

Pennine Link

Magazine of the Huddersfield Canal Society



Issue 168 Winter 2009

Huddersfield Canal Society Ltd

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NON-COUNCIL POSTS

Claire Bebbington *Marketing Officer*

Bob Gough *Administrator*



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

Pennine Link

Issue 168



Alan Stophier

*You have to
Admire a
Manoeuvre
or Two
from
Fred Carter
in the
Tunnel
and
Agree
he is a
Worthy
Standedge
Admiral II*

Editorial	4	Itchy Feet Album	16
Chairman's Remarks	5	Letter & Jidoku Solution	19
East Side Ramblings	6	Photo Competition Results	20
Volunteers	8	74 Club Members	27
Jidoku - 15	9	The Canal that Never Was	28
Heritage Day at Wappenshall	10	Obituary - Geoff Brown	30
English Abroad	12		



Editorial

The end of another season with the usual memories of the year's activities to be mulled over. One thing I don't think will be highlighted this year

is a shortage of water. Rain, rain and more rain. Good for the canal, but not for the people who use it. Ah well! Still, we have a lot of input from very active members. Andrea reports a very busy and successful trip boat operation, well done Andrea, Peter Ruffley whets our appetite for the German waterways, Paul White and John Harwood relate historical facts on other waterways. Trevor Ellis and his stalwart gang have been busy with maintenance, battling the elements and doing a job that often goes un-noticed, but is an essential background to the perception of the canal. Thanks for these contributions.

Re-organisation at British Waterways promises to be beneficial to the North West canals and particularly to the Canal Society, having returned the Narrow Canal to one authority instead of the East/West split of the last régime. Our Chairman highlights this in his report.

The Winter edition would not be the same without the results of our popular photographic competition. As always, judging has been a challenge. Personally, I sometimes feel sad that particular prints have to be put to one side in the elimination process. However, winners have been chosen and many thanks to Alan Stopher for his input and résumé. Judge our selection for yourselves on pages 21 to 25.

It is heartening to have confirmation of the enjoyment our canal brings to most people. The comments from new 74 Club members confirm our beliefs, i.e. it is hard work but well worth the effort. Thanks to all.

I am always very indebted to Bob at the office for his expert gathering of copy and manipulating it into a Society magazine. For this Issue I am even more indebted, since I have been deeply involved with the launch of *Itchy Feet* and time has been gobbled up at an alarming rate. Editing etc. has been a little neglected I am afraid. I am fully aware that a minority of people thought the launch would never happen, but I have pictures to prove it on the centre pages. I write this piece on board our permanent home with the communication by e-mail via a 'dougbe'.

I intend to give a more detailed write-up in the Spring edition with more pictures, (*sorry if you are bored with the saga, that will be the finale*). Copy for future Issues can be directly sent to the HCS office or via myself at alwyn@ogborn.co.uk

You may have received requests to petition: <http://www.waterways.org.uk/News/Number10Petition> regarding Treasury plans to sell off British Waterways' property portfolio to help balance the books. In addition to 'signing' the petition, I urge members to write to their MPs highlighting the folly of any move which will further reduce the income stream to BW and its consequence on maintenance, regeneration and viability of future restoration schemes. Such a personal approach would have significant weight beyond the useful, but simple, vote on an e-petition.

As we gallop towards Christmas and 2010, I wish all HCS members, friends of members and all and sundry who read this, a very MERRY CHRISTMAS and HAPPY NEW YEAR from all at HCS.

Alwyn Ogborn



Chairman's Remarks

It has been "all change" at British Waterways once again. The Huddersfield Narrow Canal has now been placed

within the new Manchester and Pennine Waterways unit. The good news! And, I believe it is ALL good news, that once again our canal, both east and west, is under the direction of the same BW unit. Hitherto we have had the sometimes problematical situation where we had to deal with Wigan for the West side and Leeds for the East side. To bring the two under the same management will help to ensure a much greater degree of coordination. To me the only problem is that the BW office for our canal is based in Stoke on Trent!

David Baldacchino, with whom we had our first meeting recently, has been appointed manager of the Manchester and Pennine Waterways which in addition to the HNC includes part of the Trent and Mersey, Macclesfield, Peak Forest, Manchester Bolton and Bury, and the Ashton canals. David assured me that his office, being adjacent to the M6 motorway is within easy travelling distance of all parts of our canal!

Graham Lea is our new contact for maintenance issues and he replaces Iain Weston who is still with North West Waterways based in Wigan. We took the opportunity to thank Iain for his unswerving support to our Society and I could detect a moistening of his eyes when he told me of his move from his well-loved Huddersfield Narrow and Peak Forest with which he had been so conscientiously involved for eight years. He is now responsible for the Liverpool and Lancaster areas.

When one looks at the map of canals in England, it is extremely difficult to split them for management purposes into convenient geographical regions. I imagine that such a thought was furthest from the minds of the 19th century canal builders. In today's bureaucratic culture a national management strategy would doubtless be the driving force behind where canals were opened rather than the imperative of an efficient and cost effective transport system!

We wish David Baldacchino and his team great success in their undertaking. The list of problems with which they are confronted is immense and only aggravated by a chronic lack of funding.

