

# Pennine Link

Magazine of the Huddersfield Canal Society



**HUDDERSFIELD**  
CANAL  
SOCIETY  
ASHTON-ON-LINE - HUDDERSFIELD

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# Huddersfield Canal Society Ltd

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## NON-COUNCIL POST

**Bob Gough** Administrator



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

# Pennine Link

Issue 212



Winter over Standedge Tunnel. Taken last December from the side of Pule Hill, it shows the line of ventilation shafts towards Standedge with Redbook Reservoir dam disappearing into the mist.

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Cover: Volunteers, working off a pontoon, clearing vegetation from the walls of Lock 23E, Slaithwaite. Photo: Alan Stopher



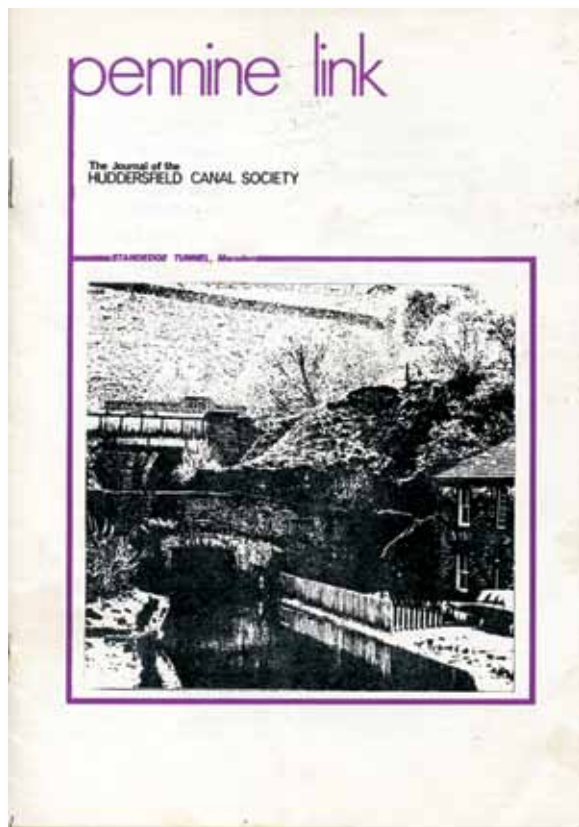


## Editorial

As Chair of Huddersfield Canal Society it is probably fitting that I take the Guest Editor's rôle for this final edition of

Besides looking back at what is a significant milestone in our Society's life, we need to look forward. My Chairman's Report goes into more detail on the challenges we face and how we are approaching them.

Another theme in this edition is the work of volunteers and the management of volunteers. Peter Rawson's piece



on the efforts of the Stalybridge Town Centre team and the Uppermill Canal Action Network's diary show just what an impact can be made by community groups which regard our canal so highly.

Pennine Link in its current form. This coincides with our Administrator, Dr Bob Gough's final publication and his imminent retirement.

A major portion of this edition has been given over to Bob Gough's personal recollections of his 33 years as the Society's Administrator along with some insights into his life before HCS. Bob's publishing expertise has turned our magazine from a black and white document produced using rudimentary desk-top publishing to a thoroughly professional product.

This Issue is numbered 212 but a look at the extensive archive linked to the Society website, shows that the first five editions were described as Bulletins. The first magazine using the name Pennine Link was No. 6 in August 1975. The cover is pictured here. I was reminded of this when Brian Beagley, member 0038, joined us for the recent Annual General Meeting held using the Zoom conferencing application and showed us his copy. Do take a look at the archive which Bob has painstakingly scanned and Martin Clark compiled for the internet at: <http://www.hcs2012.com/plink/index.htm>

Trevor Ellis updates us on the work of the Society's maintenance team and I'm pleased to be able to publish a two-page article by Terry Sigsworth about the new emphasis on volunteer management at the Standedge Visitor Centre and how such activities dovetail with their revenue earning activities.

The eagle-eyed might spot that the list of volunteers on the Council of Management is getting shorter. Long standing Trustee, Keith Noble, tendered his resignation in the run up to the November 2021 AGM. Keith has been a Society member since 1990 and in the mid 1990s was a Director of the Canal Society's restoration arm, HCS Restoration Ltd as well as part time dredger/tug driver. A member of Council since 1998, Keith brought his experience as a Civil Engineer and former Deputy Chief Officer in Local Government and knowledge of the waterways as a narrowboater. I valued his thoughtful contributions on a range of waterway and management issues and on behalf of the Society want to thank him for his time and commitment over many years and wish him and his wife Jill all the best for the future.

I venture to suggest that no country on earth has such a high level of volunteer activity. Today is a far cry from the days of Canal Company Lengthmen who would walk long distances every day to ensure that the canal functions well for its commercial customers, locks mechanisms are greased and chambers and overflows are kept free of detritus. Paid staff on the 'cut' are now at a historic low and yet there are many tasks which need doing to keep up maintenance standards. It is coming up to ten years since British

Waterways morphed into the Canal & River Trust (CRT). In 2012 there were a few volunteers who worked for the navigation authority but now even such important roles as tunnel chaperones and reservoir supervisors are undertaken by folk giving their time freely.

Another sign of the times, is the three pages of memories about departed friends. A full list of Brian Minor's deeds would read like a history of the Huddersfield Canal Society. A few gems are picked out by our contributors here as is an appreciation of Danny Stead and the working relationship he engendered with HCS Restoration Ltd. In a letter to the Editor, David Finnis also adds his thoughts on the sad passing of John Sully.

Before I draw a line under Bob Gough's long spell as Administrator I'm pleased to say that he and Trevor Ellis have completed a second imprint of the Standedge Tunnels book so it is back in print with a new cover and additional pages. If you did not get a copy the first time it can be ordered on our website at the price of £10 plus postage and packing at:

<https://huddersfieldcanal.com/shop/>

The Society is reaching the end of an era as our last paid employee departs. On behalf of the Huddersfield Canal Society I send our heartfelt thanks to Bob for all his work covering a wide range of activities and wish him and Lyubimka all the very best for his impending retirement.

Oh, ... and if anyone is interested in helping create future publications to keep members informed please respond to the advertisement on Page 31.

