

Pennine Link

Members Quarterly Journal - Issue 149 - Summer 2004



HUDDERSFIELD
CANAL
SOCIETY

Huddersfield Canal Society Ltd

239 Mossley Road, Ashton-under-Lyne, Lancashire, OL6 6LN

Tel: 0161 339 1332 Fax: 0161 343 2262

Email: hcs@hcanals.demon.co.uk Website: www.hcanals.demon.co.uk

President - David Sumner MBE Administrator - Bob Gough

HCS Council Members

Neville Kenyon Meadow Head, Tottington, Bury, Lancashire, BL8 3PP
Chairman Tel: 0161 339 1332

Trevor Ellis 20 Batley Avenue, Marsh, Huddersfield, HD1 4NA
Vice-Chairman Tel: 01484 534666

Steve Picot HCS Ltd, 239 Mossley Road, Ashton-u-Lyne, Lancs., OL6 6LN
Treasurer Tel: 0161 339 1332

John Fryer Ramsdens, Freeman & Co., 18 Lewisham Road, Slaithwaite,
Company Secretary Huddersfield, West Yorkshire, HD7 5AL

Brian Minor 45 Gorton Street, Peel Green, Eccles, Manchester, M30 7LZ
Editor, Pennine Link Tel: 0161 288 5324 brian.minor@btinternet.com

David Finnis Hollin Hall Farm, Hardcastle Craggs, Hebden Bridge, HX7 7AP
Press Officer Tel: 01422 844518

Vince Willey 45 Egmont Street, Mossley, Ashton-u-Lyne, Lancs., OL5 9NB
Boats Officer Tel: 0161 339 1332

Allan Knott 206 Chapel Street, Dukinfield, Cheshire, SK14 4QL
W.Side Boats Co-ordinator Tel: 0161 343 6400

David Stubbs 4 Hollowgate, Thurstonland, Huddersfield, HD4 6XY
E.Side Boats Co-ordinator Tel: 01484 667135

Alwyn Ogborn 14 Stanhope Street, Mossley, Ashton-u-Lyne, Lancs., OL5 9LX
Special Events Co-ordinator Tel: 01457 833329

Ken Wright Bridge House, Dobcross, Oldham, Lancashire, OL3 5NL
Minutes Secretary Tel: 01457 873599

Jack Carr 19 Sycamore Avenue, Euxton, Chorley, Lancashire, PR7 6JR
Tel: 01257 265786

Eric Crosland 44 Marina Terrace, Golcar, Huddersfield, HD7 4RA
Tel: 01484 659748

Keith Gibson Syke Cottage, Scholes Moor Road, Holmfirth, HD9 1SJ
Tel: 01484 681245

Keith Noble The Dene, Triangle, Sowerby Bridge, West Yorkshire, HX6 3EA
Tel: 01422 823562

David Sumner 4 Whiteoak Close, Marple, Stockport, Cheshire SK6 6NT
Tel: 0161 449 9084

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Pennine Link

Summer 2004 Issue 149

*Idyllic mooring at the
2004 Tameside Canals Festival*



T. Baines

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*Front Cover: Approaching Stalybridge, lock wheeler
on the towpath. Photo: R Gough*



Editorial

First of all can I apologise for the late appearance of this issue. We were waiting for some things to happen (three Festival events), and the

timing of the next Issue, celebrating 150 editions. Besides, just look at the National Press front pages - Big Brother evictions and the shenanigans at the Football Association. Frankly we think our members and readers deserve sensible items!

Thanks again to Bob Gough who does all the work of chasing contributors and the magic with the computer in setting the pages as well as his own contributions.

Nice to read the letter from Norwich, thanks for your comments Vic. I visited Norwich a few weeks ago for the first time since a Broads visit over 40 years ago. 'Er indoors was having a day with Delia Smith at Norwich Football Club (I'm hoping for a rash of Mediterranean food this summer) so we spent a night at a somewhat expensive hotel on the river.

Floating Chinese Restaurant boat opposite the hotel.



B Minor

I remembered it as a working port, we had to give way to large working boats and there were very limited moorings for pleasure craft. Now everything has changed.

All the working boats have gone and the river is full of very exotic hire boats.

The wharf side area is like Salford Quays, with Weatherspoons, Frankie and Bennies etc. Even the flats are the same design as the ones on the Quays with the idiot, miniscule, useless balconies.

Norwich is a lovely town and a pleasure to visit. Built on the only hill for miles around, its old streets and buildings have preserved its history. There is a very good market, mainly under cover and plenty of 'proper' shops.

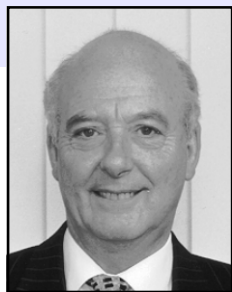
I went into Radio Norwich to see how they run things and found them in a brand new building in the town centre. A building that is modern architecture at its very best.

Would that the designers of the Lowry and the War Museum had followed this example! Perhaps the Norfolk town planners have a proper sense of aesthetics.

Ken Wright is keeping you up to date with the various deliberations of the Council of the Society. I attended the User Group meeting at Castlefield recently on behalf of the Society - incidentally we are asked to attend as a commercial user rather than a recreational one.

The main response to almost every question put to BW is a cogent reason for not doing anything. I have asked several times for BW to put a page (or so) in Plink putting their point of view, but only had a response on a couple of occasions. I suppose we have to remember that to them, canals are work and not necessarily their passion. Still, I always find all their senior staff very approachable and friendly, even though I suppose us canal maniacs must be strange to them!

Brian Minor



Chairman's Report

There was a good turn out for the AGM in June and the staff of the Delph Band Club were hospitable as ever. The entertainment for the evening was

provided by John Courtman, a Tameside Ranger whose presentation was of such interest that he continued by popular demand after supper. The supper consisted of splendid roast beef muffins, freshly sliced before your very eyes - a speciality of the house. Local members should take advantage of any events we organise at the Delph Band Club even if it is just for the food!

Bob Gough and I with two British Waterways Managers, Iain Weston and Adrian Sains, walked from Uppermill to the top of the Diggle Flight during the Spring. The BW people indicated some of the work that was being carried out by their personnel and we were able to point out the pristine paintwork on many of the locks - thanks to the work of Trevor Ellis and Eric Crosland with their team of volunteers.

During a subsequent meeting we were delighted that Adrian offered on behalf of BW that they would fit the bridge plates on the West Side. Trevor now has almost the complete set, so we should see some action here before the end of the season.

One of our recent objectives has been to work towards involving local schools in canal activities and, in response to one of our mail shots, we were contacted by St Paul's C of E Primary School in Stalybridge. They are situated very close to the Canal and use it to illustrate transport systems as part of the history curriculum and in relation to the wildlife and flora that abound in the vicinity of the Canal. Bob and I visited the school and Bob gave a presentation on the Canal to the entire school including members of staff. The visit was followed up by one of the senior

teachers, Paul White, attending an HCS Council Meeting and giving your directors an interesting presentation from the point of view of how our Canal can be positively promoted to students from a very early age. This was a significant step in helping us understand that the canal is not simply about boaters, it has a myriad of attractions for the whole community. It is our mission to exploit its potential to the full. If any of our members who are involved in education would be interested in volunteering to help us in this endeavour, please contact the office - we'd love to hear from you.

A further mailing will be sent to all schools in Oldham during the next few weeks.

In our drive to attract more advertisers to display their offerings in Pennine Link, we carried out, for the first time, an "email shot" to over one hundred potential advertisers. The response was around 6% - very good in marketing terms - and hopefully we shall be seeing the fruits of this exercise before long. Thanks to council member Vince Willey for compiling the list. Anyone who fancies putting an advertisement in our super colour Plink should contact Bob at the office.

It seems that the sale of the Mossley Road offices is almost complete. As often happens in these cases, there has been a succession of delays due to legalities and paper work! Although we have negotiated a lease of the ground floor at an attractive rent for up to three years, we are actively seeking alternative accommodation - preferably close to the Canal.

Thanks to all our members whether you are in regular touch or simply support by goodwill the work we are doing to promote the Huddersfield Narrow (and Broad) Canal for all its devotees. Your support is crucial in enabling us to fulfil our mission.

Neville Kenyon
Chairman



Keith's Disconnected Jottings

After the reopening of our Canal, the Rochdale, the Forth & Clyde and the Union Canals, the Anderton Lift, and the creation of the new Ribble

Link, the head of steam behind waterway restoration seems to have dispersed.

The big factor that allowed so much work around the turn of the century was the availability of the major grants to celebrate the Millennium. Not only did Millennium money have a large impact, but other funding bodies provided more in the way of matching funding than they might otherwise have invested so as to maximise the benefits of their own investments.

In funding terms, waterway restoration is back to the sort of levels of potential investment that existed before the Millennium Commission. To see what that might mean, consider what would have happened to restoration of the Huddersfield Narrow or the Rochdale Canals without Millennium grants.

Both canals were, of course, well on the way to complete restoration. Both had received large grants from European and government sources, but had reached the point where very large grants were essential to complete the work. Carefully packaged combinations of grants and lottery money might have restored the Huddersfield Narrow through Stalybridge and - perhaps in a phased project to slow the rate of spending - through Standedge Tunnel.

The £550,000 that HCS invested in the Standedge Visitor Centre as part of the Millennium scheme might have been needed instead to top up grants, for instance at Uppermill High Street and Wool Road bridges. To get through Slaithwaite and back into Huddersfield would have been more difficult, however, with the Yorkshire side of the canal eligible for a more limited range of grants than in Stalybridge.

One has to hope that somehow we would have found the money - even if that needed a massive fund-raising effort by volunteers and the Council to match inputs from grants. My guess is that the canal might have reopened from end-to-end sometime between 2010 and 2015.

The picture on the Rochdale Canal could have been much bleaker. Despite the fact that the canal was open to navigation on the Yorkshire side, many years of effort by the Lancashire local authorities had largely failed to find grants except for largely cosmetic improvements between Manchester and Littleborough prior to the Millennium.