David and Graham attended a recent meeting of the Operations and Maintenance Agreement group which includes HCS, BW and the three local authorities through which our canal corridor passes. Each authority agreed at the re-opening of the canal in 2001 to make a contribution to BW for the maintenance and regeneration of the canal and its environs. The group meets twice a year to examine progress and assess value for money on behalf of the local tax payers. Although both Tameside and Oldham Councils were represented, there was no one from Kirklees. I hesitate to criticise Kirklees because they do give our Society a degree of support but compared with the other two authorities, their commitment to the canal tends to be more muted. They do lend support to the visitor centre at Marsden which is in their patch but the relative remoteness of the BW unit office in Stoke on Trent will do little to galvanise either their councillors or officers to proactively promote the canal.

continued on page 6

East Side Ramblings

Greetings one and all! Another season finished and I'm happy to be able to tell you the takings are up by over 50% on the previous year (2008 - £1,553, 2009 - £2,362). So, despite some poor weather and quiet days, the crew and all who helped, kept the 'Shuttle' holding her own and more, financial doom and gloom notwithstanding!

For next year, she needs a spot of tarding-up; paintwork touched up, signing on the bow re-done and possibly re-located (at the moment she's 'The Arsdén Shuttle!') and after the introduction of Bob's flash new timing boards, she's a little bit of a Cinderella, and that won't do.

continued from page 5

Some dates have now been fixed for the bicentenary celebrations in 2011 of the opening of the canal. From 1- 4 April 2011 there will be the BW sponsored celebrations at Marsden. From 4 – 12 June 2011 the Saddleworth Arts Festival takes place and the Society is pledged to support this event which is held every four years. On 18th September 2011 we are holding our own bicentenary festival at Diggle and on 17th September our HCS Promotions Group are planning to organise a rally for boaters at the top of the Diggle Flight.

On Easter Sunday, 4th April 2010 we have agreed to accept Oldham Council's offer of a substantial grant for holding an event at Brownhill Visitor Centre – about 200 metres along the canal from our office. Our thanks go to Eleanor Sykes and Simon Papprell of Oldham Council's Economy, Places and Skills unit for instigating this exciting event for the promotion of our canal. We are indeed grateful to all our

Talking of Bob, I'd like to say how much I enjoyed his evening of Bulgarian Culture along with the talented, colourful Bissérov Sisters. Not really knowing what to expect, I think just about everything was covered. Talented musicians, singers, acting that was funny and informative, and at least half of the audience cavorting round the Thomas Bourne Room like overgrown children. BRILLIANT. So, thanks again Bob and Sisters for coming up with a great evening.

The 15th November saw a small group of us wandering round the outskirts of Marsden. Led by our Ronnie Rose, it

partners who ensure that our Society maintains a high profile within local communities.

Thanks also to British Waterways managers Laurence Morgan (Leeds) and Debbie Lumb (Wigan) and their staff who have helped and supported us so unswervingly until the recent re-organisation. We shall miss their direct involvement with our Society and we wish them every success in their new responsibilities.

We as a Society record our thanks to Jack Carr who has retired from Council after 20 years loyal service. Jack is remaining a Society member and we hope to see him at some of our events.

And finally.....Pennine Link editor Alwyn has launched "Itchy Feet" as will be observed elsewhere in this Issue. We congratulate him on a job well done. The publicity he achieved in press and TV was impressive!

Neville Kenyon

was a very pleasant day, weather wise, and Ronnie always has plenty to tell us about the history, how the place used to be worked, from where the water was drawn down and stored etc. All this and good natured banter and recalled stories. Anyone interested in the next walk? Well, it's the 13th December, 10.30am at the Marsden Station cobbles / car park. Just a local ramble, nothing over-taxing.

I've been in touch with Peter Ruffley and between us we thought we would organise another Still Waters - Portland Basin Bistro trip in the New Year. Everyone enjoyed the last one, despite the cold and snow, so I'll be in touch at some point to let you know details.

The Social evening on the 24th November at Tunnel End was a really good occasion; a mix of East and West and boat crews from Still Waters, Community Spirit and our Shuttle. Plenty of pleasant rivalry and leg-pulling. We managed 22 in number and thanks to hosts Bev and Gary for good food and a warm, cosy atmosphere.

Community Spirit is slowly but surely getting towards her adventure in May 2010 - the round trip to Liverpool. Definitely travelling along the Narrow on her outward journey, so they will be grateful for our help with the locks and local information (best pubs and eating houses) and being guided through 'The Dark Side' as they affectionately refer to us - at that stage, we will have them at our mercy!

Community Spirit will leave Portland Basin on May 8th and will travel along the Narrow over the following few days. Anyone interested in helping with the locks up to Diggle and then down to Huddersfield can let me know. I know it's early days, but time flies.

That's all from me this year 'me hearties', enjoy a healthy and happy Christmas and New Year and thanks to everyone for their time and effort.

Andrea Fisher
Shuttle Coordinator
01484 686136



*The Biserov Sisters entertain
at the Standedge Visitor Centre*

Bob Cough



Volunteers

At the time of writing we are approaching the end of a year and also waiting to find out what the effect of the BW re-

organisation is going to be on our activities, so I thought that I would review 2009.

