

MANCHESTER PACKET

Newsletter from the Manchester Branch



Frosty Morning

No 22

January 2009

Inland Waterways Association – Manchester Branch Committee

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Editorial Comments - *Ian Price*

We were unable to record the passing of our President, Bill Bleasdale in the last issue of the 'Manchester Packet' however Steve Connolly, Michael Payne & Ben Williams share some of their memories of Bill in this issue.

Also in this issue are the calling notices for both the Branch & Region Annual General Meetings. The latter has the offer of a boat trip into the Foulridge Tunnel before the Region AGM.

Copy Dates

It is planned to issue the packet four times a year: January, April, July & September. To help achieve this I welcome all offers of items AND photographs for inclusion. Copy dates are the 15th of the month preceding issue.

Disclaimer

The views expressed by our contributors are not necessarily those of the Editor or the IWA. They are, however, published as being of interest to our membership.

From the Branch Chairman - Steve Connolly

As you may well have heard from HO bulletin there are changes afoot regarding branches and regions. Some changes are already taking place, for instance the reduction in the number of regions. These changes come about from proposals from the dim and distant past to reduce the number of representatives on the IWA Council, now called the Board of Trustees. These reductions in numbers were originally aimed at region chairmen but following protracted discussions they have been modified to a reduction in the number of regions and also the proposal that each region representative [region chair] will be elected by a ballot of the region membership. This proposal has the disadvantage that those voting for a new region chairman might not be aware of the qualities or inappropriateness of the person standing for election. I personally suggested the region representative did not have to be the current region chairman and thus could be ballot elected whilst the region chairman could be elected by the region committee [as at present] who would be more appreciative of his or her skills. My suggestion was not taken up. Unfortunately I feel that the current proposals will dilute the quality of candidates who are prepared to stand for election as regional chairmen, considering amongst other things the bigger regional areas and work load and the attitude of the other, none regional, trustees to their presence on the "Board". We need to ensure that the voice of the membership is not sidelined.

One aspect of the recent changes is that the number of members required to form a branch committee has been reduced. There are still certain obligations to meet but it does mean that Manchester Branch can move up from the critical list to being able to function more pro actively with the able people that have given their valuable time to its continuance. With this in mind there is a desire within the committee to promote our aims by attending more events and spreading the good word. Sue Day has offered to take on the post of Events Organiser and I hope you will support us at some of the events we will be attending this year.

With the issue of this magazine I hope that the problems that we have had in keeping you informed will be resolved. Ian Price has spent a lot of his much needed spare time in getting to grips with the complications of producing a quarterly magazine and I hope you will support him with articles. If not I am afraid I will be forced to bring back *Tales of the Waterwomble*. You have been warned!

Bill Bleasdale

I first met Bill at the Castlefield National. I was told to speak to the little chap with the pipe and the cap, when I asked about our mooring. I well remember his sceptical expression as I explained, and the speed with which he sorted the problem. When I later joined Manchester Branch committee Bill was secretary. Again a no nonsense view highlighted by the philosophy that if the minutes were more than one A4 side somebody was talking too much. I have spoken to Bill by 'phone often in recent years, always receiving in depth, no nonsense advice, even though Bill was suffering from the dreaded creaky knee's that afflict so many these days. The volunteer waterway movement and I.W.A. have lost a good friend. God rest Bill.

Steve Connolly, Chairman, Manchester Branch.

Bill Bleasdale- Dear friend and colleague. We first met in 1972 at a Federation Rally. We were later to be both involved in FBCC affairs as Secretary and Treasurer respectively and also those of AWCC. I later joined Bill on the committee of Manchester Branch IWA and was pleased to hear of his assuming the Branch Presidency. Our boats were side by side on the hard at Hesfords for several months whilst fitting out and with my late wife became even better friends of Bill and Margaret. We were treated to many acts of kindness, advice and good fellowship. The Waterways, Boaters, Club members, IWA and Society in general have lost a wonderful, dedicated man. My thoughts and those of the IWA NW Region amongst many others, go out to Margaret and family at this time.