**Alan Stopher**



## Chairman's Report

Members who read my letter which went out with the AGM Notice will be aware that your Society is in a period of transition. Most

My thanks go to all of you who have responded to the postcard. We had an initial glitch when some smartphone users found the link did not correctly connect to our website's membership page but happily this was resolved quickly. The response so far has been good and to continue the process we will be targeting those who have yet to respond, by sending a second postcard. We too are on a learning curve with the new technology and I'm grateful to Tina Cooper of Eco & Sage Ltd for her 'pro bono' work in getting us up to speed on Office 365 and supporting our new Membership Secretary, Patricia Bayley, with making the transition.

For some time we have had a number of our members who have preferred to read Pennine Link as a pdf version rather than having a printed one sent to their homes. These will have no difficulty in reading emailed newsletters in the future. I am aware however that there will be some members who do not use email and/or do not find it easy to read documents sent by that means. Once we have a more accurate record of the numbers of members in this category we will be able to consider what, if any, arrangements will be needed to provide printed newsletters.

A further 'channel' for communication is use of social media. Currently we have a Facebook page for the Society and another for the Marsden Shuttle. The latter is proving the most lively with regular posts and feedback. As with all such methods, regular entries are needed to keep the pages topical and I'm grateful for the efforts of colleagues on our managing Council who find the time to keep us in the public eye. For those who do not use social media, our intention is to increase our use and topicality of the Society website.

will be aware of the imminent retirement of our Administrator, Dr Bob Gough, after almost 34 years in the role. In order to maintain essential functions, work is going on to enable our files to be accessed by a number of volunteer duty-holders without visiting an office. To do this we have set up an Office 365 account which holds our directory of digital folders in the 'Cloud'. In due course we will seek to dispose of the Transshipment Warehouse as we will not need such extensive premises.

Currently the Society has had no offers to edit the quarterly magazine and we will be losing Bob Gough's considerable technical and design skills so our method of keeping members up to date is sure to change. In future we envisage publishing news in digital form and emailing it to all who have provided an email address. This will save considerably on the cost of printing and mailing. We don't want to lose contact with any member but the availability of printed material to post is likely to substantially reduce from early next year. As an environmental organisation, efforts to save the use of paper are in accord with the practices of many fellow bodies. This, together with rising printing and posting costs, set against our desire to maintain subscriptions at 1996 rates, means change is inevitable.

Along with my letter in October 2021 we started to make a concerted effort to collect email details from members to supplement the addresses which we held for everyone.

The Zoom conferencing application has proved to be a boon during periods of lock-down and other spells when there has been heightened concern about meeting indoors. We've continued to use it for our Council meetings every 2 months and it has allowed us to keep in touch with partner organisations too. For the second year running we held our AGM on Zoom as well and it enabled at least one member from afar to join us.

Happily Bob Gough returned to full time work in early July 2021 after a number of periods when the Society availed themselves of the Government's Job Support Scheme. Without the furlough scheme our finances will have been put under strain.

The summer has seen a return of boats cruising our canals. It has been possible for some boaters to steer their own craft through Standedge Tunnel though this mainly applies to those vessels which have a cruiser rather than a traditional stern. The extra space on the counter in the case of the former configuration allows sufficient distancing for CRT volunteers to chaperone rather than steering the craft themselves.

Once again there have been a number of short term disruptions to navigation. The principal concerns remained loss of water above Lock 1E and above 29E. Low water in the Narrow and Broad either side of 1E had meant a period of navigation closure during September which was ongoing to keep boats afloat in Aspley Basin.

Navigation above Lock 1E still needed to be booked 24 hours in advance, which is far from satisfactory. The current arrangement means that the pound beside Huddersfield University is often left without water until a request for passage prompts water being allowed down from the pounds above. I know Canal & River Trust staff are as frustrated as we are, so I hope this reinforces efforts to find out where the problem lies.

West side short term stoppages have involved an issue at Lock 27W and a leak through the towpath between Locks 14W and 15W. A temporary fix was effective to get boats moving again.

The winter maintenance schedule has now started with all planned work due to be completed by Christmas. West side work involves grouting at Lock 29W. A similar task at 17W has recently been taken out of the programme to take account of priorities elsewhere on the system. Embankment crest raising and leak repairs at Mossley is programmed in the vicinity of Locks 14W to 15W. On the east side grouting at Lock 6E has been started which will be followed by similar work at 33E. At Hilltop Reservoir, Slaithwaite there is a temporary closure of the north-east side footpath to enable clearing out of the bywash.

Trevor Ellis's maintenance team supplements the efforts of the Canal & River Trust by devoting attention to issues which matter to towpath walkers and boaters alike. The cutting back of overhanging branches at this time of year benefits many as they enjoy the daily exercise opportunities presented by the canal. Attention to growth in lock chambers and trimming of vegetation at downstream approaches will help boaters avoid unwanted scratches to their paintwork. Pictured left are some of the team tidying up the former mooring point of the Moonraker Floating Tearoom above

Alan Stophier





Lock 23E at Slaithwaite. It is some years since the narrowboat moved to a new 'pitch' in central Lincoln so the area was overdue for making good as a lock landing for visiting boaters.

The Marsden Shuttle resumed operations in July. At first we limited numbers to half capacity to ensure safe distancing but more recently full complements have been possible subject to agreement with customers. The boat ran a good number of days through to end of October when the Scary Shuttle enticed Halloween customers who braved the heavy rain. We are lucky to have a good pool of skippers and crew who turn out enthusiastically whatever the Marsden weather throws at them. The fit-out of the new electric shuttle is progressing steadily. Completion is in prospect by Christmas followed by trials on the Lancaster Canal.

On the subject of the Society's volunteers I want to recognise two stalwarts who sadly passed away this year. Brian Minor's involvement started in the 1970s. From organising the Tameside Canals Festival through helping to manage HCS Restoration Ltd and even taking his turn as editor of Pennine Link, he was one of the key people who took the Society from being a group of enthusiasts to a force in canal restoration. In a different way, Danny Stead made his mark. He was British Waterways' works foreman for around 20 years and developed a strong relationship with the HCS Restoration Ltd volunteers restoring sections of the canal in the 1980s and 1990s. Both will be sadly missed.

