

# Pennine Link

Magazine of the Huddersfield Canal Society



Issue 196 Winter 2016

# Huddersfield Canal Society Ltd

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## NON-COUNCIL POST

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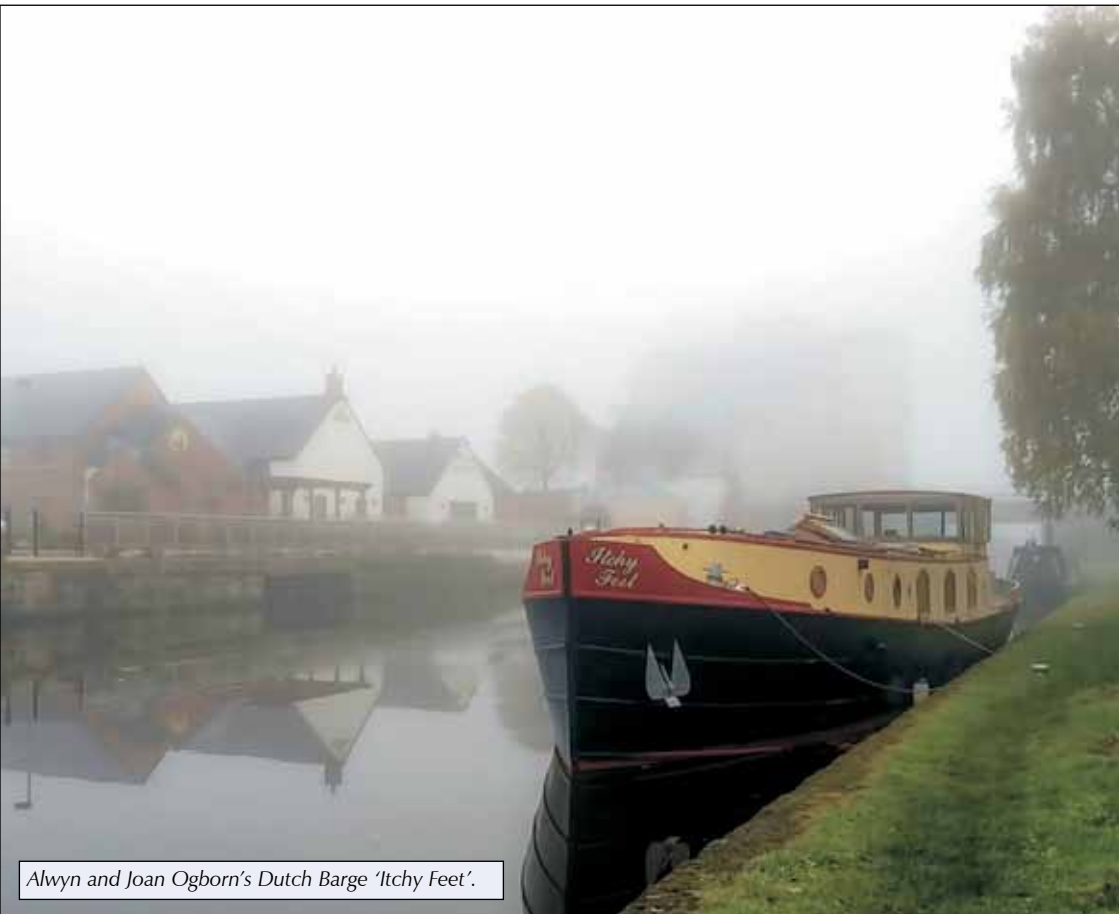


*The views expressed in Pennine Link are not necessarily those of Huddersfield Canal Society Ltd*

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Issue 196

Sally Sallett ARPS CPACB



*Alwyn and Joan Ogborn's Dutch Barge 'Itchy Feet'.*

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## Editorial

If you turn back to the front cover of this issue you will see in the bottom right hand corner that this is edition 196 of Pennine

Link. This means that this time next year we should have reached edition number 200. I am already giving some thought to how we might mark this significant landmark for the Society through the pages of Pennine Link and in doing so I have been drawn to reflect also on the history of Pennine Link and the role it has played in the life and operation of the Society over the decades.

First of all a few facts to clarify how we will have reached edition 200 by the end of next year because to those of you like me who have not been involved with the Society since its foundation the arithmetic here might seem a bit odd.

The Society was founded in April 1974 so by 2017 it will have been up and running for 43 years. We currently produce four editions a year and four editions a year over a period of 43 years would only bring us to a total of 172 - but things have not always been as they are now and a visit to our online archive will make clear how we will have reached 200 by the end of 2017.

The first issue appeared in June 1974 in the form of three typed pages and it was simply referred to as Bulletin No.1. Bulletin No.2 appeared in the same format, but with six pages, in August 1974 and a third followed in November. In 1975 there were five issues and it was for issue number 6, published in

August 1975 that the title "Pennine Link – The Journal of the Huddersfield Canal Society" was first used.

The following year saw a further 5 issues and then in 1977 Pennine Link became bi-monthly with six issues a year. This pattern continued in all but one year until 1991 when, with Alwyn Ogborn in the editor's seat, the present pattern of four seasonal editions per year was adopted. This, therefore, is how we have progressed, assuming we produce our normal four editions in 2017, towards number 200. Having sorted out the arithmetic, I would now like to share some thoughts on the importance of Pennine Link to the Society over the past 42 years.

My first thought is that through the pages of Pennine Link we have created a fantastic record in words and pictures of the transition of the Huddersfield Canals from a neglected and unloved relic of our industrial past to a picturesque gem of the Pennine landscape. What makes this record all the more compelling and valuable is that it has been created and set on paper by people who were 'hands-on' with the task of restoring the Canals and then promoting and helping to maintain them once restored.

From Bulletin One, which set out the aims of the Society, we can follow the steps leading to restoration and beyond in detail. We can read of and see the successes and failures, the triumphs and the disappointments. For example, dipping at random into the archive, we find in Issue 10 from May 1976 an account of the first HCS working party carrying out "gardening type activity"

on a length above Slaithwaite. Moving forward to Issue 58 we can read an account of a proud moment for H.C.S. in the official re-opening of Dungebooth and Lime Kiln locks on Saturday 26th May 1984 by the Mayor and Mayoress of Oldham.

Over a decade later, in Issue 120 (Spring 1997), we read of the prevailing "spirit of joy and boundless optimism" brought about by the announcement of Lottery funding for restoration by the Millennium Commission. This is followed in Issue 128 (Spring 1999) with the announcement of match funding by English Partnerships with the words "signed, sealed and delivered" emblazoned on the front cover. Between this and Issue 137 (Summer 2001) Pennine Link documents and illustrates a detailed and priceless record of the multiple engineering projects which were carried out to complete the Impossible Restoration. Since 2001 Pennine Link has gone on to chronicle the ups and downs of life on the restored Canal including, during the five years of my editorship, the implications of the advent of CRT as successor to BW.

Important as it is now and for the future as a record of the restoration Pennine Link has also had and still has another vital role, a role which was identified in the earliest days of the Society. This is that Pennine Link is the link, the common factor shared by all of our members and from the outset it was recognised that our membership is the vital foundation on which the authority of the Society rests.