Michael Payne, President, IWA NW Region

Bill and I worked together on behalf of the IWA for a number of years during the 80's and 90's. We both served on the Manchester Branch committee and represented the IWA on external organisations. We were dubbed, by an ex Regional Chairman as "Bill and Ben our Manchester Men!" Bill was President of the Manchester Branch for a number of years up to his death. We worked together on a number of rallies and campaign cruises probably the most noteworthy being the 1988 National Rally in Manchester, which was, and probably will remain so, the largest gathering of boats in the country with some 960 boats moored on the Bridgewater and Rochdale Canals and the River Irwell. Bill, with Margaret quietly supporting, was a real and true campaigner for the waterways.

Ben Williams, Worsley Cruising Club and IWA.

From the Regional Chairman - Gillian Smith

January is here and I would like to take this opportunity to wish you all a very Happy New Year and hope that 2009 brings much health and happiness and time to make use of our wonderful waterway network. We all seem to start the New Year with good intentions, hopes and aspirations. Let's hope that the Liverpool Link opening is a great success and that it encourages greater use of the remainder length of the Leeds and Liverpool Canal and raises the profile of the waterway system here in the northwest.

At our November committee meeting Debbie Lumb, BW General Manager North West and her colleague Mike Marshall, Operations Manager, British Waterways were invited. This provided an opportunity for issues and concerns of region members, branches and societies to be discussed and repeated the successful question and answer session that had taken place in September 2007. As a committee we appreciated the time that Debbie and Mike had taken in visiting us and answering our questions and I thought it would be interesting to share some of the question and answer session with you.

We asked what plans there were for the further development of recycling facilities in the northwest. We were told that details of all recycling facilities are available on Waterscape. BW are also talking to local authorities to see if their facilities can be extended. However there is great potential to tap into existing local facilities eg. those at local supermarkets, marinas or pubs. These could then be signposted from the canal. If you know of any local facilities (within walking distance of the canal) please could you forward them to either a member of your branch committee or direct to British Waterways?

Developing the role of the volunteer, especially on navigable waterways and at a time of increased budget constraints, was a key question. We were told that there is always a role for volunteers and not just the traditional perception of those jobs on the ground. We know that members of the Huddersfield Canal Society currently take on the job of greasing all the lock gear. However, there is also scope for volunteers to support BW in their engineering works or archiving materials. As a committee we feel that it is important to develop these links and during the year will be looking at ways of fostering and nurturing our volunteers here in the northwest. If you have any ideas or suggestions, or feel that there is an area in which you have a particular strength or expertise please do contact us. There is always a need for people to take the lead on specific projects and this does not mean that you have to attend regular committee meetings.

We also raised the issue of vegetation growth both on the towpath and on the offside. Vegetation management had been discussed at the User Group Meeting. Nationally BW has had a change in procurement and they are now trialling

triallying using one main contractor as opposed to the current 8-9 smaller contractors used here in the northwest. BW will also be improving their supervision and management of the process. BW are responsible for overhanging trees on the offside and they do have a planned programme of works.

Finally, it is that time of the year again when we are planning our AGMs. It would be lovely to see some new faces at both the region and branch AGM and I do hope that some of you will be able to attend and support your committees. There will be some changes at the Region AGM as at the November meeting members of the board of trustees decided to reduce and realign the regions. It was decided that there should be eight regions and there would have to be some region closures in order for them to be created. Here in the northwest it meant that Western region would close at their next AGM. The trustees were anxious that branches should be allowed to decide for themselves with which region they would like to be aligned. Both Shrewsbury and North Wales Branch and Chester Branch have indicated that they wish to move to North West Region. This means that region will be much larger in size but should fit more closely with regional government boundaries. We are looking forward to welcoming our new branch members into the region but recognise that the region committee will have challenging times ahead as our roles and remits extend over a much larger area. Further details on the restructuring of IWA regions can be found in the December 2008 issue of Head Office Bulletin or at <http://www.waterways.org.uk/News/HeadOfficeBulletin/December2008>