We started the year working on the East side, clearing lock landings, including a particularly difficult one at Lock 11E, getting rid of sapling growth along the towpath edge and then, as the boating season approached, oiling the paddle gearing and topping up the hydraulic units. The saplings become fewer each year we do the job, so we do appear to be winning. Finally, we installed a new path down to the trip boat landing at Tunnel End as part of the BW "Towpath Tidy" day, before turning our attentions to the West side.

There have always been difficulties about the split management between East and West, one of which was that we have always tended to end up doing different work on the two sides. We therefore started a Summer of painting the locks. I had optimistically offered to try to paint from Diggle down to Division Bridge, which might just about have been "on" if we had had our full complement and not suffered from wet weather. As it was, I think we only managed both a full day and full numbers on two occasions and managed to paint from 32W down to 27W, followed by 23W. At the moment we have the most of 22W (Dungebooth Lock) finished but the paddle gear is only undercoated. The lock would surprise anyone who worked on the original restoration, being under trees these

days, and it may be some time before it is dry enough.

On the poorer days and with the colder, damper weather we have turned our attention to the saplings on the West side, which have not had the regular attacks that those on the East have suffered. We've so far done Diggle to Mossley over the Summer and Ashton to Grove Road, where we are currently fighting the stretch from Grove Road up to Lock 9W. The well-intentioned local authority advice when this was being dredged was to leave a metre each side undredged. While this is a good idea on the offside, particularly where the canal is wide, on this length, narrow and well-wooded, it provides a kind of "willow heaven" and we may be there into the New Year.

At some point, perhaps when the new organisation appoints a Volunteer Co-ordinator, we need to have a meeting with BW to decide on our programme for 2010. In the meantime, we would be pleased to see anyone who is free on Fridays or possibly Mondays who wishes to get involved. Simply give me a call on the number in the front of "Pennine Link".

Trevor Ellis

The view from below Lock 9W to Grove Road, Heyrod. Early Spring and the margins prepare for another year's encroachment.



Bob Cough

Jidoku 15

				C	S	W		
			W					
B				J			S	M
	J	B				C	L	
	C						M	
	M	L				S	W	
R	B			S				C
					W			
		T	J	M				

The grid represents nine adjoining 'canals' and the letters are features on those canals:

Lock, **J**unction, **T**ap, **R**ubbish point, **B**ridge, **M**arina, **W**aterways office, **S**anitary station and **C**rossover bridge.

Fill in the missing blanks using these initial letters, bearing in mind that each 'canal' (3x3 block) can only have one of each feature and there must be no duplication in horizontal rows or vertical columns.

Solution on page 19

Reflections on Heritage Day at Wappenshall

Member Paul White recounts his thoughts on re-visiting a haunt of his youth.

I visited Wappenshall on the Heritage Weekend on Sunday 13th September. Having left Wellington in 1966 at the age of 18, I had only twice since visited the site, in 1972 and 1991. In 1972 I was on a rare visit home, and my then 8 year old youngest brother announced that he was "bored". So I proposed a walk to where I once used to go fishing with Roger Ridley of Wheat Leasowes - where is he now? - "Wappenshall Wide-Hole" as I knew it. When we got there he wasn't impressed, and I could see why: what had once been a wide stretch of water at the junction of the two canals had shrunk to a muddy puddle, with possibly less water in it than it has today.

I managed to access the site again in 1991, on a grey Autumn day. Little had changed from my previous visit. I was sad to see so much of the canal between Wappenshall and Shrewsbury had been filled in, perhaps lost for ever, its course sometimes given away by a line of trees, sometimes lost entirely under a ploughed field.

The Shrewsbury and Newport Canal was very much a part of my life as a young boy in the 1950s and early 1960s. As long as I can recall I have been fascinated by industrial archaeology; railways and canals in particular. Alone, or with others of a like mind, I have climbed up Trench Incline and can even remember the remains of the engine house, explored lengths of the canals above Coalport and the Incline there before it was restored, and have prodded, poked around and climbed the remains of bygone industries in the Ironbridge

Gorge in the days before it was the World Heritage Site it is today. Indeed, fifty years ago no-one seemed much interested in what remained - even the famous Iron Bridge was threatened with destruction by the "Jackfield Slip".

Quite apart from my own interest in the canal as an important reminder of North Shropshire's industrial past, it featured in our family life as well. My grandfather, Herbert Purcell, who was born in 1887 told me that his Sunday School treat was a trip on the canal, followed by tea. We lived from 1957 onwards on Leegomery Road in Wellington. A favourite Summer Sunday evening walk would see us set out from Leegomery Road, down the "Bridle Path", then a short trip along what is now "Queensway" and was then little more than a country lane, then turn right up to Wappenshall. We would then walk along the leafy towpath of the Shropshire Union Canal to Long Lane, have a drink in the garden of the "Buck's Head" then back along Long Lane and home. Quite a long walk, but we thought nothing of it - and we met plenty of others doing the same! On Heritage Day I walked perhaps a quarter



P White

of a mile in the Shrewsbury direction, something I had not done for fifty years.

I was fascinated by all I saw, and so many interesting features struck me: the complicated bridging of the Newport Branch, the metal strips placed on the tops of the bridges to stop the towropes cutting into the stone, the ridged engineering bricks on the Newport Branch to help the horses keep their grip, the dark channel under the main warehouse, the iron strapping reinforcing the beams inside - all wonderful, a story made of materials, the technology and the inventiveness of its day.