In Bulletin One the first secretary Bob Dewey wrote "**Membership** - This is one of the most important facets of our

*initial campaign. We cannot hope to wield influence unless we have a really substantial membership to back up the committee".* In Bulletin 2 emphasising this point he said "*the more members we have the louder is our voice.*" In the same edition, welcoming the influx of members, John Maynard said "*our second Bulletin and approaching our hundredth member, not only locally but from canal enthusiasts all over the country and even one from Canada*".

The importance of a broad membership base was recognised by new editor Chris Griffiths in edition 10 when he wrote "*In addition to articles concerning the Society, and the Narrow Canal, we will also be including waterways news of both regional and national importance because our campaign must be nationwide and kept in the context of the waterways movement as a whole*"

Today, for those members who live locally, the Canals are part of daily life but our membership is still widespread, stretching far beyond the south Pennines. Some of our more distant members are able to visit us and perhaps achieve the ambition of undertaking a Tunnel passage, but for others Pennine Link is their one, quarterly link with the Canals and the Society.

So, and I will admit to a degree of bias in saying this, whatever the future holds for the Society the continuation of Pennine Link must be an essential part of that future. As Bob Dewey said all those years ago we *cannot hope to wield influence unless we have a really substantial membership* and to retain and hopefully grow our membership we need to maintain a regular informative link with our membership and that **Link is Pennine Link.**

*continued over ...*





## Chairman's Report

We live in tumultuous times. The rise of isolationist politics brings the spectre of climate change denial to

undermine the collaborative work of the Paris Accord.

Writing in late November this week's intense rainfall in the North West has reminded us of the fragility of our own response to the increasing occurrence of dramatic weather events. It is too early to assess the impact on the Huddersfield Narrow Canal but it is hoped that the towpath and wall damage is at a much more manageable level than that which occurred on the Rochdale and Calder & Hebble Canals last Boxing Day.

It is pleasing to learn that after all the Summer's work by Canal & River Trust (CRT) and their contractors, the Rochdale

Canal was reopened to through traffic in early October. Rebuilding work is continuing on Elland Bridge and a Winter stoppage is now underway to enable the reconstruction of Cromwell Bridge (*pictured opposite*).

Although we don't have the figures yet, passages through the Standedge Tunnel have held up well this year. The Autumn cruising period has only been disrupted on two occasions. The navigation was closed for a day in mid-September at Lock 14W when both tail gate paddles' gear mechanisms became detached from the paddles on the same day.

A recurrence of the hole in the bed of the canal just upstream of Lock 29E meant a short stoppage in early October but it was soon resolved, sufficiently to permit passage. In both cases quick response by CRT has minimised cruising disruption. The booking system has remained in place at Lock 24E to enable

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*continued from page 5 ...*

Which brings us to this current issue. For the past 19 years our Winter edition has featured our annual Photographic Competition and we had hoped and expected that the results for 2016 would be appearing in these pages. However, sadly by the closing date we had received only one entry in each of the two categories, for which thanks to Frank Oakland and Angela Acott, and one entry does not make a competition, so regrettably there are no results to publish.

My thanks do, however, go to all those who have contributed to this edition and special mention is due to first-time contributor James Wynn who has taken

over from Rhys Wynne as leader of the Community Roots project. In saying this, as we approach the end of another year, may I repeat my regular invitation to all of our members that if you have a tale to tell, boating experiences to relate or thoughts that you wish to share, the pages of Pennine Link are always open to you. Just forward your contributions to us, preferably in electronic format, to Bob at the office.

It now remains only for me to sign off by wishing you all a very happy Christmas and a good New Year in 2017 on and around the Narrow, the Broad and the rest of our waterway network.

**Graham Birch**



Alan Stopher

*The view is in the direction of Elland. Clay bunds have been placed upstream and downstream and pumps placed to carry water around the blockage. In the foreground is the contractors temporary road to enable the new bridge abutments to be built from the compound on the right (North) side.*

CRT staff to enable passage on the hour from 9am to 2pm.

In mid-October we held our Autumn meeting with CRT's Waterway Manager, David Baldacchino, and his team to discuss the operation and maintenance of the Huddersfield Narrow. We were told that a minor reorganisation was in hand with Manchester & Pennine region being extended to cover the Trent & Mersey to Gt Haywood which includes Stoke and Stone and the Caldon Canal. The 2016/7 Winter stoppages which are now well underway had been widely circulated (and are on HCS's new website). Most sections of East side work involve polyurethane grouting. Most on the West side involved Lock

gate replacement. All are programmed for completion by Christmas 2016.

Lock 24E guillotine gate repairs are programmed for early in the 2017/8 financial year. We were given a draft list of work to be undertaken in 2017/8. As well as Lock gate replacements there were a significant amount of wash wall repairs. Included here was a sum of £120,000 which was proposed for the overturning wash wall downstream of Lock 24E along this heavily trafficked section. Your Society will be studying the proposals in detail and giving feedback on priorities in due course.

It is clear that the number of CRT volunteers and adoption groups continues to increase. This is excellent

news for ensuring community 'ownership' of stretches of canal. On the Huddersfield Narrow the Diggle and Slaithwaite groups are becoming established. A key factor in their success will be the level of support which CRT can provide and this depends directly on the limited number of staff available to join work groups. It will help for groups to become more self-sufficient in terms of tools, materials, storage and management. I'm pleased to say that CRT management recognises that this is an area for improvement.

We were assured that the consultant's proposals to increase footfall at Standedge Visitor Centre had been well received by CRT Board. There are, however, a number of competing projects nationally requiring funding bids and developments elsewhere are likely to take priority in 2017. In the meantime, Manchester & Pennine has set aside some funds to keep the attraction functioning.

Onto our own activities, thanks go to Patricia and Peter for managing an HCS stall at the Wedding Fayre at Standedge Visitor Centre in October. Along with the Shuttle crew they ably promoted our Wedding event boat service. Despite the grey Summer in the North, Marsden Shuttle takings and passenger numbers were well up on last year. In addition to the usual weekend service, we provided free trips at the Stalybridge Festival, a couple of weddings and a spectacular Halloween weekend (particularly thanks to Eric, Yvonne & Terry). New crew members are always needed. Contact Mike McHugh or Bob at the office if you are interested. We are considering running the boat some weekends during

the normally closed Winter season as CRT have decided to experiment with opening the café at weekends. Once more I would like to record a big thank you to all our skippers & crew.

Trevor has continued to lead our maintenance team on their fortnightly operations. Numbers can fluctuate which affects what can be done. If you have the inclination to getting stuck into some physical work on alternate Fridays please give Trevor or Bob a call. Trevor has also been trained up as a volunteer tunnel chaperone and is looking forward to guiding boaters through Standedge next season. More chaperones are required to enable CRT to increase the days of the week for tunnel passages so if any reader is interested in volunteering for a role with a difference please contact CRT at Tunnel End or Red Bull offices.

Some changes have been made to the canal observers reporting. If you are interested in volunteering to cover some of the current gaps on the West side please contact Peter Rawson.