Forthcoming Events 2009

April 25th & May 3rd	Standedge Canal Tunnel Festival
June 13th & 14th	Whaley Waterways Weekend
July 5th -	MarpleLocksHeritage Society Bi-Annual Festival
July 11th - 19th	Rochdale Canal Festival

Details of the Stadedge & Rochdale events follow

Rochdale Canal Festival 2009

The Rochdale Canal Festival has been organised for 2 years, 2007 & 2008, by the Rochdale and Oldham Councils, with some input from the Rochdale Canal Society.

The Waterways Trust (TWT) owns the Rochdale Canal and it is managed by British Waterways. TWT has appointed Lucy Rogers to co-ordinate the festival 2009, extending it to the whole length of the canal, involving Calderdale Council too.

More involvement from the boating organisations has been requested by TWT. As a result, an initial meeting was held with Lucy in early January in Manchester, with the Rochdale Canal Society, IWA - Manchester and the Horseboating Society all sending representatives along.

The committee of IWA Manchester Branch would like to contribute to the event and request help from any members of the branch who could assist on any of the dates over nine days, July 11 - 19 (provisional). Suggestions (so far): boats (thre Rochdale Canal Soc. Is very keen to see more boats on the canal), IWA Branch Stall.

Further info from Steve Connelly or Sue Day (contact details on committee page)

Standedge Canal Tunnel Festival 2009

The Horseboating Society (HBS) run the Standedge Canal Tunnel Festival in 2008, legging the tunnel and holding a field event at Diggle. The IWA - Manchester branch ran its stall at the Diggle event (amidst very heavy rain). Phil Woolas, MP for Saddleworth and Oldham East travelled up the Diggle locks on horseboat Maria and then visited the IWA stand. The HBS worked enormously hard to hold the event as BW Yorkshire asked for a £2,000 fee for legging the tunnel which the HBS successfully campaign to waiver.

For 2009, the HBS are being welcomed back by BW Yorkshire (with no mention of a legging fee!). Note the dates, cheer the leggers as they enter the tunnel, win a prize for guessing how long they will take, maybe go on the guided walk following the boat horse over Standedge via Boat Lane: or volunteer as crew or a legger.

Saturday April 25th at the Standedge Visitor Centre.

Horseboat Maria up the Diggle Locks 10.30 to 11.30, legging Standedge Tunnel 12.30 to 15.30, guided walk along Boat Lane to arrive at the Standedge

Visitors Centre, Marsden - open until 18.00, with activities to coincide with Cuckoo Day, Marsden.

Sunday May 3rd Standedge Visitors Centre

Teddy Bears Picnic at the Centre, Horseboat Maria with leggers (and bears!) in tunnel at 13.30 - 16.30, guided walk over Standedge along Boat Lane to Diggle.

All enquires to Sue Day (contact details on committee page)

'Branch Shop'

The Branch Shop can supply the full range of publications available through the IWA. Contact Andrew Perry for details and orders (contact details in committee listing).

Maps & guides

Nicholsons, Pearsons, Imray, GEOprojects, Waterways World, Towpath Guides, Overseas & European, Historical

Books for Boaters

practical, light hearted, engines, electrics, knots & crafts log books

General Waterways

building, restoration & revival, individual waterways, boat journeys, nostalgic & photographic, young readers

Christmas Cards

Charitable Towpath Walking (Part 2) – Steve Saxon

There can be few things as relaxing and refreshing as walking beside water; and the English canal network provides a walker's paradise that can take you all the way from Leeds to London, or Bradford to Bristol, without needing to cross any roads. As part of my personal project to walk to the four extreme points of England (N, S, E & W), the towpaths promised to link up long-distance footpaths and give opportunities to observe wildlife, industrial archaeology, or local history. Hopefully there would be interesting material to write about, for the plan was to write books about the walk, books that could be sold for charity.

