

# Pennine Link

**Magazine of the Huddersfield Canal Society**



**HUDDERSFIELD**  
**CANAL**  
**SOCIETY**  
ASHTON-UNDER-LYNE ~ HUDDERSFIELD

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# 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*

On Standedge Moor - Society Administrator, Bob Gough, (centre) comments on the summit reservoirs during June's walk over the top from Marsden to Diggle followed by a return trip through the Tunnel.



Bob Cripps

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Cover: Oldham Theatre Workshop and children from Diggle Primary School begin their outdoor performance for the Society's Bicentenary celebration event at Diggle Tunnel Tip. Photo: John Brierley



## Editorial

Firstly I must respond to changes at the top. Neville Kenyon has resigned as Chairman and we thank him for leading us over

the past ten years. With the glamour of restoration achieved fading it has not been easy to maintain the Society's high profile. Alan Stopher has succeeded to the chairmanship and brings with him his professional prestige in the restoration field. As a member of IWAC he takes over with a broad view of our canals even if the Government eventually abolishes IWAC.

Plodding around in the mud at Diggle Tip seemed a funny way to celebrate the Narrow Canal's bicentenary but the weather gods were not too unkind on the day, the clouds parted, the sun shone intermittently and the ground had begun to dry up by the time we went home. At the earlier celebration, on 4<sup>th</sup>. April, it was wet too. The canal needs water and we pray for it at times but we must be careful to get our timing right.

In any case, plodding around in mud is an apt reminder of restoring the Narrow and other canals, work which still goes on in about fifty sites throughout the country by dedicated restorers. As a member of IWA's Restoration Committee I have been privileged to visit many of these other restorations and to meet the people involved. It is gratifying to record that they often acknowledge the Huddersfield as their inspiration. In the early 1970s, before either the Rochdale or Huddersfield Canal Societies was formed, the late Ralph Kirkham, then Secretary of the Calder Navigation Society and later a founder member of HCS, was campaigning for restoration of the Rochdale. He was the

first to suggest that, in order to justify any restoration, the wider benefits needed to be identified and evaluated. To spend millions of public money just for leisure boaters would never have won widespread approval. The earliest restorations had been achieved with little more than muscle and sweat but the major hurdles to be overcome on the more challenging projects required proportionately much greater resources.

BW have tried very hard to keep the Huddersfield open over the past 10 years. Over the past 12 months 10% of all the lock gates made for BW's network are destined for installing on the Narrow this Winter. The fundamentalist view is that BW's resources should be applied in proportion to traffic. That would be disastrous for the Narrow and we must be grateful to David Baldacchino and his team at Kidsgrove that such an approach has not prevailed.

So much for the past. BW's successor is to be known as the Canal & River Trust. If you haven't been so instructed already, please note that that abbreviates to C&RT. The ampersand is official and must not be represented as 'and', lest the new organisation appears as 'CART'! However we think of it, HCS must cultivate a good relationship if the Narrow is to prosper under care of the new Trust.

As Christmas looms, it is surprising how soon the 2012 canal 'season' will be upon us. Whatever enjoyment you derive from the canal, whether as walker, cyclist, angler, antiquary or boater, may you have a very merry Christmas, a prosperous New Year and much happy canalling in the future.

**Keith Noble**

*I wish to thank Bob Gough for preparing this Issue of P'Link. As guest Editor, I had only to read and approve the draft. KN*





## Chairman's Report

This is my first report having been elected the new Chair of the Society in mid-November. Neville Kenyon has been an excellent leader of HCS over

the last 10 years taking the Society forward from reopening in 2001, maintaining good relationships with our partners and supporters, and managing expectations through the initial bedding-in period for the reopened waterway. He leaves the chairmanship on a high note after the successful Bi-Centenary Event at Diggle in September. He will be a hard act to follow.

Although only recently joining HCS's Council of Management, I have been a member of the Society since the early 1980s and was very much involved in the final push to reopen the Huddersfield Narrow Canal as Huddersfield Canal Company's Project Director.

My chairmanship starts at a period of great change in the management of inland waterways in England and Wales. New relationships will have to be forged as the Canal & River Trust comes into existence. There will be plenty of scope for new volunteer activities and what is described as 'local community engagement'. HCS will need to decide the areas on which it should focus and how best to communicate with its members and the outside world. To help bring these and other ideas together, a new business plan will be developed during this Winter.

I must say I enjoyed the Bi-Centenary celebration at Diggle over the weekend of September 18th/19th 2011. It was great to see so many local people enjoying the activities. The Oldham Theatre Workshop production involved many local children and the school provided an excellent base for the players. Even the weather held until the planned closure time. It was an object

lesson in how to engage with communities along the canal and my thanks go to all those who played a part in the project, particularly the Oldham Council staff and our own. A lot of work goes on behind the scenes to make such festivals successful but let's hope it won't be too long before the Canal Society can stage another event of this nature.

In the meantime, it is pleasing to see work progressing on the new Waterfront project in Huddersfield which is bringing our canal to the surface once more. Twelve years ago it was not possible to identify a suitable site for relocating Sellers Engineering so the canal was buried in a 300-metre long tunnel. Further Education funding, the Council and landowners have enabled the new Kirklees College to be built on what is now a prime site with the canal at its centre. It just goes to show that our 200 year old canal continues to have relevance in the twenty-first century.

**Alan Stopher**

Alan Stopher



*View of the canal route through the former Sellers site taken on 19th November 2011 from Chapel Hill. St Thomas's church in the distance stands just above Manchester Road. A section of canal tunnel with the lid removed is visible behind the foreground site fencing and to the left of the church. The completed channel will be one narrow boat width with a passing place above the new Lock 3E which will be situated in the immediate foreground. The massive structure of the Kirklees College building is taking shape on the right hand side.*

# A New Era - The Future Unfolds

The last Plink carried in full the Society's response to the Government's consultation on British Waterways becoming a charity. As you might expect, things have moved on since then and the purpose of this article is to update members on progress to date including feedback from the Government and a report from the Trustees appointed to lead the change.

The charge towards an April 2012 vesting day is showing no signs of abating and, whilst there is much left to be put in place, it is evident the deadline will be achieved, come 'hell or high water'. Inevitably this will mean some cutting of corners and much work left to be done by the new Charity after vesting day.

