

MANCHESTER PACKET

Newsletter from the Manchester Branch



No 24

July 2009

Inland Waterways Association – Manchester Branch Committee

President:	Vacant	
Vice Presidents:	Jim Ramsbottom, Ben Williams	
Chairman, Navigation & Technical, Exhibition, Planning	Steve Connolly 27 Hooten Lane Leigh WN7 3BY	T: 01942 679310 M: 07710 554602 E: steconno@btintnet.com
Vice Chairman:	Vacant	
Acting Secretary:	John Palmer 53 Southwood Road Great Moor Stockport SK2 7DJ	
Treasurer:	Barry McGuinness 4 Pole Lane Failsworth M35 9PB	T: 0161 4817237 M: E: bmcguinness@gmail.com
Editor:	Ian Price 16 Wyedale Close Buxton SK17 9RF	T: 01298 78141 M: 07971444258 E: ian.price-buxton@talk21.com
Membership:	Keith Fowler 171 Queens Road Cheadle Hulme Cheshire SK8 5HX	T: 0161 485 2813 E: kepf@btinternet.com
Canal Society & Cruising Club Liaison:	John Palmer 53 Southwood Road Great Moor Stockport SK2 7DJ	
Event Coordinator:	Sue Day 12 Oakwood View Lower Beestow, Mossley Ashton-under-Lyme OL5 9QL	T: 01457 834863 E: sueday_horse@yahoo.com
Sales:	Andrew Perry c/o The Boatyard, Worsley Dry Dock, Worsley, Manchester M28 2WN	T: 0161 793 6767 E: perry750@btinternet.com

Programme Coordinator: Planning (joint): Conservation: Publicity: All Vacant

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Editorial Comments - Ian Price

Following the enlargement of the NW Region Gill Smith has decided to stand down as Chair, a post she was persuaded to fill on a temporary basis in 2006 when Margaret Fletcher died. Surprisingly she has been doing this at the same time as holding down a demanding job as a primary school head teacher. Most of the time she was Region Chairman she was also Chairman of Promotions Committee. Her other roles within include IWA *Wild over Waterways* Co-ordinator; and a member of the IWA Finance Committee.

We thank Gill for her support of the Branch and welcome Alan Platt as the new Region Chair. He introduces himself in this issue.

Also in this issue are articles from some of the Canal Societies in our Branch and Region which I hope will be of interest to those not familiar with their valuable work.

Cover photo

Exit to the River Irwell from the Manchester, Bolton & Bury Canal taken when the Worsley Cruising Club made an excursion to the MB&B in June 2008

Copy Dates

It is planned to issue the packet four times a year: January, April, July and September. To help achieve this I welcome all offers of items AND/OR 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.

Chairman's Column

Steve Connolly

It has been a very busy time championing our concerns over the proposed fencing in of the Rochdale Canal along Canal Street. As a Branch we had three main concerns: the fence would make the canal hazardous for boaters with the consequent loss of foot access; it would make horse boating all but impossible; and the heritage would be spoilt (the locks are Grade II listed structures).

In a reply to the concerns expressed by IWA's Manchester Branch, Debbie Lumb, General Manager of BW's North West Waterways, commented: "It is true that this is not explained very well in the planning documents and in hindsight could have been added. However, please understand that we have always been the voice of our customers - both in boating circles and in horseboating - throughout this process. We are simply guilty of not telling everyone everything we were doing outside of this planning application!"

The planned additional safety measures are:

- the offside landing above the lock to be extended by adding a new landing stage (possibly floating)
- the existing landing stage below the lock (under the bridge) to be re-surfaced to improve safety
- bespoke steps to be added to the steep cobbled slope between the lock side and the lower landing stage



Above Lock 86 - Canal St
Photos Alan Platt



Slope below
Lock 86



Landing Stage
Lock 86

These measures will "design out" the need for boaters to climb over the wall and use the traditional steps, which BW now considers unsafe. BW hopes to have the new features in place before the *Mardi Gras* festival in late August, which has caused access problems in the past. However, if the new fence is erected before the lock upgrades are completed, then the access gate to the steps will be left open until the new measures are in place.