This section of the walk, which resulted in Book 2, *Ramble Past Manchester* (which can be purchased from IWA Manchester Branch), also took in the towpaths of two canals, as well as a few hilltops nearby. Following a canal is a good way to find peaceful walking close to (or even in) the big city, and can provide for a variety of interests

Berries, wreckage, and cobwebs on the Huddersfield Narrow



It was a warm Sunday afternoon; I was strolling the towpath on my own. There were four fishermen ahead, using long black boom-like rods that reached right to the far side of the canal. I never seem to see any fisherman catch anything; in decades of canal walking and cruising I don't ever remember seeing an instance of piscatorial success. In this case maybe the fish were disturbed by the activity: several people were walking dogs; a cyclist came past wearing a Commonwealth Games T-shirt; ducks were chasing slices of bread; and two Brown Hawker dragonflies dodged to and fro over the water. 'Like Piccadilly Circus' muttered one of the fishermen as I eased my way past, trying not to bump into dogs or trip over tackle.

Round the corner heavy clusters of rowan berries stood out against the green background: 'a burden, and a beauty and a wonder', as Quickbeam the Ent described them. At this time of year (early September) there were berries everywhere: elderberries, blackberries, hips and haws; but it was the rowan berries that were bright enough to show up as part of a wider view. Some clumps of fern must have been later growth, showing a light spring green against the drabber end-of-summer dark green of most of the ferns. The towpath passed under another bridge, and neat terrace houses and the old stonework of forgotten wharves began to appear. In one place on the far bank, well-squared masonry showed where a large bridge had once crossed the canal: this had been the south end of the Micklehurst Loop, where the LNWR relief line re-crossed the valley and plunged into Cocker Hill Tunnel, to emerge at Stalybridge station and rejoin the main line.

Early in the twentieth century, this tunnel was the site of a spectacular accident, when an express hauled by a Webb compound locomotive named *Aurora* overtook a slow-moving goods train. Fortunately the guard saw the express coming and jumped clear, to witness how the swift *Aurora* demolished his van and several wagons, burying herself in splintered woodwork. The *Mossley & Saddleworth Reporter* described the resulting scene: 'The wreckage reached from the permanent way of the line to the arch of the tunnel and the whole looked like so much broken firewood simply tipped up in a heap....'

In contrast to the urban surroundings, a Speckled Wood butterfly was sunning itself on a bramble bush, and a fat spider sat nearby, in the middle of a many-ringed and finely-latticed web, which caught the sunlight to show its organic engineering to best advantage. The spider had a fine cross of white spots on its back, so it was *araneus diadematus*, which in English rejoices in the imaginative name of Garden Spider.

Memories on the Peak Forest

Ahead a sign hung on a ten-foot-tall sawn-off stump of pine: SLOW SWING BRIDGE 40 YARDS. By the pine stump was another, taller, stump, almost like a totem pole. Behind the stumps soared a tall grey eucalyptus tree; and around the trees lay an exuberant mature garden with many odd corners; a fountain of red fuchsia canalside and an anonymous narrowboat moored nearby.



Coming to the Higgins Clough Swing Bridge, memory carried me back 21 years to our Cheshire Ring barge trip. We were a group of young friends (I was youngish myself then) gathered together by Chris Parker to enjoy a week's hire of a 52-foot narrowboat (*Monsal* from Wigan). We did the Ring plus plus – Parker's normal regime was to get the boat moving at dawn (early rising on a rota), eat breakfast and lunch on the move, tie up at dusk and then have dinner – so we covered some ground. This was probably the first swing bridge we'd come across; it took two to open it, but seemed to be prepared to close more easily after the boat had passed. Ian decided to push off and ride back to the bank on the edge of the bridge, when it suddenly stopped moving and he continued, finding himself in mid-air above mid-canal, which is not a tenable position for any length of time.

