link through to the Rochdale Canal at Hollinwood, pursuing an idea first put forward in 1791.

The society is referring to the entire project as The Hollinwood Canal. Funding has been obtained from Tameside and Oldham Metropolitan Borough Councils to enable initial studies and investigations to be carried out. Roy Sutton, one of IWA honorary consulting engineers, has carried out a preliminary engineering feasibility study.

The society has been working closely with the staff of Oldham Countryside Service and Daisy Nook Country Park. Both a society working party weekend and a Waterway Recovery Group weekend have been arranged for later in the year. A programme of events for members has been arranged. The society has a new Internet site at www.hollinwoodcanal.co.uk

Ashton Canal - Stockport Branch

The inaugural meeting of the society to campaign for the restoration of the Stockport Branch of the Ashton Canal met

at Stockport Town Hall on 3rd February. The numbers attending were such that those attending had to transfer from a meeting room into the main council chamber.

After an initial temporary chairman had brought the meeting to order, Roland Dotchin, also the chairman of Tudor Cruising Club volunteered to take on the chairmanship for the next stage. David Sumner MBE, formerly chairman of Huddersfield Canal Society, accepted vice-chairmanship. Local councillor Peter Scott agreed to continue as secretary and announced that Stockport Council had offered to provide £1,000 to enable Hallamshire University students to produce a pre- feasibility study of the restoration. The three students undertaking this task were in the body of the meeting.

The new society is to be named the Manchester and Stockport Canal Society to reflect that the canal is partly in Manchester City Council area and partly in Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council's area.

Martin Clarke, British Waterways' North West Restoration Manager gave an outline of other schemes now progressing in the North West, including the Manchester Bolton and Bury Canal, indicated the sort of assistance that could be given to a project with a comparatively limited budget, citing progress on the Sankey Navigation restoration, and indicated that British Waterways would help in any way it reasonably could, whilst bearing in mind that BW has no funds to spend on schemes that are not currently part of its responsibilities.

The meeting concluded with those present invited to contribute £10 towards set up costs (and a potential initial newsletter) and the suggestion of meetings initially on a quarterly basis.

MAIB Report on River Bure Tragedy

The Marine Accident Investigation Branch of the Department for Transport's report on its investigation into the capsizing of a hire boat on the river Bure, near Honing, on the Norfolk Broads on 19th July 2003 has been published. The 6.77 metre craft, which was hired for an afternoon only, was of a modern GRP cruiser design, built in 2001 at Wroxham by a reputable firm, and had ten passengers from two families on board. When similar craft are used for hire with overnight occupation, the capacity would normally be two people.

As the boat was returning to its hire base in the late afternoon, six young passengers were sat on the roof of the boat and four adults were inside the boat. The distribution of weight of the passengers was such that boat started to list, and then quickly capsized. Two of the adults were trapped inside the upturned hull of the boat, one of whom drowned despite quick attendance of a nearby inshore rescue team and an RAF helicopter.

The report concludes that the boat turned over because the distribution of weight of the passengers was not envisaged in stability tests for the boat - where passengers are all assumed to be sitting in designated seats, and also noted that the weight allowed for in stability tests, of 75kg per person, is insufficient. In this case, where the passengers consisted of four adults and their six teenage children, the average weight of the passengers was 84.5 kg. The report also concludes that (a) there are a series of inadequacies in safety arrangements for the operation of hired boats and that, (b) tighter controls are needed to ensure public safety.

The main recommendations from the report are:

- * Local authorities should assume responsibility for ensuring that hire boats operate safely within their area by

introducing licensing regimes supported by the inspection of hire craft by competent bodies. This would not apply on BW's waterways, as local authorities do not have this jurisdiction.

- * The Maritime & Coastguard Agency should form and chair a working group of key interested parties to draw out best practice to (a) agree better co-ordination between navigation and local authorities, (b) develop a national code of safe practice for boats let to hire on inland waterways, and (c) liaise with the Department for Trade & Industry to clarify the impacts of the requirements of the Recreational Craft Directive on any national code of practice and licensing regime, and provide advice regarding any deficiencies in this respect.