How many people, I wonder, travelling by train between Wellington and Shrewsbury realize that the line was built originally by the Shropshire Union Railway and Canal Company. The railway was later run jointly by the Great Western Railway and the London and North Western Railway, the latter company having taken over the SUR & C Company. Despite what has often been said and written, in my view railway companies did not have a "policy" of running the canals down. At least in the 19th and early 20th Centuries they tried to make the best of their assets. The rails

protecting the quaysides at Wappenshall would have been manufactured by the LNWR at Crewe, used on the railway and when worn beyond their profile for rail use would have been bent and shaped for just this purpose.

Having spent several happy hours at Wappenshall, I made my way to Lubstree Wharf. A rail line from the Lilleshall Company once reached this isolated spot many years ago. It presents a quite an idyllic scene today; purely LNWR in design spoiled only by the sad condition of the warehouse, now roofless, the main roof timbers having been removed and left to rot nearby.

My final visit was to the road overbridge on Long Lane. What a beautiful monument to the bricklayer's art this is - Flemish bond, the headers pink, the stretchers blue, and as good as new. I only wish I could read the stone plaque on the bridge - can anyone enlighten me?

I finished the day with a drink in the garden of the Buck's Head, reflecting on what a huge task the S & N Canals Trust and its partners have in front of them. I live in Stalybridge, and I have seen what has happened from the Huddersfield Canal

Society's small beginnings to the fully re-opened canal of today; and remember the stretch through Stalybridge had been completely buried by buildings erected since it officially closed in 1944!

Great things have small beginnings, and with this in mind I planted some acorns I had collected from a tree on the canal bank. Already I can see a difference being made, and I am sure that the reopening plan will go from strength to strength.

Paul White

Left: Iron straps protecting the stonework from the abrasive action of tow lines.

Below: The impressive Wappenshall Warehouse.



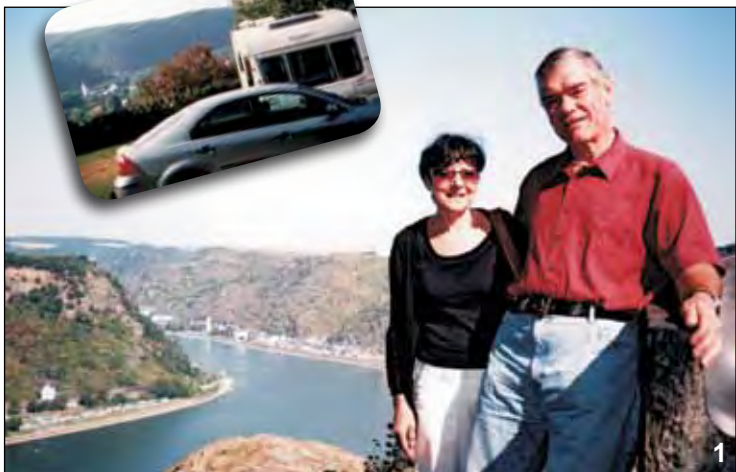
P White

English Abroad

all photos: P Ruffley

When not Chairing meetings of the Tameside Canal Boat Trust or skippering the boat 'Still Waters', Peter Ruffley gets away from it all with his wife, Sylvia, and their caravan. Trouble is, they never seem to end up far from water and boats! Peter recounts their latest trip to Germany:

My wife, Sylvia, and I went to Germany for two weeks in September with the 'van, having seen an advert for "Fire on the Rhine". We travelled for two and a half days (including the Dover-Calais ferry which was delayed three hours due to storms in the Channel) before arriving at Lahnstein on the Rhine, just south of Koblenz, at the junction with the river Lahn. Managed to get lost in Lahnstein, not to be recommended when towing a caravan, but finally found the steep, twisting road to our site. Our caravan was pitched a yard from the edge of a 300ft drop into the Rhine Valley,



overlooking the river and town, and only a short walk from Lahneck Castle.

The Rhine, as you may know, is a substantial river alive with oil tankers, cargo boats and holiday cruise ships and a vital transport route. There are also railway lines on both sides of the river with goods and passenger trains running day and night. They carry train-loads of new cars in both directions.

On our first Saturday night we didn't have to venture far for entertainment;



we sat in and watched the fireworks over the town bursting at our eye level. There was only one wet day and we used that to go into Koblenz for a cruise on the Rhine and Mosel rivers. The boat was built to carry 300, but we were there with only four other passengers! Continuing our transport-themed day, we took a tractor train tour of old Koblenz, this time full of tourists from London.

A short drive from our site was the town of Bad Ems on the river Lahn; a large, elegant town with natural hot springs and during the 19th century was the place for European Royalty to go and 'take the waters'.

The highlight of the holiday was stopping in the small town of Bechein (lacking shops and pubs) and discovering a 'stone museum' set up by a retired miner. He had collected rocks and minerals from around the world (including 'Blue John' from Castleton) and we spent



2

over two hours there with the old gentleman as a personal guide explaining everything, for our benefit, in slow simple German. There was no charge, just donations were welcome.