He confided afterwards that before he hit the water, the thought that passed through his mind was 'there's no way I'm going to be able to make this look impressive'. In fact I was quite impressed, watching from the security of the towpath, by the fact that he went in feet first and disappeared completely, leaving hardly any bubbles. I hadn't thought the water was that deep, I mused, weighing up a possible 2.5 for Technical Difficulty and 9.5 for Artistic Impression. Meanwhile Ian re-emerged like Poseidon from the deep – wearing a rather unclassical grin – and proved as he waded ashore that the water had been no more than chest-deep: he'd bent his knees on hitting the canal bed like a true Para.

The extracts above are taken from the towpath-walking sections of the books, but there are also hillwalking and visits to stately homes and museums, and sidetracks into genealogy, literature and music as well as wildlife and local history. Most relevant to IWA Manchester and the Rochdale Canal Society is that if you buy Book 2 from the former, or Book 1 from the latter, the *full* £7.99 purchase price goes to that charity. So even if you don't read this kind of book yourself, start thinking who you might soon need to get a birthday present for!

The books are not available in ordinary bookshops, but are also sold through certain other charities: more details on www.fourpointsramble.org.uk



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THE INLAND WATERWAYS ASSOCIATION – MANCHESTER BRANCH

Annual General Meeting 2007/8

The Annual General Meeting of the Manchester Branch of the Inland Waterways Association will take place on **Monday 9th March 2009 at 8pm at Dukers 92, Castle Street, Castlefield, Manchester M3 4LZ.**

AGENDA

1. Apologies for absence
2. Approval of minutes of previous AGM (10/3/2007) & matters arising
3. Reports from the Region Chairman & Branch Chairman
4. Presentation of statements of income & expenditure, assets, liabilities & commitments
5. Notice of Committee size
6. Election to fill any vacancies on Branch Committee
7. **Talk by Glen Atkinson** taking a light hearted look at the incredible antics reported in Victorian newspapers

Statement of Committee Size

The statutory requirements, which were agreed on the 14th September 2002, state that the Branch Committee shall be comprised of a maximum of 16 selected members.

There are 2 retirements under the 3 year rule. John Palmer and Roger Lorenz. John has indicated his wish to be re-elected, however Roger is standing down. We thank him for his help over the years including time as treasurer.

This leaves 8 vacancies on Branch Committee and the Branch Secretary would be happy to receive nominations from anyone who would be prepared to serve on the Branch Committee. We desperately need more help, please consider offering to join us.

Nominations for elections to the Committee (which must be in writing, signed by the proposer, seconder and nominee) should reach the Branch Secretary on or before the 9th March 2009. Under new bylaws nominations will also be accepted from the floor of the meeting.

Nomination form for Manchester Branch Committee 2009 – 12

I (name)*of

Address

Agree to accept nomination for election to the Committee of The IWA Manchester Branch for 2009/2012.

Signed

Proposed by*

Signature

Seconded by*

Signature Date:

NB: Nominee, proposer and seconder must be members of the IWA in good standing.

(*Block Capitals please. Photocopies of this form accepted)

Please send to: Branch Acting Secretary John Palmer, 53 Southwood Road, Great Moor, Stockport SK2 7DJ by 9th March 2009.

THE INLAND WATERWAYS ASSOCIATION NORTH WEST REGION

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

SATURDAY MARCH 7th 2009 AT 2.00PM

**FOULRIDGE VILLAGE HALL, PARKINSON STREET, FOULRIDGE,
LANCASHIRE BB8 7PS**

DIRECTIONS: From the end of the M65 in Colne follow signs to Earby and Barnoldswick.

From the A56 in Foulridge follow the brown tourist signs to Canal Wharf (Postcode BB8 6PP), turn right into Towngate at the 'Hole in the Wall' public house before reaching the Wharf. The Village Hall entrance is in Parkinson Street, a few yards up on the left (Postcode BB8 7PS)

PROGRAMME: 11.00pm – Trip aboard the boat ‘Marton Emperor’
Into Foulridge Tunnel. The ‘Marton Emperor’ is fitted with
uplighters so that the tunnel structure can be viewed.

