

Pennine Link

Magazine of the Huddersfield Canal Society



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Huddersfield Canal Society Ltd

Registered in England No. 1498800 Registered Charity No. 510201

Registered Address: Progress House 396 Wilmslow Road Withington Manchester M20 3BN

Transshipment Warehouse, Wool Road, Dobcross, Oldham, Lancashire, OL3 5QR

Office Hours: Monday - Thursday 08.30 -16.00 Friday 08.30 -13.00

Telephone: 01457 871800 Email: hcs@huddersfieldcanal.com

Website: www.huddersfieldcanal.com

Patrons: Timothy West & Prunella Scales

Council of Management

Alan Stopher 101 Birkby Hall Road, Birkby, Huddersfield,
Chairman West Yorkshire, HD2 2XE Tel: 01484 511499

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

Mike McHugh The Old Chapel, Netherton Fold, Huddersfield,
Treasurer & Co. Secretary West Yorkshire, HD4 7HB Tel: 01484 661799

Patricia Bayley 17 Greenroyd Croft, Birkby Hall Road, Huddersfield,
Council Member West Yorkshire, HD2 2DQ

Graham Birch HCS Ltd, Transshipment Warehouse, Wool Road, Dobcross,
Council Member Oldham, Lancashire, OL3 5QR Tel: 01457 871800

Martin Clark HCS Ltd, Transshipment Warehouse, Wool Road, Dobcross,
Council Member Oldham, Lancashire, OL3 5QR Tel: 01457 871800

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

Peter Rawson 45 Boulderstone Road, Stalybridge, Cheshire, SK15 1HJ
Council Member Tel: 0161 303 8003

David Sumner MBE HCS Ltd, Transshipment Warehouse, Wool Road, Dobcross,
President Oldham, Lancashire, OL3 5QR Tel: 01457 871800

Keith Sykes BEM 1 Follingworth, Slaithwaite, West Yorkshire, HD7 5XD
Council Member Tel: 01484 841519

Eric Woulds HCS Ltd, Transshipment Warehouse, Wool Road, Dobcross,
Council Member Oldham, Lancashire, OL3 5QR Tel: 01457 871800

Tony Zajac HCS Ltd, Transshipment Warehouse, Wool Road, Dobcross,
Council Member Oldham, Lancashire, OL3 5QR Tel: 01457 871800

NON-COUNCIL POST

Bob Gough Administrator



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Issue 199

Alan Stopher



The Explorer Cruise is run on tea - Taking a break on the Diggle Flight (left to right): Ali (HCS), Kim & Nicky (nb One from the Vine) and Duncan (Tudor Cruising Club).

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Front Cover: Steve Wood brings his nb Bream out of the portal at Tunnel End, the last of the convoy, into a packed basin.
Back Cover Top: Ray Butler with a useful purchase from the Marina. Bottom: HCS Volunteer, Paul Leeman, on the windlass at Lock 22E on a particularly wet day in Slaithwaite. Photos: Alan Stopher



Editorial

This is my penultimate Editorial for Pennine Link because I advised Council at our meeting in July

that I am intending to pass the baton (or should that be the blue pencil) after our Winter edition of Pennine Link.

With my forthcoming retirement in mind I am pleased to find myself able to devote a substantial part of this edition to a range of good news stories concerning events, groups and individuals who contributed to the life of our Canals during the Spring and Summer.

First in line are all of those involved in organising, assisting with and participating in the Explorer Cruise which took place in the final week of June. You will find extensive coverage of this in words and pictures in the pages of this edition, but I would like to take this opportunity to offer my personal congratulations to all of those who contributed to the success of what was a ground-breaking event.

Many people were involved and they all played their part so I am reluctant to single out individuals. However, I feel justified in making particular mention of Ray Butler who introduced the idea as a means of promoting our Canals and sold it to the Canal & River Trust (CRT). To our Chairman Alan Stopher who led the planning on behalf of the Society and Keith Sykes who led the fleet on its journey.

In passing I would like to add that it has been said that during the Cruise the team work and camaraderie between the volunteers, the boaters and the CRT staff demonstrated the waterways at their best. In the light of this and having had a foot in both camps for the past five years I am saddened on occasion to hear the Trust and its staff referred to in the same negative terms as its predecessor.

I would like to repeat what I have said before, that the Canal and River Trust is not British Waterways. It has been my experience over the past five years that difficult decisions are not taken lightly at national or regional level. Also that the staff from the Chief Executive down have a genuine concern for the waterways and all of their users. Moreover, as demonstrated during the Cruise, when called upon to do so, individuals are more than happy to go the extra mile.

Moving on, I am pleased to offer our congratulations to our friends from the Street Scene Greenfield Group. The group was one of the first to formally adopt a length of the Narrow and updates and images of their activities have been a regular feature in Pennine Link over the past four years.

It was very good news to learn that they have been awarded the Queens's Award for Voluntary Service. This is the highest award given to volunteer groups and in its sector it is the equivalent of the MBE. Further details of the award and how it was celebrated will be found in the Group's update in our Winter edition. Needless to say, they are immensely proud of their achievement, but are keen

to emphasise that it is seen as a reward for all the volunteers who have worked with the group since it was set up.

Congratulations are also due to the CRT's Manchester, Pennine and Potteries (MP&P) team for success in two areas. First they are proud to have been recognised in two categories of the 2017 Living Waterways Awards. In the Small Project category they were finalists for the work they did and their participation in the 2016 Manchester Pride event and in the large project category they were winners as part of the team that undertook the works to repair the Rochdale Canal after the disastrous floods on Boxing Day 2015.

Closer to home it is also a great pleasure to congratulate the MP&P team at the Standedge Visitor Centre who have received a coveted Silver Award from the Green Tourism Board. The award is given for achievements in sustainability and is proof of excellence in energy, water efficiency, waste and recycling, ethical sourcing and green values.

Last but not least, I want to offer our congratulations to Society member Frank Carter. You will recall that in our Summer Issue we reported that Frank was planning to undertake a sponsored walk on behalf of the Alzheimer's Society. I am pleased to report that he has successfully completed his walk despite the vagaries of the British Summer weather. His account of the first stage of the walk is included in this edition and the second will follow in the Winter edition.

Having written this piece and reported a succession of good news stories, a piece of very sad news reached us.

This is the sudden death on July 27th of Society member Grahame Searby. Grahame was a popular and enthusiastic member of our Shuttle crew and a tribute to him, written by fellow crew member Tony Zajac, is included in this edition of Pennine Link. All our thoughts are with his family and friends as they mourn his loss.

On this sad note, I will sign off with my usual best wishes for your enjoyment of the waterways this Autumn.

Graham Birch

ADDENDUM

Changes at The Loft Space

In the Summer 2017 issue of Pennine Link in the MP and P Update, it was reported that changes had been made at the Warehouse at the Standedge Visitor Centre. To accommodate these changes, it was necessary for CRT to serve notice to quit on the existing enterprise 'The Loft Space' operated by Ruth Gilbert and Janet Clark.