We found Germany to be a wonderful country, plenty to see, prices similar to ours, excellent food, helpful people and the buses ran to time.

Peter Ruffley

1. *The English Abroad - Sylvia & Peter*
2. *The spa town of Bad Ems on the river Lahn*
3. *A pilot boat guides a 'modest' cargo boat!*
4. *A 'Caravan with a View' overlooking Lahnstein*
5. *Hotel boats cruise the river Rhine*



4



5

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Itchy Feet Album

25th November 2009



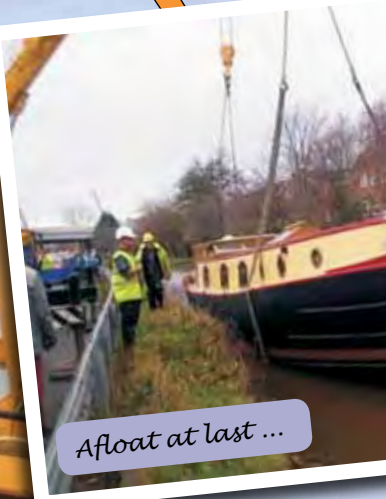
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... &



Easy does it ...



Afloat at last ...





and low-loading



Leaving Mossley ...



and settled in on the
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Letter to the Office & Jidoku Solution

Following last Issue's 'Looking Back' feature where Jean Beck reminisced about her early days with the Canal Society, she wrote:

Dear Bob,

Thank you so much for the prompt return of my photos. I was pleasantly surprised by the article (after my initial embarrassment).

Hopefully some of the 'old' names may feel they want to write a few memoirs too, which would be interesting.

Please would you be so kind as to add a postscript in the next edition to say that Ron Buckley in the photos is now my Ron Beck (I haven't got a new husband; just a new name!)

Also, if anyone is interested, I have two 'canal costumes' if anyone wants to give them a good home: two traditional bonnets in blue and white sprigged cotton, two royal blue long skirts with black braid around the bottom, plus two white cotton aprons.

Thanks again Bob.

Jean Beck

Please contact the Society Office if you are interested in Jean's offer and we will pass on your details so she can make arrangements with you directly.

Solution to Jidoku 15

L	T	J	M	C	S	W	R	B
M	R	S	W	T	B	J	C	L
B	W	C	R	J	L	T	S	M
S	J	B	T	W	M	C	L	R
W	C	R	S	L	J	B	M	T
T	M	L	B	R	C	S	W	J
R	B	W	L	S	T	M	J	C
J	L	M	C	B	W	R	T	S
C	S	T	J	M	R	L	B	W

Could you help promote the Huddersfield Canals?

The Society has a Promotions Group which meets three or four times a year during the day to discuss projects.

We are looking for some more volunteers to join the Group, particularly with the bicentenary celebrations approaching.

If you are interested, please call Claire on 01457 871800



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2009 Photographic Competition - Results

This year's Photographic Competition attracted almost 100 pictures from 16 entrants; there was roughly an even division between the two categories, with the Huddersfield Narrow producing 52 images to choose from.

Alan Stopher (recent IWAC appointee) kindly agreed to be our lead judge, accompanied by Editor Alwyn and from the office, Bob & Claire.

In summary, Alan writes:

'There was a good range of entries particularly in the Huddersfield Narrow Canal category. The winning selection illustrates how satisfying it can be to take atmospheric pictures in all seasons and particularly shows the Huddersfield off to fine effect.'

The overall winner captured the judging panel's imagination with a very well executed winter scene at Uppermill. The composition was excellent, even down to the position of the family of ducks!

We couldn't resist including Alan Crosby's charming entry and it was taken while cruising past aboard the Marsden Shuttle!

Still on the Huddersfield, the Category A winner was a strong image of a couple walking the towpath at Roaches in the snow. Many entries included the human element to add interest but we could all feel the pleasure of being wrapped up against the chill in this scene. The runner-up in Category A was taken from a well chosen viewpoint to successfully illustrate a colourful autumn scene at Mossley and its reflection.

Autumn was a recurring theme for the Category B winner taken on the Lower Peak Forest. The positioning of the figure and the well exposed nature of the image we felt well captured a peaceful record of the waterways environment.

The contrasting runner up, an ultra-wide angle urban picture successfully expressed the interesting mix of heritage and modernity along the city centre waterfront in Brighouse.

Well done to the winners and runners-up and thanks to all for entering. We enjoyed looking at your work.'