Our Marketing Officer, Claire Bebbington, has moved to pastures new. I would like to place on record the Society's thanks for Claire's work over the last ten years and wish her well in her future employment. Claire has secured a post with the Wooden Canal Boat Society at Stalybridge, so I hope that we can work together on some initiatives in the future.

We are looking to spread the marketing duties amongst a number of members in the coming months so if you would like to help distribute HCS publicity materials or promote the Society in some other way please get in contact.



Patricia Bayley has already taken on the role of administering the Society's Twitter and Facebook accounts.

On a related topic, the Society's website is changing. The StardotStar supported site will cease to be provided at the end of the current year. Our member Martin Clark has already put in a lot of work to redesign the site using WordPress. It will be up and running using the same address by the time you read this. I'd like to thank Martin for all his efforts so far and I'm pleased that he is keen to continue in a supporting role. Our occasional emailed Pennine Link Extra newsletters will now be discontinued in favour of more up to date news items on the website together with social media activity.

Our President, David Sumner has moved with Diane to Spain to live near their son. I would like to thank him for all his support during my period as Chairman and in wishing him well for the future look forward to his continuing guidance from afar.

Returning to the theme of collaboration referred to in my opening paragraph, I am pleased to say that a number of our Council members take part in relevant meetings in the Region. These include contributing to discussions at CRT customer forums, providing a Society input into the design of towpath refurbishment in order to ensure all users' needs are taken into account, and to help plan strategies to protect and promote the heritage and landscape of the South Pennines. We also send a delegate to Northern Canals Association meetings, the last one being a visit to restoration work on the rural Grantham Canal. By taking time out to work

with others, we are keeping up the profile of your Society and helping to share knowledge and expertise where appropriate. Keith Sykes has been a key Council member in many of these initiatives. In thanking him for his commitment I also wish him well for his visit to London to collect his BEM in recognition of his volunteering activities for the Scouts.

We're already planning events for next year. A new venture for the Society will be the Pennine Explorer Cruise in the last week of June 2017. Borrowing the model started by the Birmingham Canal Navigation Society (BCNS) the aim is for a convoy of up to 12 boats to make the passage eastwards assisted by Society members and with some evening social activities to keep the crews entertained. Our friends at the Calder Navigation Society are likely to host the last event when the cavalcade reaches Mirfield. I'm working with Ray Butler, a member of the Manchester & Pennine partnership, the Chairman of the Macclesfield Canal Society and a keen boater himself. Watch this space (and the website) for more details of the programme as it develops.

That's all the news from me for this Issue. Here's to some brisk Winter canal walks with a mince pie at the end! Best wishes for Christmas and the New Year to all our friends, members and their families.

**Alan Stopher**





## Manchester & Pennine Update

With the Rochdale Canal (and hence the Pennine Ring) re-opened after the Boxing Day floods and the 2016

boating season drawing to a close, the Partnership's thoughts have turned to planning for 2017/18. The first stage in this process took place when the Partnership had a two day session at Trafford Hall near Chester on September 15th/16th.

The first day took the form of a workshop during which the group was able to discuss and explore issues and opportunities arising from the evolving economic, organisational and political changes which would be setting the context for the work of the Trust in 2017/18 and beyond. This was followed on the second day by the Partnership's regular bi-monthly business meeting.

In the workshop session, amongst the topics covered were:

***Opportunities arising from the establishment of the Greater Manchester Combined Authority*** - for which the new elected mayor will be in place, following the election in May 2017. It was felt that every effort should be made to build upon the relationships already established, such as with the Greater Manchester Strategic Framework team and Transport for Greater Manchester. The Trust should be seeking to meet with the new Mayor as soon as possible.

***A Calder Valley Heritage Bid*** - which is being prepared for submission in response to the Boxing Day floods.

***How to Improve Customer Services*** - by not just meeting the required standards but by addressing needs. Areas covered in discussion were:

- The need for more boater facilities in specific areas of the network
- How to improve User Forums and structure them to suit customers
- How to make better use of the internet and social media.
- Having a more visible and effective presence at waterway events

***Social Value*** - Gillian Renshaw provided an update on this project which is aimed at addressing the need for a new approach to Local Authorities as the existing maintenance agreement comes to an end. We were reminded that the aim of the commission is to identify the beneficial impact of the waterways on individuals, the local economy and the environment so as to support the case for continued Local Authority engagement.

***Impacts and Opportunities arising from Brexit*** - discussion centred on the potential impact which leaving the E.U. might have on the waterways. This discussion was informed by a note setting out the areas of environmental legislation which had affected canals and which concluded that, on balance, this legislation had been beneficial through improving environmental standards and funding technologies to help achieve this.

Looking forward, it was felt that the emphasis now needs to be on identifying opportunities arising from, for example, the continuing devolution agenda, the Northern Powerhouse initiative, HS2 and the creation of the new Combined Authority for Greater Manchester.

On day two, the principal item on the agenda for the business meeting was the proposed extension of the Manchester and Pennine area to include Stoke on Trent. Stoke has been within the area of Mid-Shires Partnership and my former colleague Simon Papprell (now with CRT as Mid-Shires Enterprise Manager) and Alan Smith of Stoke City Council attended to give an introduction to the City and its waterways.

Simon gave a presentation explaining the enterprise work, contacts, opportunities and projects which will be carried over to M and P. He also emphasised the constructive working relationship which the Trust has with the City and urged M and P to ensure that this is maintained.

Alan Smith followed this up by outlining the history and character of the City's canals. He also stressed the importance that the Council places on partnership working with CRT being a key partner in delivering the City's regeneration programme.

In response, it was agreed that M and P would organise a launch event in Stoke early in 2107 and that it should seek to co-opt a representative from the Stoke area onto the Partnership.

The Partnership met again in Stockport on November 10th by which time a draft programme of Partnership Projects for 2017/18 had been drawn up and was tabled for discussion. The programme

comprises eighteen projects extending across the whole of the Region. Of these, the Narrow will benefit from two projects in particular. These are;

***The South Pennine Ring “Explorer Cruise”*** which is planned for mid Summer 2017. This project is being developed in partnership between CRT and HCS and it will see a multi vessel cruise along the Narrow to publicise and promote its use to a national audience. To assist with organisation and publicity, CRT will be allocating a small budget and making staff resources available to assist with planning and operation.

***Standedge Visitor Centre*** where a number of key actions proposed in the Development Plan produced earlier this year will be implemented. These will include

- Moving forward with the “Gateway” welcome location at Lock 42E.
- A review of car parking arrangements with a view to delivering improvements
- Improvements to the Warehouse to increase opportunities for income generating activity
- Enhancing the digital, online presence of the Centre as a means of promoting the available attractions
- Increasing visitor mooring capacity to increase flexibility in the use of the Tunnel by private boats.

Amongst other proposed projects are:

- Consolidation of the Green Flag status of the Macclesfield and Peak Forest Canals together with an application for special Heritage Status for the Marple section.