*Ruth has since been in touch with us to let us know that she and Janet are moving to new premises in Slaithwaite where they aim to continue with most of their teaching and groups. She tells us that updates will appear on their Facebook page and that the name and logo will go with them. Therefore, in future, they will be 'The Loft Space at Britannia Mills'. **GB***



Chairman's Report

As you can see from the Editorial and separate reports on the Pennine Explorer cruise and the Stalybridge Festival there has been

plenty happening this Summer.

For the first time our June AGM was conducted on the same evening as our volunteers' social, this time in the splendid Thomas Bourne room at Standedge Visitor Centre. It reminded all present that this fine building is something special and I'm grateful to the Canal & River Trust for the opportunity to use the space on a Friday evening in June when it could conceivably have been in use as a wedding venue. The evening was a first for the Trust as we helped to baptise their fine new bar.

As well as the usual AGM items we considered a resolution brought by David Finnis and Keith Gibson encouraging the removal of the 'pinch points' which preclude 7ft wide boats navigating the Narrow Canal. During the ensuing discussion we were reminded that a report had been produced by British Waterways in 2002 which had estimated the cost of increasing the navigable width from 6ft 10in to 7ft as around £8 million based on detailed measurements at all the locations concerned. At that time, soon after the conclusion of a number of successful Millennium inspired projects including our own, there was clearly some enthusiasm in official circles for seeking funds to deal with the pinch points but over the years since then other restoration projects in need of funding have become the focus. The notion of removing the pinch points has come up more recently when Council has been considering its own Business Plan.

It is thought that the current limitations mainly prevent the transit by certain historic craft such as Mikron Theatre Company's Tyseley. There have however been successful transits since 2001 by a number of historic craft from the Wooden Canal Boat Trust as well as some riveted steel-hulled craft which meet the current 6ft 10in gauge. Without some form of market research we won't have any idea of the potential interest in using a 7ft wide canal.

The approved resolution stated:

'This meeting requests that HCS Council raise the issue of 'pinch points' on the Huddersfield Narrow Canal with the Canal and River Trust to ensure that remedial actions to remove them are built into future maintenance programmes with Wade Lock in Uppermill being undertaken first to allow access to the winding hole.'

The Volunteer Social was, as always, an enjoyable gathering and it was pleasing to have representation from Greenfield, Uppermill, Stalybridge and Slaithwaite adoption groups along with colleagues from Canal & River Trust. Tony Zajac kept us amused with his canal-themed quiz. Our caterer for the night, Rachal's Kitchen, provided an excellent cold buffet and Trust staff ran the well-stocked bottle bar.

Our presence at the Stalybridge Festival including the running of 'free' boat trips is a welcome feature bringing to life the town's waterfront. HCS Council member, Peter Rawson, continues to work hard on leading the Town team and the regular clean-up sessions and this work is much appreciated by the Society, businesses and residents.

Apart from the occasional Saturday the Marsden Shuttle has run at Marsden on

all weekends and bank holidays until the time it was taken down to the Stalybridge Festival. Following this it has had some attention to the flooring at Portland Basin Marina before crews brought it back up to Marsden in early July. My thanks go to all the boat crews who have run the Shuttle including those from the East Manchester Community Boat Project who helped make the move to and from the festival. We were all shocked by the news that one of the boat crew stalwarts, Graham Searby died suddenly soon after. He will be much missed.

Trevor Ellis's maintenance team has been concentrating on lock gate painting on the dry days. Trevor himself has also spent many days in the Standedge Tunnel during his first season as a Volunteer Chaperone.

Bob Gough, our Administrator, continues to staff our office and do all those things that need doing to keep the Society running, many of which are unattractive to volunteers. After 29 years in the role his knowledge is invaluable and often shared with people in the wider waterways community.

There have been relatively few unplanned stoppages this summer on the Narrow. In the run up to the Pennine Explorer cruise it had become known that there was loss of water through the gates, cill and other parts of Lock 17W. As soon as the cruise had passed through, the opportunity was taken to carry out repairs to reduce leaks pending planned winter work at the same location. The east side of the Huddersfield Narrow Canal was suffering with loss of water below Lock 11E. An investigation was undertaken on Friday 4th August. A further loss of water is apparent at Lock 22E in Slaithwaite and this will cause disruption in the cruising season if grouting work has to be undertaken in mid-October as currently proposed.

We had a fruitful meeting with the Canal and River Trust's Waterway Manager David Baldacchino in early July to consider Operation & Maintenance matters. David's colleague, Daniel Preston gave us an insight into his approach to managing the risks inherent in operating the 200 year old waterway. The latest programme of 2017/8 Winter stoppages on the canal was tabled and it was noted that they were all scheduled for January to March 2018, so cruising could continue up to Christmas. It had been estimated that up to 20 lock-fulls of water per day were lost through leakage on the East side which vindicates the continuing emphasis on work aimed at keeping the water in the canal. We were advised that the Standedge Visitor Centre was receiving significant interest as a wedding venue justifying recent investment in improving facilities for that purpose.

As yet there has been no official feedback on the final design for the Colne Valley towpath improvements between Longroyd Bridge, Huddersfield and Lowestwood.

Reflecting on some of the things said by visiting crew members on the Pennine Explorer cruise, I realise we tend to take for granted how special the northern canals are. Totting up my own personal experiences during a recent month's cruise on the River Weaver, Bridgewater Canal and Leeds & Liverpool Canal, I realised that 4 of the 7 original wonders of the UK waterways are within a short distance of the Huddersfield Narrow and that is not counting the amazing Standedge Tunnel which is also one of the seven. For the record the four are Anderton Lift, Barton Swing Aqueduct, Burnley Embankment and Bingley Five-Rise. With my wife and various friends we have experienced all of these by narrowboat this Summer.

If you are out and about, enjoy the Autumn.

Alan Stopher



Manchester, Pennine & Potteries Update

The main event of the Summer for the newly expanded MP and P Partnership was the annual 'Outburst' which

again took place at the Manchester Mechanics Institute on Thursday July 13th. There was a healthy attendance of over a hundred representing a range of public, private and voluntary sector organisations.

After a welcome from Walter Menzies poet Nancy Campbell was introduced and she undertook the now traditional challenge of producing, by the close of the event, a poem based on words and phrases submitted by the audience. The two guest speakers, Paul Williams who is leading the Stoke on Trent Capital of Culture Bid 2021 and Paul Martin who is CEO of the Manchester LGBTQ Foundation were then welcomed.

Paul Williams opened proceedings with a presentation on the work that is taking place to develop and promote Stoke's bid to be named the next UK Capital of Culture. He spoke about the City's strong historic traditions as a home of art and culture which are embedded in the long established and world famous ceramics industry and how that industry in turn has close links with the city's waterway network. He explained that if successful the intention will be for the city's canals to serve as a backdrop to a range of events and projects.