## Defra consultation outcome

In September, Defra published its response to the 12 week consultation on the New Era for the Waterways. Including our own Society, 168 organisations responded with a further 180 individual contributions made.

Given the weight of opinion from the waterways community, the summary of responses appeared to be rather thin and many of the key areas requiring further consideration were left in the hands of the Trustees. The main points worthy of mention are set out below.

A decisive majority of respondents supported the charity working to include other navigations, including Environment Agency navigations in the next Spending Review. British Waterways had already agreed to merge with The Waterways Trust which would bring the waterways museums back into the fold.

Trust Obligations will, as a general rule, require that there is pedestrian access to the existing towpaths and that this access remains free of charge.

A revised draft 'charitable purpose' was set out which picked up on some earlier omissions including an explicit reference to navigation and including the words 'commerce and industry' to address the movement of freight by water.

A majority of responses were concerned with the proposal for Local Waterway Partnerships based on BW's regional management structure. Unsurprisingly many respondents drew attention to the fact that truly 'local' engagement would need to include other smaller community level partnerships. The response from Defra indicated that it would be the role of these regional advisory panels to facilitate and promote specific engagement projects at a very local level. The document was silent on how this might be done. In recognition of the point made by respondents, the word 'Local' was dropped leaving them described as Waterway Partnerships. There will be 13 of these including one for museums and one for the whole of Wales. Chairs of these partnerships will be appointed by the Transition Appointments Committee. Half will be in place by December 2011 and the remainder will be in place by March 2012. The recruitment process for the Chair of our own Manchester & Pennine Partnership is well underway. HCS has been advised that the Standedge Visitor Centre will be included in the Museums Partnership.

The Council will be the guardian of the long term values of the charity and it will be able to appoint and dismiss trustees. The initial composition will be 35 including the 13 chairs of the various partnerships and representatives of the various constituencies such as boaters, walkers, anglers, volunteers, donors, heritage, environment and local government interests and employees. The aim is for fair representation from the various constituencies involved, with a view

to progressing to 50% of the Council being elected, over time. Different constituencies would each elect their own representative(s) based on currently available databases of electors.

Regarding individual membership of the charity, the Trustees do not plan to have this for fund-raising purposes. Many respondents felt that the new charity should, as far as possible, engage with volunteers through existing local schemes and campaigns, as opposed to competing for the same audience. The response drew attention to the challenge of widening the source of volunteers beyond the core of waterways supporters. There would need to be an inclusive and flexible approach which 'aspires to engage the broadest possible cross-section of society'.

Regarding commercial freight on the waterways, there were to be no changes to current classification or BW's maintenance duties for commercial waterways. However there would be an amendment to the Transport Act 1968 that would oblige the Secretary of State to take into account the charity's representations on affordability.

Funding was a major area of respondents' concern. The response stated that the government funding contract will be negotiated with the Trustees in Autumn 2011, and clear methods of measuring public benefits will form a part of the discussions.

## **Canal & River Trust**

The Transition Trustees themselves are led by BW Chairman Tony Hales and he is joined by two Board members from BW, John Bridgeman (Deputy Chair) and Nigel Hugill (Property), John Dodwell, who many will recognise as the former chair of the Commercial Boat Operators Association, Simon Thurley (English Heritage), together with three leading lights in the charitable sector: Lynne Berry (WRVS), Jane Cotton (Oxfam), and Tom Franklin (Ramblers).

An announcement in October 2011 revealed that the new waterways charity would be called Canal & River Trust. The BW black and white bridge logo had been reworked free of charge by the consultants who designed it and will now include a swan in place of the bullrushes. The rest of this article will use the new name shortened to C&RT.

At the same time, the C&RT Transition Trustees issued a progress report on their work entitled 'First decisions, early thoughts and statements of intent'. It showed that much has been achieved in a short time and many of the issues and concerns coming out of the consultation were being worked upon.

The following two quotations from the report indicate the level of understanding reached and the size of the task:

*Stakeholders are supportive of the new charity but their prime concerns are whether:*

- *it will be adequately funded*
- *local people and communities will be allowed to influence local activity*
- *the much needed cultural change across the waterway movement can be achieved within an acceptable time frame*

*We still have to ... agree a funding package with Defra. This is key to the success of CRT. There is no point setting up the charity with inadequate resources. We know what we need from government and we need to persuade them to increase their current offer of £39m per annum for 10 years to a level that ensures CRT is viable.*

The Transition Trustees have a challenging job and we wish them well.

## **The Transfer Order Consultation**

In September 2011 Defra launched a new 6 week supplementary consultation on certain aspects of the proposed Transfer Order from

BW to C&RT. Many of the issues were fine legal points requiring careful consideration. The Inland Waterways Advisory Council (IWAC), worked hard to respond to the points raised and added a number of observations of its own.

The main points were:

**Environmental Duties** - IWAC noted that the waterways are so important to our natural environment in England and Wales that any reduction in the legal obligations laid on the biggest navigation authority would clearly be inappropriate. It therefore sought a clear declaration that the statutory environmental duties of the C&RT should not just relate to activity in its capacity as a navigation authority, a harbour authority and a statutory undertaker but include all environmental aspects of its work.

**Free public access** - IWAC also picked up an apparent dilution of the commitment to secure free public access to all towpath and waterway paths. It therefore sought a clear undertaking from C&RT committing the charity to the principle and promotion of free access to all C&RT waterside paths, excepting only a narrow exemption for paths into attractions.

**Changes to the classification and maintenance of waterways** - IWAC noted the Government's intention is to introduce an obligation for the Secretary of State to take into account the C&RT's representations on the affordability of any proposed changes to the classification or maintenance of its waterways. A linked proposal is to give the C&RT an enhanced 'statutory proposer' role on the classification and maintenance of its waterways.

There were concerns that this could be interpreted as introducing a viability opt-out that enables affordability for C&RT to override the public interest in maintaining a waterway to commercial or cruising standard. IWAC felt that it would be

important to avoid a 'statutory proposer' role being used as an opt-out for stretches of waterway that are more expensive to maintain without the potential for cross subsidy being fully explored. (This is a particular concern for HCS as the HNC is a high maintenance waterway).

In its response IWAC regretted that the important issues of classification and maintenance were being addressed in the Transfer Order before the Trustees have had a reasonable opportunity to decide on relevant policies relating to commercial waterways, remainder waterways and restoration. This represented a significant weakness in the decision-making process.