Lock 87, like Lock 86, has only a short area where boat crews can step aground and there are the same concerns over the difficulty of getting off the bow of certain types of boats. At the moment crew members are able to walk down from Lock 86 to prepare the lock but, with the fence in place and the traditional steps out of use, all crew members would in future be aboard their boats, hence the need for an extended landing at Lock 87.

BW's Debbie Lumb admitted that a new landing at Lock 87 was not planned at the moment, but will look into whether there may be cost savings in doing the works at the same time as Lock 86. However, BW's limited budgets may mean that this needs to wait.

The improvements to Lock 86 go a long way to address the issues raised by boaters. However, some have pointed out that access by foot will be sometimes required in order to let water down when the pound below the lock is low.

Boats sometimes come to a halt in this pound if the level is down, often due to grounding on objects that have been thrown into the canal. If a boat leaves the lock when the level is low, there is the risk of damaging the upper wooden cill behind the top gates. A crew member going ahead to run some water down can prevent this. So, what would happen in future, when boaters cannot reach Lock 86 on foot, with all the crew members on board the boat aground in the middle of the canal? Presumably they would have to call BW staff out to

sort a problem which most crews could have sorted for themselves. *{is there mobile phone signal in the lock/pound? There isn't in Lock 92 ed.}*

Concerns are being raised about the fence preventing assistance being given in the event of an emergency. Suggested scenarios include a legitimate canal user falling into the water and getting into difficulty; a boat getting caught on the cill and sinking; serious accident on a boat . People or paramedics on the street would be unable to offer assistance be as they would be unable to climb over the fence.

Given BW's funding problems it can be argued that, since the need for these added measures has arisen because of the planned fence, the budget for the fence should include the lock improvements and planning approval should be made only on the condition that it does.

More information and photos can be found on the Pennine Waterways web site as well as links to the plans for fencing
www.penninewaterways.co.uk/news/canalstreet2.htm

NW Region Chairman's Comments

Alan Platt

First let me introduce myself to you; when Gillian Smith decided that the enlargement of the Region's territory to include Chester and Shrewsbury & N Wales branches was the right time for her to step down, it was suggested that I might like to take over. I felt that after some years as Chairman of Shrewsbury & N Wales, I needed a challenge - I think I've probably got one! My experience lies with the busy Llangollen and Shropshire Union Canals and the major restoration project of the Montgomery Canal. I have to get better acquainted with the canals of the North, their problems and challenges and with the branches of the old region.

The new enlarged North West region will have to evolve into its own shape and format. One thing I have found with the old Western Region and my membership of the IWA Committee for Wales is that each branch and region has its own personality, and its own challenges and issues. That is right and proper; the branch members are what makes the IWA work, and I hope to get around to committee meetings and events as much as possible so that I can meet people and find out what concerns you and how I can help.

What concerns us all at the moment is the reorganization of British Waterways announced recently. There are two sides to this. The first is the long term declared aim to take BW into the 'Third Sector'. This lies somewhere in between the Private Sector of industry and commerce and the Public Sector BW currently inhabits. The nearest role model for this seems to be the National Trust. There is much to welcome in this thinking, but the idea needs developing and hopefully BW's emphasis on the role of the volunteer will include consulting with the IWA and others.

The second aspect of this relates directly to the £30m funding gap in BW's budget and part of the solution is to restructure the organization. The existing BW regions are being replaced in the autumn with 11 operating areas. These will be concerned with core maintenance and matters such as restoration and moorings will be dealt with on a national level. The proposed areas are subject to consultation but the area covered by your branch seem all to fall into the proposed Peak and Pennine BW area, and I understand the area Manager will be David Baldacchino , formerly deputy to Julie Sharman in Wales & Border Counties, newly appointed as the Regeneration Manager for the North of England, presumably covering the branch area and therefore both well known to those of us from south of the Mersey. We are promised that the savings will not affect maintenance of the waterways. This and much else in the proposals will become clearer with time. It is very much a matter of 'watch this space'.