CRT is therefore supporting the bid and CRT Enterprise Manager Simon Papprell has been co-opted as a member of the bid team.

During his presentation Paul said that a decision on which cities should be shortlisted to go forward to a final selection in December 2017 was imminent. It was pleasing therefore to learn that an announcement made the following day confirmed the inclusion of Stoke in a final short list of five.

The second presentation by Paul Martin focussed on the partnership which has developed between his organisation and CRT to promote the upkeep of the Canal Street section of the Rochdale Canal. He explained how volunteers were involved in removing litter and debris to keep the Canal clean and that a group known as the 'Village Angels' had been established to assist those who accidentally or otherwise find themselves in the canal.

Following the two guest speakers we welcomed CRT Chief Executive Richard Parry who gave a brief update on the achievements of the Trust which he reminded us was "five years old yesterday – July 12th". In his presentation he set out a series of very encouraging statistics. For example income in 2016/17 increased by 7% to £202.9 million, half a million volunteer hours had been recorded, community adoptions now numbered more than 175 and the number of Friends had doubled in two years to 22,000.

Looking forward, he identified the main tasks for the immediate future.

These are:

- *to build the case for an approach to Government for continued funding in 2021/22,*
- *to continue to grow support and reach out to new communities*
- *to strengthen links to the new administrations, such as that in Greater Manchester (GM)*
- *to continue to implement the changes necessary to ensure the Trust is equipped to meet the inevitable challenges which the future will bring.*

Richard was then followed by M P and P Waterway Manager David Baldacchino who spoke about the principal highlights and achievements in our own region and the priorities for the current financial year. In doing so he made particular mention of the recent HNC Explorer Cruise which he said had been highly successful and he paid tribute for this to his own staff, to our Society and the many volunteers who had worked together to ensure this success.

He also spoke about the progress which had been made at the Standedge Visitor Centre. He explained that the major investment suggested in the recent consultant's report was not currently programmed but that smaller scale investment had taken place and had achieved positive results. For example, a sum of £25,000 had been spent on equipment and furniture for the Thomas Bourne Room resulting in a significant and growing demand for its use for corporate functions and weddings.

Across the region as a whole he was able to tell us that in the past year volunteers gave 43,352 hours amounting to 5,767 days, that 21 community adoptions had been set up and that 1,000 planned preventative maintenance tasks had been carried out.

He concluded by saying that in the current year M P and P's aim is to continue the upward trend in all of these areas, to achieve the retention of the Green Flag Awards on the Macclesfield and Peak Forest canals, to progress work on Urban Cooling, to continue to engage with the emerging GM Spatial Strategy and to develop and promote the 'Share the Space' initiative.

Following a question and answer session the final set of presentations took the form of four short 'Soapboxes' in which individuals were invited to speak for five minutes on a topic of their choice. Of the four, it was gratifying that three were on topics related to the HNC. First, Claire Atkinson, Duty Manager at Standedge spoke about the recent Green Tourism Award, second, my colleague on Council, Tony Zajac gave a splendid talk about the Explorer Cruise and finally Roger Hope told us about the work of the Greenfield Street Scene Group.

The final part of the morning was devoted to a workshop session when participants could choose from a list of topics and take part in a facilitated discussion on topics of particular interest to them. We then finished off with what has become the tradition: a crowd-sourced poem from our guest poet, Nancy Campbell.

Graham Birch

Pennine Explorer Cruise 23rd June - 1st July 2017

The idea for the Pennine Explorer cruise came from Ray Butler, who was until recently a member of Canal & River Trust's Manchester Pennine & Potteries Partnership and has been a leading light in the Macclesfield Canal Society.

He proposed a guided cruise along the lines of the ones run successfully by the Birmingham Canal Navigations Society to encourage use of the lesser-cruised sections of the system. The idea gained traction following discussions with a number of us in the Huddersfield Canal Society and it soon became evident that the whole venture would gain the backing of the Trust. It just needed a bit of planning as well as promotion amongst the boating fraternity. Once your Council agreed to the idea, a small team started putting together an itinerary and booking documentation.

The beginning of the week chosen coincided with the Stalybridge Festival which would ensure a number of boat movements for local people to witness. A maximum of 12 boats was thought desirable given the challenge of managing water through the 74 locks as well as those to be passed through on the Marple or Ashton flights. It was recognised that boats longer than around 57ft would have to return via Standedge because of the size limitations of the Huddersfield Broad Canal and Calder & Hebble Navigation. It was seen as important to 'do something' each evening, preferably including aspects of local history and culture and we were also keen to provide volunteers to help with locks. After all we wanted to make it easier for boaters to make the

spectacular passage. One of our number, Keith Sykes, took on the role of boat crew organiser as he and Margaret were intent on bringing their Stafford based narrowboat Morning Mist on the cruise.

An unknown quantity was how well the canal would stand up to intensive use over a period of only a week. One concern was the fact that a dry Pennine Winter had left reservoirs at a relatively low level in April and May. If it was to go ahead some rain was needed. In the end we had nothing to worry about on that score as June weather provided the necessary top up.

Helen Hall of the Trust coordinated media releases and I produced text and pictures for the daily HCS website update which was uploaded by Bob Gough and Martin Clark. Others were encouraged to tweet and message Facebook friends as appropriate. Ideally we wanted to meet up with local decision-makers along the way. We were only partially successful with this but very grateful for the interest shown by a number of Tameside Councillors and Lord Pendry as the cruise passed through Stalybridge. Elsewhere the impact of the 'snap' General Election did not help.

We had no trouble assembling 12 boat crews and Keith ensured that there was a 13th shadowing us in case anyone had to drop out.

The group met at Portland Basin Marina on the afternoon of Friday 23rd June 2017 (right). Here the Canal & River Trust gauged the boats to check that they would fit through Standedge Tunnel. Help on Marple and Ashton Locks was provided by members of the Tudor

Cruising Club and Canal & River Trust Volunteers. Guy and Sandra Holding kindly hosted this first gathering at their office and chandlery. Welcome bags were provided to each crew with useful information about the trip as well as their complimentary Huddersfield Canal Society membership packs complete with Summer edition of Pennine Link, the Society's quarterly magazine, and a complimentary copy of the Towpath Guide.

Graeme & Barbara Sleeman, had travelled the furthest to join the cruise, from their base on the Kennet and Avon in Berkshire. Christine Kemp had brought Ketura from St Pancras Boat Club in London including taking part in the BCN Challenge, a 24 hour long contest to see how many miles and locks each crew can cover with only 6 hours rest.

The next morning HCS and CRT volunteers helped boats up to Stalybridge to moor between locks 6W and 7W.

Of the 13 boats gathered in Stalybridge, David Fletcher and his crew (below) won 1st prize for the Best Presented Boat awarded by the Stalybridge Carnival committee.



In the evening all the crews headed to the legendary Stalybridge Buffet Bar for pie and black peas and liquid refreshment. We were joined by friends from the Calder Navigation Society who were destined to help with the locks on the east side.