- * The British Standards Institution should propose to the International Standards Organisation that ISO 12217 (the international standard for stability of non-sailing recreational craft over 6 metres in length) should be reviewed, including allowance for the likelihood of people weighing more than 75kg.

- * The Maritime & Coastguard Agency should review the stability tests currently required within all its codes of practice for small craft, with a view to introducing a margin of safety in their methodology, and to take account of the likelihood of people weighing more than 75kg.

- * British Marine Federation should encourage boat builders to arrange for an independent competent audit of their methods used to certify a boat's conformity with the main Recreational Craft Directive requirements.

- * The Department of Trade & Industry should re-examine its methods to raise awareness of the Directive amongst small boat builders, and ensure that relevant local Trading Standards Departments are aware of their responsibilities as enforcement

authorities with regard to the application of the Directive's Regulations.

Section 94 of the Public Health (Amendment) Act of 1907 allows local authorities to control and licence pleasure boats on inland waterways, but a recent amendment to this Act removed these powers on BW's waterways. BW has controls on hire boat operations through the Boat Safety Scheme, and introduced boat construction standards and controls on hire boat operation in 1978 in order to avoid the need for local authorities to introduce a licensing scheme under the 1907 Act. BW then acted to amend the Act when one local authority indicated that it intended to introduce its own licensing scheme regardless of BW's controls, and BW successfully argued that duplicate local authority controls might be contradictory.

However, other navigation authorities, including the Environment Agency and the Broads Authority do not have as strong controls over hire craft as British Waterways, although the Agency is seeking to change this and also to gain exemption from Section 94 of the 1907 Act. Where there is no navigation authority or, as in the case of the Broads Authority, the navigation authority does not enforce standards for hire boat operations, it is largely left for operators to regulate themselves, with only a few local authorities - an example of these being South Lakeland District Council, which covers Windermere - taking an interest, or having access to any expertise to make effective checks. Although a range of smaller navigation authorities have adopted the Boat Safety Scheme, they may not all have the necessary legal powers to fully enforce it, especially in respect of additional requirements for hire craft.

Under the Health and Safety (Enforcing) Authority Regulations 1998, the environmental health departments of local and unitary authorities are responsible for

enforcing health and safety legislation among hire boat companies, where hiring is the main commercial activity (otherwise it is the Health & Safety Executive that has responsibility). However, the use of hired pleasure craft (and the use of private pleasure craft) is not subject to the Health & Safety at Work Act, and neither is there any requirement for firms hiring boats to inform a local authority's Environmental Health Department or the Health & Safety Executive when they commence trading.

Responsibility for enforcing compliance with the Recreational Craft Directive lies with the trading standards departments of county councils or unitary authorities, for which the Department of Trade & Industry issues guidance, but in practice, it is unlikely that any local authority has the expertise available to do this in a thorough manner, beyond addressing specific complaints or superficial overview, and firms are not obliged to inform trading standards departments when new boats are built or when they start business.

The Broads Authority has commented: *"The Authority welcomes the report as a very thorough and cogent examination of the circumstances surrounding the capsized and also of the technical and regulatory background. It is able to support all of the Report's findings as to the cause of the incident and also the conclusions drawn and recommendations made."* ... and ... *"This thorough and sensible report addresses all of the many matters which contributed to that event and it is a very sound basis for all of the relevant authorities to achieve through cooperation a situation wherein boat hirers can reliably assume that their activity will be safe, as clearly they must be entitled to do."*

The Association of Inland Navigation Authorities has also broadly welcomed the recommendations and *"views them as a very useful and constructive approach"* but adds the warning note that *"any new*

Money for Nothing

Tax paying members who, on joining the Society or renewing their subscription, have signed the Gift Aid declaration, can give themselves a hearty pat on the back.

At no financial cost to themselves, this simple declaration has allowed the Society to make a claim to the Inland Revenue each financial year.

As a registered Charity, we are entitled to claim back the amount of tax the member has had to pay in order to earn the money paid to the Society for their subscription and any donations. This is currently calculated as 22/78ths of the money paid, or £2.54 for an individual membership, and £3.08 for family.