In its conclusions IWAC said that it does not consider that giving C&RT an enhanced 'statutory proposer' role adequately addresses the fundamental issues of classification and maintenance. Any proposals relating to individual waterway status required consideration of all aspects of public benefit, sustainability (social, environmental and financial), the desirability of cross-subsidisation across the network, and should only follow systematic consultation with the relevant Waterway partnerships, local communities and users.

**Freedom of Information** - The consultation put forward three scenarios relating to the application or otherwise of the Freedom of Information Act to the new charity. BW as a public body has to comply with the provisions of the Act. On balance IWAC considered that the compromise of bringing the C&RT within the scope of the Freedom of Information Act only for the exercise of functions of a public nature, would achieve the necessary transparency and accountability without unduly burdening the charity.

It will be interesting to see what emerges when the final version of the Transfer Order is issued.



## **Proposal to abolish the Inland Waterways Advisory Council**

Members may recall the Government's announcement in July 2010 that it had decided to abolish the Inland Waterways Advisory Council along with around 120 'Arm's Length Bodies' on its 'Bonfire of the Quangos'.

Included in the proposal were the closure of some high profile bodies such as The Sustainable Development Commission and all eight Regional Development Agencies, two of which contributed £12m to the final phase of HNC restoration. Following difficulties encountered on the passage of the Public Bodies Bill through the House of Lords, the coalition decided to put the proposal to abolish IWAC out to a 12 week consultation with abolition being the Government's 'preferred option'.

The Huddersfield Canal Society has valued the independent and sound advice provided by IWAC. It was a major report on restoration projects by IWAC's predecessor IWAAC which gave confidence to funding agencies that the Huddersfield Narrow Canal restoration was a robust and viable project. Recent IWAC reports on such issues as volunteering, partnerships and funding have provided an excellent resource for the waterways community as it considered the move to the new charity. The Council of the Huddersfield Canal Society therefore decided to submit a response to the consultation.

In responding, HCS expressed surprise that the Government should bring forward a proposal to abolish a cost-effective volunteer-based advisory group at the time of the greatest change in the management of the Nation's inland waterways in over 60 years. In its view, closing down an important source of advice to Defra officials and the waterways sector at such a crucial time appears to be perverse particularly as the C&RT is clearly a flagship project for

the Coalition and one which Government is keen to see succeed.

It explained that HCS is keenly interested in seeing progress maintained and a successful outcome on a number of outstanding issues, all of which could benefit from good quality independent help and advice if the C&RT is to have the best chance of success. The main ones as far as HCS is concerned are the funding package, the proposed localism strategy, remainder waterways, restoration policy and culture change.

In conclusion Huddersfield Canal Society urged the Government to retain IWAC in its current volunteer-based form to advise the Trustees of C&RT, Defra officials and waterways stakeholders at least for the next two years of transition in the management of our inland waterways. Thereafter arrangements can be reviewed to determine the best way to provide such advice.

It remains to be seen whether feedback from the waterways community can influence the Government.

These are interesting times as Graham Birch said in his editorial in the Autumn Edition of Plink. They are sure to have an impact on our Society's future role. In the meantime your Council has had a very constructive meeting with BW Waterways Manager, David Baldacchino, on the Winter programme of maintenance and it is pleasing to see that lock gate replacement and other major works continue to be given priority despite the financial stringencies.

That's all for now but watch this space as further developments emerge.

**Alan Stopher**





## Reflections on the Festival

To mark the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the opening of the Huddersfield Narrow Canal along its full length from Ashton-under-Lyne to Huddersfield, on the

weekend of September 17<sup>th</sup>/18<sup>th</sup> we held our 200<sup>th</sup> birthday party.

The events took place on the bank of the canal at Diggle Tip, adjoining the portal of the Standedge Tunnel. The centrepiece of the day was the performance of a specially commissioned piece of outdoor theatre by Oldham Theatre Workshop (OTW), entitled "Reflections of the Past". Additional features were a boat gathering on the top pound and the opportunity, for the first time, to take trips into the Diggle end of the Tunnel, courtesy of British Waterways

The festival weekend had been more than a year in planning and preparation. The organising group, in the course of the year we held numerous meetings, generated a multitude of e-mails, prepared and submitted funding bids and participated in development of the plot and script for "Reflections...". We also prepared and issued press releases, prepared health and safety plans and organised public loos, litter bins, caterers and marquees. In parallel, Council member Keith Sykes was organising the boat gathering.

As a somewhat soggy Summer moved on into what we hoped would be a drier Autumn, everything was more or less in place and we were ready to go. Some 2,000 advertising flyers had been printed and distributed, the local press had provided welcome publicity and I was interviewed about our plans for the day by BBC Radio Manchester.

However, as the festival weekend approached we found ourselves paying increasing attention to the heavens and to the weather forecasts. Things were looking less than promising and, as is often the case, the forecasters favourite word was "changeable". From Wednesday night onwards we were promised a series of Atlantic fronts bringing with them heavy rain and strong winds as they passed through, and arrive they did.

All day Thursday, Friday and Saturday we had a succession of heavy showers and in some cases torrential downpours which, for an outdoor event, was the last thing we wanted or needed. Plans were therefore made as to what to do "if wet" as we walked the site in the rain and wind on Saturday morning.

However, as Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> dawned, the weather relented and we woke to a clear Autumn morning. Indeed Bob Gough had the pleasure of watching the sun rise over Diggle, having arrived at 5.00am to meet the marquee erectors.



The rest of the team arrived around 8.00am and the sun continued to shine but the three days of rain had left their mark. The site was very, very muddy causing some consternation to the drivers of vans and trucks delivering stalls and exhibits. Nonetheless, in the next three hours everything fell into place.

The bouncy castle and climbing wall arrived and were erected. The portaloos were delivered and set up. The caterers, the Diggle Brass Band, the Wood Bodger and Cue Ball Crazy arrived and set themselves up. The Hollinwood Canal Society, Diggle W.I., the White Rose Society, the RSPB, GM Fire Service and the craft vendors set out their stalls. Despite some technical problems BW's trip boat was in place and last but not least, OTW were ready to start the first ever performance of "Reflections of the Past"

Now all we needed was an audience for "Reflections ..." and some customers for the traders and the trip boat - and come they did. Our estimate is that that during the four hours of the event we had some 500/600 visitors of all ages. These included the Mayors of Oldham and of Rochdale (suitably attired in mayoral chains and "wellies")

and the Chairman of Saddleworth Parish Council. We were also pleased to welcome Ruth Hair representing one of our funders, Pennine Prospects, and David Baldacchino representing British Waterways.