Julie Arnold - Waterways Images

On the Sunday whilst the Carnival procession was being assembled in Stalybridge, the 12 boat cavalcade left the urban areas behind as it started the climb up the Tame Valley. 8 locks took the boats to Roaches Lock above Mossley and included a passage through the short Scout Tunnel. 'I've really enjoyed the day and it brings back memories of an earlier trip when I was so struck by the magnificent mill buildings set in the Pennine valleys' observed Pat Stow

of 'Diligent Too'. In the comfortable surrounds of the Roaches Lock pub, yours truly showed the Impossible Dream DVD made in the run up to reopening of the canal in 2001. The well-made film has stood the test of time and, said Ray Butler of 'Owl', 'it records the tenacity of those who stuck to their convictions when many doubted that the Huddersfield Narrow could be restored.' Afterwards there was a question and answer session before crews retired

to get some rest before the following day's challenge. I doubt that the pound below Roaches Lock has ever seen 17 boats moored up at the same time (*left*).

The next day was fine and sunny and the 'Everest' of canal pounds - 645 feet above sea level and the highest in the UK - was reached by the whole Pennine Explorer cruise plus one additional boat after a fascinating if challenging day (*right*).

With so many on the move on one day it was inevitable that there would be some adjustments needed to ensure sufficient water in all of the short pounds. However, an added complication was a failed downstream paddle on Lock 30W coming only a few days after the other paddle of the pair had become detached from its rack. Not daunted by

this, the Trust team put their mind to getting us through and succeeded. Phil Smith applied all his ingenuity to what he described as 'Heath Robinson engineering' and with support from his colleagues managed to sufficiently fix the damaged paddle to get all boats through, the last one passing through 32W at around 8pm (*right*). Steve Wood of Bream, a 70ft traditional narrowboat, said 'he'd not had so much fun for ages and when can we do it again?' Thanks go to friends from Tudor Cruising Club, volunteers from Huddersfield Canal Society and CRT's own volunteers for all their efforts

in helping the Explorer cruise keep on schedule. To round off the day Keith Sykes ran a canal-themed quiz in the Diggle Hotel.





The passage of Standedge Tunnel by 12 boats in one direction in the same day was something special.

The boats crammed into the waterspace between the eastern portal and the footbridge was something to behold and another canal first. It also provided the iconic image of the trip, one used by both the national Waterway press and local media (*left*). 'It's been a fantastic day' was the verdict as the crews tucked into barbecued sausages and burgers and a cask of beer from Empire Brewing at the 'put-up' food stall beside Tunnel End Cottages. Particularly appreciated was the help given by the chaperones who guided the steerers through the darkness during the 3 and a quarter mile tunnel passage and pointed out some of the historic features. These included two newly-trained volunteer chaperones

including our own Trevor Ellis who with the paid Trust staff ensured that the carefully planned timetable was met.

The weather turned distinctly 'Pennine' on the east side and 'wet Wednesday' will long remain in the memories of crews, staff and volunteers alike. Wall to wall water didn't stop the 12 boats descending the locks to Slaithwaite and judging by the evening gathering at the Swan pub it didn't dampen their spirits. 'Too much water' on the Huddersfield Narrow was the surprise verdict as boaters gathered for an evening of song and dance after a day of non-stop rain. David at the Swan had put out the bunting to welcome us, Thieving Magpies (*below*) and Slubbing Billy Morris dancing sides entertained us outside, and Enoch's Hammer folk group continued the musical entertainment in the cosy



lounge for the rest of the evening. The cruise's own bard, Ray Butler from Owl recited a number of verses on canal themes, many learnt during his time on the legendary BCN (Birmingham Canal Navigations to the uninitiated) and a good time was had by all. Thanks go to all the musicians and dancers, the landlord and his staff and not to forget the 6 volunteers who helped on the 21 locks down from the summit.

Thursday dawned grey. The drizzle got a little heavier around mid-day but despite this it was a better day for weather as 12 boats slipped gently down the 13 locks to Milnsbridge Basin. 'The boat with no name' which had been shadowing the 12 to Slaithwaite joined the main Pennine Explorer cruise as 'Troubadour' from the Kennet & Avon was due to lay over for a few days. Water levels were still high over the weirs which meant that some had to be drained off by the Trust when we reached Milnsbridge bringing an extra 12 lockfuls with us. 6 of us helped with locks and we were given great support by the Trust staff who managed the water. "We've had far more help than we ever envisaged on this trip", said Glenys Kershaw of NB Camarilla. (Below - Volunteer lock-wheelers Jean and Lesley at Slaithwaite.)

Keith Sykes arranged a special evening visit to the Colne Valley Museum at Golcar which involved a short



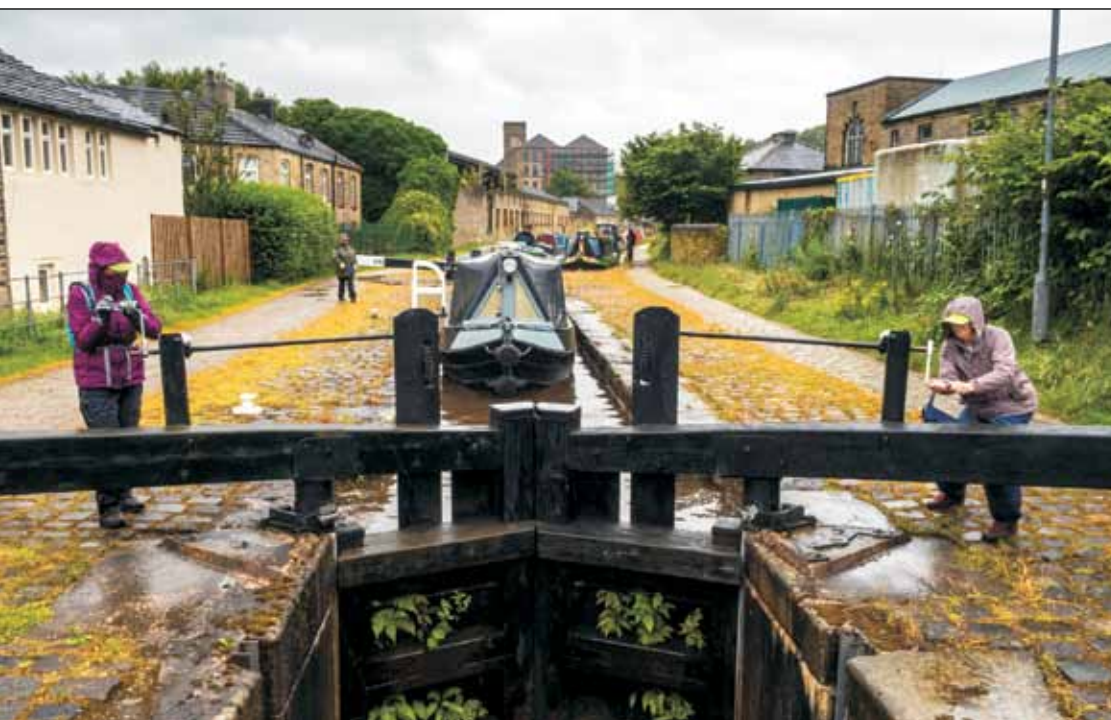
bus journey. 5 museum volunteers welcomed us, and in showing us around, explained about life in a weaver's cottage in 1845, and how spinning and weaving was done before the factory era (above). We were also shown the clog-makers workshop. A pleasant evening was rounded off with tea and biscuits in their well-appointed café. The Society is grateful for the enthusiasm of the museum volunteers and the time they made available.