HCS



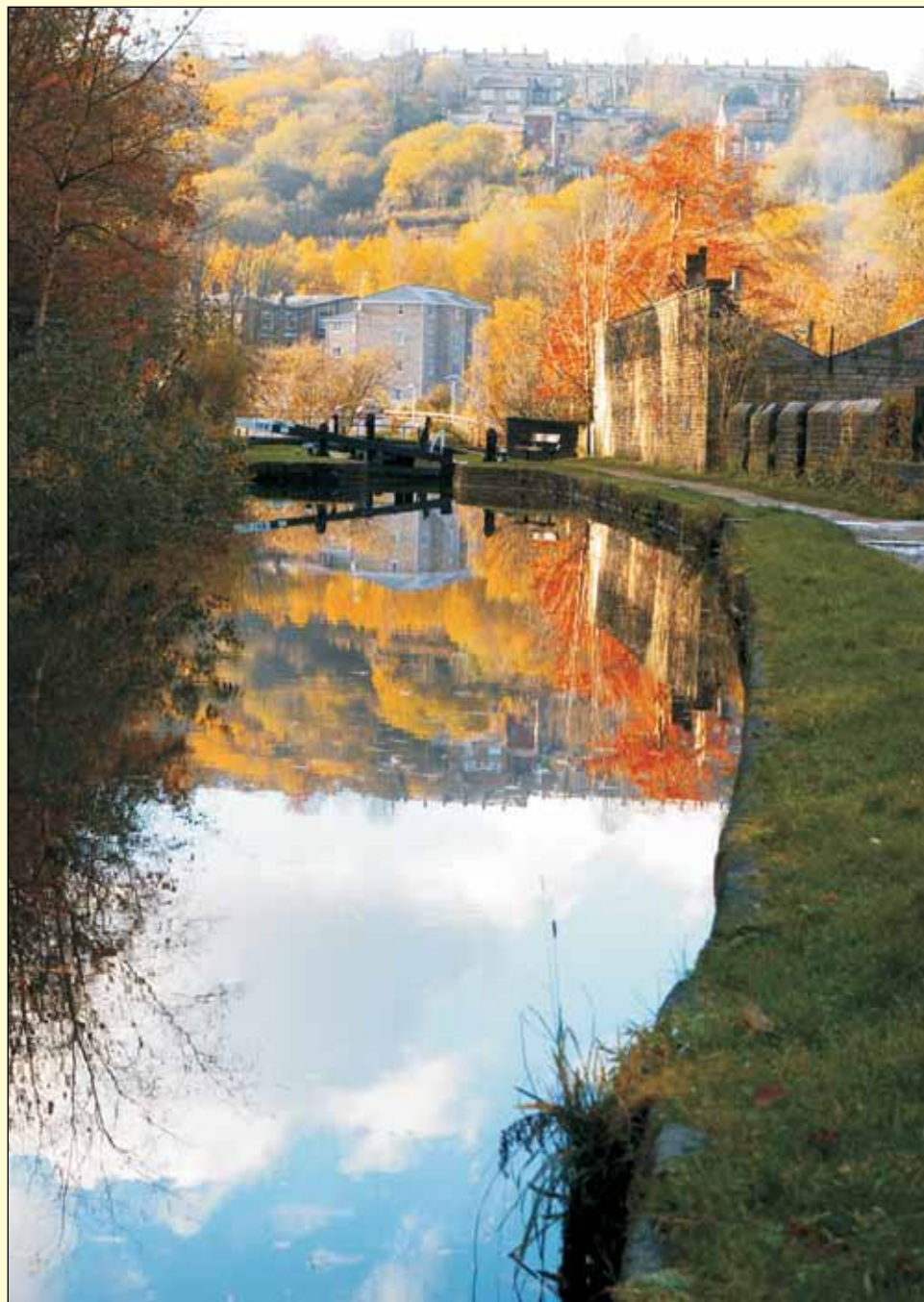
Alan Crosby



Overall Winner - John Brierley, Uppermill
nb Hephzibah moored at Uppermill High Street



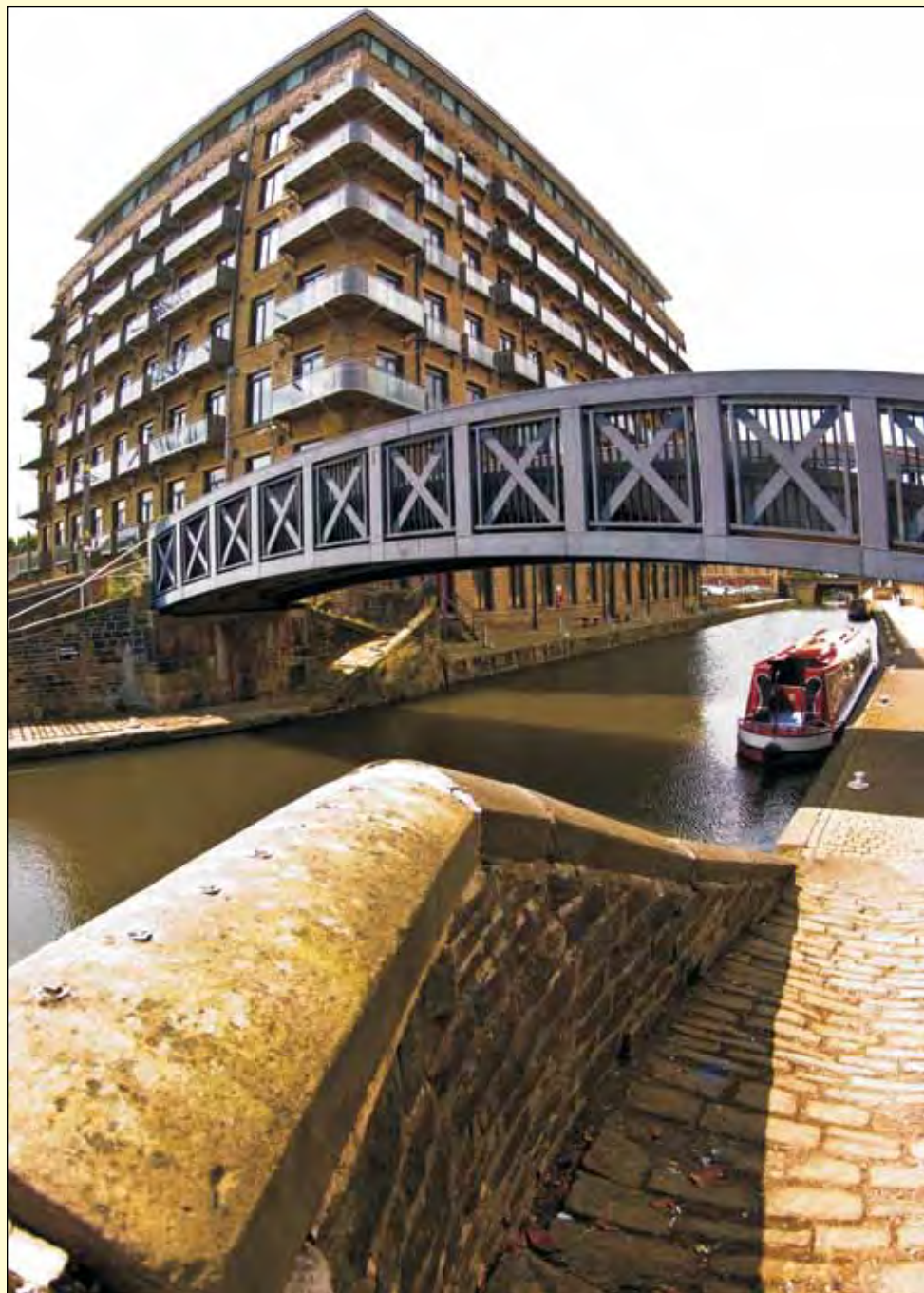
Huddersfield Narrow Canal, Winner - David Mounsey, Mossley
Below Roaches Lock, Mossley