As well as the energy and commitment of our volunteers we cannot run our Society without funds. Many of our members add donations when paying their subscriptions and recently there has been an increase in such generosity for which I would like to record my thanks. We do, from time to time, receive donations 'out of the blue'.

One such cheque came from the organisers of the Gathering Charity Walk in July 2021. This raised funds for four charities 'to help people reach the light at the end of the tunnel'. Appropriately, the 54 mile walk from Warrington to Huddersfield took in the entire length of the Huddersfield Narrow Canal towpath. The walk must have gone very well as the organisers saw fit to make a separate £100 donation to our Society. My thanks go to them as well as my appreciation for the work they do for the charities and the people they help. Passengers on the Marsden Shuttle will know that this now runs on donations rather than set fares. Many folk no longer carry cash with them and rely on card payments so I'm pleased to say that Mike McHugh and Martin Clark have instituted a card donation system using a QR code.

CRT have increased the number of Volunteer Team Leaders and in November we've had a fruitful face to face meeting to coordinate the Society's activities at Standedge Visitor Centre. Planning has started for joint events in the coming year. Dates to save in your diary start with 1st/2nd May 2022 when we will celebrate the restored canal's 'coming of age' and the public launch of the new electric shuttle boat. The Pennine Explorer cruise will be back in mid-summer with the tunnel passage of 12 boats planned for Thursday 30th June. It will be an opportunity for people to come and see the boats as they fill up the basin at Tunnel End. Sunday 31st July has been identified as the date for the Tunnel End Music Festival, a revival of a successful event in 2019.

In discussions with CRT Area Operations Manager Vicky Levine and Heritage Adviser Ruth Garratt, it has been decided to locate former icebreaker and maintenance craft 'Marsden' within the Standedge Visitor Centre compound: in the corner above the turning circle. Arrangements for forming

a cradle for the craft as well as delivery and cramage are still to be agreed and it could now be Spring 2022 before Marsden arrives.

Alan Stopher




Filling up the basin at Tunnel End during the 2019 Explorer Cruise - the same in 2022? Let's hope so!

Continuing the heritage theme I have sent in the Canal Society's comments on a draft Heritage Strategy for the South Pennine Park. If you don't recognise this description it is a branding which has emerged from Pennine Prospects, the partnership bringing together communities, businesses, charities and local authorities which have an interest in promoting and protecting the environment, culture and creativity of the Pennine ridge between the Peak Park and the Yorkshire Dales National Park. Those of us who know and love the 'Mills and Hills' with their associated canals and stark moorland scenery will understand the need to celebrate the area's special character and encourage sustainable investment. It is hoped that this 'badging' will bring the locality to wider attention.

As we move into winter, there is plenty to do behind the scenes to make the changes at the Society as smooth as possible. We will also be saying a farewell and thanks to Dr Bob Gough as he adjusts to retirement after almost 34 years of sterling service for your Society. I wish you and your families a peaceful Christmas and New Year.

Alan Stopher





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## Stalybridge Town Team Volunteers Group

This well-established and dedicated group has now been working to help look after Stalybridge Town Centre and its prominent stretch of the Huddersfield Narrow Canal for over 7 years. Their routine of meeting on the fourth Saturday of each month was unfortunately broken by the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic. The regular sessions were reconvened in March this year with increased numbers of volunteers and renewed enthusiasm.

The group works well with both Tameside Council and the Canal and River Trust and augments and enhances the activities of both organisations in the care of their respective assets in the town centre.

Other key partners are Holy Trinity Church, Stalybridge, and Stalybridge Tesco. Both organisations support the group with much needed hospitality and supplies and also very willing and enthusiastic volunteers.

The work of the group is much appreciated by the local community, many of whom have joined in to help.

This is a really friendly group which welcomes everyone and it's a great opportunity to meet like-minded folk and have some fun whilst doing some great work on behalf of the whole community. Children are most welcome to attend provided they are looked after, and supervised by parents, while they are with the group.

If you are interested in getting involved, please contact [STT20@outlook.com](mailto:STT20@outlook.com) and you'll be added to the distribution list and kept up to date on future sessions. Details of the main group sessions (normally the 4th Saturday of each month, 9.30 am start) are also listed on the Volunteers' cabin which is located in the corner of Tesco's car park closest to Armentières Square.

**Peter Rawson**



*A happy band of young and not so young ready to give the town centre a good going over.*

Dave Sweeton

## HCS Volunteers



Since the last update was published in the previous edition, we have moved on to concentrate on clearing vegetation

from lock walls; many locks on the canal have developed a coating of moss on the walls, which, over time, provides a home for larger plants and even small trees. This was even the subject of a comment in the recent Waterways World guide to the canal. I first noticed the problem a few years ago, when we had the drought and the canal was closed for a few weeks and the recent reduction in traffic due to the pandemic has provided more scope.

We started at Marsden, in order to minimise difficulties with the transport of the pontoon which we use, and through

July and August we worked our way down the flight towards Sparth, with a brief interlude to assist CRT in the stemming of leaks at Lock 29E, where the weather was far from kind!

At the time of writing, we have reached the guillotine Lock (24E) in Slaithwaite. Turnout has been good, though less than usual in September and October, with a number of people taking holidays. Scope beyond Slaithwaite looks a little more limited, as several of the locks seem to stay full, which suggests that the problem may not exist. A return to our previous worksite at Ramsden Mills/Trojan Plastics may be on the cards as, although we completed the painting of the Lock, we never got to finish the job by clearing the lock walls.

**Trevor Ellis**

*Moving on to Lock 23E and a moment of truth as the volunteers manoeuvre the pontoon into the lock chamber.*



Alan Stophier



## Obituaries - Brian Minor & Danny Stead

Past Chairman, David Sumner, writes:

Brian Minor joined HCS in the early days (Member since 1983). His wife, Anne who pre-deceased Brian, was secretary to Hugh Wainwright the owner of the company I joined in 1980 and who helped procure "Benji" our first trip boat. Both Brian and Anne were stalwarts of the Tameside Canals Festivals starting in the late '70s before Brian became more involved with the Society. He was a very keen Rugby player well into his sixties.