As envisaged and planned there were four performances of "Reflections of the Past". Each lasted about 45 minutes starting at 11.15am and continuing hourly from then until the final one 2.15pm. The production took the form of an interactive drama, which sought to bring to life some of the characters who have influenced, and been influenced by, the canal during its 200 year history. During the performance the audience moved along the towpath encountering as they did characters from the canal's past, present and future.

The drama was performed by a mixture of professional actors, students of the Theatre Workshop and local school children.



*it was Alright on the Day! Leading actor, Ben Miles, with performers from Diggle Primary School*



The children were auditioned at a "Summer School" held in Diggle Village School and led by the Theatre Workshop. During the summer school the children also helped with the making of props and costumes whilst learning about the history of the canal.

Each performance, set against the backdrop of the fourteen boats which had assembled for the boat gathering, was greeted with pleasure and enthusiasm by the audiences and feedback received was without exception complimentary.

Given the restrictions on space as a result of using locations along the towpath for the performance, it had been envisaged that the

audience for each performance would need to be restricted to about 25/30. However such was the demand that numbers following and watching each performance far exceeded this. Typical of the comments made were:

*"Excellent – a wonderful way of recounting the history and heritage of the canal"*

*"Fantastic, funny, interesting and educational"*

*"Enjoyed the performance very much - it held everyone's attention."*

As 3 o'clock approached, with the final performance of "Reflections..." complete we started to wind down. The W.I. had sold the last few cakes, the band were packing their instruments, gazebos were being dismantled



Scene: Thomas Telford



Scene: Half-timers from the Mill

and thanks and congratulations were being passed on to participants and helpers.

By 3.30pm the site was almost empty except for the marquees, which were being dismantled, and a few remaining vans being loaded. At which point the heavens opened and the rain poured down – given the weather that had been forecast the timing could not have been more perfect. However, the now churned up field was made even wetter to the dismay of the operator of Cue Ball Crazy who, as he set off to leave, ended up axle deep in mud and stuck fast in the middle of the site. Our final act of the day, as dusk gathered, was to help to extricate him and get him on his way.

## What we Achieved

Writing this piece some four weeks later, having done the final accounts and submitted the final grant claims, I and my organising group colleagues are satisfied that we achieved everything we set out to do.

Our stated aims were to:

- Celebrate the heritage, history and role of the canal in Saddleworth and the south Pennines
- Promote, raise awareness of and increase knowledge of the heritage of the canal and its immediate hinterland amongst local communities and across the region.



Scene: Restoration volunteer



Scene: Women in the War



- Include and involve local people, particularly young people in our celebration.
- Achieve positive media coverage in advance of and after the event to bring the canal and its supporters/funders to as wide an audience as possible.

Taking these in turn we believe that we have more than satisfied each of them.

By organising and holding a free event which combined education and entertainment in an interesting and accessible form we have delivered a sustainable and fitting **celebration of the heritage and history of the canal.**

The key to this was the dramatisation of the story and telling it through the mouths of authentic characters from history.

It is this which will remain in the memories of all those who saw it for months and years to come, far longer than any number of pamphlets, lectures and exhibitions.

Through diligent research and close co-operation between the Society and OTW we succeeded in creating a piece of theatre which brought to life the history and heritage of the canal but also gave an accurate and authentic picture of the canal's 200 year history. Feedback (*"I learned a great deal about the history of the canal"; "considering we are local there was a lot we didn't know"*) indicates that this was a most successful means of achieving our aim of **promoting, raising awareness of and increasing knowledge of the heritage of the Canal.**



The direct involvement of the children from Diggle School and the students of OTW together with the many children who attended on the day and watched “Reflections of the Past” met our goal of **fully involving young people in the event.**

We were delighted with the excellent **media coverage** which we received through which we succeeded in **bringing the canal and its supporters/funders to a wider audience.** Good press coverage was provided by the Huddersfield Examiner and the Oldham Chronicle Coverage was also given on BBC Radio Manchester during peak listening hours over the weekend of the event.

## A Concluding Thought

Our birthday event and the positive publicity it attracted has brought our canal and its heritage to a wide audience and I think it is important that the momentum and the resource it created should not be lost. In particular “Reflections of the Past” is an entertaining and accessible means of bringing both the history of the canal and current issues to a wider public. My hope therefore is that we will be able to work with Oldham Theatre Workshop to produce further versions of the production which, via digital media, can be brought to as wide an audience as possible.

**Graham Birch**



Ian Bradbury



*All Photos: John Brierley  
unless otherwise credited*



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# J & J Sykes, Coal Merchants, Slaithwaite

*Trevor Ellis considers the history of some of the canal's early carriers.*

We knew of J. & J. Sykes mainly from a picture of the boat **Melville** at Cellars Clough Mill. They are also recorded making a small number of tunnel transits in the Standedge Tunnel Book. Given the frequency of the name "Sykes" in Slaithwaite and also the first names such as "John", "Joseph" or "James" it's difficult to know who we are dealing with.

## People

The 1851 Census shows James Sykes, Boatman, 58 at Top of Town, Slaithwaite with John (Son) also Boatman, 30. Both are born locally (there is another James Sykes, Waterman, 23 (born 1828) living at Nabbs Lane, but given that we are looking for what sounds like a father and son, or perhaps two brothers, the first seems most promising.)

The 1861 Census shows James Sykes, Boatman, by then 68 at Killn Lane (sic), Slaithwaite with John (Son) also Boatman, 40. A Joseph Sykes, Coal Merchant, is at Bridge Street, aged 47, also born locally, with son, William 20, also Coal Merchant. (According to John Sykes of the present day Sykes/Shaw Fuels family, who recently appealed for information in the "Huddersfield Examiner", these latter are his family but may not be of the same "Sykes" family as the J. & J. Sykes that we are seeking.) On the same 1861 Census, two boats **Trial** and **Sarah** (possible connection - James Sykes' wife was Sarah) are at Thornhill Forge. They are employed in the Coal trade and on the front of the form, the Master (owner?) is given as "J. & J. Sykes, Slaithwaite" in the case of **Trial** and "Joseph Sykes" for **Sarah**. Charles Balmforth is "Mate" on the **Trial** and Lister Brown is shown as "Master" on the **Sarah** (unlikely as he is only 13 - Lister Brown also appears in Linthwaite as a "Boat Boy", far from the only case where boatmen are recorded both on and off the boats.) Unfortunately Joseph Sykes does not appear, so can not be traced - if not the coal merchant of the present day Sykes family,

this may be the Joseph Sykes who appears at Meal Hill as Lock Keeper aged 35, and who had been a Waterman in 1851.