- Continuing the search for a sustainable use for the Whaley Bridge Transhipment Warehouse.
- In partnership with the City Council and others, supporting ongoing projects such as “Greening the City” in Manchester City Centre. This involvement by the Trust in measures to improve safety and environmental quality reflects its view that action is needed if they are to be successful in convincing boaters to use the canals as a base for visiting the City.
- Linked to the above is the continuing and urgent search for a location for CRT to establish a Manchester Hub in the City Centre to provide a meeting point, work space and promotional base at the heart of the new Combined Authority.
- Support for the Calder Valley Rising project which is seeking funds to continue and enhance the post-flood recovery works.
- Activities to establish the Partnership in Stoke on Trent and its environs. This will involve working with Stoke City Council to support existing Council investment programmes

in the delivery of canal and canal corridor improvements.

Whilst the work to prepare and agree the 2017/8 programme has been taking place, I have been continuing to work with the Trust’s Planning team in formulating its response to the Greater Manchester Spatial Framework.

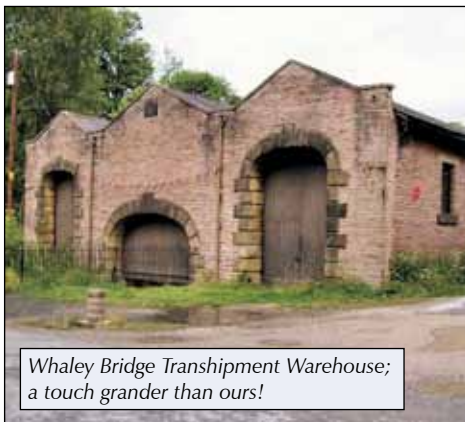
As I write this, the draft Strategy is out for public consultation and the aim is to have the Trust’s response finalised by mid-December ahead of the closing date on December 23rd. Predictably the headlines arising from the consultation have been in respect of a number of major housing and industrial development proposals. However, the Trust’s aim will be to ensure that policies to protect and enhance the region’s waterways are embedded within the final document.

As I draw to a close, may I draw your attention to the CRT website where the programme of Winter Open Days is set out. There are none this year on the Narrow or the Broad, but relatively local to our area, there is an Open Day on January 21st on the Marple Lock Flight on the Peak Forest Canal.

The final matter to report in 2016 is that this will be the final “Manchester and Pennine Update” because by Spring 2017 M and P will have expanded to include Stoke-on Trent and it will have become the Manchester, Pennine and Potteries Partnership so I will be writing the M P and P Update. In recognition of this, the Partnership’s programme for 2017 includes a launch event linked to a Partnership business meeting which will take place in Stoke on March 30th.

**Graham Birch**

Keith Stevens



*Whaley Bridge Transhipment Warehouse;  
a touch grander than ours!*

# Tales of an Ancient Mariner

## Part the Third (and last) ....

*Well, I'm a little more ancient than the last episode, and I've had my first season skippering the Shuttle so I'm a bit more of a mariner than I used to be. The story continues.....*

The Shuttle season starts at Easter, so on Good Friday I met Terry Lomas bright and early at the Shuttle mooring next to Standedge Visitor Centre. I'd planned a fairly intensive start to the season to put my new found expertise to the test, so I was crewing Good Friday and Easter Sunday, then Skippering for the first time on the Tuesday.

The weather on Good Friday was decent and the day quite busy with plenty people around to shuttle up and down the canal. As usual we took turns to man the tiller, look after the passengers and collect fares. Not having been responsible for banking the takings that day I can't recall exactly how much we took, but I think around £70 - 80 were added to the coffers.

Other than being quite busy, the first day was fairly uneventful. None of the threatened emergencies that I'd trained for happened and the day passed quickly with lots of happy customers. I think they especially enjoyed the two occasions that we had to lift the boards to access the weed hatch to remove a nylon jacket and a large plastic bag from the propeller.

Sunday was even less eventful probably because the main obstructions to navigation had been cleared on Friday. So to my first Skipper day, Tuesday, with Mike McHugh.

The only real difference to being Skipper is that you should really get there first to start getting the boat ready (unlocking, putting out life belts and boat hooks, removing shutters and doing engine checks). When the Crew arrives you finish the preparations and then set off to put out the A boards, saying that the Shuttle is running, at either Lock 42 or Tunnel End, depending on which way the Shuttle is pointing.

Skippers are also responsible for the log, usually just a note of who's running the boat and a record of the days' fares. After three days (almost) on the trot I was getting used to the routine and, whilst running the Shuttle can't be described as stressful, any anxiety that I might have felt about doing it had completely evaporated. I was now really looking forward to my days out as Skipper.

Each day falls into a general pattern. The first trip or two are often passenger free, giving time to chat with the days colleague and refresh your boating skills, particularly the turning manoeuvre above Lock 42 and outside the Waters Edge Café, where you probably have an audience. Soon it starts to get busier on the towpath.

In the morning and early afternoon the general direction of potential passengers is from Marsden to SVC so hanging around at Tunnel End isn't advisable. The situation generally reverses by mid-afternoon as people start going home but every day is different and to a certain extent it depends on the weather. An ideal day is warm and clear just after some heavy rain. This makes the towpath a bit muddy and you have



people around but not wanting to get their new trainers muddy...!

Sometimes we try and synchronise the departure of the Shuttle from Tunnel End with the CRT Tunnel Boat as it returns from its regular hourly trip. However, people getting off the CRT boat often head to the Café or the Visitor Centre. As they pass, we tell them that we'll be back in about 30 minutes. If they want the ride back to Marsden we usually see them later. We usually do one round trip per hour but more can be fitted in if the boat (capacity 12) fills up quickly. However, on a quiet day, we'll set off with just one or two on board or even empty in case someone is waiting at the other end.

Chatting with passengers is great fun, finding out what people know about the Narrow and why they've come to Marsden for a day out. The most common reaction is surprise at how much there is to do and how great the scenery is. If I'm not at the tiller I tell them a little about the history of restoration and get a plug in for the part HCS played. We always have HCS leaflets on board for passengers to take away in the hope that they'll think about joining. Handing out 'Junior Navigator 1st Class' stickers to children is also always a popular part of the trip.

Passengers come from far and wide and on board I've met people from Saudi Arabia, India, Germany, France, even Oldham. Everyone's been friendly and children usually think a ride on a boat is great fun. We let them sit in the bows but make sure they keep all their bits inside the boat. I usually tell them we don't go back for anything that gets chopped off which seems to make them behave



In addition to weekend Shuttling, crew get the opportunity to assist 'special operations'. Wedding charters are great fun and also quite lucrative! There were only a couple this year but HCS are now attending the 'Wedding Fayres' that happen occasionally at SVC to publicise the service, so we are hoping for more in future. Crew decorate

the boat with balloons and bunting and then ferry the wedding party from Lock 42 to the reception at the Visitor Centre, returning as required to provide transport for guests. The happy couple disembarking makes a great photo opportunity!

Currently the Shuttle only goes out midweek during school holidays but we have had enquiries about school charters during term time. We would like to pursue this but of course we will need the crew to be able to do it.

*continued on page 18*

# Top hole

Standedge Tunnel certainly is.  
And our boats are pretty good too.  
Combine the two on a one-way trip,  
or do the whole South Pennine Ring.