The obstructions to navigation here were so closely spaced that tackling them one or two at a time would have provided very few of the benefits that piecemeal restoration brought to canal-side settlements on the Huddersfield. Only on complete restoration of the canal were significant benefits likely to justify the giving of grants. Without the Millennium grant making that complete reopening possible, it is very hard to see how progress would ever have been made in restoring the Rochdale Canal south and west of Littleborough.

The Millennium clearly was a huge boost for the waterway restoration movement. The miles of restored waterway resulting have also led to a situation where most potential grant-giving bodies now start from a position of understanding that regeneration benefits will flow from a restored waterway, and British Waterways have amassed a great deal of experience of and enthusiasm for restoration. Ten years ago, before the Millennium grants, neither of these was a certainty; indeed, years of work was involved for many restoration societies to gain these prerequisites of most restoration schemes. So, although money might be tight, the prospects of most restoration schemes are better now than they were then.

In the warm glow of the success of the Millennium schemes, British Waterways published its ideas for those projects with BWs active support in a series of tranches of work. Progress on the first of these has been slower in the new circumstances than we might originally have hoped.

The restoration of the Northern Reaches of the Lancaster Canal is now planned to be a phased development that might meet the requirements of the North West Regional Development Agency, but that Agency has no money available in the short term.

Progress on the Manchester, Bolton and Bury Canal is way behind the sort of timescale that I, probably naively, anticipated, especially as the economic benefits of that restoration seem likely to surpass most, if not all, other waterway schemes in terms of the return to the community from capital investment in the canal.

Further south, the application to the Heritage Lottery Fund for the first phase of the Cotswold Canals scheme is being

scaled back to have any chance of success, and it is proving difficult to find grants to build the proposed new Bedford to Milton Keynes Waterway.

Perhaps to underline that waterway restoration is still a key element in plans for the future, British Waterways has issued a new report, *Waterways 2025: Our Vision for the Shape of the Waterway Network*. This sets out BWs plans for further rounds of restoration schemes. Wisely, no timescale is attached, other than the hoped for end date of 2025, and even then the schemes are expressed as ones that 'might be completed' by that date. The report sets out the criteria by which BW have assessed schemes in terms of need for the project, its sustainability and how it relates to the waterways network. The following schemes are identified as ones that will receive BW's active support:

PRIORITY ONE:

- Ashby Canal (to Measham)
- Proposed Bedford to Milton Keynes Waterway
- Bow Back Rivers
- Cotswold Canals (Phase One)
- Droitwich Canals
- Proposed Fens Waterways Link
- Proposed Liverpool Link
- Manchester, Bolton & Bury Canal
- Lancaster Canal, Northern Reaches
- River Carron Navigation.

PRIORITY TWO:

- Ashby Canal (to Moira)
- Cotswold Canals (Phase Two)
- Grantham Canal
- Lichfield Canal
- Monmouthshire & Brecon Canal (southern section to the Usk estuary)
- River Leven

- St Helens (Sankey) Canal
- Wendover Arm of the Grand Union Canal
- Wiltshire & Berkshire Canal (and the North Wiltshire branch)

In addition, the report identifies three schemes that would contribute significantly to the waterways network, but have lesser relevance to BW, as Priority Three. These are:

- Proposed Slough - Windsor Link
- Proposed Higher Avon Navigation
- Wey & Arun Canal

The report says that BW 'do not wish to discourage' other schemes. Some, such as the Cromford or the Shrewsbury and Newport will hardly be surprised to be omitted - as being relatively new and undeveloped schemes. Others, perhaps, smaller schemes, especially rural ones like the Pocklington may not be too concerned, only needing relatively small amounts of cash - if only they can get issues resolved. Others however must be concerned.

The Foxton Inclined Plane is omitted this time on the basis that it is what the report calls a 'heritage/development project' rather than a restoration, which is true. Locally, the Chesterfield through the M1 and beyond back to Chesterfield is, perhaps the most surprising omission.

I would have thought that now the canal partnership has appointed a project officer to push this forward, the completion of the Chesterfield was on a par with others on the list. Perhaps, the difficulty is that extension of the canal has less of an impact on the BW network than some other projects.

Also, the difficulties in bringing about a restored Barnsley Canal, rebuilt Dearne & Dove Canal and the building of the Rother Link between the Sheffield & South Yorkshire Navigation and the Chesterfield Canal might be factors in BW thinking. Presumably, the Barnsley etc. do not make the grade because of the limited enthusiasm shown so far by the riparian local authorities and Yorkshire Forward, which is a shame. A little support from BW might just be the thing to transform attitudes here.

The Environment Agency, which until recently has not been noted for enthusiasm for the waterways in its care, has also put down an important marker for waterways, with the formal launch of the proposals for the Fens Waterways Link by Baroness Young, the Agency's Chief Executive, at a meeting in Peterborough on 11th June.

This plan (which also features in the BW list) to link existing waterways to create a new and important link between the river Witham at Boston and the river Great Ouse near St. Ives is estimated as being likely to bring in an income from recreational visits to the area of £14m per year when the work is complete.

The big problem for the Agency and the local authorities along the route will be raising the capital to do the work, although the commitment shown by the public launch and the fact that Lincolnshire County Council has a budget for waterways improvements in the County are clear statements of intent.

Keith Gibson



HCS Council News

We have had three Council meetings and the Society AGM since my last piece. The turnout for the AGM was a little disappointing, with only 24 members present - the

absentees clearly hadn't heard about the Delph Band Club hot beef butties! We have found a new venue for the Council meetings - at the Tunnel End Inn, Marsden. Very friendly and hospitable - and the beer's not bad!

17th March, 2004

The sale of 239 Mossley Road is progressing nicely, although the "SOLD" notice on the building has led to speculation, strenuously denied, that HCS is closing down.

Council members met BW representatives from the West side on 10th February to discuss work programmes. Assistance with dry stone walling along the Diggle flight was a possibility.

The Chairman met West side BW boss Adrian Sains on 16th March and walked him from Uppermill to the Diggle portal. Our lock painting efforts were praised. Other volunteer work was discussed, as was the now long lasting saga of the fixing of bridge plates.

The Chairman expressed concern at the age profile of Council and stressed the need for the Society to attract young members. He was approaching local schools on the subject.

New promotional items were discussed.

A "yard sale" of surplus construction equipment had raised £78.50. The Society's sales trailer had been given to the Lichfield and Hatherton Canal Society for use in their restoration campaign.

Little to report on the volunteer front due to weather and holidays. Listed structures and bureaucracy were still frustrating attempts to fix bridge plates.

The Society is proposing to purchase a commercial quality gazebo to replace the sales trailer as a promotional tool at outdoor events.

The Marsden Shuttle boat has undergone a refit at Portland Basin Marina and volunteers were to paint it. It will stay on the West side for the time being and possibly help at the Marple Flight celebrations in July.

Our boats are very busy due to the success of Portland Basin Museum even 'out of season'. An electric auxiliary motor is being fitted to cope with the common propeller blockages.

Photocalls being arranged for the handover of the sales trailer, the opening of the boating season, and the 30th birthday of the Society.

Questions were asked about the future of our dredger, still in storage in the ex-BW yard at Mossley, as the space was needed by member Alwyn Ogborn who occupies the yard. It was agreed to offer it to the newly formed Hollinwood Canal Society rather than have it broken up by British Waterways. (*Why we are not using it to dredge OUR canal remains a mystery to me! KW*).

After a lengthy discussion about the future of relationships with BW on The Narrow and Rochdale canals, and the problems of water supply, the meeting closed.

5th May, 2004

Keith Noble hedged his bets by appearing in the 'present' and 'apologies' items!

Keith Sykes was welcomed to the meeting as the Society's observer at the East side B.W. User Group meeting.

Sale of Mossley Road office proceeding slowly due to need to negotiate a lease for our occupancy of the ground floor.

Clearing out all the surplus paper is in hand and future archive material being separated out. A small separate office is to be rented to act as a document store and archive sorting office.

Other avenues are being explored to find a new permanent home.

Schools in Tameside, Oldham and Kirklees were being mail-shot with Society details to try to encourage younger members.

The colour issue of Plink went down well; other promotional ideas were discussed.

The dredger has gone from Alwyn Ogborn's yard and is now in storage at Stockton in the Midlands awaiting refurbishment. The Society is helping with some of the removal costs to assist the fledgling Hollinwood Canal Society - the new owners.

The volunteers have agreed some work on East and West sides for the Summer. Bridge plate saga is probably solved on the West Side but not on the East.

Society to be represented at the Tameside Canal Festival in July.

The Shuttle is operating at Marsden again now the Visitor Centre has reopened at weekends.

Approval given to replenish stocks of "uniforms" and wet-weather gear for boat crews.

Whilst the amount of "operation and maintenance" volunteer work continues to be limited, the boat crews number some 14 volunteers per week, representing a significant promotional activity for the Society.

Photocalls had taken place recently to highlight the Society's 30th anniversary and the re-opening of the Cheshire Ring.

Keith Noble took the floor for three items of any other business, namely

- a. The Society's response to consultation on the proposed Colne Valley Greenway (a cycle route hiding under an assumed name).
- b. The legislation on Alcohol Limits being extended to boating on the inland waterways - heaven forfend!
- c. The Government seeking views on users' impressions of British Waterways - should make fascinating reading!

Keith Sykes circulated and spoke from his notes on the East side User Group and, in his absence, Bob Gough circulated notes of Brian Minor's trip to the West Side User Group. Both meetings seemed to be the usual mixture of criticisms by users and excuses and platitudes by BW. One sorry note is the reduction in BW staffing members (bank side and office), and expenditure on canal work, due to Government cut-backs. *(And we thought John Prescott was on our side! KW)*

Annual General Meeting June 10th, 2004

Held at the Delph Band Club where the Extraordinary General Meeting was held in January. A pleasant enough spot with decent draught beer but the clatter of a slot machine for part of the evening rather lowered the tone.