John & Joseph Sykes appear as Coal Dealers in the 1870 Huddersfield Directory. John Sykes of Spring Grove also appears as Coal Dealer 1876.

The 1871 Census has John Sykes, Waterman at Spring Grove. Joseph Sykes is still Lock Keeper, also at Spring Grove, which suggests a possible connection between the two.

By 1881 the Census has John Sykes, 60, Waterman, now living at Carr Lane. Joseph Sykes is now a Canal Labourer and still at Spring Grove.

Interestingly there is no trace of either on the 1891 Census or 1901, but the "Boats" and "Traffics" references below and Directory entries (e.g. White's Directory of Leeds & the Clothing District 1894, which has J. & J. Sykes at Bridge Street), suggest that the business (if theirs) must have continued. John Sugden in his book "Slaithwaite Notes" (first published 1902) mentions "Sykes's (Midgley's)" as having their own coal boats and wharf, sadly with no dates apart from a reference in the introduction to "the last 50 years" and no further reference to or explanation of "Midgleys", though this could be a clue as to the continuation of the company after the disappearance of the Sykes's.

Sadly, no Midgleys appear on the 1891 Census, though there are two father-and-son pairs of Sykes living next door in Bridge Street as Coal Merchants - George Sykes (40) and his son, William (16) are the descendants of Joseph Sykes the coal merchant of the current Sykes family, but William (50) and son Herbert F. (27) are not obviously linked to the two known families.

## Boats

As mentioned above, on the 1861 Census, the boats **Trial** and **Sarah** are at Thornhill Forge. They are employed in the Coal trade. Whether there is any significance



to the different entries under “Master” can not be known, but given the broad locks below Huddersfield, it would make sense for narrowboats to work as a pair.

We also have a picture of the boat **Melville** at Cellars Clough Mill. This clearly shows “No.2” on the rearmost panel of the cabin side, suggesting that they still had at least two boats. Joseph Boughey (“Last Traffics on the HNC” in Waterways World many years ago) dated the picture as late as 1910 (we don’t know on what basis, though picture could well be around 1900 or later - see also Tunnel transits below).

#### *Traffics*

As stated, “Sykes’s (Midgley’s)” are mentioned as having own coal boats and wharf by Sugden. As coal dealers working from Slaithwaite, it is likely that most of their customers were in the upper Colne Valley. The location of **Trial** and **Sarah** in the 1861 Census suggests they obtained their coal from the Thornhill area even then, though there were nearer pits at that date. Thornhill Forge was part of the estate of the Ingham family, who owned both the forge and two collieries in Thornhill Lees. On the 1905 Godfrey Edition OS Map Ingham’s Pit is linked by a railway to a staithe adjacent to Forge Lane Bridge. The notes to this map (taken from “The Inghams and Thornhill Collieries” by John Goodchild) state that the coal was “good for coking but absolutely useless as house coal”, which leads one to suspect that the Sykes’s might have been supplying local gas works.

The Standedge Tunnel register of passages from September 1874 to August 1937 (originally at Tunnel End, now at the Waterways Museum, Gloucester) records the following:

As “J Sykes”:-

Between 23rd August & 2nd September 1897: 2 passages from Marsden to Diggle.

Between 25th August & 4th September 1897: 2 passages from Diggle to Marsden.

These trips would appear to be loaded westbound as the times are around 3 hours westbound and two hours eastbound. The time taken to return to the tunnel is a day and a half, the second four hours longer, so allowing for unloading, they can not have gone far – perhaps the loom works or at most, Woolroad?

As “J & J Sykes”:-

On 9th November 1908: 1 passage from Marsden to Diggle and on 10th November 1908: 1 passage from Diggle to Marsden.

This trip is a complete mystery, as the boat spends only two hours west of the Tunnel, and that between 10.00pm and midnight! The time to return is longer than the outward trip.

Can anyone – perhaps a member of the Sykes family who has done some research – cast any light on the subject?

**Trevor Ellis**

J & J Sykes’ “Melville” at Cellars Clough Mill





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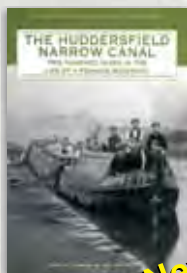
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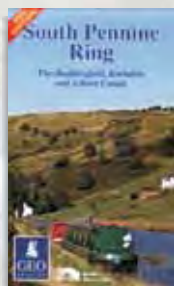
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# Mikron at 40

## Mikron Theatre Company achieve 40 years on the waterways

I was privileged to be present at Mikron Theatre company's Ruby Do to celebrate their 40th year as a touring canal boat based company bringing live theatre to informal venues around the UK. Marsden Mechanics was full for a splendid Sunday lunch and excellent afternoon's entertainment and reminiscence.

Against a background of changing fortunes and fashions in the art world, Mikron must surely be unique amongst small theatre companies in having weathered the storm for a full 40 years. This year's 'storm' could have sunk the boat as there was no formal grant available but it is a measure of the level of support that Mikron has accumulated over the years that not only has the Company survived but that they have met the challenging financial target for donations set at the beginning of the 40th year.

The event was an enjoyable sail through Mikron history. Many of the actors from the 46 original shows over the 40 years returned for the event. Several sang and played songs from the shows and some were interviewed in a Desert Island Discs style by the company's current Artistic Director, Marianne McNamara and Producer, Peter Toon. An exhibition of 40 years Mikron posters brought back happy memories of some of the 20 or so plays my wife and I have seen since first coming across the company in the mid 1970s. 'I'd go back tomorrow', 'Imogen's War' and many other classics were portrayed as well as the HNC's own 'Warehouse Hill' from 2001. Early film footage showed the trials and tribulations of the early tours in the 1970s.