Cost of the above £9 per head, which includes pie and
peas lunch.

The boat trip and lunch must be pre-booked as places are limited to 50.

I/we intend going on the boat trip at £9 per head YES NO

Number - meat pie veggie pie Amount payable £

Please make cheques payable to: IWA North Lancs & Cumbria

Name:

Address:

Please return to:

Madeline Dean, Runnymede, Bolton Road, Heath Charnock, Chorley PR7
4AZ

THE INLAND WATERWAYS ASSOCIATION – NORTH WEST RE- GION

Annual General Meeting 2008/9

The Annual General Meeting of the North West Region of The Inland Water-
ways Association will take place on **Saturday 7th March 2009 at 2pm in
Foulridge Village Hall, Parkinson Stret, Foulridge, Lancashire, BB8 7PS**

AGENDA

- 1 Apologies for absence
- 2 Approval of minutes of previous AGM held 1st March 2008 and any
matters arising from these minutes
- 3 Reports from the Region Chairman & Branch Chairmen
- 4 Presentation of statements of income & expenditure, assets, liabilities
and commitments
- 5 Notice of Committee size
- 6 Election to fill any vacancies on Region Committee

Statement of Committee Size

Statement of Committee Size

The statutory requirements which were agreed 14 September 2002 state that the Region Committee shall be comprised of a maximum of 16 elected members plus the Branch Chairmen.

This year there are no retirements under the three year rule

There is a total of six vacancies on the committee this year and the Region Secretary would be happy to receive nominations from anyone else who would be prepared to serve on the Region Committee.

NOMINATION FORM - N W REGION 2009 – 12

* Name

*Address

Telephone numbers

E-mail

Signed

Date:

Nominee must be an IWA member of good standing.

*Block Capitals please. Photocopies of this form accepted

Please return form before or at the Annual General Meeting 1 March 2008

to: Mrs S Thurstan, 30 Queensway, Blackburn BB2 4QT Tel: 01254 200363;
e-mail sue.thurstan@ntlworld.com

Under the new bye-laws nominations may also be accepted from the floor at the AGM

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IWA Manchester Branch Winter Talks Programme October 2008 - April 2009

2nd Monday in the month commencing 8pm prompt
In the Brindley Room, At Dukes 92, Castle Street, Castlefield, Manchester

Meetings are open to members and non-members All Welcome

- | | |
|--|--|
| October 13th | Steve Rigby
Diving to the Titanic, a personal view from an award winning author |
| November 10th | Peter Scott
<i>On his namesake 'Peter Scott' and boat 'Beatrice May'</i> |
| December 8th
NB VENUE TO BE ADVISED | Mike Clarke & Christmas Social
<i>The Leeds and Liverpool Canal, its' history and an update or the Liverpool Link</i>
Ukrainian Club, 215 Stockport Road Guide Bridge, Ashton-u-Lyne OL7 0NP {email Steve for directions if needed} |
| January 12th | David Brown BWB
<i>Reservoir feeds to canals, especially in our region</i> |
| February 9th | Colin Edmanson
<i>An introduction to the history of the River Weaver and its' links with the salt industry, liberally illustrated with old and new photographs, maps and diagrams.</i> |
| March 9th | Glen Atkinson
<i>What the Papers Said – Victorian Newspapers: a light hearted look at the incredible antics reported in Victorian newspapers</i> Followed by AGM |
| April 6th | Duchess Countess Packet-Boat Trust
<i>Progress towards building a replica of the Duchess Countess c1800 as a horsedrawn packet boat</i> |

Manchester Branch area Canals

The Bridgewater Canal, The Rochdale Canal, The Ashton Canal, The Huddersfield Narrow Canal, The Lower & Upper Peak Forest Canal, The Macclesfield Canal, The Manchester Ship Canal.

In addition there are four restorations in progress within the Manchester Branch:

Hollinswood Canal; The Manchester, Bolton & Bury Canal; The Stockport Branch Canal; Bugsworth Basin