Shire Cruisers  
The Wharf  
Sowerby Bridge  
West Yorkshire  
HX6 2AG

01422 832712  
[info@shirecruisers.co.uk](mailto:info@shirecruisers.co.uk)  
[www.shirecruisers.co.uk](http://www.shirecruisers.co.uk)

**YORKSHIRE'S LEADING HIRE FLEET**



## PORTLAND BASIN BOAT HIRE

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Tel/Fax: 0161-330-3133 [www.portlandbasinmarina.co.uk](http://www.portlandbasinmarina.co.uk)

For a special occasion or simply a great day out with family or friends, hiring one of our self drive day boats is an ideal solution.

Our Narrowboats *Mary* and *Alice* are available throughout the year and will accommodate up to 10 people. Hire cost from £90 per day.



# Volunteer Activities



It seems to be some time since I reported on the activities of the Society's Volunteers in "Pennine Link" and furthermore, I always seem to be looking forward, rather than

reviewing what has gone.

Increasingly, we are trying to "fill in" between a number of groups who have adopted various lengths and it is always difficult to work out what is going on and where, so that we don't duplicate work that others are doing. Fortunately there are far more groups on the West side than the East, so at least it reduces the time it takes to travel.

Over the Summer, as usual, we turned to painting balance beams and paddle gearing, carrying on where we left off at the end of Summer 2015 at Lock 25W on the lower part of the Diggle Flight and working up to the top. I understand there may now be a Diggle group starting, but hopefully they won't need to paint anything for a while.

We did get somewhat delayed at Diggle around June/July when we had little luck with the weather, but we eventually started to work up the Marsden Flight from Lock 32E at Sparth around the start of September, but were finally rained off at Lock 35E, which seems destined to remain half-done until next year.

Even on fine days in the Winter, Locks under trees never dry out properly and in



any case, probably need washing off to clear the green slime which accumulates. Fortunately, we hadn't attempted any of the woodwork, or the water-soluble woodstain would now be staining the lockside.

This Winter, we will probably continue our tree-logging and litter-picking activities. We have already spent three sessions on the stretch between Slaithwaite and Tunnel End, including, most recently, some work on the

"Marsden Shuttle" tackling the offside at the two narrows on the summit length, which were starting to cause problems running trips. *(Photo below).*

Future projects will include a visit to Mossley to look at a stretch from Egmont Street to Calf Lane which did have a local group working on it, but, apparently, has not had any recent attention.

**Trevor Ellis**

**If you're thinking about getting involved with Trevor and his Team, please ring him on 01484 534666 and help make a difference to the Canal environment. Working Parties take place on alternate Fridays, which has proved a comfortable commitment.**





The longest 'special operation' this year was a trip over to Stalybridge for the Carnival in June. This required a trip through Standedge Tunnel and then down the 26 locks from Diggle to Stalybridge town centre. It was a 2-day operation, day one through the Tunnel and down to Wool Road then onto Armentières Square next day.

Over the carnival weekend the Shuttle ran continuous free trips along the Stalybridge section which proved hugely popular. The return to Marsden was on the Monday/Tuesday so Crew and a Skipper were needed for 4 days. I assisted on the Wool Road – Stalybridge section on the way out, and Wool Road to Standedge on the way back. I was designated to take the first shift for the return tunnel passage – exciting yet daunting at the same time.

I've taken boats through tunnels many times but Standedge is something else. Because the Shuttle sits fairly high in the water, you soon discover the appropriate posture to steer is best described as bent. Your helmet is rapidly appreciated as an essential part of the day's wardrobe and I'll never again tell anyone that the tunnel goes straight through the Pennines.

After about 30 minutes we met the support crew at an adit that crosses to the old railway tunnel for one of several safety checks. Handing the tiller to someone else I straightened myself out and relaxed – the amount of concentration required to steer a boat in the confined space that's Standedge Tunnel is pretty extreme. The passage took around 1 hour 40 mins – not a record but for such an experience it's good to take your time!



Far from Home ... The Marsden Shuttle moored at Stalybridge.





Yvonne in her role as the 'Watery Witch'

Eric Wouds

One 'special operation', I must confess, was my fault. I asked about plans for themed weekends, prompted by a proposed trip on a Santa Special on the Kirklees Light Railway. Mike couldn't recall any and I wondered if we could think of something to do.

and balloons to the kids and extracting additional money from the adults by getting them to hunt for buried treasure (a sort of raffle) whilst a soundtrack of spooky sound effects downloaded from Amazon played away in the background.

*concluded over*

As the Shuttle doesn't normally run after October, Christmas was out but Halloween was approaching and I suggested a Halloween special. We gave the Shuttle a bit of a makeover for the weekend, including pirate flags and bunting, creepy cloth curtains, rubber bats, a few spiders, a pumpkin and lots of skulls. My wife, Yvonne was the Watery Witch, handing out sweets



Eric Wouds

I got the pirate gear out and the face paint to be the Ghost Pirate Captain. On Saturday, Terry Lomas crewed in a rather disturbing mask and a black cape and on Sunday Adam Moolna joined in wearing a jaunty Pirate hat and brandishing the plastic cutlass.

As an experiment, I think it was a success since lots of people said they enjoyed it. The children in particular thought it was brilliant. Number wise the takings indicated that we probably operated at about 60% capacity and on more than one occasion we had people waiting to get on. There had been some advance publicity but our passengers mainly didn't know about it until the day. Hopefully there'll be some word of mouth and we'll have a busier time next year. Whatever it's all good publicity for HCS and an enjoyable and fun day for the crew.

Since the Water's Edge Café is opening at weekends through winter we'll try and get the Shuttle out a few winter weekends too so a Santa Special isn't out of the question.

Checking my diary I see that I either Crewed or Skipped the Shuttle 13 times this year. There are however 32 operating weekends between Easter and the end of October and if you add the school holiday outings and the occasional wedding charter, that's a lot of Skipper/Crew days needing to be covered. Sadly therefore there are days when the Shuttle can't run through lack of crew. I've had a couple of days cancelled as I've had no one to crew with me, so that's 2 more days it could have been out if we'd have had just a couple of people with the time to spend one day on the canal.

I hope I've been able to provide an accurate impression of what it's like to be part of the Shuttle crew family. I volunteered not because I am short of things to do but I suppose because as a Council member I felt a certain duty to ensure a Society asset was used more effectively. However, I wouldn't be a member of HCS if I didn't have an interest in canals and everything that goes with them, and boating is fairly fundamental, after all.

It's not every Canal Society that can give its members a real 'hands on' opportunity to operate a working boat while providing the support and assistance to gain the qualifications needed to be an Inland Waterways Skipper. It's a bit of a challenge, but I can genuinely say that I've enjoyed every bit of it and I look forward to next season.

As I've mentioned, there were some weekends in 2016 when the Shuttle stayed at its moorings as there wasn't anyone available to run it. If you've ever thought about crewing, why not give it a go? Apart from having a good day out, you'll be helping to promote your Society at a time when we can't take anything for granted. The Shuttle is the visible sign that HCS is a viable and active organisation – let's make sure everyone who visits Standedge on Summer weekends knows that and maybe pick up a few more members too.