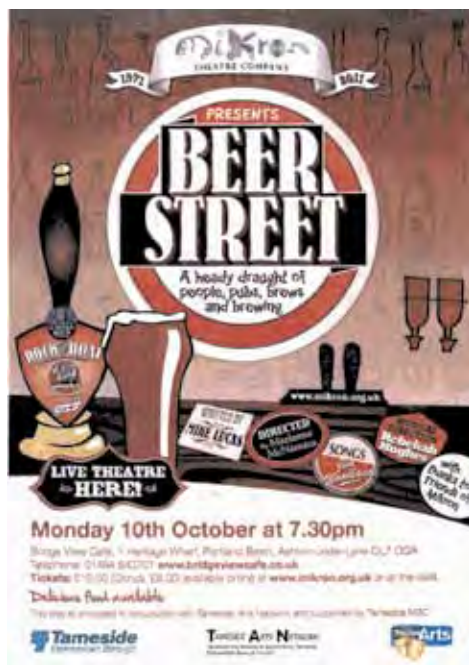
The event closed with an emotional last word from Mike Lucas, the inspirational founder of the company, and a standing ovation from all present.

This year's update of the hilarious 'Beer Street' and engaging 'period' play 'Hell and High Water' on the building of the Bridgewater Canal were up with the best of Mikron's work and showed they could still enthrall and engage audiences of all ages. Three of the four performers were new to the cast but not only did they embody the spirit of Mikron, but showed incredible talent in the way they interspersed their musical skills with quick and convincing changes of clothing.

Do look out for next year's two productions on 200 years of the Luddites and the history of the allotment movement as our very own local theatre company works its way around the waterways of Britain on its narrow boat, Tyseley.

I'm pleased to say "the show goes on ..."

**Alan Stopher**



*Ad for this year's performance of 'Beer Street'*

# 2011 Photographic Competition Results

*Lead Judge Alan Stopher comments:*

'Although numbers were somewhat down on last year there was still a good range of entries to judge in both categories. As always it was a challenge to select the images for commendation. All of the images fitted the requirements of the competition but there were a few, particularly in Category B which did not necessarily indicate to the casual viewer that they were waterway linked. As has been the case in previous years, some entrants had evidently struggled to produce good quality prints on home equipment and I wondered whether they would have done better to have them commercially processed at one of the many shops or internet companies which do this at a competitive price.

The overall winner this year came from the 'Huddersfield Narrow Canal' category. It is a challenge for entrants to find new subject matter on our canal so photographers have to look for different angles or produce the perfect image from a popular location. It was pleasing to see that the best print was one taken at the Bi-centenary Boat Gathering at Diggle. I particularly liked the composition of John Brierley's picture with the reflection and well lit coping stones giving the foreground plenty of interest. The sky displayed a good tonal range as did the whole print. Colour balance was also well handled and the whole was sharp throughout.

The winner of the Huddersfield Narrow Canal category was Andy Tidy with a colourful image of two boats passing above Lock 37E on the Marsden flight. Crew members positioned around the lock added human interest to a pleasingly composed print.

Still on the Huddersfield, the Category A runner-up was a study of the stone work at the tail of Lock 10E. Despite a strong shadow in one corner the author had produced an interesting print showing the texture and colour of weathered stone which is a feature of our canal.

Commended in Category A was Andy Tidy's pleasant portrayal of a boat in Lock 31E with Cellars Clough Mill beyond. The tree and shrubbery framed the scene well although there was some debate about the distracting nature of the out of focus red blooms in the bottom right.

The Category B winner was a conventional but well taken photo by Alan Crosby of a narrow boat and crew passing moored boats on the Grand Union Canal. The willow frames the left hand side but still enables the distant view of boats to be seen. It combined good composition with sound technique.

The runner up, was an atmospheric sunset (or sunrise) scene at the double locks at Hillmorton. The author, once more Andy Tidy, had done well to expose the sky and reflections whilst still enabling some detail to be seen in the darker areas.

Commended in Category B was an image which may not immediately convey 'waterways' as the narrow boats are pictured heading out into tidal waters with nothing on the horizon. The boats are on their way from the River Nene to Boston. Brian Holmes entitled his picture 'Towards Infinity' and this is a fitting title for a composition which was sufficiently different to catch the eye. The huge sky with its fluffy cloud balances the narrow strip of water filled with boats at the bottom of the picture. The print quality left something to be desired, but I felt the dramatic composition merited a Commendation.

Well done to the winners and runners-up and thanks to all for entering. Andy Tidy is a new entrant this year which shows that the field is wide open for new approaches to the competition. Thank you also to Claire Bebbington and Bob Gough for ably assisting me in choosing the successful prints. We enjoyed looking at your work.'

**Alan Stopher**





*Overall Winner*

*'Chelonian' at the Festival Boat Gathering, Diggle - John Brierley, Uppermill*





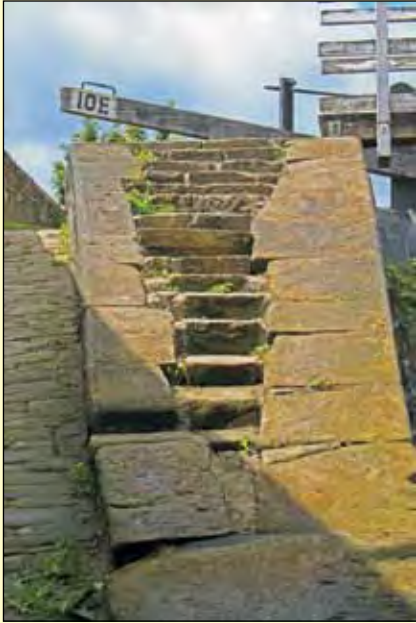
*On the Marsden Flight - Andy Tidy, Sutton Coldfield*

## *Category Winners*

*On the Grand Union Canal - Alan Crosby, Littlemoss*



# *Runners-Up*



*Lock 10E, Milnsbridge  
Andy Tidy, Sutton Coldfield*



*Hillmorton Sunset, Oxford Canal  
Andy Tidy, Sutton Coldfield*

# *Commended*



*'Towards Infinity' crossing the Wash  
Brian Holmes, Bradford*



*Lock 31E, Lingards Wood  
Andy Tidy, Sutton Coldfield*

# Ten Years Restored - A Personal Experience

*Keith Noble looks back on the past ten years of the Huddersfield Narrow:*

In all the rightful celebrations for the bicentenary of the Narrow Canal's original opening, we ought not to forget that 2011 is the tenth anniversary of its re-opening. The trials and tribulations of seventeen years' construction are matched in its history by twenty six of restoration. 4<sup>th</sup> April 1811 and 1<sup>st</sup> May 2001 are both red letter days in the story.