Finally I would like to thank Gillian for her efforts on your behalf in the past, and for her help with the handover, and to thank Steve and the other regional committee members for their help and for making me feel welcome.

THE SHROPSHIRE UNION CANAL SOCIETY

Catherine O'Brien

The Shropshire Union Canal Society has been working for over forty years to promote interest in the past, present and future of the 158 miles of canals that form the Shropshire Union system – canals that are of tremendous social, environmental, historical and commercial importance.

A big part of the Society's effort is directed to the restoration of the Montgomery Canal. There are volunteer work parties every month from March to November, and during the winter months there is usually some hedge laying.

The Society has been actively involved in campaigning and restoration since the early days of the Welshpool Big Dig, forty years ago, and since that time Society volunteers have restored Pool Quay Locks, Carreghofa Locks, Burge-din Locks, Brynderwen Lock and Newhouse Lock. Volunteers are currently working on the stretch between Redwith Bridge and Prices Bridge, which is the next stretch to be watered.

The Society also contributes to the wellbeing of the other canals of the Shropshire Union system through volunteer initiatives including the installation of visitor mooring sites, and the installation and maintenance of leisure facilities such as benches and picnic tables. Recently the Society has also undertaken some minimum standards work in conjunction with British Waterways.

Forthcoming events include the Ellesmere Boat Rally over the weekend of 11th-13th September, with decorated boats, stalls, fireworks, and concerts by the Jackfield Elcock Reisen Band on the Friday and the Salt City Jazzmen on the Saturday. The Boat Rally runs in conjunction with the town's annual Ellesmere Festival, so there is plenty to see and do in the town as well. For tickets and information please contact Ellesmere Infolink, Wharf Road, Ellesmere SY12 0EJ, telephone 01691 624488 or ring Paul Mills on 0151 336 1049, mobile 07761 739439.

If you would like to find out more about us and see some of the things we've achieved to date, please have a look at our website at www.shropshireunion.org.uk .

Press Release

MONTGOMERY WATERWAY RESTORATION TRUST

YMDDIRIEDOLAETH ADFER CAMLAS MALDWYN

**In partnership to promote the restoration and development of the
Montgomery Canal in England and Wales**

Montgomery Canal – BIG DIG 40 – 17/18 October 2009

A major celebration on 17/18 October will commemorate the Big Dig weekend of 18/19 October 1969 when nearly 300 volunteers cleared the section of the Montgomery Canal through Welshpool – the first mechanised work party and the most significant event at the start of the restoration scheme. It will both mark the 40th anniversary and promote the full reopening of the waterway. The weekend will be co-ordinated by the Montgomery Waterway Restoration Trust (MWRT) and will involve the groups involved in the restoration project –



Friends of the Montgomery Canal, (FoMC) Inland Waterways Association (IWA), Shropshire Union Canal Society (SUCS) and Waterway Recovery Group (WRG); with the co-operation of British Waterways (BW).

Exact timings, locations and public access to sites will be announced later. On the Saturday morning WRG and IWA will be replacing the commemorative stone at the Graham Palmer Lock – below Welsh Frankton on the section linked to the main waterway network.

During the Saturday afternoon FoMC and IWA are organising a procession of boats through Welshpool, including steam-powered and horse-drawn craft, carrying VIPs and including the unveiling of a commemorative plaque at

Welshpool Town Lock - on the detached central navigable section. There will also be a display of historic and promotional items about the Big Dig and the restoration scheme in Welshpool

All weekend SUCS will have a major work party continuing its ongoing channel reconstruction along the dry section south of Redwith Bridge to Crickheath Wharf.