All the usual formalities were gone through; 13 apologies (there were only 24 present so several hundred didn't send apologies nor proxy votes), 2003 minutes read out by yours truly, Chairman's Annual Report taken as read (by everybody, in Spring Pennine Link). The accounts were dealt with by Caroline Jones, from auditors Mazars. She made a delightful addition to the function and was asked several questions which she answered with aplomb.

The auditors were re-elected as were several members of Council; Eric Crosland and David Stubbs were elected to the Council. Eric has been a member of Joint Council meetings for years, being a director of HCS Restoration Ltd; now he's fully-fledged.

Any other business items were mainly limited to queries about British Waterways priorities and suggestions as to where money could be best spent. A short but serious discussion about marketing the Society and enticing younger members brought the formal event to a close. Council will decide where and when the next AGM takes place - it will be on the East side.

Following the meeting we all slurped our way through hot beef muffins dipped in beef juice and listened to a presentation from John

Courtman of Tameside Countryside Service who talked (at some length, but very interestingly) about Tameside's three river valleys. Also, Alwyn Ogborn, on behalf of his wife Joan, was presented with a book prize for winning the Pennine Link Spring competition - the longest word to be made from "The Grand Union Canal". Joan won with "nonegenarian" - mind you, it was the only entry!

28th July, 2004

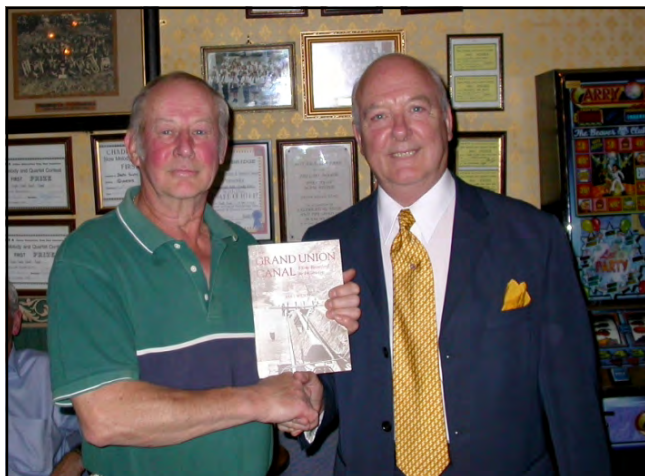
The meeting was held, again, at the Tunnel End Inn at Marsden - a very pleasant venue.

The Society has sent out a mail shot to all schools in Tameside (106 of them), inviting them to get involved in the canal - only ONE school responded, St. Paul's in Stalybridge, and teacher Paul White gave Council a talk on how his school uses the canal as a tool in history, geography and environmental subjects.

When the Huddersfield Canal Company is finally laid to rest a new system of guarding the canal's future will be established. Our representatives will be Chairman Neville Kenyon and Treasurer Steve Picot at the "board" level and retired civil engineers Ken Wright and Keith Noble at the "officer" level. To accord with the wishes of the Millennium Commission we all have to live 125 more years! (He said, jokingly).

This year's Christmas edition of Pennine Link will be No.150 so it is to be a bit special - starting with the Photographic Competition which will be FREE entry with a top cash prize of £150 (see page 34). Now let's see if we can raise a bit more interest.

In another effort to involve ourselves in the regeneration of the canal corridor we are contacting the tourism officers in the three local councils. This could also lead to a combined effort in producing a new, very updated, Towpath Guide.



On behalf of his wife Joan, Alwyn Ogborn (left) accepts the Spring Competition prize from Chairman, Neville Kenyon.

HCS Archive

Our finances continue to be in a satisfactory state, helped by recently recovering £7,500 tax repayment, which we thought we had lost, and over £1,500 from Gift Aid for last year.

The volunteers are busily painting Diggle Locks.

We took our new publicity tent to the Marple Locks festivities and raised a great deal of interest.

The boat crews continue to work hard on both sides of the hill and we are hoping to get involved in providing the Father Christmas trips at Marsden - now that there are too few staff at the Visitor Centre for British Waterways to do it.

We continue to give talks to interested groups - at the present time these are mainly Age Concern lunch clubs.

We are going to organise a brass plaque to be sold to boaters who can prove that they have "done" the Huddersfield Narrow.

Two subjects raised at the AGM - widening Wade Lock in Uppermill and improving water supply on the East side to allow more boats up to Marsden - are to be raised as priority items with British Waterways.

Ken Wright

HCS Crews News



I write this having just set off for a leisurely ten day cruise around the Cheshire Canal Ring and just after departing from base at Furness Vale, we passed

David Sumner (our President) and Chris Farrar returning from a trip on his beloved Huddersfield Narrow Canal.

The warm weather of Summer seems to get everyone in the mood for a spot of boating reflected by the high number of enquiries and bookings we receive for the trip boats at the HCS office.

On the day Ashton Market Hall burnt down, Arlies Primary School, Stalybridge, were due to visit the Portland Basin Museum and the Setantii exhibition at Ashton Town Hall. However, due to the town centre being sealed off, the Setantii visit was cancelled and so, teacher Joyce Hansell, wife of HCS crew member David Hansell, asked, at short notice, if we could fill the vacant slot with a trip on Still Waters for her pupils.

Paul Peacock and I duly volunteered and enjoyed a good afternoon out with a very lively bunch of happy children. A few days later, much to our surprise, we received a whole wad of letters from the children on the trip reflecting their various observations. Here are some extracts, as written, which show how children see things.

Arlies Primary School Broad Hill Road Stalybridge

Dear Allan and Paul

I thank you both for the boat trip it was excellent infact it was the best boat trip I have ever been on. When Mrs Hansell told me we was going on a boat trip I was really really excited so thanks one more it was really smashing.

Conner

... It was a Pleasure to wind the bridge up and then down. ... I liked the boat rocking and when I got a mouth full of flys.

Thomas

... Even though we can't go to Selanti it was still a good day out. At the beginning I was a bit affraid but it was ok later on.

Victoria

... When we got in the tunnels you could hear your self echo and it was really pitch black. ... as we were coming back I thought Allan would fall of the side of the boat.

Jack

We loved your boat trip ... so thanks for giving up your time and taking us, its a good job we listened and kept our heads inside the boat or I would not be writing to you now.

Andrew

I am very happy that you let me and someothers help with the liftup bridge.

I think all of Class 3 enjoyed the boat trip, because we Saw geese, chicks, Swans and alot of plants.

and full of laughter I hope when you get this letter you will feel better.

Thank you Your Pal Joe

Amy

Thanks for a wonderful boat trip. It was a lovely view out the window. I enjoyed going under bridges and when people cranked the bridge up. ... We will all bring a pound in, I promise.

I rearly liked liked the boat trip. ... it was the best School trip I have ever bin on athow I am slitly glad the town-hall burnt down or I would not have met you two lovly people.

AIT Lyons

Luke

I had a fantastic time When we went out on the canal. I liked it when we saw ducklings under their mums tummy and then swans, Thank you for telling us the safty rules.

Thank you very much it was the first boat trip I have ever been on. The boat trip was unexpeted but i had a excellent time. ... Mrs Hansell realy enjoyed it, so did all the other teachers it was so cool and wicked.

Loren

Lauren

I really enjoy boat rides and your's was the best ever. ... I was really, really excited, when I heard we were going on one. I got so excited I almost fainted, (but I didn't luckerly).

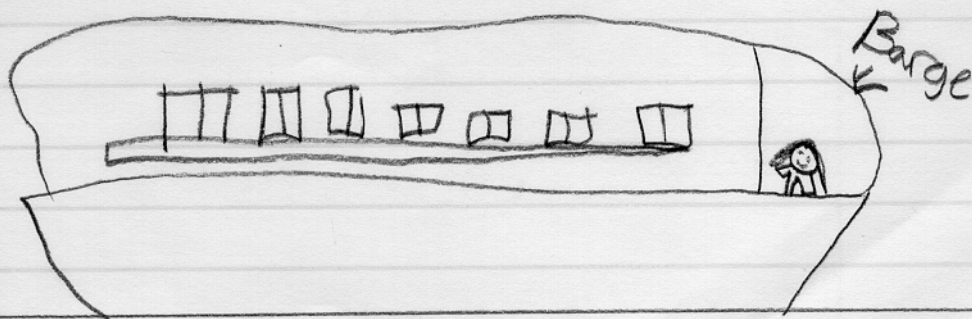
As always, anyone wishing to try their hand at crewing or skippering the trip boats should contact David Stubbs (East side) on 01484 667135 or me (West side) on 0161 343 6400.

Hannah

Thanks for giving up your time for us, the trip was excellent. ... you were both funny

Allan Knott

West Side Boat Crew Co-ordinator



Lauren Jode Fitton

Mossley Canal Festival



The Mossley Festival Association and Roaches Lock Public House held their first Mossley Canal Festival from the 30th April to the 2nd May 2004. They provided a stunning musical weekend, showcasing local talent, with sideshows and attractions to suit all ages.

The canalside venue was an ideal opportunity for Ed Mortimer's *Astra* to offer boat trips and Sue Day attended with *Maria*; Britain's oldest surviving wooden narrowboat, celebrating its 150th anniversary and resplendent in livery restored to her original scheme.

Photos: A. Knott



The Hollinwood Branch

Progress continues on the latest canal restoration proposal in our area. Ed Mortimer reports on the latest news, plus a couple of interesting items of correspondence.

From little acorns

The article in Plink (Spring 2003) about the Hollinwood Branch created a lot of interest. Since then lots of meetings have been held, lots of work has been done, and a canal society now exists. Yet nothing looks any different on the canal. It is still as derelict as it was this time last year.

So now I realise just what staying power all those early stalwarts on the Huddersfield Narrow Canal must have had. Acorns take a long time to grow into oak trees.

On the Huddersfield Narrow Canal all the early work somehow seems forgotten, along with those early people who did all of it. What short memories we seem to have. Instead boaters now moan 'there's no mooring bollards'. When the Hollinwood Canal is reopened, will all the early work and endless meetings (with all sorts of organisations) be forgotten just as easily? I suppose it will.