Huddersfield Narrow Canal, Runner-up - David Mounsey, Mossley
Lock 14W at Woodend, Mossley



Other Waterways, Winner - David Mounsey, Mossley
Stanley Lift Bridge, Peak Forest Canal



Other Waterways, Runner-up - Mark Curry, Slaithwaite
Brighouse, Calder & Hebble Navigation

... and The Highly Commendeds



Huddersfield Narrow Canal - Above Lock 24W, Wool Road - John Brierley, Uppermill



Other Waterways - Marina near River Trent - Anita Crosby, Littlemoss

74 Club Members

We welcome the following intrepid boaters who have successfully navigated the Narrow and joined our Club.

P & G Fairhead

SOLACE

Miss J Acheson

JUDY

And here are their 'grass roots' comments:

"A unique and unforgettable holiday round the South Pennine Ring. Hard work, though a mere fraction of the hard work that preceded the re-openings over two or three decades. Especially thanks to those with the vision to start the job, and the commitment of those who carried out the work. On a previous trip, BW cut a metal spike from Solace's prop. This time, I was able to renew an old acquaintance with Fred and was honoured to be escorted by him. So much knowledge shared through Standedge Tunnel. However, BW were also extremely helpful on the passage towards Huddersfield, as well as passing on advice.

If those who criticise features of their journey would first drive the A62 from Diggle to Marsden, then climb above Marsden on the road up the South side of the valley, a look backwards might help them place the problems in proportion!"

P Fairhead

"Continued valiant efforts by BW staff to assist boaters in the most difficult circumstances. Serious investment desperately needed in the whole canal - but it is so wonderful to do and doing the Standedge Tunnel is a MUST! Hope present breach resolved satisfactorily."

Miss J Acheson

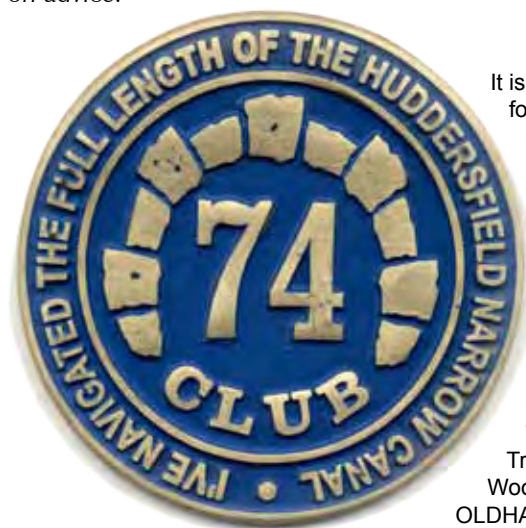
Navigated the Narrow and don't have a plaque?

It is available at £5.00 for Society members, £8.00 for non-members and £4.00 for non-members who join the Canal Society at the time of applying.
Postage & packing is £1.00 per plaque.