The Gift Aid scheme was introduced on the 6th April 2000, and so far, the Society has successfully reclaimed the following amounts:

Tax Year	Amount (£)
2000/01	694
2001/02	872
2002/03	831
Total	2397

In addition, those members who historically signed Deeds of Covenant have allowed the Society to claim a further £1123 in rebate.

Because the majority of the Deeds were linked to a four year Banker's Order, most have now expired and further claims cannot be made. Hence, when renewing your subscription by Standing Order, please sign the Gift Aid declaration (assuming you are still a taxpayer) and allow the Society to continue making claims.

An added bonus of the Gift Aid scheme is that, at the moment, it is retrospective. So, if you have been a taxpayer since April 2000, but never thought to sign the declaration, it is not too late. You can sign it on renewal and we will be able to make a claim on all the money you have paid the Society since April 2000!

And I never knew the Chancellor was a supporter of the Huddersfield Canal Society!

Bob Gough

measures must be both effective in delivering safety and cost effective in application, if the hire boat and allied trade operations are to prosper. Indeed a heavily bureaucratic approach would lose the confidence of all."

British Marine Federation has commented: "The safety record of the hire boat industry is excellent, as noted in the MAIB report opening remarks, with the incident investigated being the only record of a fatality resulting from the capsize of a hire boat and BMF have made robust representations to MAIB that the recommendations are over burdensome and

a disproportionate response to the incident. All elements of the recommended code exist in the form of the Recreational Craft Directive, the Boat Safety Scheme and the BMF Handover Guide and what is required is proper enforcement of these provisions by the relevant authorities. BMF are working with DTI Marine Unit to ensure MAIB and MCA are fully aware of the implications of the report's recommendations and to minimise the impact of any further regulation on the industry."

IWA Bulletins

Sales Trailer's New Home



R Gough

The Society's Keith Gibson (far left) hands over the keys to the Society's Sales Trailer to Mike Brown (centre) and Brian Kingshott of the Lichfield and Hatherton Canals Restoration Trust.

Having served the Society well at a variety of events, the trailer has become somewhat superfluous as the Society emphasises less

on sales activities. Hence, Council decided to donate it to the L&H Trust.

The 'handover' took place at the Spring meeting of the Northern Canals Association, which was hosted by the Trust, and Keith wished it would bring them the same success that HCS had enjoyed.

Bob Gough

FOR SALE

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Complete Bound Volumes from Issue No 1 (1972) to December 1993.

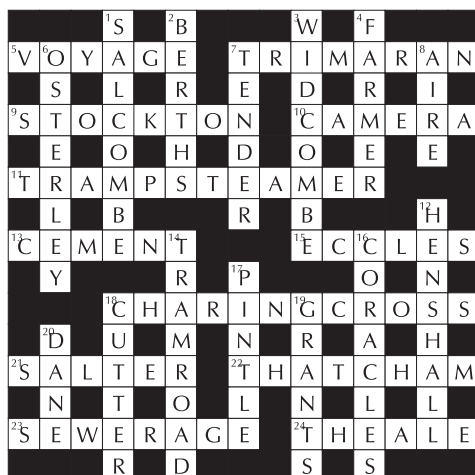
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Solution to Canal Crossword 43



THE SOCIETY WELCOMES THE FOLLOWING NEW MEMBERS:

2684 Mr Holtsbaum, [REDACTED]

2685 Mr Goodier, [REDACTED]

2686 Mr & Mrs Bain, [REDACTED]

2687 Mr Haythornwaite, [REDACTED]

2688 Mrs Borowski, [REDACTED]

2689 Mr Fitzpatrick, [REDACTED]

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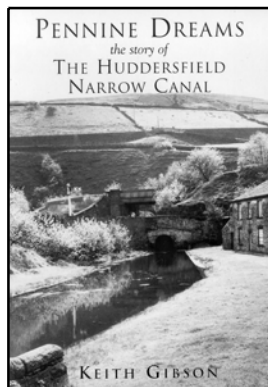
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