Hello, I'm David Heyes

The newly formed Hollinwood Canal Society seemed to have created a lot of interest, but yet so many seemed still to be unaware that the canal exists, or that there was a new society with some sort of idea that it could or should be reopened.

12 June 2004

Dear Ed,

I read your very interesting pages on the Internet; as a kid I used to walk along the canal to school from Drury Lane to Stanley Road School. So it brought back some cheerful memories at the time I lived at No. 9 Drury Lane which, like a lot of Hollinwood Canal, is now gone.

We also used to get on the canal and walk the other way, as a way to get into Daisy Nook. It was a very nice walk as a kid; not too far and along the way, near the Mersey Mill, the canal contained some very large gold fish. I used to do a lot of fishing in those days in the mill lodges that were plentiful then, but I cannot remember seeing anyone fishing in the canal in that area.

I remember what was the first lock on that canal. It was just in front of what was Levi Jackson's rope works, which later, in the first war years,

became Hills' Aircraft, which did a lot of work for A.V. Roe. I remember it very well because a class mate of mine got pushed in that lock coming home from school, and the policeman, who was on traffic duty at the junction on Drury Lane and Manchester Road, had to come along climb down the lock and help Roy back to safety. There was no ambulance called, and Roy and the policeman had to go home wet through.

Just where the canal was fed from the Wharfe Yard, there were two skeletons of barges at the opposite side of the canal to the towpath. Just behind the Yard was a barge building and repair workshop; but it was derelict in the 1930's. There was also another lock that went under the main road at Drury Lane. As kids, I recall there was also a building we called The Marble Arch, where we used to play on the dark nights of winter. It was a waiting room for the trams, I think, but I cannot remember anyone waiting for a tram in there! There were also a set of public toilets, also long gone.

E. Shelmerdine, Grasscroft, Oldham

Then I was at a local event in Oldham. Afterwards David Heyes, the local MP, came and introduced himself to me. (This did seem a little wrong, I thought canal enthusiasts are supposed to have to lobby long and hard to get the attention of the local MP!)

‘Great idea, reopening the Hollinwood Branch Canal’ he said, ‘we might not see it opened in our lifetime, but it is worth doing’. Since our conversation he has joined the Hollinwood Canal Society. The Society now has 80 members.

Oldham Council takes the lead

Now Oldham Council is beginning to lead in arranging meetings and the future direction of the proposals. They are arranging meetings that include Tameside Council. The discussions are a big step from this time last year, when the existence of the canal was hardly acknowledged. Yet the discussions and thinking are still not sufficiently forward thinking. This is particularly true for the former gasworks and huge brownfield site in Hollinwood (*opposite*).

This site in Hollinwood, next to the M60 at Junction 22, could be a huge quality canalside leisure and retail development, similar to Broad Street Birmingham or Castlefield in Manchester. Yet Oldham Council are concerned instead about ‘real’ jobs. So the site may well become industrial units.

An industrial estate is not what many of the Hollinwood people actually want. And not many would benefit from it either. Instead they would like some sort of new and exciting town centre to use and visit, and some open green space as well. And this could so easily include a canal as a central feature.



But the site is a very valuable one, and a more immediate financial benefit is perceived to be gained from selling it for some sort of industrial use. Sad, and just a little bit too short sighted. Sad too for the local people, who have had a hard time of it all (years of blight because of the motorway).

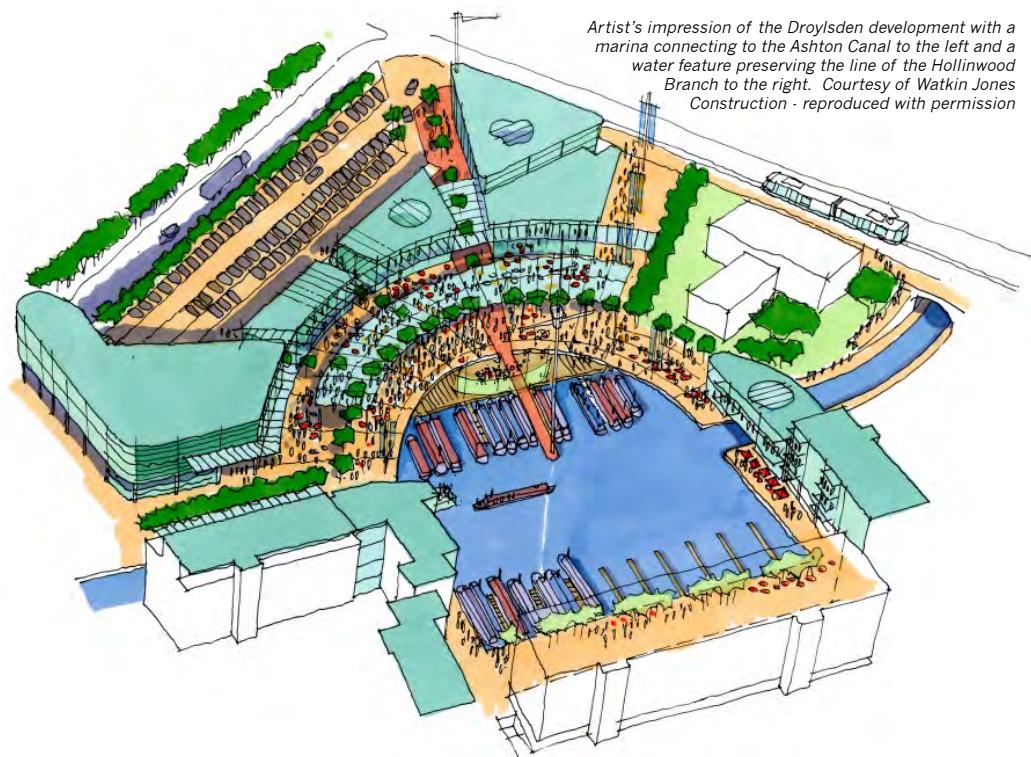
Canal Society has some success at Droylsden

The canal route is to be redeveloped at Droylsden. This is at Fairfield Junction (the junction with the main route of the Ashton Canal). There has been quite a lot of local publicity about this. Earlier proposals at this site were for a housing development surrounding a small marina. It would not have been possible to continue the canal beyond it, without demolishing some of the development.

Canal Society meetings held with Councilor Kieran Quinn and Tameside Council Officers led to the decision to adopt a new design for the development that includes the line of the canal. Sadly the proposals at the moment do not include for all of it to be to a navigable depth. Instead part of it is to be constructed as a shallowed water feature! I am hoping that lessons learnt from constructing the shallowed section on the Rochdale Canal will result in a change in this decision.

Floating water plantain

What could have held up or stopped the restoration of the Huddersfield Narrow Canal could have been the cherry trees in Slaithwaite. Well, I think the Hollinwood Branch cherry trees could be a little smaller, they are Floating Water Plantain. This small rare aquatic plant is likely to



Artist's impression of the Droylsden development with a marina connecting to the Ashton Canal to the left and a water feature preserving the line of the Hollinwood Branch to the right. Courtesy of Watkin Jones Construction - reproduced with permission

present problems for the restoration of the Hollinwood Canal. If Floating Water Plantain is so important to the world as we know it, why are we not constructing suitable lagoons now throughout the country for it to thrive?

Sadly, the canal would be easier to reopen if it had all been filled in and built on! (And where would the Floating Water Plantain have gone then?)

Are we really at the stage of building a parallel canal so that one of the channels can be used for aquatic species?

Engineering Report says it is technically feasible

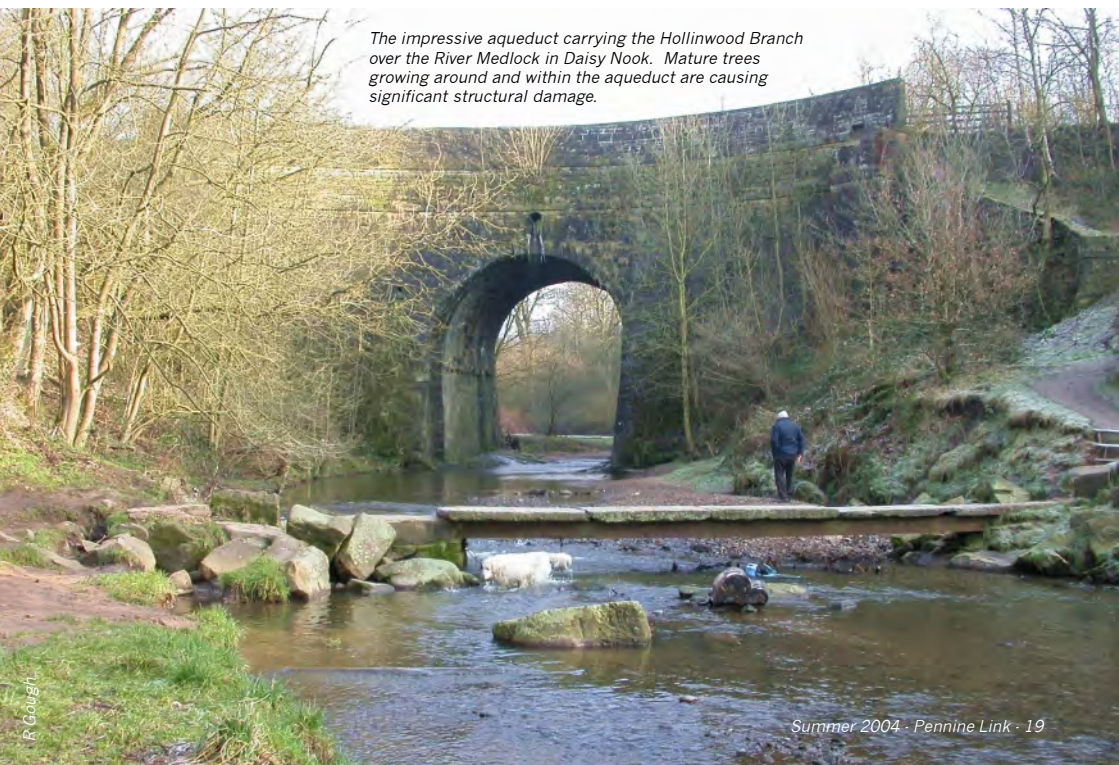
Roy Sutton, Honorary Consultant Engineer to the Inland Waterways Association, has carried out a detailed engineering study of the Hollinwood Branch. He has concluded that the restoration of the

canal (and the creation of a new link to the Rochdale Canal) is technically feasible. It just needs a bit of money. Well, quite a lot. His estimate is £16M for Fairfield Junction to Daisy Nook Country Park. And a further £15M for Daisy Nook Country Park to the Rochdale Canal. Sounds a lot, yet each bit is 'only' about twice what it cost to reopen the Huddersfield Narrow Canal in Stalybridge.