Keith Gibson, writes:

During the years in the 1980s & '90s, when David Sumner chaired the Canal Society and I was the chair of the Construction Group & later of HCS (Restoration) Ltd, Brian was on the Board of Tameside Canals Ltd & later of HCS (Restoration) Ltd between 1985 & 2001.

But his main role in those crucial years when we were restoring the canal was with what was called the Promotions Group bringing together volunteers from the festivals, boat crews & sales, and press & publicity activities of the Society. Through these years, Brian was one of a



Brian, with Sales Officer Pat Riley, not letting the dire weather at a Saddleworth Festival dampen his humour.

HCS Archive

group of key volunteers who took it in turn to chair that group - the others being Alwyn Ogborn, Jo Young & Jack Carr.

The importance of Brian's work over these years as one of the unsung heroes of the restoration was demonstrated when he was one of the small group of seven HCS members who were introduced to HRH The Prince of Wales at the official opening of the restored canal on 3rd September 2001.



Brian, suitably attired, with grandson George Tewson on his knee, aboard the Marsden Shuttle at Tunnel End on the occasion of awarding the Society's 2000th member to Bill 'Compo' Owen.

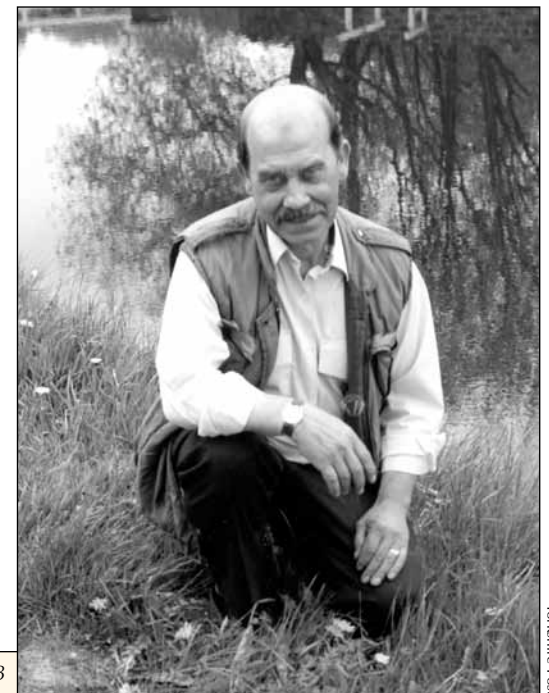
HCS Archive

Peter Rawson writes:

We are also saddened to announce the passing of Danny Stead, former Works Foreman for British Waterways for around twenty years. Danny worked closely with HCS (Restoration) Ltd., during the earlier stages of the canal restoration.

Danny lived close to us in Salybridge. Just as in his working life, he was well liked and respected by everyone and would chat happily to people while out walking his dog, Barney.

Our condolences go out to his wife Margaret and his family and friends. He is sadly missed by everyone who knew him.



Danny pictured by the canal in 1993

Yorkshire Post



# Uppermill Community Action Network

## June

There was an excellent turnout by the Uppermill Community Action Network (UCAN) as part of the national Great British Spring Clean organised by Keep Britain Tidy which ran from 28 May to 13 June 2021.

It was a double pleasure for us – a pleasure to meet up with fellow volunteers after such a long break due to the necessary restrictions around the Covid-19 pandemic and a pleasure that we could engage in this valuable environmental work.

## July/August

Our season began by focusing on the area between Moorgate Street and Wade Lock clearing vegetation from the side of the towpath.

On our next outing we concentrated on attacking the Himalayan Balsam which had taken over the woodland area near

the viaduct. As an invasive non-native species, it out-competes other plants.

We had, until the pandemic stopped our efforts, made considerable inroads in clearing the infestation along the canal side. However, it takes three to four consecutive years of effort to keep it under control; miss a year and you start over again, so persistent are their seeds.

We are pleased to report that the pond we created last year is now home to a range of wildlife and the waterside plants are well established.

The various flower beds by the canal were given a thorough tidy before the colder weather sets in. They are in fine shape but just a little overgrown, with a few fallen leaves which we like to keep as a mulch and shelter for wildlife.

The Summer season concluded with the usual litter-picking task, but gradually the 'haul' is decreasing as visitors and residents are apparently becoming more considerate.

## September

Assisted by Canal and River Trust (CRT) staff, we have begun the first contribution to Incredible Edible Saddleworth (IES) by installing two raised planters near Dungebooth Lock in Uppermill which will soon be planted with herbs and vegetables by local volunteers.

The 'Incredible Edible' movement has been running in many parts of the UK and across the world for several years.

We have also been busy clearing vegetation from the stone raised beds at Wade Lock and Lime Kiln Lock and then filling them with a variety of plants very kindly donated by our volunteers.

### To Contact UCAN:

*peterkillan@hotmail.com*  
*01457 878361*

*\* Watch out for acronyms, they can curse it.*

## October

Our volunteers and CRT have been out and about again this month on a variety of productive and very enjoyable outdoor activities, largely dictated by routine and ongoing projects.

We have been tending the two new raised wood planters near Dungebooth Lock and one has been planted with broad beans by the local group of IES; a fine example of partnership between UCAN, CRT and IES\*.

Our pond in the viaduct woodland has been covered in netting to prevent the accumulation of falling leaves, which would otherwise ruin our efforts in trying to introduce this wildlife haven.

It is heart-warming that the amount of litter we collect each time is now less than one bin liner. Our almost litter-free environment has been achieved by a consensus of those living, working and visiting our beautiful village.

**Karen Williams**



Left: Attention! Socially-distanced Company UCAN ready for Spring Cleaning duties, Sar!

Right: Installing raised planters at Dungebooth Lock as part of the Incredible Edible Saddleworth project.

Far Right: Volunteers protect the woodland pond with netting to intercept falling leaves.







## Standedge Volunteers

*Terry Sigsworth writes:*

Hello! I have had the privilege of working for the Canal and River Trust (CRT) at Standedge

Tunnel and Visitor Centre since the site opened in 2001.