My own memories of the latter event start the day before, when Jill and I set out from Sowerby Bridge. We had a rendezvous with the Calder Navigation Society's boat, 'Savile' at Brighouse and together we cruised up to Sainsburys. Despite a little rain, cut grass and seasonal flowers denoted the arrival of a deferred Spring. Waking next morning, the sun shone on Huddersfield and its canal, welcoming the first of May in proper manner.

That 'Savile' took part in the Civic Procession to the opening was appropriate bearing in mind that, when the rest of the canal closed in 1944, the first few pounds of the Narrow Canal had been transferred to the Calder & Hebble Navigation.

Following the speeches and nibbles, I returned to my own boat, planning to start our trip up to Standedge and beyond. It was not to be as some boats in the official cavalcade had struggled over a sand bar below Lock 1E and BW decided to do a bit of extempore dredging. We were fifth in the queue and the first three went up before the dredging started, mooring overnight in the pound above. Whilst the delay was

an irritation to us at the time, we were fortunate in that the first pound dried out overnight leaving the first boats severely aground.

One of Mikron's shows for 2001 was 'Warehouse Hill' telling the story of restoring the Narrow Canal. Marsden Mechanics Hall is the theatre company's HQ. The premier performance was that night in the University. It was odd to have characters portrayed on stage whilst two of the 'originals' sat watching 'themselves' in the audience.

Of the boaters aspiring to traverse the canal westbound from Huddersfield, one was new to canals, knew nothing about the restoration and had been told it was a brand new canal. On learning the truth the next day he unfairly abused Ken Middleton, BW's local inspector, and went home. It took until teatime before there was sufficient water for those of us still below to pass Lock 1E. Thereafter our trip that day was uneventful till, as darkness fell, we reached Lock 13E. It hadn't taken the Milnsbridge jobs long to realise that a few bricks behind a gate can stop everyone. We had been warned that this was 'bandit territory' and five boats huddled together till BW could come and release us early the next morning. Various other 'teething' problems impeded our progress but BW sorted them out promptly and we reached Slaithwaite before nightfall, but not before we met New Zealanders on nb 'Wa Te' which had made the eastbound passage.

The third day on the Narrow kept BW personnel busy sorting a succession of relatively minor problems but we



reached the Visitor Centre by half past three and moved up to Tunnel End later. We expected the boats to enter the tunnel soon after 8 o'clock the next morning but, for reasons which are not fully recorded it was delayed till much later in the morning and the boat didn't emerge till mid-afternoon.

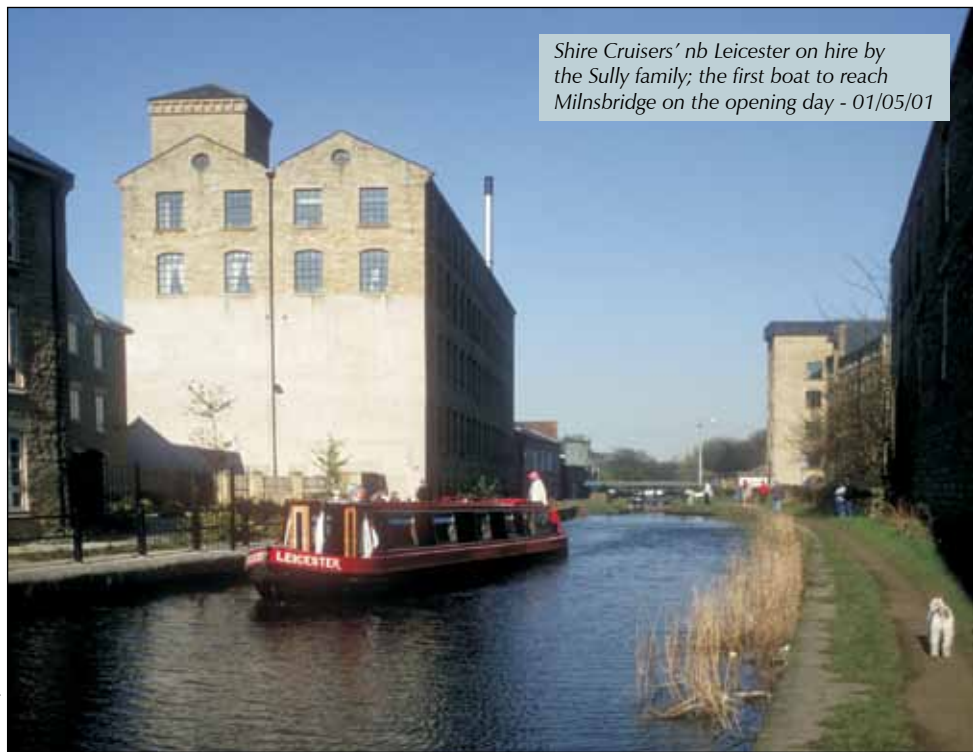
The first westbound boater had gone through the Tunnel the previous day but we were guilty of a little *schadenfreude* upon hearing the news that he had slipped, hurt his foot and gone into hospital. That meant that as all the other boats had turned round or moored up, from being fifth, we were now second and might even be first to traverse the canal from east to west. It was not till we reached Marple and saw the injured party limping around the bottom lock

that we recognised that we would have to make do with second place. We had not set out with the intention of being first but the prospect was quite exciting whilst it lasted.

The first trips through Standedge Tunnel were marred by there being no provision for crew as BW's passenger 'pods' were not ready and taxis were a poor substitute. When the pods came, that's where the crew had to go, being prohibited from staying on their own boats. Today boaters may steer their own boats through the tunnel and well behaved pets, previously prohibited absolutely, are allowed to stay aboard. We look forward to further relaxations in due course when boaters may go through unchaperoned every day.