8 locks down to Huddersfield sounds easy but it needed careful water management because 12 boats don't normally do it in quick succession. Excellent support from Canal and River Trust staff, again supported by five Canal Society volunteers at the locks, meant that all 12 boats arrived at the Huddersfield University moorings by 2.30pm (below). The University site full of boats was reminiscent of the rallies which the Canal Society held around 30 years ago to raise awareness of the restoration potential (inset).

In the evening we assembled in Heritage Quay, the splendid new University Archive centre, to award the plaques to all the boaters who had crossed the Pennines. Jack Kershaw on behalf of

the boaters thanked all involved for the organisation of the cruise and singled out particularly people for a special mention. They know who they are.

Afterwards I conducted a walk around Huddersfield Town Centre to show our visitors some of the fine buildings, sites of historic significance and explain what makes Huddersfield the town it is.



Diane Calverley





We paused to read the plaque on the façade of the original George Hotel (above) where the Huddersfield Canal Company had been formed in 1793. The building had been sited at the Market Place but the Georgian façade had been taken down and reconstructed in St Peters Street to make way for the new thoroughfare of John William Street and New Street. After taking in St George's Square, surely the finest urban square in the north of England, we retired to the Sportsman pub to slake our thirst.

The cruise through the Huddersfield Narrow's 74 locks was over but 9 boats headed down the Huddersfield Broad to Battyeford aided by volunteers from the Calder Navigation Society. To round off the adventure, South Pennine Boat Club (SPBC) and Calder Navigation Society (CNS) hosted a rousing last night of the Explorer cruise in the excellent club facilities at Battyeford.

Christine and Chris brought their 59 foot long narrowboat Ketura through the 1776-built locks without a hitch.

The 150-year old Locomotive Bridge was hoisted and dropped 9 times as the convoy left Huddersfield. By early afternoon all the boats were found moorings in the well-appointed marina taking the places of boats which were cruising elsewhere on the network. SPBC catering team supplied tea and scones as crews relaxed in the pleasant surroundings.

By 7pm around 70 had gathered for the final evening. Guest boaters and some of the Huddersfield Canal Society helpers joined SPBC and CNS members for an evening to remember. The three crews whose boats exceeded the dimensions of the Broad all made their way by car or bus to join in the fun. CNS provided a complimentary pie and pea supper and a fine range of desserts courtesy of Avril Davies and her team. SPBC operated their splendid new bar. The real ale, wine and soft drinks flowed. Peter Davies welcomed guests and club members resplendent in shirt jacket and tie, almost unrecognisable from the waterproofed biking lock-wheeler

of Wednesday. Richard Stead gave an informative potted history of the Calder & Hebble navigation including images of the 2015 flood damage and an insight into the unique C&H hand-spike. The raffle helped defray some of the costs and the prizes were happily shared between hosts and guests. Frank Auffret warmed up the audience with a ditty or two ably assisted by the SPBC male voice choir and the excellent Kirkpatrick trio provided live music to listen and dance to.

It was an opportunity to thank all who have been involved in the cruise – the boaters for coming, the canal society (HCS and CNS) and boat club (Tudor Cruising and South Pennine) volunteers for helping with the passage and final night mooring respectively, all those organising and hosting evening events, Canal & River Trust staff and volunteers for ensuring that no challenge was left unresolved.

Was the cruise a success? By common consent it was. Hard at times when the weather was at its worst but all will take home happy memories of their Pennine transit. Pat Stow of Diligent Too summed it up: 'It's been a fantastic experience'. It has certainly demonstrated the resilience of the Huddersfield Narrow Canal. When was the last time 12 boats

made the same passage on the same day in the same direction? If it has ever been done before it will be in the early 19th century. It is doubtful whether 12 boats have ever started from the same pound and moored in the same pound. It required careful water management each evening and morning particularly at Milnsbridge to ensure that everyone could get through. It also demonstrated the commitment of a wide range of volunteers who were only too pleased to welcome and help boaters enjoy their local area. As for Tame and Colne Valley residents, I lost count of the number who commented about how nice it was to see so many colourful boats at once.

I've now heard from or seen all the boat crews who continued their cruising. Some returned via the Rochdale, three headed back over the Huddersfield taking their time and most took the long way around via the Leeds & Liverpool. As Ali and I took our narrowboat in the opposite direction we saw five of the boats and had much-needed help from two crews up the 21-lock Wigan flight.

Will we do it again? Who knows but we certainly demonstrated what was possible.

Alan Stopher

*Photos:
The author except where credited*



Pennine Explorer Cruise - Epilogue

On the day after the Explorer Cruise reached Slaithwaite, Council member Eric Woulds posted the following on Facebook. Reproduced here, it reflects the pleasure and sense of achievement generated by the Cruise. (GB)

There aren't many days when you have a prolonged warm glow, even though it's cold and wet. Yesterday was one that I'll remember for a long time, as I suppose it's a culmination of something that I've been involved with intermittently for over 30 years.

Back in the 1980s my day job was mainly helping the day to day running of the Kirklees Community Programme scheme which was restoring sections of the Huddersfield Narrow Canal. The money was only there to restore the easy bits – the big blockages in Huddersfield Town Centre and Slaithwaite were always going to be the challenge and those involved with the restoration knew it was going to be some time before the restored sections would be linked up. Of course, full restoration happened and the HNC has been a working canal since 2001.

However, for some reason, yesterday's events seemed to bring home what a success story this has all been and in particular how Slaithwaite has changed its attitude to the canal restoration.

Towards the end of the first stage of restoration in the late 1980's some Slaithwaite residents were to say the least sceptical. We had an exhibition of a first draft of a Town Centre restoration plan in the Library. It was not very well attended, perhaps reflecting the level of interest at the time. However, I had

plenty of comments about the loss of the cherry trees that used to grow on the line of the (filled in) canal and the return of the dead dogs and stagnant water that children would no doubt drown in if the canal was ever restored.

Thirty years later and I am helping a 70 foot former Fellows, Morton and Clayton working boat through Lock 24 as it approaches the bit of the canal that some said would never re-open.

The Pennine Explorer Cruise hits Slaithwaite and a steady procession of 12 boats pass through the same Lock, and two more Locks below it, to moor up in Slaithwaite Town Centre overnight. Three of them are moored up just above Lock 22E. Before restoration the copings of this Lock used to be visible in a car park that stood on the line of the canal – completely filled in, but intact below.