I had just finished university at that time and started as a temporary visitor assistant, selling boat trip tickets and working in the shop. I became captivated by the place and am still here 20 years later. I love the Huddersfield Narrow Canal and especially Standedge Tunnel, still getting excited every time I go in the Tunnel. Tunnel End has such wonderful scenery and wildlife, an amazing history and heritage, and fascinating visitors who come here. I soon joined the Canal Society as a member.

I was lucky enough to be offered a secondment to develop volunteering at Standedge, which has been very successful and we now have two full-time Volunteer Team Leaders (VTL) coordinating groups of different volunteers. Some people volunteer on the boats, some form part of the grounds maintenance team and others have volunteered for additional rôles within CRT; some have joined the Canal Society work-parties led by Trevor Ellis.

I am now employed as a VTL for Tunnel Operations. This involves managing the private boat passages through the Tunnel and passenger trips, none of which would be possible without volunteers. Trevor Ellis, of the Canal Society, is also one of our volunteer chaperones.

Chaperones go through the Tunnel with the private boats, providing navigation advice,

pointing out hazards and ensuring safe passage. They also share their knowledge of the history of the Tunnel and note features of interest along the way.

Volunteers also drive a shadow vehicle which follows the boats through the Tunnel, driving alongside in the disused railway tunnel and watching the boats go safely as they pass the connecting adits. They check on the boat's progress and are available to help with evacuation in case of emergency or breakdown. The volunteer Tunnel Controller at Tunnel End coordinates the operation, including the daily trip boats.

The trip boats are piloted by volunteers, and we have a volunteer guide on board to bring the history of Standedge Tunnel to life. We currently have two volunteers who have been passed out as Boatmasters through our internal training programme and several more in training. It takes at least 6 months to train and then, to become a Boatmaster, you have to show evidence of your knowledge and undertake a practical test examined by the Maritime & Coastguard Agency. We have had two volunteers join the team with their own licence; piloting much larger vessels at sea!

We are always looking for new tunnel operation volunteers, and any new volunteers come to that, so if anything interests you, please contact me at: [Terry.Sigsworth@canalrivertrust.org.uk](mailto:Terry.Sigsworth@canalrivertrust.org.uk)

Our second VTL to join us on site is Gordon McMinn who looks after the grounds maintenance team of volunteers. He is also developing



new events such as our Christmas Market, musical events and canoeing opportunities. He is also tasked with improving the visitor experience at Standedge with new displays and signage and managing the Tunnel End Reservoir wildlife habit area and the woodland between our site and Lock 42E.

The grounds maintenance team have really improved the site through planting and creating interesting features. They have created a sensory garden and built a stage for outdoor performances. If you have a passion for gardening and are interested in volunteering to continue to improve our grounds for visitors please email: [Gordon.mcminn@canalrivertrust.org.uk](mailto:Gordon.mcminn@canalrivertrust.org.uk)

Andy Leatherbarrow is also a VTL based at Standedge, but he supports and develops volunteering on our local Huddersfield and Rochdale canals, in rôles such as rangers, lock keepers and volunteer operatives.

If this is something that interests you, please contact: [Andrew.Leatherbarrow@canalrivertrust.org.uk](mailto:Andrew.Leatherbarrow@canalrivertrust.org.uk)

We have invaluable administrative support from Lee Sewell, who deals with general visitor enquiries and activity bookings. If you would like any further visitor information please call 01484 844298 or email: [Lee.Sewell@canalrivertrust.org.uk](mailto:Lee.Sewell@canalrivertrust.org.uk)



Bev and Gary Earnshaw manage weddings and private events at Standedge and provide a bespoke, personalised service within our beautiful grounds and event space. This income-generating activity helps to support the continued operation of the site, ensuring that we can showcase our canal heritage and provide visitors with one of the 'Seven Wonders of the Waterways' experiences. If you are looking for a unique wedding or party venue, email: [Bev.Earnshaw@canalrivertrust.org.uk](mailto:Bev.Earnshaw@canalrivertrust.org.uk)



Victoria Levine is our Area Operations Manager. She is based at, and looks after, our Standedge site, and also manages the Huddersfield Narrow Canal (East side), Huddersfield Broad Canal and the Rochdale Canal from just below the summit to Lock 1 in Sowerby Bridge.

She is keen to involve more volunteers and also develop a closer working relationship with the Canal Society and can be contacted by email: [Victoria.Levine@canalrivertrust.org.uk](mailto:Victoria.Levine@canalrivertrust.org.uk)

Looking forward to welcoming you soon!

**Terry Sigsworth**  
Volunteer Team Leader

# JIDOKU 49

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The letters in this special version being:

P-A-N-D-E-M-I-C-S

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

Solution on Page 31

## Top hole

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## 33½ Years at the Society

I was flattered, and a little surprised, when the Editor asked me to contribute to this last paper edition and 'highlights of my past time with the Society' was the guide to content. What I have chosen to 'highlight' is naturally very personal and may seem curious now and again, but I must point out, I do not have a narrowboat, have a fear of water and much that I have done has been a day to day routine, though the variety of activities has kept the job interesting to this day.

First, I should explain how having grown up in North Cheam, Surrey, I have come to spend over 40 years 'up North' (By the way, there is a South Cheam station, but no Railway Cuttings, East Cheam in case Hancock fans are reading this).



14th February 1957, my first birthday, with an elder brother to watch over me. Mum was a ferocious knitter!

Members of a certain age may recall scratchily practising Marion Richardson letters with dip-in steel pens, reciting the times table from large navy blue wall posters, having your fill of free school milk and computers were large cabinets with big reel to reel tapes and plenty of flashing lights; well they were in films and the 'Man from U.N.C.L.E.'.

Before getting too sentimental, I'll say that my elder brother, Michael, blazed a trail through Junior school and on to Tiffin Boys grammar in Kingston-u-Thames. Although my 11 plus exam went well, having an elder brother at Tiffins was something of a 'free pass' and

I ended up being a perpetual schoolboy passing over each opportunity to search for a 'proper' job in favour of further study.