**Keith Noble**

*Shire Cruisers' nb Leicester on hire by the Sully family; the first boat to reach Milnsbridge on the opening day - 01/05/01*



# Canal Connections Conference

On September 14<sup>th</sup> Alan Stopher and I represented the Society at a conference entitled Canal Connections which took place in the impressive Todmorden Town Hall in West Yorkshire. The conference was organised by Pennine Prospects and was inspired by the Canal Connections Project which they fund. The project is centred on the Rochdale Canal (hence the venue) and its stated aim is

*“to connect local people to the Rochdale Canal through developing understanding and appreciation of the canal’s heritage, providing opportunities to actively participate in the canal’s regeneration and through creating physical linkages on and along the canal.”*

The conference was attended by about 60 people representing a variety of waterway interests and we heard presentations from a range of speakers. In keeping with the overall theme the majority of the presentations provided ‘good practice’ examples of how canals can be made relevant to the communities along their route so that, far from being seen as a danger or a liability, they can be viewed as an asset and a valuable community resource.

The opening presentation was given by Tony Hales CBE, the Chair of British Waterways. As such he is at the heart of the process of transforming BW to what we now know will be called the Canal and River Trust (C&RT) and his speech was given close attention by all present.

In fact we heard little that we did not already know. In summary he told us that the waterways have been under-funded to the tune of at least 10% of their annual budget requirement and that there was no

possibility of additional funds being made available to BW from the Government to fill this gap.

He explained therefore that the only way forward was a move to charitable status, so giving the opportunity for the new body to access private/charitable funds for which they would otherwise not be eligible. There was, however, no clear view as to the exact source of these additional funds, at least in the short term.

He went on to explain and illustrate with diagrams the new management structure with a central trust body feeding down into regional bodies reflecting the current regional waterways structure of BW. Hence the Huddersfield Narrow falls within the Manchester and Pennine Division.

Each Division will have an advisory Waterway Partnership comprising representatives of the various waterway interests within the region. The Chair of this body will in turn sit on the Council of C&RT. Interestingly, these Boards had originally been described as Local Waterway Partnerships but from the presentation it emerged the word “Local” has now been dropped.

During questions following the presentation Alan Stopher remarked on the loss of the Local element and asked how Mr Hales envisaged the new Partnerships linking in practice with grassroots organisations such as HCS and local community groups. The simple answer was that he didn’t know but the assumption was that structures appropriate to local circumstances would emerge. (“suck it and see”?)



Mr Hale's presentation was followed by one from Roger Hanbury, Chief Executive of the Waterways Trust, which is responsible for the Rochdale Canal. We now know that The Waterways Trust will be subsumed with the new C&RT in April 2011 and Roger explained that it would bring with it valuable experience of partnership working which could help to inform the operating practice of the new body, particularly in our own region.

Following a coffee break, we heard about the role Pennine Prospects and the Leader funding programme in waterway regeneration. Then, either side of lunch, we heard about two specific projects which provided examples of how communities could, to their mutual benefit, engage with canals and waterways in their locality.

The first case study was of the Coast, Wolds and Wetlands Waterways Partnership centred on the Beverley area of East Yorkshire. This has drawn together a range of interest and community organisations to regenerate features of the rural landscape, including waterways, for the benefit of the local communities.

Bearing in mind Tony Hale's message about the need to secure alternative sources of funding, the key lesson from this presentation was that co-ordinated and focussed community action can secure significant funding for worthwhile projects and that good practice models do exist.

The second case study was closer to home and involved us hearing from local groups, based in and around Todmorden, telling us how they have come to adopt their section of the Rochdale Canal and integrate it as a positive feature of the town. Through these projects it was explained and demonstrated, by two

excellent speakers, how it has become valued and used as a linear park for the town and how hitherto canal-side back land has become home to community allotments for vegetable cultivation linked into the 'Incredible Edible' project.

The day concluded with a short walking tour to view these local projects. It was good to see that Tony Hales was able to accompany the tours and be clearly in 'listening mode'. The prodigious Great Wall of Todmorden was viewed. This hundred year old blue brick wall believed to be the largest brick structure in the land\* was in need of tree removal work and the prospects of a C&RT/Network Rail joint project emerged during the conversation. A number of planted sites were viewed and it was good to see spare pieces of land behind the towpath yielding raspberries, vegetables and herbs for local consumption. Also seen was a small regeneration project between towpath and car park which had greatly improved the welcome to Todmorden for boaters and drivers alike.

Back at the Hall for a last round of refreshments, Alan Stopher met John Stopp, BW's newly appointed Adoptions Officer who is developing a role involving meeting waterside communities and companies to encourage waterway adoption schemes. Both exchanged e-mails and promised to explore what was possible, in due course, on the Huddersfield Narrow.

All in all, the Conference was a worthwhile exercise in developing links between the emergent C&RT, local community groups, waterways people and the various organisations and funding agencies which can help build fruitful local canal partnerships.

**Graham Birch**

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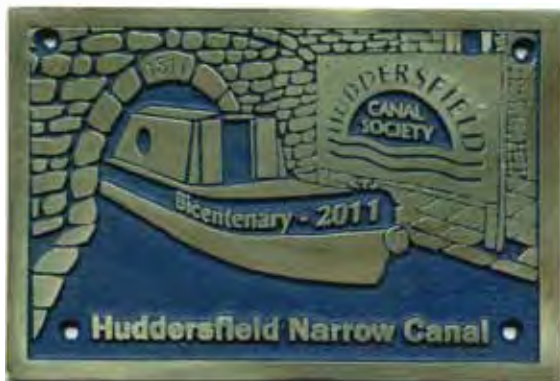
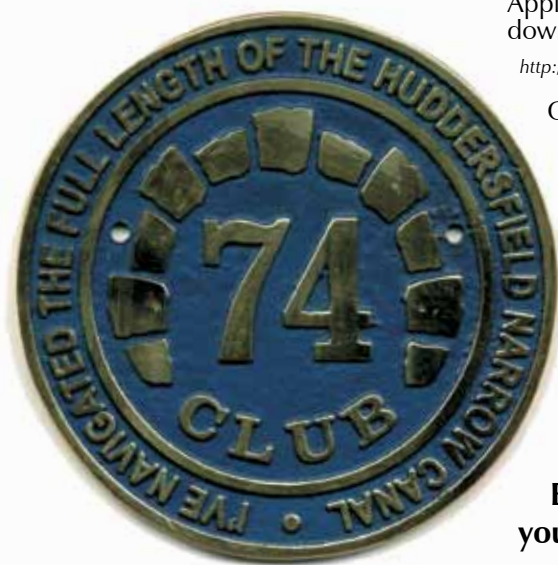
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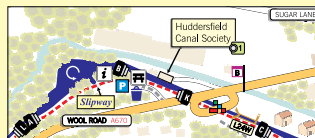
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