Yesterday evening I stood by the head gates, looking up the canal at moored boats where cherry trees used to grow, with a big grin on my face. Slaithwaite Town Centre looked so right – possibly unique. Whoever could have thought any different?

On to the Swan for a jolly good knees up with the Slubbing Billys, Thieving Magpies and my band mates Enoch's Hammer. Our guests are the boaters who have provided the spectacle. We all knocked back a few pints, played some tunes and sang some songs to celebrate. It was one of those days that makes everything worthwhile.

Eric Woulds

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.

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Frank's Walk for Alzheimer's - Part 1

Tuesday 20th June 2017

My 70 mile walk around the South Pennine Canal Ring started on the 3.75 mile Huddersfield Broad Canal at the Aspley Junction, Huddersfield at 10.00am.

I soon pass the Turnbridge Lifting Bridge which spans the canal. This eye catching bridge opened in 1865 and is operated by a combination of wheels, chains and counter-weights to lift the bridge to allow boats to pass along the canal.

Walking on I meet a friendly couple of voluntary litter pickers walking along the towpath having collected 2 bags of litter along the way, making a determined and admirable effort to 'Keep Huds Tidy'.

I reach Lock 1 with its attractive Lock Keepers Cottage at 11.45am, then join the Calder and Hebble Navigation at Cooper Bridge where I plan to walk a further 9 miles to finish the day at Sowerby Bridge. I reach Brighouse Basin at 2.00pm and after a break for lunch walk on towards Elland, but am diverted onto the Elland Road at one point due to subsidence works being carried out by CRT. I reach the picturesque setting of the 3 Salterhebble Locks with its shortest middle lock and Lock Keeper's cottage at 4.45pm. Walking on through beautiful countryside towards the junction with the Rochdale Canal, I conclude my day's walk at the Navigation Inn, Sowerby Bridge at 5.50pm

Wednesday 21st June 2017

Today I start to walk the 32 mile Rochdale Canal leaving at the junction of the Calder & Hebble Navigation in Sowerby Bridge at 11.30am.

I pass through a pleasant area of lush woodland before reaching the small towns of Luddenden Foot and Mytholmroyd followed by the market town of Hebden Bridge and attractive canalside moorings. I enjoy lunch at the very popular Stubbing Wharf pub – referred to in the late Ted Hughes poem 'The Stubbing Wharfe', before continuing on walking through the beautiful Calder Valley to the town of Todmorden on the borders of West Yorkshire and Lancashire where I finish at 5.10pm.

Thursday 22nd June 2017

Today I aim to reach the summit of the Rochdale (183 metres above sea level) and leave Todmorden at 9.30am. I walk past the Great Wall of Todmorden, built with approximately 4 million bricks, towards the Gauxholme cast iron Skew railway bridge constructed to carry the Manchester to Leeds railway over the canal. Onward then, past Grandma Pollard's Chippy by Lock 27 and climbing the steep sided Calder Valley towards Walsden before reaching Lock 36 – East Summit Lock - in good time to have a light lunch in the Summit Inn. I then begin my descent, passing 10 locks on the way towards the town of Littleborough and onto Rochdale but have to decide to finish at 2.30pm on reaching Smithy Bridge when light drizzle becomes heavy rain.

Friday 23rd June 2017

Today I plan to walk the final 13 miles of the Rochdale Canal to reach Castlefield, Manchester. I leave Smithy Bridge, again in drizzle rain at 9.40am and am soon walking close to the Southern parts of Rochdale. I see my first signs of reaching

Manchester at 10.20am when a tram passes over the canal on its way into Rochdale town centre.

I stop for a quick drink at the Ship Inn, Slattocks before heading on down to Chadderton where I enjoy lunch in the Rose of Lancaster. Leaving at 2.30pm, I continue walking and find myself crossing the busy M60 Manchester Outer Ring Road by means of a lengthy footbridge.

The scenery slowly becomes more industrialised as I proceed further along the canal into Manchester, passing

frequent locks between Newton Heath and Manchester City centre. On this section, I observe the remaining red brick warehouses and one time cotton mills together with the forever increasing developments of modern apartments etc. Finally arriving at the north side of the city centre I descend the Rochdale Nine and finish at Lock 92, named Dukes Lock as it was originally owned by the Duke of Bridgewater. I complete my day's walk at 6.25pm and head straight to the nearest pub!

Frank Carter



Frank Carter

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Stalybridge Festival - 24th & 25th June 2017

This is the fourth year that the Huddersfield Canal Society (HCS) has supported the Stalybridge Festival Weekend. We have worked with the Festival Committee and Stalybridge Town Team to provide a full weekend of activities centred on the regionally famous Stalybridge Carnival which has been running for over 40 years.

Although the weather conditions did not quite live up to previous years, the event benefitted greatly from the visit of the inaugural Pennine Explorer Cruise; organised jointly by HCS and the Canal and River Trust.

The 12 boat 'flotilla' of narrow boats arrived on Saturday and provided a great spectacle on the water. The public had not experienced such a number of boats on the canal in the town centre since the early days following the reopening in 2001, marked by its celebratory 'Stalybridge Splash' event.

Lord Tom Pendry and Councillors Sweeton and Feeley spoke to several of the boaters and welcomed them to Stalybridge.

The large number of boats was particularly significant for Lord Pendry who, as

MP for Stalybridge and Hyde, had campaigned hard for the funding from the Millennium Commission and English Partnerships which was needed to complete the restoration of the canal.