For more information, or to arrange a 'taster' day, contact Mike McHugh via [mccq.mike@gmail.com](mailto:mccq.mike@gmail.com) or get in touch with the HCS Office. We'll soon have you standing on the Shuttle stern deck with a big smile on your face!

**Eric Woulds**

# Whitelands Tunnel, Ashton-u-Lyne - Part 1

Leading a walk from Portland Basin to Stalybridge along the Ashton and Huddersfield canals as part of the recent Heritage Open Day events in Tameside, we passed through Whitelands Tunnel, now opened out, directly above Lock 1W and the start of the Huddersfield Narrow Canal. For some years I have had a fascination with the history of the 'Tunnel'.

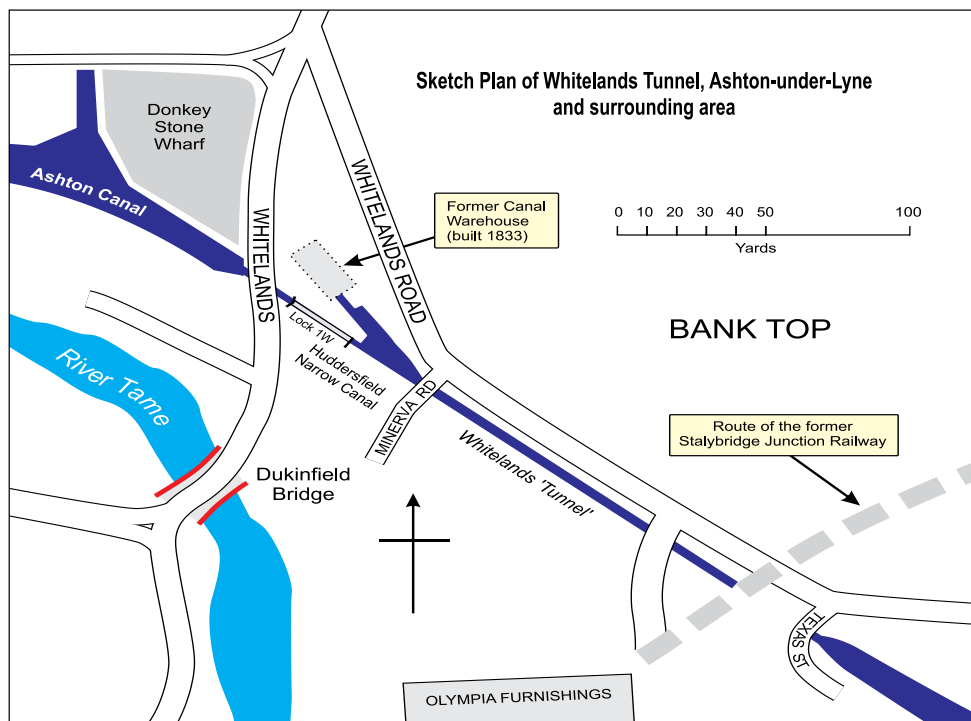
The Ashton (Manchester, Ashton and Oldham Canal in full) was being 'cut' when support for the Huddersfield Canal was in the process of soliciting. The original Act of 11<sup>th</sup> June 1792, authorising the construction of the Ashton, specified its eastern limit at Dukinfield Bridge over the River Tame and Ashton Wharf, now known variously as Ashton Old, Eli Whalley's or Donkey Stone at Whitelands, Ashton-u-Lyne, was a natural terminus for the canal;

stopping short of the Ashton-Dukinfield turnpike road and the obstruction of the aptly named Sand Hill (today's Bank Top).

The Huddersfield was enacted on the 4<sup>th</sup> April 1794 and it seems quite likely that work on both canals was taking place at similar times in that area. Both Companies shared Benjamin Outram as Engineer and George Worthington as Clerk.

To continue the Ashton navigation, the Huddersfield Canal Company built a bridge to accommodate the turnpike road and sited their first Lock immediately afterwards, raising the canal to road level in preparation to negotiate Sand Hill.

It was decided to tunnel through the hill, rather than construct a route around it; no doubt encouraged by the sand and gravel deposits making up the body of the hill



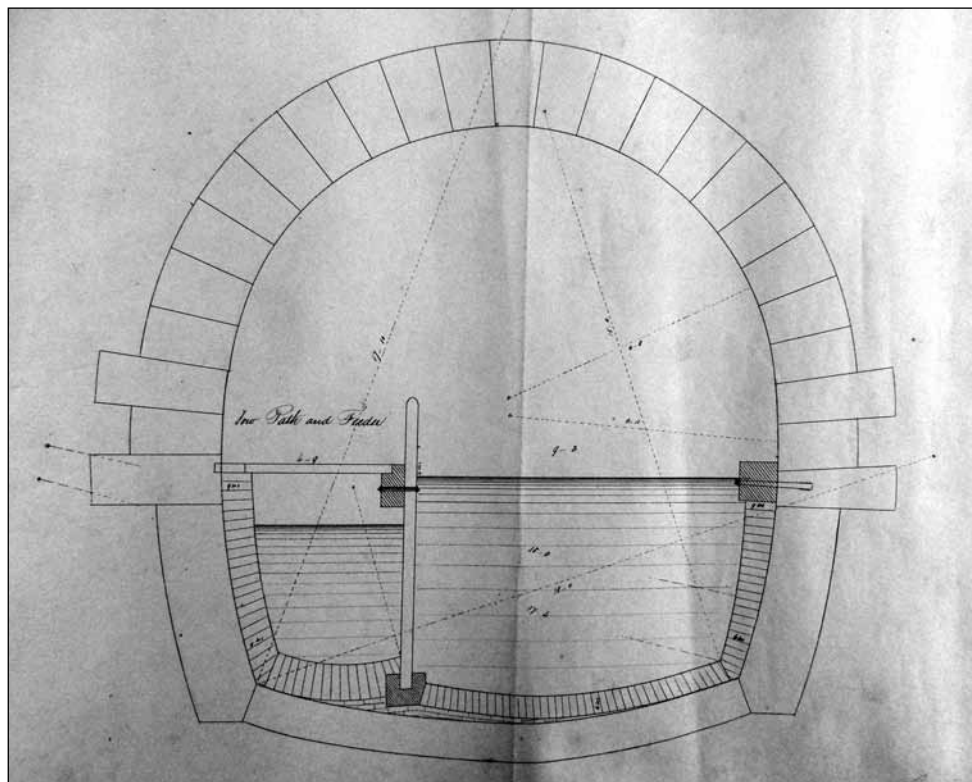
and the consequent ease of tunnelling. However, it would need extensive lining to form a stable structure.

There are no direct references to the construction of the tunnel in the Canal Company Minutes<sup>(1)</sup>, but an engineering cross-section, copied in July 1839, may represent an original specification (below). Of particular interest is the wooden planking that lines the channels and a rather modest Tow Path suspended over a Feeder. The channels appear to be separated by substantial planking, of a watertight specification, to maintain the different levels. The Feeder was for the Ashton Canal and had its source from the River Tame, some distance upstream, from an area known as Mabholes, between Lock 3W and the present day Clarence Street. The accommodation of the Mabholes Feeder within the structure of Whitelands

Tunnel suggests a certain cooperation between the Companies.