The Biology lab technician at Tiffins, June, had a cousin, Maureen, and they were both avid David Essex fans. Maureen lived in Failsworth, near Manchester, and each year would venture South, meet June and they'd see their idol in concert. In November 1974, Maureen came into the school looking for June and we met briefly; my fate was sealed. Correspondence and short visits north, culminated in marriage in July 1977 and relocation of this southerner.

I had spent an un-happy year at St Catharine College, Cambridge, but managed to transfer to the second year at Manchester University and could commute from our home – rather missed out on student life, but developed my interest in the Earth Sciences. More studying led to a PhD in Civil Engineering and then some post-doctoral research in medical computer vision at UMIST where I gained experience in computer programming and image processing. The research concluded and as luck would have it, the Government's Enterprise Allowance scheme was launched and I set myself up as ISIS Computer Consultants (*Egyptian goddess rather than Luddite terrorist*).

One of my clients was Oldham Countryside Service and once, I helped out on their display stand at an event in Salybridge. The 'pitch' next to us was manned by a chap (Grant McFarlane) from an organisation called the Huddersfield Canal Society.

We chatted and it transpired the Society had bought two computers and would like someone to assess their potential. Grant McFarlane was the Society's ecologist and at that time, the Canal in Tameside had been awarded Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) status due to the purity of the water and its flora and fauna, especially the variety of Pondweeds and the best stands of Royal Fern in the North West. Here was an ideal opportunity to record the flora and a few months later, ISIS was engaged to write a program which would map the canal and overlay a database of plant species.

Unbeknownst to me, my working on the program was an opportunity for management to assess my suitability for employment as a Trainer for their planned 'Computer Section' under the forthcoming Employment Training scheme. This prospect of employment was something of a relief as ISIS Consultants wasn't doing very well.



8th August 1982, a casual picture taken while walking with friends along the canal captures volunteers working on Limekiln Lock, Uppermill. Little did I know how much the canal would feature in my future.



And so, I started with Tameside Canals Ltd (a subsidiary of the Society) at the end of June 1988 which then became HCS (Restoration) Ltd during the restoration days. Sad to say, my wife Maureen died in 1996, but I married a Bulgarian folk singer in 2001 and we still live in Failsworth/Bulgaria. I became the Society's Administrator in July 2003 and now can look back on the past years with the Society as I approach retirement near Valentine's Day next year.

Pennine Link has definitely been a constant through my time here. Issue 99 (Autumn 1991) was the first I was involved with (self-processed and printed Black & White photos and wrestling with early Desktop Publishing software) and since then, the magazine and technology have developed over the decades; technology most notably. Our archive of Pennine Link has helped me establish a chronology of highlights.

It is quite appropriate to say that I got off to a flying start in 1991 following an appeal in the Spring edition (No.97) for a pilot who could fly the length of the canal for aerial photography purposes. By chance, Mr Peter Garside of Slaithwaite answered the call and I was thrilled to have a personal helicopter tour, circling Stalybridge a few times for plenty of pictures of the town centre and the area intended for Staley Wharf in particular. Peter's playing of the theme to M.A.S.H. added to the occasion. I should add the flight was offered down the management hierarchy, but I seemed to be the only keen volunteer!

These days, the wonders of Google Earth© and sophisticated drones (see the feature in the October 2021 edition of Waterways World magazine) have rather superseded such exploits, though perhaps they lack the sheer terror of dangling out of a helicopter; at least I



April 1991 and a high level view of Stalybridge town centre at a time when a river route for restoring the Canal was a serious option.

had the photography to take my mind off things. There were shots of the Broad Canal and through a bit of navigational wandering, the Peak Forest; a deviation that clipped Manchester airspace as I overheard – a hasty retreat to Portland Basin was called for.

The Canal has always been very photogenic and much favoured by Location Managers and their scouts, so I

was excited to hear a TV crew would be filming at Lock 9W, Mossley for a scene in Debbie Horsfield's hit comedy series, 'Making Out', featuring hit Rachel Davies as Pauline.

Of course, the actors become lost among the paraphernalia and crew and it was a wonder no-one fell in, but I did get the chance for a chat with lovely Rachel and a picture with co-star Paul Bazely.



Above: Key Grips, Gaffers, Best Boys. PAs and hardware - just the job for filming an intimate scene where Paul adorns Rachel with a garland of Himalayan Balsam flowers christening her 'Queen of the May'.

Left: Rachel Davies and Paul Bazely who seems very keen to get into shot.





*A personal encounter near Lock 1E, Huddersfield during some pre-launch publicity. No prizes for guessing who's the Star!*

By the Autumn, the Marsden Shuttle was ready for 'launching' at Tunnel End and the Society's Patron, David Essex, had agreed to do the honours. I couldn't pass over this highlight, even though it is somewhat vicarious given a certain Mrs Maureen Gough's delight at the prospect; cousin June was suitably envious! It was a great event and warranted a full colour spread in the celebratory 100<sup>th</sup> Issue.

I didn't realise 1991 would be so eventful!

I have been through Standedge Tunnel a number of times when through trips were offered to the public and I could coordinate them with my guiding walks over the moors. However, my 'highlight' was in March 1992 when BW's Danny Stead took a party of us, on foot and Landrover, through the disused Nicholson rail tunnel and we could

venture over the cross-headings and peer into the pre-restored Canal tunnel. The crisp atmosphere, tang of sulphur and soot, and wonderful sights your adapted eyes could behold ... I'll admit, not everyone's idea of a fun day out, but I was enthralled.



*Peering into the Canal Tunnel from a cross-heading bridge; brick arching supports the largely natural rock section.*

The fact that the original Huddersfield Canal Company was formed in 1794 and the Canal formally opened to through navigation in 1811, there were two significant bicentenaries to celebrate, though to avoid confusion, 1994 was the Bicentenary and 2011, 200 years of the Huddersfield Narrow Canal.

A suitable motif was needed for the Bicentenary. I had been copying a microfilm of the Canal Company Minute-books in Ashton Archives and noticed the early meetings were embossed with the Company Seal and it was decided our promotional material would make a good impression with this design (sorry about that). The original Minute-books are held at the National Archives in Kew and I could combine a visit to my parents and the Archive. Definitely a highlight for me, but I do get enthusiastic about seeing any source material; on the down side, years of study and research does little for your sociability, I'm afraid. To this day, we cannot be certain about the details behind the seated woman receiving the cornucopia. Common themes in contemporary seals include beehives, bees, spigots issuing water, hand tools etc. My line-based interpretation at the time, certainly left something to be desired, but served its purpose.