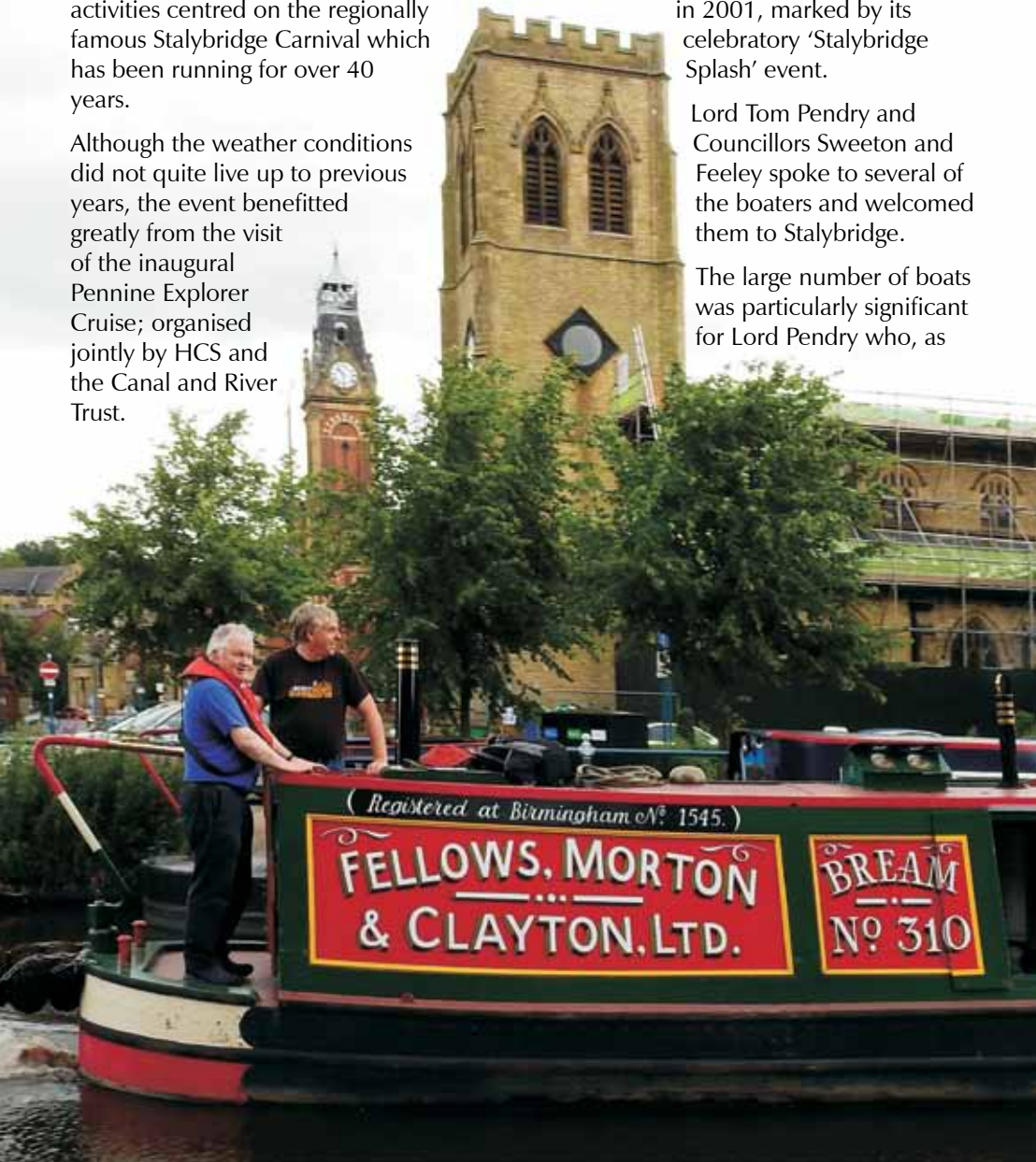
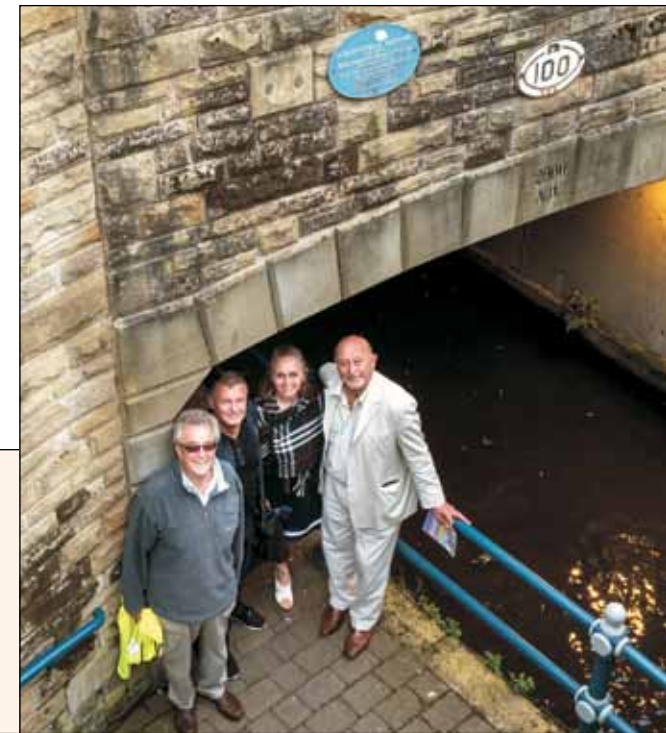
The competition for best boat was judged by the Carnival Queen and Princess and was won by nb Water Avens owned by David Fletcher, pictured below by Nigel Hobson.

Right:

Pictured below the plaque commemorating the reopening of the canal are (L to R) HCS's Peter Rawson, Councillors David Sweeton and Lianne Feeley and Lord Pendry meeting before they tour the boat gathering. (Alan Stopher)

Left:

Steve Wood at the tiller of his FMC 'Bream' Explorer Cruising into Stalybridge at Armentières Square. (Bob Gough)



On Saturday evening the famous Stalybridge Station Buffet Bar served up a 'pie and black peas' supper for the boaters which seemed to go down very well indeed. The visit also coincided with their Beer Festival so there was a nice range of real ales on offer.

It was really great to see all these boats on the water at the same time and hopefully the cruise can be put on again in the not too distant future.

As in previous years there were free canal boat trips for the public for the full weekend courtesy of Tameside Canal Boat Trust's boat Still Waters and HCS's Marsden Shuttle. Both boats were very busy on both days and thanks are due to both crews who worked tirelessly to keep everyone happy.

It was particularly pleasing to see the Marsden Shuttle flying the flag for HCS at the event again. The logistics and volunteer support needed in bringing down the Shuttle from Marsden and returning her after the event is onerous and significant. A special thank you is due to the HCS colleagues and all the other volunteers who were involved.

The weather put a bit of a damper on the proposed Vintage/Classic car and motorbike displays on the Saturday but the local Ukulele band, Stalybridge Strummers, did us proud with their performances. An NSPCC Family Fun Day was held in the nearby Civic Hall on Saturday which also helped bolster attendance on the day.

On Sunday there was a large craft market with a nice range of stalls in Armentières Square. Huge crowds turned out to witness the iconic Carnival parade and to enjoy a range of activities including live music and a fun fair in Cheetham Park. In Armentières Square we also had live music from Enoch's Hammer and many thanks to my HCS colleague, Eric Woulds, for organising that.

All in all a great weekend made special by the visit of the Pennine Explorer Cruise. Many thanks to all those involved in planning the event and helping out over the weekend.

In particular we are very grateful for the programming of the Cruise to coincide with and complement the Stalybridge Festival.



Below Left: Beyond the call of duty; Mike McHugh braves the weather on Marsden Shuttle during a shower as the Still Waters' crew prepare for another run. (Alan Stopher)

Above: The skirl of the City of Liverpool Pipes and Drums traditionally heralding the arrival of the Carnival Parade. (William Lonsdale)

Below: Amongst the variety of colourful floats, a homage to Roald Dahl's 'Willy Wonka's Chocolate Factory'; the adults making the Oompa-Loompa characters their own. (William Lonsdale)

Next year's Festival will be on the weekend of the 23rd and 24th June so please make a note in your diaries.

We are fortunate to have a very active volunteer group in Stalybridge working to help improve the canal side environment in the town centre. If you would like to get involved please send your email address to hcs@huddersfieldcanal.com and we'll let you have details of future volunteering dates.