Application form can be downloaded from:
<http://www.huddersfieldcanal.com/society/74club.htm>

Or simply send a cheque payable to 'Huddersfield Canal Society' with a covering note to:

74 Club Plaque
Transhipment Warehouse
Wool Road, Dobcross
OLDHAM, OL3 5QR



A Stophier

The Canal that Never Was

*by
John Harwood*

It is highly likely that most visitors to the village of Cong which straddles the boundaries of Counties Mayo and Galway in the Irish Republic, have no interest whatever in canals. Cong was the filming location for the John Wayne film 'The Quiet Woman' (in the grounds of Ashford Castle) and of course you can visit the Quiet Woman Café, museum etc whilst you are there, for the village, quite naturally, pursues this for all it is worth.

In 2008 the village had two visitors however, (namely self and wife), who broke the rule and duly ignored all the Quiet Woman sites and went straight for the Cong Canal. Cong is located on the shortest possible route between Lochs Corrib and Mask and a canal linking the two would have opened up the area of the upper loch for trade which would then have been able to pass along Loch Corrib to Galway and thence to sea.



1



2

In the 1850s The Commissioners of Public Works projected a canal three miles long with four locks, work commenced and the canal took five years to build.

Unfortunately due attention had not been paid to the geology of the area

(Carboniferous limestone) and as fast as the canal was filled with water it emptied itself. Numerous attempts were made to plug the leaks but to no avail and eventually the project had to be abandoned as a total waste of money (other than as a provider of employment during the Famine). The Cong Canal (now known also as the Dry Canal) therefore was one of the biggest canal building fiascos of all time – it has literally never seen a boat!

Today the bottom lock (onto Loch Corrib) is a boathouse and you can very nearly drive your car into lock 2. You can certainly walk into the bottom of the lock, see the gate rebates and coping stones all neatly carved and laid, study the paddles holes cut out of solid rock which have never seen water (well, other than the famous Irish rain!).

Walking along the lock side you can see that the outer walls have never been backfilled and away into the distance is the bed of the canal that never was: the Cong Canal!

John Harwood

Main Image The first lock on the Cong Canal

1. The bed of the canal above the lock
2. Where the ground paddle should be
3. Original dynamite blast hole
4. Thickness of lock wall evident at derelict end

All Photos: J Harwood



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4

Obituary - Geoff Brown 1929-2009

Long-standing members of HCS may remember Geoff. At his funeral recently, I met Gerry Turner, who was a human face in BW at a time when, as far as HCS was concerned, these were few and far between. I took the opportunity of obtaining a copy of his obituary of Geoff that he had written for the Calder Navigation Society:-

"I first came into contact with Geoff in approximately 1984, when he visited me at my BW office in Castleford. He wished to make me aware of an idea which he had been formulating for some time – that of a towpath and riverside walk along the C.& H.N. and the A. & C.N. between Sowerby Bridge and Castleford and from Leeds to Castleford, and on to Goole. From the outset he called it the Aire-Calder Walk.

Shortly afterwards he invited me to accompany him along the A. & C.N. between Knottingley and Whitley Bridge. To many this section might appear to be relatively featureless, but what struck me was his very careful observation of many details duly-recorded and photographed. – a brand of dedication which ran through his life!

Certainly in the period I knew him, he did not own a car. Like the early days of Alfred Wainwright's explorations in the Lake District, he made full use of rail and bus. His knowledge of timetables in the North of England was immense.

For some reason or other, I never visited Geoff at his home. When I telephoned him his wife of 57 years, Kath, would hail him to come down from some upper point. In my mind's eye I visualised a figure descending from some lofty eyrie where he had been putting in neat and special order the day's "rich pickings". I can only imagine that his immense "library" might take some sorting?

It was highly appropriate that the last fairly energetic walk I did with Geoff about three years ago was truly South Pennine in nature. We started from Lumbutts and ascended via the popular stone trod on to the Pennine Way to the southern tip of Warland Reservoir. Then we descended to the historic tollhouse at Steanor Bottom. As we waited for the bus back to Tod (as he called it) he announced his retirement from such masochism and from then on would stick to leisurely walks with the canal and historical societies of which he was a member.

There will be several facets of his ability which I have not touched upon. However, one was that BW's Chief Mining Engineer at Leeds, Malcolm Stakes, would turn to Geoff at times for some assistance with survey work!

I am sure that several local organisations, including CNS and HCS, will wish to extend their heartfelt gratitude and condolences to Kath and her family.

Gerry Turner

*BW Leisure & Tourism Officer
North East (Retired)"*

I can confirm the bit about Malcolm Stakes. At one HCS meeting in the wilds of either Marsden or Slaithwaite, when Geoff was doing a slide show on his great love, Standedge Tunnel, we were amazed to find that this worthy had travelled miles to hear Geoff speak!

I did offer several times, on behalf of the Society, to try to arrange funding for a publication, but I suspect Geoff's work was never complete and, in any case, he was never one to seek the limelight.

Trevor Ellis



Geoff at March Haigh reservoir in June 1988
Neil Fraser Archive

The Back Page

HUDDERSFIELD CANAL SOCIETY

welcomes the following new members

2788 Mr Martin F Ward, [REDACTED]

2789 Mr John J Faulkner, [REDACTED]

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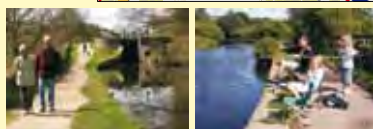
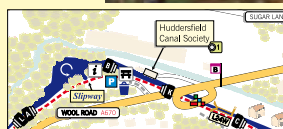
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