What about the locks

The original Hollinwood Branch had eight locks. Four are within what is now Daisy Nook Country Park, and four more towards the very end of the canal in Oldham. The proposals only include the restoration of the first four locks within Daisy Nook Country Park. Two new locks are needed for the new short link down the Rochdale Canal (a level difference of 21 feet).

The impressive aqueduct carrying the Hollinwood Branch over the River Medlock in Daisy Nook. Mature trees growing around and within the aqueduct are causing significant structural damage.



Possibly a drop lock could be used to cross the motorway at Woodhouses (although other more imaginative schemes are being considered for crossing the motorway at this point).

What is tentatively being considered is completely restoring the top lock of the four locks within Daisy Nook Country Park. This is the one lock that is completely infilled and buried. The other three locks are capped and still visible as a feature.

Future threats

In Droylsden there is the possibility that Manchester Road Bridge could be demolished as part of the construction of the Metrolink extension to Ashton. However it has recently been announced that funding is not available for the next phase

of Metrolink extensions. So, for the moment, this threat has gone away.

By EMail:

I was very interested to see your website - as a youngster in the early 60's I often used to walk the canal.

You mention the pumping engine at the Fairbottom Branch Junction. You may be interested to know that I have a set of quite good photographs of this just before it was demolished. Also, my uncle - who is now 84 - has a starting handle from this engine. Now for the interesting bit ... should anyone ever think of restoring the canal, they should take a close look in the bottom of the top lock of the staircase pair at Daisy Nook (pictured below, Ed.). The 'beam' from the pumping engine is down there, buried when they filled it in ...

Best Regards, Howard Bolton, Derby





Two views, from Howard Bolton's collection, of the Pumping Engine at the Fairbottom Branch which was used to back-pump, and hence conserve, water on the Hollinwood Branch in Daisy Nook.

Already long derelict, the pictures were taken just before the main structures were demolished in the late 1950's.

The inset detail below shows an unusual feature in the use of parallel motion to the pump rod; this was due to the pump delivering to quite a high level and thence down the 'launder' or water trough shown.

The engine could deliver about 35,000 gallons in half an hour to replace the water used in navigating the Waterhouses Locks.



Photos courtesy of Harold Bolton.

Society working parties

Meet at the Countryside Centre, Daisy Nook Country Park

Sat / Sun 16–17 October

Working party clearing the vegetation that is damaging the canal structures within Daisy Nook. 10am to 5pm both days

Sat / Sun 4-5 December

Working party on the canals in Daisy Nook. 10am to 5pm both days.
This will be in conjunction with Waterway Recovery Group North West

If you want to support this new society the contact details are:

Address: 68 Knowl Street, Stalybridge, Cheshire. SK15 3AJ

Or visit the website:
www.hollinwoodcanal.co.uk

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

Telephone: 0161 303 7635

Ed Mortimer

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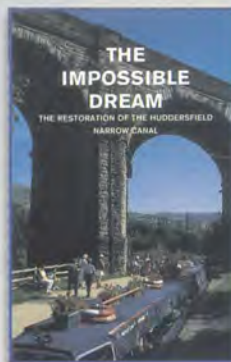


BED & BREAKFAST at NEWBARN

A warm welcome awaits tourists & business people from a local couple at this modern farmhouse on a working sheep farm. Lovely views over the village and just 5 minutes from Standedge Tunnel. Parking for any size of vehicle. OS Pathfinder Map 714 (GR 010090).

Newbarn, Harrop Green, Diggle, Saddleworth, OL3 5LW
Tel & Fax: 01457 873937 or 07979 598232

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 Huddersfield Narrow Canal



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Marple Locks Bi-Centenary

The 200th anniversary of the opening of the Marple locks was celebrated on Saturday 3rd July with a Festival and a visit from a reincarnation of Samuel Oldknow, the man who made them possible.

Sam's Lime Kilns just behind Lock 16 were making money in 1804, but the cost of transport to the growing industrial area of Manchester was harming his profits. The Peak Forest Canal was the answer.

Built in the 'modern' fashion, with locks grouped centrally and designed mainly by Benjamin Outram, the canal was an instant success. The top end of the canal brought the raw lime from Buxworth Basin and Whaley Bridge to his kilns and then carried the vital building material onward. His Mill lower down the flight, utilising the flow of water down the bywash added to his wealth.

He must have been an enlightened employer with good public and labour relations as 200 years afterwards the inhabitants of Marple turned out in atrocious weather to pay tribute to his memory. The locks are still in operation today, albeit with several renewals of the gates and mechanisms.



Oldknow Mill



Descending the Flight

Many of the activities of the area were represented at the Festival. Marple is no longer an industrial town, purely a residential area, and the stalls reflected this. The Chess Club, the Guides, a tree surgeon and a couple of local charities were amongst those present. Local artists were painting on the canalside and Tudor Cruising Club were selling life saving bacon butties at Lock 4.

The show opened at 10.00 a.m. and half an hour later, the heavens opened and a gale blew. A stall from Stockport MBC blew away and the staff decided that discretion was the better part of valour and left.

The stall from the Macclesfield Canal society spent an hour trying to take off with a couple of hefty fellers holding it down and then they decided that enough was enough, and packed up.

But as the 1.00 time for the opening enactment came, the rain died away and



The Rubber Duck Theatre Company

although the odd strong blast made everyone grab their tent poles, the afternoon was relatively peaceful.

Sue Day, fresh from the Mossley Canal Festival, was in attendance with the wooden narrowboat Maria, whose structural alterations showed what some of the first boats to use the canal must have looked like. The children from the Rubber Duck Theatre Company, in Victorian costume, added authenticity to the scene.

Several guided walks went down the locks having the mechanics of the operation explained to them and a very useful mini bus kept up a free service from the top to the bottom of the flight.

The new HCS tent lasted all day, although we had to make a few modifications to

battle with the elements. Alwyn and Joan brought everything along and President David Sumner, in his home town, was on hand to keep us in order.

Every visitor had nice things to say about 'our' Canal and hopefully we should get some new members as a result. Several members came to talk to us and amongst many old friends it was a pleasure to see HCS Restoration's consultant, Mike Thompson, again.

Altogether, in spite of the weather, an enjoyable experience and plus points gained for the Society.

Brian Minor

Photos: B Minor



*Olwyn Ogborn (left)
and David Sumner
at the HCS stand.*



Artists on the canal bank



Sue Day and her boat horse

GMR Bus in the Basin Again!

Once again the BBC GMR Bus has had a day's stay at Portland Basin. This time it coincided with the Friday of the Tameside Canals Festival. Every time the bus's location was mentioned on air, this meant that the Festival got a plug!

Presenter Gill Kearsley interviewed Tony Wostenholme live in the morning about the history of the Festival and what was happening during the weekend, with the sound of Ed Mortimer's boat engine in the background. Tony came over very well and made his points very clearly. I think also the fact that Gill is an attractive young lady wasn't lost on him either!



The bus is used by the BBC for two purposes, the first is the obvious one of good PR. Getting out and showing the face behind the voice, meeting listeners, hearing and sometimes recording their opinions. Many of these are subsequently broadcast in the series 'Word on the Street'. Several of the daytime programmes are actually transmitted from the bus.

The second reason is to introduce the general public to the world of computers and the Internet. A tutor from a local college is always on hand and should the 'bug' bite after a chance to try one's hand at the new technology free or very inexpensive courses can be recommended.

Brian Minor

Below: The distinctive, yellow GMR Bus parked up on the wharf at Portland Basin.

Inset Left: Gill Kearsley (GMR) interviewing Tony Wostenholme of the Festival Committee.

Inset Right: HCS Skipper, Alan Knott (left) with GMR's Paul Hurst. Photos: B. Minor



Letter to the Editor

Dear Brian,

I recently paid my fourth visit to the Huddersfield Narrow, over 5 years, during and since restoration. I have walked the Huddersfield to Tunnel End sections and over Standedge on previous visits and the Uppermill/Diggle section so decided this time to walk the Greenfield to Dukinfield section.

My plans were somewhat thwarted however as it was pouring with rain at Marsden on the morning of my intended walk. So I caught the train to Ashton and visited the Portland Basin Museum. A most interesting and educational experience.

Two hours later it was still raining but I decided to walk from the Basin to Uppermill. A short investigation of the Peak Forest Canal - the towpath was very wet - then I made my way along the short section of the Ashton to the Huddersfield. Despite the rain this was beautiful and the canal looked so serene.

However a small comment (not a criticism as I think the Society has the matter in hand) the overhanging branches above the towpath in some parts meant the I had to bend almost double (and I am only a little chap) to avoid having my rain hood ripped off (I sympathise with Sue Day - Review Issue 148 - about the East Side).

I was impressed with the cleanliness of the canal except at Stalybridge locks (and I know it's not the fault of the Society but the uncaring British public) where the locks and side walk were just a rubbish dump for fast food plastics, plastic bottles and cans. A pity!

I walked on to Mossley and then having had my fill of the rain caught the train to Greenfield and walked the short distance to the Saddleworth Museum encountering

towpath problems again with the vegetation and overhanging branches. Another interesting and educational experience at the Museum.