I had mentioned the Staley Wharf project and at the early planning stage we arranged for the local fire brigade to have an 'exercise' nearby – trying out their extendable ladder with me atop taking



pictures of the site. Only a 'highlight' in terms of elevation as the safety strapping and jolting was particularly uncomfortable; the adjacent chemical works, MANRO, were definitely alarmed at the unannounced presence of fire engines but were spared the sirens and flashing lights.

Most day to day events pass without note but some (albeit with hindsight) are much more significant. Maureen and I watched a TV program, probably 'Arena', about Kate Bush recording her latest album 'The Sensual World' and using the vocal talents of Bulgaria's famous Trio Bulgarka; extraordinary sounds.

We were lucky enough to see the Trio near the end of their final UK tour. Some years later, we were pleased to see that the Bisserov Sisters, from Bulgaria, were touring and a relationship developed,





*Tameside Canals Festival 1998. With the Bissarov Sisters, (l to r), Mitra, Neda, Bob with homemade T-Shirt and Lyubimka.*

culminating in our taking a City Break in Sofia and seeing them 'at home'. Maureen's health had deteriorated and she died a few weeks after our return.

I maintained contact with the Sisters and was able to sponsor their appearance at the 1998 Tameside Festival, though perhaps this sample of East European culture was a bit of an acquired taste. Nonetheless, it was delightful having them stay with me and before I knew it, I was in the Pirin mountains proposing to the lead soprano, Lyubimka; we married in February 2001.

I will pass over the Canal's official opening ceremony in September 2001 as Lyubimka & I were a few ranks back in the crowd getting soaked in the rain and only had glimpses of HRH the Prince of Wales with hastily manoeuvred photos. But there again, that was how it should have been, and the day was a great success for the Society.

I have just remembered that my brother had a much closer encounter with His Royal Highness when he received his Master of Arts degree (*below*) from the Prince's School of Traditional Arts (VITA) at Islington, London.



*Mr Michael John Gough, BA MA somewhat surprised at the accolade or the Royal presence?*



*Memories at 239 Mossley Road, Ashton-u-Lyne*

Our Mossley Road office in Ashton-u-Lyne had been the base for Tameside Canals Ltd, HCS (Restoration) Ltd, the Canal Society and the Huddersfield Canal Company, but after restoration work was completed and redundancies ensued, it became somewhat 'surplus to requirements' and in Spring 2007, the Society moved to the 'Transshipment Warehouse' on Wool Road, Dobcross.

1830s stone-built, with a picturesque canal-side location, but a bit nippy in the Winter (*below*) and not the best arrangement for an office. HCS (Restoration) Ltd had refurbished the 'Shed' during 1993 and it had served many purposes for the local community before our occupation; I'm sat here assembling this Issue!





## Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor

I was sorry to read that John Sully had recently died in the last issue of 'Plink'.

I first met John when he was talking to Brian Holden, Secretary of the Rochdale Canal Society, at a rally in the late 70s and they were both adamant that the Rochdale would be completely restored years before the Huddersfield.

I met him again in early 1980 when he was Chairman of West Yorkshire MC Council's Recreation & Arts Committee as I had become a volunteer with the County's newly formed Countryside Ranger Service which fell under the remit of that Committee. This obviously gave me the opportunity to continue our lively discussions about the restoration of the Huddersfield or Rochdale. At this time HCS were negotiating with BW to take a lease on Tunnel End Cottages at Marsden and refurbish them as our HQ but unfortunately struggling as BW didn't consider us as a volunteer organisation to be a viable long-term possibility. The Ranger Service were also seeking a suitable base in Marsden and we, HCS, persuaded WYMCC to join us in pursuing the lease with BW. Through Cllr. John Sully and his Deputy Chair, Cllr. Garth Pratt (another friend of HCS) WYMCC did and agreed to refurbish the cottages involving an MSC scheme and then sub let one cottage to HCS. The refurbished cottages opened as Tunnel End Canal & Countryside Centre in 1983.

During conversations with John he admitted that he had never travelled the full length of the Huddersfield so early in 1983 John and I, having visited the progress

being made on Tunnel End Cottages by the MSC team, cycled from there down the canal to Huddersfield to view what the restoration possibilities were. John was amazed and very impressed. Shortly after the Eastern cycle ride it was agreed to do the same on the western side of the canal but unfortunately BW were not keen on us cycling! We therefore agreed to walk and were joined by HCS Chairman David Sumner for the event. We met Duncan McIlroy, Tame Valley Warden at Brownhill Visitor Centre at Dobcross adjacent to Lime Kiln Lock (23W) for John to see the Tame Valley Centre and hear about their Wardens before setting off down the canal.

John was a great transport fan and also a part time journalist being involved with Radio Leeds's weekly 'Yorkshire Transport' programme alongside fellow HCS and CNS member, Peter Spence. I've lost track of the number of canal side and non-canal side interviews I did with them in my role of HCS Publicity Officer!

John and Garth's involvement also helped to ease the way for the Marsden to Slaithwaite MSC restoration scheme, the lock gate workshop at Linthwaite, the Joint Committee and the removal of the major blockage at Wakefield Road.

I've always said that the involvement of WYMCC in helping us establish Tunnel End Canal & Countryside Centre was not only a pivotal point in the restoration of the HNC but also in developing & strengthening closer working relationships with the five local authorities and British Waterways.

Thank you John and R.I.P.

**David L Finnis OBE**

I never cease to be amazed at how far the technology has come since my early days with Tameside Canals: Amstrad 1640 computers, 5¼" vinyl floppy disks and covering self-developed and printed photos with tracing paper with instructions for the printer to 'screen' for Pennine Link. It seems fitting that my 'swansong' should be this paper version, albeit produced entirely digitally.