The Company Minutes infer that the Tunnel was open to navigation during 1796, though at a meeting in January 1797, it was represented *"that the feeder of the Ashton Canal which is carried under the Towing Path of the Huddersfield Canal through the Sand Hill at Ashton underlyne takes from the Huddersfield Canal one Lockful of Water at least every twelve hours by Leakage in the planking"* The Ashton Committee instructed their engineer to *"cause that Grievance to be remedied"*.

When the Huddersfield Committee asked the eminent engineer, Robert Whitworth Snr., to view and report on the line of the canal and its works in June 1797, he submitted his report that August<sup>(2)</sup>. Regarding the Tunnel through Sand Hill,



he agreed that tunneling was a better option than carrying the route around the point of the hill, though added "... *the Tunnel is very badly executed, ...*"

The Tunnel appeared to operate without incident until the Spring of 1820 when Mr Raistrick (the Company Engineer at the time), reported to a meeting of the Committee "*the Tunnel at Ashton is in a dangerous state and wants considerable repair*" The Committee promptly resolved that the Earl of Stamford, as landowner, should be approached for "*terms for the Land above the Tunnel in order that the committee may determine whether to repair or cut it open*". Negotiations appear to have been very protracted, as over three years later, Mr Raistrick reports that the Tunnel "... *is in a very dangerous state and that it is highly expedient that it should be cut open.*" The Committee agree and advertise by handbill for contractors to make offers for the work. A sub-Committee is appointed to assist Mr Raistrick in the negotiations and letting of a contract. Another year passes and in June 1824, a larger sub-Committee is appointed "*to assist Mr Raistrick in the cutting open or otherwise securing the Ashton Tunnel*".

On this occasion, it was quickly decided to "*cut open a certain part of the West end of the Tunnel and also another length near the East End*".

It should be noted that the Canal Company Minute Books are littered with Resolutions that were never put into effect, but here, judging by

a subsequent claim for compensation by a Mr Reyner for "*injury done to his Land over the Tunnel at Ashton –underline(sic) ...*" certain works must have taken place. Furthermore, Priestley<sup>(3)</sup> states that the tunnel "...*at Ashton, (is) one hundred and ninety-eight yards long, cut through a complete body of fine sand*" compared to a length of 172 yds depicted on the Ordnance Survey 60" map, surveyed in 1849, matching the present day portal to portal distance. How the 26 yards of cutting open were distributed between the West and East ends is unclear, though it may be significant that the Company proposed to build a warehouse at the Ashton end at this time (its entrance arm still survives) and creating some extra navigation may have helped the project. Nonetheless, this partial cutting open appears to have stabilised the tunnel for the life of the Canal Company.

**Bob Gough**

1. *Minutes of the Committee of the Huddersfield Canal Company (1794-1843)*. Microfilm copy at Ashton Local Studies & Archives.
2. Robert Whitworth (Snr.), *A Survey of the Huddersfield Canal*, Letter dated 11<sup>th</sup> August 1797, transcription published in *Pennine Link* Issues 31 to 34.
3. Priestley, J., *Historical Account of the Navigable Rivers, Canals and Railways of Great Britain*, (1830).

A derelict Canal Company Warehouse and Lock 1W at Ashton in 1955





# Uppermill Community Action Network

With Autumn now well underway and Winter around the corner, UCAN has focused on continuing the planting of wild flowers at designated areas along the towpath (*photo below*).

On our Project Day on 27th October, we made excellent progress with these efforts, when, in addition to the Bluebells and Daffodils planted on previous project days, other flower varieties were also planted. We were able to do this as a result of the very generous donations made to the Group by UCAN member Nick Watts and other supporting folk of Uppermill. To all of those who made donations of flowers, we extend a very big 'thank you'.

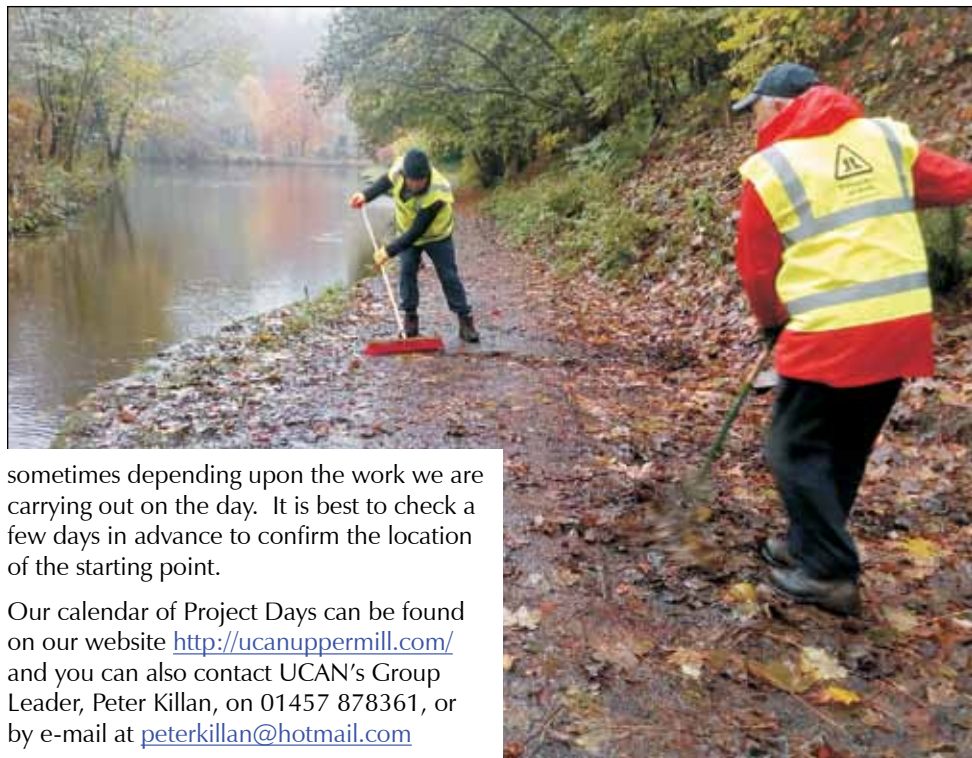
On our following Project Day, which was November 12th, we focused on sweeping dead leaves from the towpath, (*photo top opposite*) starting at Limekiln Lock (23W). We plan to extend this activity to sections

further down the towpath towards Wade Lock (21W) on future project days. We also completed the planting of all the wild flower bulbs in the wooded area under the viaduct. Hopefully we will all enjoy them in full bloom come next Spring.

Whilst working on the Canal we have watched, with great interest, the current Canal and River Trust work to replace the Lock gates at Dungebooth Lock (22W). We were very pleased that Project Manager, Jim, was happy to give us a talk explaining the work currently in progress. The talk was very interesting for the group and we thank Jim for giving his time in speaking with us (*photo bottom opposite*).

We will be continuing with our Project Days in the New Year and we warmly welcome newcomers to join us on future group activities. The usual meeting point is 10am at Limekiln Lock, but this is changed





sometimes depending upon the work we are carrying out on the day. It is best to check a few days in advance to confirm the location of the starting point.