On the morning of my departure, I was encouraged by my host to walk to Sparth reservoir - again a delightful experience but what can you do about the silly scribbblings of the stupid 'graffiti artists' on the boards and lock paddle gates - nothing - as it's a national disease but it's a pity they don't turn their 'talents' to helping to paint the lock paddle arms on the East side. (I would come myself to help - not as a 'graffiti artist!' - but it's a bit of a way from Norwich).

I was most fortunate in staying at the Pear Tree Cottage in Marsden - a home from home. Mr and Mrs Goodhall made me most welcome - a lovely comfortable home to stay and excellent breakfasts for ageing walkers.

Also I ate my two main meals at the Railway in Marsden - an excellent eating house with friendly hosts and good food.

All in all I thoroughly enjoyed my visit again and I felt that the canal has matured and - especially in the rain - looked most peaceful and scenically beautiful. It proves that all the effort and work put in by the Society and its volunteers (and is still being put in) was exceptionally worthwhile.

I hope it will not be my last visit (but age is beginning to tell) and my good wishes to all involved in maintaining this national beauty which is so attractive to walkers like myself seeking peace and quiet.

Yours sincerely,

Vic Edwards (2546), Norwich

A real pleasure to receive your letter, Vic, and to see that the Society's efforts in helping to restore the Narrow are truly benefitting its users. Ed.

2004 Photographic Competition

In anticipation of our imminent 150th edition of Pennine Link, Council have decided to celebrate with a very special Photographic Competition. Not only is entry entirely FREE, but the overall winner will get a cash prize of £150, the winners in each category £50, and the runners up £25!

Competition organiser, Ken Wright continues:

The eighth annual competition is upon us! And we want to rekindle the enthusiasm we had in 2002, when there were 95 entries from 18 photographers. Last year we managed only 82 pictures from 13 competitors. With a membership measured in hundreds we should do better - the rules are simple enough and, this year, as you can see, the prizes are phantasmagorical.

As I have said year after year we are surprised at the lack of interest from juniors. With the advent of the digital camera, and its computer associations, I would have expected young persons to be jumping at the chance to have a go.

There will be a judge's prize again this year, awarded to the best junior entry.

At last, something to keep them occupied in the long, summer holidays!

The adults shouldn't need encouragement. With over 2000 miles of inland waterways to go at - not counting all those foreign ones - and a picture round every corner, the possibilities are endless.

Older photos are acceptable but new ones are preferred, although who can tell the difference!

AWARDS

Overall Winner

- Challenge Shield for one year
- £150 Cash prize
- Replica Shield to keep
- Signed certificate

Winners - In all categories

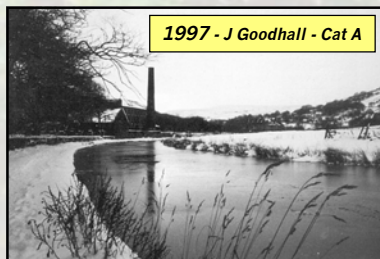
- £50 Cash prize, signed certificate

Runners up - In all categories

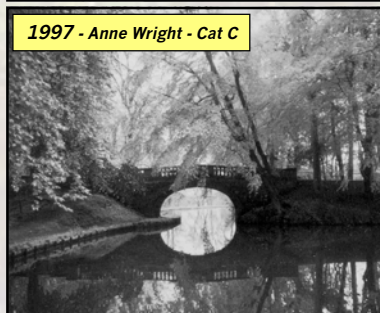
- £25 Cash prize, signed certificate

Best Junior entry - special Judge's prize

Plus selected "highly commended" and "commended" certificates



1997 - J Goodhall - Cat A



1997 - Anne Wright - Cat C



1998 - P White



1999 - T Briggs

Every picture entered will be commented upon by the judge, **Past President of Oldham Photographic Society, Geoff Hope**, and the comments passed to the entrants. Of course, the winning entries will be printed in Pennine Link, in colour, for the special 150th edition.

RULES

The competition is open to all Society members and their families. There is no entry fee. Prints only, black and white or colour. Minimum size 6" x 4", **maximum overall** size 8" x 6".

PRINTS MUST NOT BE MOUNTED.

Any canal-related subject is acceptable in the following categories:-

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

HOW TO ENTER

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

**Photo Competition
Huddersfield CS
239 Mossley Road
Ashton-u-Lyne
OL6 6LN**

Include locations of the photographs (captioned if you so wish) and age of the photographer if 16 or under.

Include your name and address and the name of the HCS member you are related to (if applicable) and return postage or SAE if you want your prints back.

CLOSING DATE

FRIDAY 22nd OCTOBER, 2004

Any queries to the organiser,
Ken Wright Tel:- 01457 873599
E-mail:- wright.ken@talk21.com

FINALLY

Digital photography encouraged.
Encourage those JUNIORS!

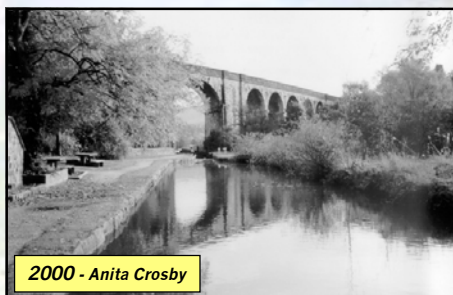
Ken Wright

Our past glories

The winners since the competition's, inauguration in 1997 when category winners were honoured.



2001 - J Lower



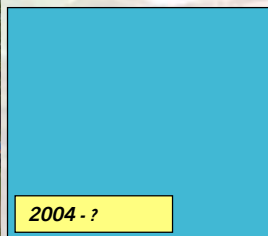
2000 - Anita Crosby



2002 - J Morgan



2003 - J Morgan



2004 - ?

27th Tameside Canals Festival

supporting

Willow Wood Hospice

Portland Basin, Ashton-under-Lyne

9th, 10th & 11th July, 2004

CANALS FESTIVAL PROVIDES ANOTHER WEEKEND OF FAMILY FUN

Boats, Bands and a huge beer tent were once again the main attractions of the 27th Tameside Canals Festival, which took place at Portland Basin in Ashton-under-Lyne, over the weekend of 9th to the 11th of July.

Despite the weather, which was damp and showery for most of the weekend, the event attracted over 40 narrowboats to moor along the towpaths adjacent to the site. It was once again generously sponsored by the Ashton District Assembly and with all set-up costs covered by sponsorship, all proceeds from the event were to be donated to Willow Wood Hospice, raising a magnificent £5,000.

Head of Fundraising at the Hospice, John Fellowes said: "One of the problems with organising outside events is the total reliance on the weather and for the first time in many years the attendance at the festival did suffer as a result of the atrocious conditions, especially on the Saturday. However those who did attend were entertained to the highest degree and everyone enjoyed themselves".

John continued "Events like this do not happen over night and I would like to thank everyone on the volunteer festival committee for all their hard work on our behalf.

(Anyone reading this and who would like to become involved in next year's Festivals is asked to ring the Hospice Appeals Office on 0161 330 7788.)

The Festival featured a large craft tent that was busy all over the weekend, a number of sideshows and a variety of gift stalls as well as a superb entertainment programme. This started on Friday evening when as well as the Festival's legendary beer tent (which was open over the whole weekend offering a range of real ales, lagers and ciders), the zany 'Biggles War-time Band made a welcome return following their successful performance here last year. They were supported by the Navajo Line Dancers, who also captivated the audience with their performance!

Then on Saturday, the site opened at 11am with a range of entertainment including live music and children's entertainers. At 2pm, visitors were welcomed to the Festival by Chairman of the voluntary organising committee,

Mr Barry Edwards, who thanked everyone for their support before introducing the Civic Mayor of Tameside, Councillor Bill Harrison who formally opened the Festival by saying that he hoped that everyone would have a wonderful time at this event which is one of the borough's major annual Festivals.

The Mayor and Mayoress then toured the site accompanied by Vice Chairperson Hazel Maskell and they especially enjoyed the annual Festival of Dance, spending a leisurely afternoon watching performances from the gloriously named Chorlton Cloghoppers, Fiddler's Fancy, Shuttler's Clog and the Britannia Coconut Dancers, who were all demonstrating different styles of dance from around the world!

The site reopened at 7pm for a night of live Irish music. Opening up proceedings were guitar/vocalists Jim & Bonz and they set the mood nicely for top-of-the-bill, 'Curraghsons' whose tantalising electric fiddle playing had toes tapping and hands clapping as they went through their repertoire. Unusually, they had visitors dancing in the aisles (which is quite difficult when you consider that we were under canvas in the middle of a field!) and a great night was had by all, with several encores demanded at the end!

On Sunday the site was again open at 11am with the boater's church service, which was led by the Reverend Dennis Thomas, who after 25 years is standing down from this duty as he is retiring. The Committee would like to especially thank Reverend Dennis for his dedication to the Festival and wish him a long and happy retirement.

There was more fantastic family entertainment until 4pm, which mainly took place

under canvas to avoid the regular downpours, and this included Bethany's Accordion Band, Mossley Hollins Brass Band and the Ruidogrande Samba Band which went down a storm.

More great dance groups performed including the Milltown Cloggies, Seven Stars Sword and Step Dancers, the Manchester Ukrainian School of Dance, Opanka and the Horwich Prize Medal Morris Men, each attracting large, appreciative audiences.

With admission to each evening concert just £2.50 per person and daytime admission at just £1.50 (with accompanied children FREE!) many comments were received by the Committee from satisfied visitors who were surprised at the amount and quality of the entertainment that was provided!

Dates for your diaries for the 2005 Tameside Canals Festival are Friday 8th, Saturday 9th and Sunday 10th July. Don't miss it!

Peter Hawley



Scenes from a colourful festival overleaf ...





Wonders of the Waterways

When I was forced into a 35 mile journey to work in 1974 I became a dedicated fan of the 'Today' programme on Radio 4.