Peter Rawson



Obituary

Grahame Searby

Grahame Searby was the archetypal Yorkshireman and now Yorkshire and indeed, the Huddersfield Canal Society are the poorer for his untimely passing.

In the time I have known Grahame he had a dry sense of humour but was never one to stand on ceremony. He once wrote to the Society council a letter of complaint about the state of the engine in the Shuttle and how it didn't have the guts to pull the skin off a rice pudding! I remember that the paper was simply a page torn out of a spiral bound pad and it still had all its holes and all the bits of paper hanging off it. At times he was quiet and hard to fathom out whilst at other times he was surprisingly forthcoming but still came across as somewhat reserved; perhaps hanging on to the remnants of a smile which he was trying not to let break through in case people knew what he was really thinking!

Grahame has been a real asset to the Huddersfield Canal Society over the years and has put in many hours of volunteering as a crew member and skipper. Even though Grahame initially had a motorbike and Suzie a car, like a lot of crew, he was up early catching buses to arrive on time. With not having a car and living over towards Holmfirth, many times he had to battle his way over the 'tops' to attend boat meetings and social occasions. At times it was impossible to get over because the weather was so bad with no way of getting back that same night. Grahame, though, took all this in his stride.

In Marsden, at the 'Tunnel End Inn' they used to hold 'Open Mic' nights and after playing on a few occasions we both got talking, when Grahame said, "If you want, I'll come over and play the mouth organ as well!" I replied, "Great, let's do it".

Sadly we never quite got round to organising it. However, not many people will know, that one evening Dr Bob Gough actually came down with us and played the didgeridoo! We were so proud.

We trained together on various boats such as 'The Shuttle', 'Still Waters' and 'Community Spirit' from about 2005 onwards. Grahame used to crew with Suzie and for a long time they worked together as a team. We always seemed to end up doing our First Aid training in the same group and we had many, many laughs as we practised giving 'mouth to mouth' with the rubber dummies! About 10 years back we were both part of a large contingent of trainees employed to take the 'Shuttle' down to Guy's boat yard in Portland Marina for some work to be done on it. I took a lot of photos on that trip and we got plenty of practice on the locks on the way down.

As our boat exams were fast approaching I can remember the look on Grahame's face when, in preparation for it, we were sent into the cabin, two by two, to be quizzed by our resident expert; Bob Maycock in an impromptu 'Q & A' session, as the boat steadily made its way along the 'cut' down to Ashton.

Grahame worked on the 'Shuttle' on many a Sunday. At one time the Golden Rule from the BW office at Standedge Tunnel End was that, after putting the boat away, HCS 'Shuttle crews' had to be out of the Visitor Centre compound by 4:30pm at the latest so the BW staff could lock up, but on one particular occasion, Grahame, Suzie and myself emerged from cashing up inside the boat only to find all the gates had been closed and it suddenly dawned on us; we were locked in!

There was only one thing for it; we had to climb over the wall or swim across the canal. So ... after throwing our bags over the wall, I scrambled over first; (I was more sprightly in those days!) and it wasn't too bad. Then over scrambled Suzie. Graham was last and seemed to be making 'heavy weather' of it, at which point Suzie called over to Grahame but there was no answer so Suzie exclaimed, "Ok! See you Grahame, me and Tony are going to run off together!" Well I've never seen a bloke climb a wall so quickly or swear so profoundly as he scaled the compound

wall and was over as quick as a shot! We shared many a joke as we worked together and I remember him telling me about the time he ended up sleeping overnight in a large pipe.

Many people have commented that, as a crew member, Grahame was a grafter and was good at what he did. It's true; he was. Grahame was always willing to help out at short notice, was always great to work with and we are so sad to lose such a terrific person and friend.

Tony Zajac



Eric Woulds

Grahame (right) with Tony at Lock 17W, Roaches helping take the Marsden Shuttle to the 2016 Stalybridge Festival.

Obituary

Robin Witter

At the end of last year Dr Robin Witter died after a long period of ill health.

I met Robin in 1976 one Sunday lunchtime in the Tollemache pub in Mossley. He asked the landlord 'does anyone here know about the Huddersfield Narrow?' From that chance meeting we built up a long friendship.

Some may remember his electrically powered river cruiser Little Gypsy which attended many canal festivals and was in the flotilla of boats to be in the first official passage of Standedge Tunnel. Before that momentous day I had cruised most of the canal network in England north of the K & A with him and my wife, Diana, sleeping on board and usually moored outside a pub where he would persuade the publican to allow him to plug in to recharge the boat's batteries which had a two/three day capacity depending on speed, current (rivers) and length of day.

Robin was at Leeds University when I was there but he was completing his PhD; me a Bachelor degree.

He was one of three brothers who all had outdoor interests/hobbies and between them ran the Witter Towing Bar company, formed by his father Colin, based in Chester.

Robin also owned AC Canoe Products and it was in one of his canoes that we paddled through the Tunnel in the early eighties before the gates were padlocked! Robin would tour the country looking at redundant canals and particularly tunnels.

He encouraged me to continue the restoration fight and we discussed tactics

often listening to Mahler, Richard Strauss and operas both at his Deeside residence and on his silent Little Gypsy.

He introduced me to David Hutchings when I introduced him to a gathering of canal worthies in Chester when we - HCS - looked in awe at his achievements. David would not take no for an answer. Neither did we. He became acquainted with Professor R. Schofield author of a biography of Benjamin Outram who consulted Robin on Standedge Tunnel.

His exploits brought attention to the Narrow. His knowledge and enthusiasm for canals inspired me.

He is survived by Heather, his wife, his two sons Nigel and Edward and Julia his daughter.

David Sumner



David Sumner

Robin at Greenfield in the late 1990s

220 Club - 14th Draw

The Club now benefits from 64 subscriptions, so we can offer a quarterly Prize Fund of £153 which means the first prize has indeed reached three figures at £102 and the second prize, £51. 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 thirteenth quarterly draw:

Total Subscribers: 64
Total Prize Fund: £153

1st Prize:
Mr J Donnelly winning £102

2nd Prize:
Mr J King winning £51

Congratulations to the prize winners!



The Standedge Tunnels A new book by Trevor Ellis

Society Vice-Chairman and HCS Volunteer Coordinator, Trevor Ellis, has, since last year, volunteered with Canal & River Trust as a Boat Chaperone, accompanying private boaters through the canal tunnel.

Through his observations, he became concerned that some of the previous publications concerning the tunnels (canal and railway) contained inaccuracies and that none covered them and their surroundings as a whole.

He also felt that much new research and unpublished parts of the now late, Geoff Brown, ought to be made available. *(Geoff was a recognised authority on the tunnels and the Society holds an archive of his detailed work.)*

It is hoped Trevor's book will be published in Autumn this year and perhaps the work will inspire others to look further into the history of these fascinating structures.

Bob Gough

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