Our calendar of Project Days can be found on our website <http://ucanuppermill.com/> and you can also contact UCAN's Group Leader, Peter Killan, on 01457 878361, or by e-mail at [peterkillan@hotmail.com](mailto:peterkillan@hotmail.com)

Photos: Nick Watts





# Street Scene Greenfield Group

The Autumn has been another busy time for the Group with their various activities. Weather permitting, work will be able to continue throughout the Winter months.

In October, volunteers were able to take advantage of CRT's workboat being in the area on two occasions and managed to cut back a huge amount of vegetation whilst having a cruise on the canal itself (*below*).

The remainder of the project days have concentrated on repairing and replacing more of the fencing along the stretch between Hall (20W) and Wade Lock (21W). The end is now in sight! Many thanks to Greg Barratt, Tesco's

**"The more Volunteers there are, the easier the tasks become and greater respect for our surroundings follows."**

Community Champion for organising so many helpers, not only from our local store but also from other Branches.

If you haven't volunteered before and would like to be included in the mailing list for details of our activities, please contact Project Leader, Gill McCulley: have a chat on 07963 521195 or email her: [gillmcculley@yahoo.com](mailto:gillmcculley@yahoo.com)

Fencing repairs will continue, more gravel is to be laid and vegetation cleared. It's all good fun and an enjoyable way of getting some exercise, meeting other members of the community and spending time in the fresh air!

Photos: CGRA

CGRA

**STREET SCENE GREENFIELD GROUP**

*would like to wish all readers  
A very Happy Christmas and  
a Healthy & Happy 2017*



*Peter Lowe (L) and CRT colleague  
on the final stretch of fencing.*



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# Community Roots

Well, the Summer is over and Autumn is passing into Winter. So, what's new? Firstly I would like to start with introducing myself as the new Community Roots Project Leader, having taken taking over from Rhys in July this year. I have an extensive background in working with communities and managing environmental projects such as parks and gardens, so I am only too aware of the positive impact local people can have in improving and sustaining change for the better.

As I look back over the last few months, I realise what a privilege it has been and continues to be working on the SSSI sites on the Rochdale Canal and the Huddersfield Narrow Canal. The enthusiasm and support I have been given by our volunteers and local groups has been by far the most rewarding part of this project to date.

We have undertaken many tasks to support and enhance the SSSI sites and the canal as a whole, with projects ranging from canal

clean-ups, to working with Mather Street Primary School to produce their own SSSI photo calendar and many other volunteer / community tasks besides. Each group and task has been a rewarding experience for both myself and the volunteers involved, whether it has been with a litter picker in hand or stood at a stand to support the Canal & River Trust Share the Space campaign. In all of these areas the volunteers have always been ready willing and able to support the Community Roots project in any way they can.

The Summer months have also presented us with an opportunity not only to strengthen the links with the groups already working in the SSSI sites, but to reach out to new groups and volunteers. We now have strong interest from Bury College and their students. Our plan is to involve Bury College in our ecological surveys of the canal and its surrounding habitat. This will certainly provide a larger picture of the general ecological health of our SSSI sites.



Photos: James Wynn



*Bottom Left: Volunteers with the Community Roots Project*

*Top Right: Our Peter Rawson with Cllrs. Leanne Feeley (with board) and Eleanor Ballagher at Armentières Square, Stalybridge.*

*Below Right: Volunteers at Slaithwaite.*

We have a wide range of future projects planned, such as, lock painting, small mammal surveys, wildflower meadow planting, local art projects and the re-planting of reed beds. These will be in addition to the continual on-going maintenance and improvements made by our regular adoption groups. I am encouraged to say that the future of the Community Roots project looks to be going from strength to strength.

So, if you feel like a day out on the canal with a group of like-minded people, you will always find a warm welcome from our volunteers on the Rochdale Canal and the Huddersfield Narrow Canal.

If you wish to get involved or have any suggestions for a project in your area, why not contact me at:

[James.Wynn@canalrivertrust.org.uk](mailto:James.Wynn@canalrivertrust.org.uk)

I look forward to hearing from you soon

**James Wynn**  
Community Roots Project Officer



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## 74 Club Members

We welcome the following intrepid boaters who have successfully navigated the Narrow this year.

D J Ryall	MAGIC
Mr R Smith	KINVER
A Smithee	TWO JAYS
Mr J Smith	AMY
Ms K Fagan	Y-KNOT

### ***Make your voice heard!***

*Comments entered on the application form are forwarded to both the Canal & River Trust and Manchester & Pennine Waterways Partnership. This helps influence the decision-making process for work on the Narrow Canal and improvements to the navigation of our 'Everest' of the system.*

## **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.

An application form can be downloaded from our website:

<http://www.huddersfieldcanal.com/#74-club>

or collected from the Tunnel End Café, or simply send a cheque payable to 'Huddersfield Canal Society' with a covering note to:

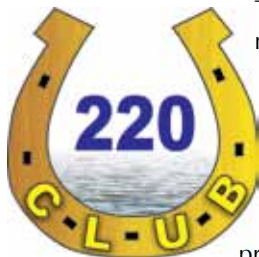
74 Club Plaque

Transshipment Warehouse, Wool Road  
Dobcross, OLDHAM OL3 5QR

## **HUDDERSFIELD CANAL SOCIETY** **welcomes the following new members in 2016**

2875	Mr Harry Pratt,	
2876	Mrs Glynis Mather,	
2877	Mr Warren Maxwell,	
2878	Mr Frank Carter,	
2879	Mrs Jennifer Seddon,	
2880	Mr Paul Kaye,	
2881	Mr Phil Smith,	
2882	Mr Chris John,	

## 220 Club - 11th Draw



The Club gathers momentum, as we now have 60 subscriptions, giving a quarterly Prize Fund of £144 with a first prize of £96 and second

prize of £48! The more who subscribe, the higher the prize fund offered for your £2 a month stake.

To join, you need to complete the enclosed application form or it can be downloaded from our website. Do consider completing a Standing Order and then you'll never miss a draw.

For legal reasons, only Huddersfield Canal Society members are eligible to subscribe to HCS 220 Club, so if you are reading this and not a Society member, join us and then sign up to the 220 Club.

**AND here are the results of our eleventh quarterly draw:**

**Total Subscribers:** 60  
**Total Prize Fund:** £144

**1st Prize:**  
Mr T Johnson winning £96

**2nd Prize:**  
Mr V Willey winning £48

*Congratulations to the prize winners!*

## Another Puzzle for Christmas

12 02 23 07  
10 02 22 05  
26 01 13 04  
11 02 09 09  
28 01 06 03  
05 01 26 05



28 02 23 06  
17 02 02 04  
14 02 44 03  
17 01 10 01

*Solution in the Spring 2017 Issue*

### MEMBERSHIP RATES

Individual	£9.00
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Articles, letters and comments for Issue 197 of Pennine Link should reach the Editor at Transhipment Warehouse, Wool Rd, Dobcross, OL3 5QR by **26th February 2017**

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