I delighted in the expert commentary and wit of John Timpson and Brian Redhead and quite fell for the young lady reporter, later presenter, Libby Purves. Indeed, I confess to her becoming the only person whose signed photograph ever graced my desk!

Thirty years on Libby is a celebrated columnist, novelist and broadcaster, having fronted the Radio 4 'Midweek' programme for 20 years. Guess how pleased I was to find the following article in which Libby tells of her love for canals.

The article appeared in May 2004 issue of SAGA magazine. For an annual subscription (£16.95) please contact 0800 056 1057. Take my word for it, it's a jolly good read.

Ken Wright

When I was 25 and broke, I fell in love and threw myself into the new passion, body and soul. A weekend of it would leave me bruised, exhausted and happy. And exceedingly muddy. For the object of this romantic passion was the British canal system, and through coincidence and penury (and, as it turned out, great good luck) I happened to start from the opposite end to most people.

Most canal fans begin by having a holiday on a narrowboat in summer. I started by joining the Waterway Recovery Group and hauling rubbish out of filthy locks with a barrow-hoist – in winter. So long before I experienced canals as part of the leisure industry, I learnt to love them as muddy, freezing, holes in the ground. I have never regretted it.

For that is how they started, 200 years ago. England in 1800 was newly traversed by

brown canals, the visionary and cutting-edge transport technology of the age. In an era of rough, dangerous roads, there was ease and sense and utilitarian beauty in the aqueducts, tunnels and locks which enabled great loads to glide soundlessly between the cities. Hordes of rough navvies built the "navigations" – hence the word navvy, indeed – and songs were composed about the great endeavour, bristling with capitalised 18th-century formality – "When with Fond Emulation all Parties are Vying, To make our Canal of Old England the Pride".

The canal navvies were a tough mob: the eager unemployed, hired for a pittance to dig, lay bricks, line the trenches and push perilous tunnels through the depths of hills. They lived in turf huts, and from time to time provided a useful rent-a-riot service for political candidates.

They were exploited, but what they built was beautiful; canal bridge arches are among the loveliest man-made structures in the countryside, and the great aqueducts are matchless. There is something lovely too in the sheer logic of using the physics of water to enable one lean horse to pull with ease a load which it could not shift an inch on dry land. Canals are beautiful and useful, but the beauty began with a muddy hole and many aching backs. I consider myself lucky to have first got to know them from the navvy's perspective.

I stumbled on the Waterway Recovery Group by accident. It still exists, indeed has a highly tempting website (www.wrg.org.uk) listing all its camps and work parties. In the early 1970s it was relatively new, and had to save up tens of thousands of Green Shield Stamps to buy excavators. The organisation's mission was the same as it is today: to clean up, repair and restore sections of the canal network which fell into disrepair during the

arrogance of the railway age and the reign of road freight. The aims were ambitious; in 1972 they mustered 1,000 volunteers to clear 3,000 tons of rubbish from the Peak Forest and Ashton Canal in one weekend.

So I got into my dirtiest clothes one winter Saturday, and was picked up on the Oxford bypass at dawn by a battered red van. Five of us sat uncomfortably on the ribbed metal floor for the next three hours, heading into Warwickshire. The canal, when we found it, was a ribbon of brown ice; we were met by a splendid gnome-like figure named Graham (alas, now long dead) who from a doorway of a hut made of old garage doors gave us rapid instructions, deploying us to mix cement, clear locks and point brickwork. I had none of these skills. By the end of the weekend I had a smattering. Learning is always good. And for desk workers – which most of us were – there is a huge pleasure in being allowed to muck about with spades, concrete and barrows.

Many of us, young and not yet householders with gardens to wrestle with, felt that we were entering into a heritage of manual work which was lost to us when we took A-levels. On the other hand, the leaders who kept us from digging up the wrong sections were often builders and landscapers who felt passionate enough about the canal system to give it their weekends, and sleep

on the floor of a village hall after a rough meal of stew and spuds from a 30-gallon pan, washed down by a gallon or so of beer. I never really understood beer until I did that cold, heavy, earthy work: it's the way it lays the dust in your throat that is so wonderful. Then we all sang the modern navvies' version of *Jerusalem*, "Bring me my pick and grappling hook, bring me my mighty JCB/Bring me my boots, oh ecstasy! Bring me my gallon flask of tea..." We swore not to shrink from seas of mud, nor let our sludge-pump idly stand, till we'd rebuilt the waterways of England's green and pleasant land.

I got to the stage when I was actually put in charge of the concrete-mixer, one day on the Basingstoke Cut. But I grew older and busier and less broke, and ended up as an idle boater instead, gliding along on the summer surface and looking at the peaceful banks instead of labouring on them. The first trip was on a working boat, one of the last, with bunks lashed in its cargo space. Then, with my own family, I hired comfortable modern narrowboats for the odd weekend.

But the joy of it is that you can never quite forget the industrial, gritty roots of your journey. One of the best things is jumping on the towpath to work a lift-bridge, swing-bridge or lock. To be allowed – indeed compelled – to engage with these lovely, heavy pieces of engineering is magic. It satisfies your inner child, the child who on country walks was always boringly warned not to touch big, dangerous things with iron cogwheels, to stand away from lock-gates and leave things alone. To progress down a waterway you have to move tons of water by winding a handle, and push great gates open, smooth on their hinges ... oh, wonderful. Canals reconnect you to an old inheritance.

Libby Purves



The Flower of Gloster

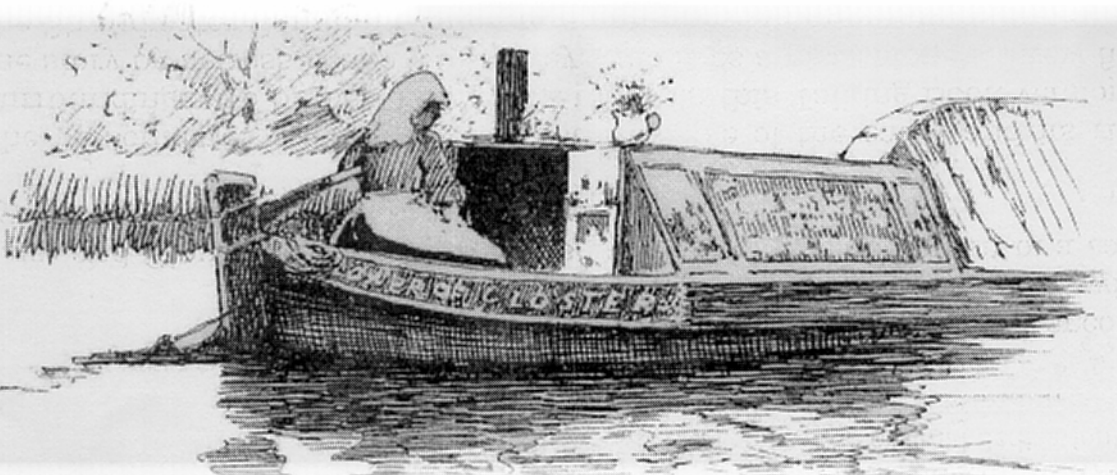
by
E. Temple Thurston
read by
Diana Humphrey

A Talking Book set of 4 CDs - complete and unabridged - in jewel case with sketch map of the journey and reprint of the original dedication.

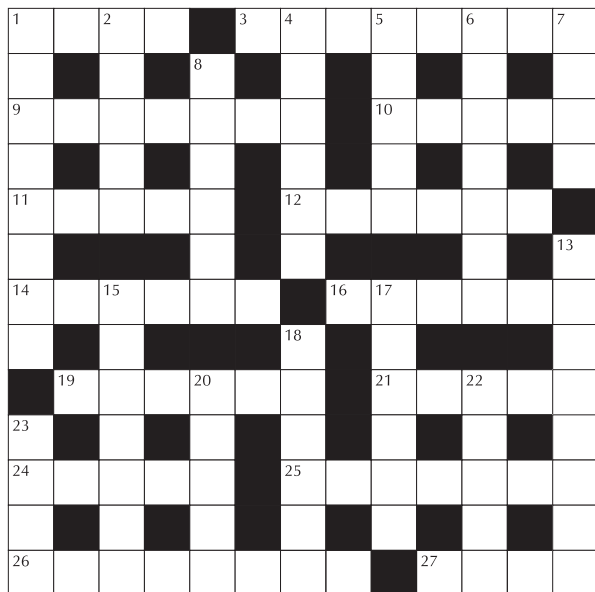
First published in 1911, this is Ernest Temple Thurston's evocative account of a springtime journey by barge around the canals of Oxfordshire, Warwickshire and Gloucestershire. It is a fascinating historic document of a canal system which was on the brink of closure.

The personalities and characters of the people of the canal and its rural surroundings are brilliantly brought to life in this Talking Book version of the story by actress Diana Humphrey, who lives a mere stone's throw from the Stroudwater Canal in Gloucestershire.