We have been circulating electronic versions of Pennine Link to certain members for quite some time now, so hopefully the planned transition from paper to pixels will simply involve a comprehensive email membership list for future 'mailing'. This will be a great relief from printing labels, sticking on envelopes, franking, adding reminders and a magazine and dragging sacks of mail to Oldham Sorting Office for the quarterly pantomime of querying the missing paperwork (*there is none with dropping off franked post!*). Even so, this 'chore' contributes to the variety of tasks that has kept my work for the Society so interesting during the past 33½ years.

I will leave you with something my neighbour said to me recently: "Retiring? What will you do? I couldn't retire, it would be so boring." Different, certainly, but boring ... I don't think so!

**Dr Bob Gough**  
Administrator HCS



The Royal Fern  
*Osmunda regalis*

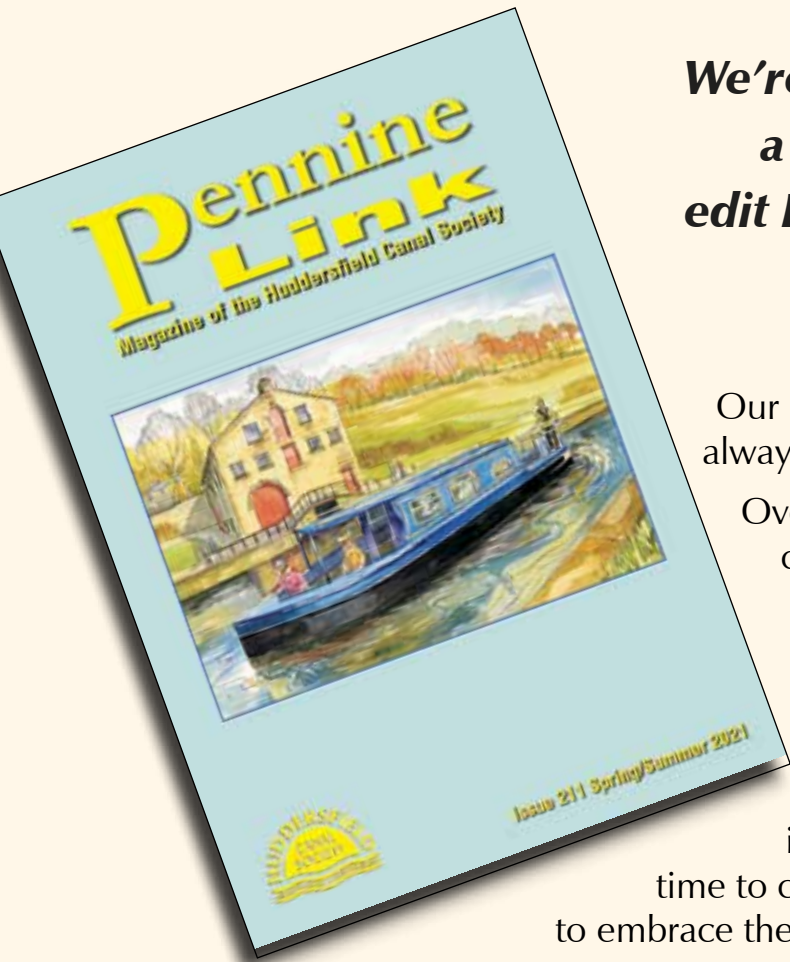
The Society first produced a Towpath Guide in 1981 and since the Narrow had re-opened to full navigation in May 2001, there was a need for a new Guide. Some years later, the project had passed down to me and I agreed to author the book. It was a fascinating undertaking and thanks to the Society, I was able to explore the entire Narrow from Ashton to Huddersfield (*and a bit at either end*) and document the towpath views. I distinctly recall the anticipation of travelling to the binders in Mossley and collecting a few advance copies to see how my labours had turned out. First printed in 2008 and re-printed with updates in 2009, we managed to sell 2,000 copies in all. Grand times.

You may think that being in front of a TV camera would be a highlight, but my few seconds of fame in 'Canals – The making of a Nation' doesn't really qualify. In fact, there was a great deal of researching the long list of questions they sent only for it all to be reduced to one aspect and that to be answered in ever shortening sentences and numerous 'takes'. At least North West Tonight were more accommodating, filming the re-location of a dislodged clump of Royal Fern, rescued from Huddersfield and minded by me for 24 years at home, back to the Canal at Mossley.

I was pleased to help Trevor Ellis with the layout and illustrations of his 'Standedge Tunnels' book and most recently, its second impression. When much of what an Administrator does is routine, it is a 'highlight' to be involved in a major project now and again. Mention of 'routine' work rather accounts for much of the 2010s and my encounter with bowel cancer in 2018 and the pandemic will be memorable, but little else.



# Your Society still needs you ...



**We're looking for  
a volunteer to  
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Our magazine has not always looked like this.

Over the years it has changed to reflect the Society's activities.

As HCS moves to a more flexible way of working it is an opportune time to consider how best to embrace the new media in its publications.

If you are interested in helping HCS promote what we do in the future, to our members and the outside world, we would love to hear from you.

If this role interests you, please send us an email with the subject line 'Pennine Link Editor' to: [hcs@huddersfieldcanal.com](mailto:hcs@huddersfieldcanal.com)

## 220 Club - 31st Draw

This quarter, the Club benefits from 47 subscriptions, so we can offer a Prize Fund of £112.80 which means the first prize is £75.20 and the second prize, £37.60. The more who subscribe, the higher the prize fund offered for your £2 a month stake.

To join, you need to complete the form which can be downloaded from our website by following the Members' Area link, or if you prefer, call the office and we'll send you a paper copy by post. 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 thirty-first\* quarterly draw:

Total Subscribers: 47  
Total Prize Fund: £112.80

**1st Prize:**  
Mr T Ellis £75.20

**2nd Prize:**  
Mr A Shepherd £37.60

*Congratulations to the prize winners!*

*\* Our thirtieth draw was made remotely and the results published on our website.*



Solution to Jidoku 49

A	M	N	S	C	D	P	I	E
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I	E	P	N	M	S	A	C	D
S	C	M	D	A	P	I	E	N

### COPY DATE

Articles, letters and comments for Issue 213 of the **Pennine Link Newsletter** should reach the Editor at Transshipment Warehouse, Wool Rd, Dobcross, OL3 5QR by **Monday 7th March 2022**

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