The Flower of Glocester - £24.99 (incl. P&P)
from record dealers, or order at
www.poppyrecords.co.uk, or by post from:
A Tuddenham
Poppy Records
88 Mount Road, Southdown
Bath, BA2 1LH



Canal Crossword - 44



Across

- 1 Molehill with no hole by a dark satanic location (4)
- 3 Rat gangs found on the Lancaster (8)
- 9 Lent sun dimmed on a subterranean canal journey (7)
- 10 Nosey lockkeeper found here in Oxford (5)
- 11 Hen or cock seen fishing on a canal bank? (5)
- 12 All Ned needed could be bought below Halifax on the Calder and Hebble (6)
- 14 The captain would not let Ely try passing these SU locks single handed (6)
- 16 Eye Mrs Beatle on a ferry (3)
- 19 Small stone Pele found on Bondi Beach (6)
- 21 Nacre is too heavy too unload from a boat with out mechanical assistance (5)
- 24 Bathyscaph would not need a patch on this lockless canal! (5)
- 25 Rachel's each way bet on the boat race was placed a bit further downriver (7)

26 In a suburb of Trentham on the T & M find a place where skirts might be raised? (3,5)

27 When the sea leaves Malmsey what remains can be found on the Bridgewater (4)

Down

1 On the Basingstoke canal find a town with a bridge and a lake of the same name and a canal office for good measure (8)

2 In Dublin ergonomically designed ships carry more passengers (5)

4 Inescapably had the cabin removed at a BW yard near Hemel Hempstead on the GU (6)

5 Manholes with no men warn of a shallow area (5)

6 Wigs nan used to wear under the canvas shelter (7)

7 Flower beneath Marple aqueduct (4)

8 Canal engineer - inventor of indigestion remedy? (6)

13 Very near the north end of the Oxford canal the army knew of a former colliery branch now occupied the the Coventry Cruising club (5,3)

15 Dream he had of cruising through a Broadland town (7)

17 Town on the River Waveney lost it's head to become another town on the Leigh Branch of the Bridgewater (6)

18 On the Thames near Old Windsor look for an island with a navigation channel that is definitely not old (3,3)

20 Oh boy, news at last of restoration of an Irish river (5)

22 Near a nasty M6 interchange find a small Oxford canalside village (5)

23 Initially speaking there were plans to put lighters aboard ships (4)

Solution on Page 46

What the Papers Said

Manchester Evening News

In a major, two page 'Homes' article, the Titanic Mill at Linthwaite was featured with emphasis on its 'green' credentials with regard to its power generation. With one and two bedroomed apartments ranging from £133,000 to £268,000, a real snip! (5/5/04)

Reporter and Chronicle

The first Mossley Canal Festival took place over the May holiday weekend and was given a very colourful, full page spread highlighting the various activities on offer. Also pictured was Ed Mortimer's 'Astra' with fellow Society member Martin Clark at the helm, giving trips for the festival goers. In the same issue, the holiday events at Portland Basin were reported and special mention made of the very popular canal boat trips run by Society volunteers on behalf of the Tameside Canal Boat Trust. (6/5/04)

Bellway homes are to develop new canalside housing on three sites around Portland Basin. The first phase of construction will take place on the 3.63 hectare brownfield site of the former Junction Mills. (6/5/04)

Tameside Advertiser

With headline hyperbole, our volunteer boat crews' pre-season litter clean-up at Portland Basin was reported as a 'Canal Crisis over Litter and Vandals' with reference to rubbish and thugs causing problems for canal trippers. (11/3/04).

The following week, Jane Thomson of British Waterways gave a more balanced view in the Letters page emphasising their clean-up work and commending the

Society. She also listed some simple guidelines whereby the public could prevent the littering in the first place. (18/3/04)

Front page news for the £110m development at Droylsden which will feature a 30 boat secure mooring off the Ashton Canal. Obvious significance for the newly formed Hollinwood Canal Society. (24/6/04) This article was reworked in the **Tameside Citizen**, but more interestingly it was illustrated by an alternative artist's impression. The Citizen's impression seemed to show not only the marina and its connection to the Ashton, but a restored Hollinwood Branch going clear under Manchester Road bridge with a tram suitably placed above! (29/6/04) (see page 18 and Ed Mortimer's comment)

The paper gave a suitably upbeat account of the Tameside Canals Festival despite the indifferent weather reducing the crowds that had been seen in previous years. (15/7/04)

Oldham Evening Chronicle

Anticipating the May Bank holiday, the Chronicle suggested a number of local attractions including the Stanedge (sic) Tunnel. Their reference to trying out the 'legging it' machine in the Visitor Centre was somewhat out of date, but there was a good colour photo of the then Society's Standedge Pioneer (before it became the Still Waters at Portland Basin) waiting for a Tunnel transit. (26/4/04)

A major emergency exercise took place at Diggle acting out a fictitious accident inside one of the Standedge rail tunnels. Boat trips into the Tunnel were suspended during the exercise. (26/4/04)

The revamped Standedge Visitor Centre reopened in time for the Spring Bank holiday with a charge for the boat trip into the Tunnel and free entry to a reduced exhibition area with restricted opening times. **(27/5/04)**

This year marks the bicentenary of the opening of the Rochdale Canal and a major article listed the planned celebrations. Unfortunately, the background history referred to the Rochdale as the highest navigable waterway in Britain, with the Huddersfield Narrow having the highest and longest canal tunnel. **(7/6/04)**
(It is probable that the statistics were transposed - Rochdale Summit pound is 601ft asl and the Standedge Tunnel pound is 645ft asl - especially as the article refers to the Summit pound as being "well over 600ft above sea level").

Oldham Advertiser

Correspondents to the Advertiser have been voicing concern that despite the successful restoration works on the Huddersfield Narrow and Rochdale canals, they are once again becoming litter strewn, dumping grounds. **(2/3 & 23/3/04)**

A new station for Diggle looks increasingly remote as budget costs have risen astronomically due to the Strategic Rail Authority's decision to reopen the two disused single track Standedge tunnels. **(11/3/04)**

Directing a recent production of HMS Pinafore at the Lowry, Timothy West was described as a "canals fan and keen supporter of the Huddersfield Canal Society." **(31/3/04)**

The dissent between Oldham Council and British Waterways over the maintenance programme for the Rochdale and

Huddersfield Narrow canals rumbled on with a further article suggesting BW were blaming the delay in producing a maintenance plan on their company restructuring, and that a BW representative had failed to attend a significant Council meeting. **(12/3/04)**

However, in a 'Letter of the Week' BW's Adrian Sains put the record straight by stating that an operational management report had been produced in advance of the Committee meeting, but was lost in the Council's internal post. Hence, the councillors were not only acting in ignorance of the facts, but also ignoring their legal responsibilities to discuss their withdrawal action with other members of the Rochdale Canal Trust. **(8/4/04)**

A nostalgic picture of Walmsley Bridge on the Rochdale Canal showed the Failsworth Hat factory, famous for its manufacture of 'Stetsons', with a call for past employees to share their memories. **(8/4/04)**

As with the **Oldham Chronicle**, the Advertiser devoted a full page to the 200th anniversary of the opening of the Rochdale Canal, though it avoided any elevation errors. It gave a balanced account of the canal's history and process of restoration, with some interesting archive photos from the Rochdale Canal Society. **(20/5/04)**

Greater Manchester Police - 'Brief'

The GMP are promoting a City Centre Canal Watch Scheme covering the Bridgewater, Rochdale and Ashton canals. Local business owners, residents and boaters joining the Scheme have a map of the canal system highlighting access points so they can direct police to specific trouble spots they encounter. **(May 04)**

Canal & Riverboat - August 04

A piece showing the hand-over of the Society's Sales Trailer to the Lichfield and Hatherton Canals Restoration Trust credits Keith Gibson with Chairmanship of not only the Northern Canals Association (true) but also the Huddersfield Canal Society!

Colne Valley Chronicle

Following the promotion of the Colne Valley Greenway, which seeks to use stretches of the Narrow towpath as an alternative transport route and support from the Paddock Community Forum, the Colne Valley Society have echoed the Canal Society's concerns that there will be an unhappy conflict between the various user groups. A final decision by Kirklees Council is expected soon. (9/4/04)

A fascinating photo from April 1955 showed the Narrow in Slaithwaite looking from below Lock 19E towards Slaithwaite Bridge with a host of tall factory chimneys pouring smoke into the sky. (26/3/04)

Huddersfield Daily Examiner

Kirklees is enjoying a tourism boom with the Huddersfield Narrow at Slaithwaite being one of the big attractions from its association with ITV's drama 'Where The Heart Is'. (2/3/04)

Gift Aid Update

A tax reclaim for Gift Aid and Deeds of Covenant for the tax year 2003/04 has recently been submitted and approved; the Inland Revenue rebating the Society £1539.18.

Taxpayers, please ensure you have signed at least one Gift Aid declaration so the the Society can continue to maximise the value of your subscriptions and any donations.

A case of wanton vandalism on locks on the Narrow and Broad Canals left a long stretch of the waterway almost empty, with damage estimated at about £1,000 (4/3/04)

Our Press Officer, Dave Finnis, was interviewed for a major article celebrating 30 years of the Huddersfield Canal Society and had a double page spread as a result. A succinct account of the trials and tribulations of the Society concluded with a free plug for Keith Gibson's book 'Pennine Dreams'! (19/4/04)

The heroics of fisherman Gary Murphy, leaping into the Huddersfield Broad to rescue an elderly man who fell in, makes the front page and his actions were praised by the local police. (22/4/04)

Several articles on the Colne Valley Greenway, Standedge Visitor Centre re-opening and emergency exercise at Diggle effectively repeat the news in the Lancashire media (or vice versa).

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

Solution to Canal Crosword 44

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THE SOCIETY WELCOMES THE FOLLOWING NEW MEMBERS:

- 2690 Ms Balfe & Rev Mitchell, [REDACTED]
2691 Mr Searby, [REDACTED]
2692 Mr Parker, [REDACTED]
2693 Mr Tilley, [REDACTED]
2694 Mr & Mrs Bacon, [REDACTED]
2695 Mr Higgins, [REDACTED]
2696 Mr Lord, [REDACTED]
2697 Ms Pond, [REDACTED]
2698 Mr Kershaw, [REDACTED]
-

MEMBERSHIP RATES

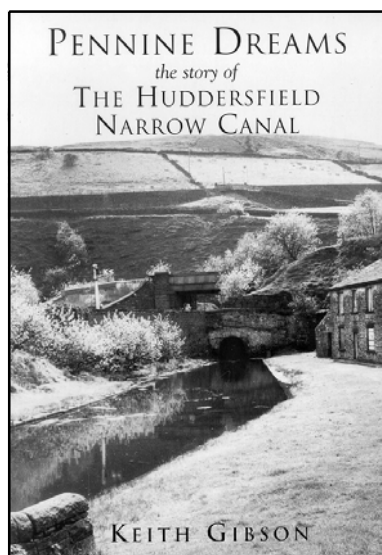
Individual	£9.00
Family	£11.00
Life	£90.00
Associate	£15.00
Corporate	£150.00

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