Also all weekend, further down the dry section at Waen Wen, towards Pant, WRG will have a major national work party clearing a further channel section of vegetation and obstructions.

There will also be a public screening of historic films of the Big Dig in Welshpool, on a date and venue to be announced which may not be on the actual weekend.

VIPs, those involved in the restoration project and veterans of the Big Dig will be attending all the events. Access and parking may be difficult at the work sites and public viewing points and media facilities will be announced later. MWRT would like to hear from anyone who was a volunteer at the 1969 event. Any current working volunteers – not already involved or affiliated to the organisations – are welcome and in the first instance should contact Michael Limbrey. Visiting trailboats are welcome at Welshpool - again initially contact Michael Limbrey. Any boats planning to attend the ceremony at the Graham Palmer Lock should note the restrictions on the use of Frankton Locks and should contact BW for up-to-date information on Montgomery Canal opening hours.

FURTHER INFORMATION FROM –

**Michael Limbrey Tel: (day) 01743 350571 (evening) 01691 654081
m) 07974 692759 (e) michael@limbrey.net**

PHOTO SHOWS – Some of the 300 volunteers clearing the canal at Severn Street Bridge in Welshpool during the 1969 Big Dig.

CREDIT/COPYRIGHT – HarryArnold/Waterway Images

Extracts from IWA Head Office Bulletin

These extracts from a recent Head office bulletin may be of interest ed.

Manchester Bolton & Bury Canal

For the first time since the Manchester Bolton and Bury Canal was formally opened at the Middlewood site last September, a significant number of boats made a trip on to the canal over the weekend of 27-28 June when 19 boats from Worsley Cruising Club locked up into the Middlewood section. The boats were locked up by British Waterways' staff and assisted by Manchester Bolton and Bury Canal Society Trustees. The senior engineer responsible for the construction, Fran Littlewood, was on hand to ensure that the back-pumping system could cope with this number of craft coming through the third deepest lock in the country and through lock 3 to wind immediately before Salford No 2 tunnel.

Rochdale Canal

Rochdale MP Paul Rowen is backing a campaign to persuade United Utilities to stop restricting water going into the lock at the Rochdale Canal Summit in Littleborough. Mr Rowen has called for an urgent meeting with United Utilities and British Waterways to resolve the issue that could lead to a boost for tourism in Littleborough. Currently, restrictions in place limit the number of boats that can pass to only four per day.

There is also apparently a problem with localised flooding from the waste water in Littleborough when the river Roch is in spate.

The equipment to divert the water is already in place, but it has been padlocked to prevent use, it is hoped that rather than run to waste, excess water can be diverted into the canal and stored for use when needed .

Local businesses in Littleborough are concerned that they are being deprived of the custom that increased tourists would bring , who would visit if they were not being discouraged by the delays in getting through Summit Lock.

Discounted Rail Fare and Entry Offers for IWA National Festival

East Midlands Trains are offering a 'Kids go Free' Bank Holiday rail offer to encourage Festival visitors to leave their car at home and travel by train to the National Waterways Festival at Redhill over the August Bank Holiday Weekend. EMT's brand new East Midlands Parkway station overlooks the site

and visitors arriving by train are within a 5 minute walk of the Festival entrance.

East Midlands trains are also offering a further £2 off entry to the festival in their "Go Out" rail magazine on production of the magazine at the turnstile. *(To get further information about the free travel offer for children, go to www.eastmidlandstrains.co.uk/kidsgofree).*

Invasive Species

Invasive water plants that out-compete native species, reducing biodiversity and causing problems such as flooding, are still on sale as ornamental pond plants in garden and aquarium centres around the country, warns the charity Plantlife.

In May, Plantlife launched a survey, 'Against the Flow', appealing for the public's help in researching the extent to which these plants have escaped into Britain's rivers, canals and lakes.

Plantlife lists five of the most invasive species:

- Parrot's feather.
- New Zealand pigmyweed.
- Creeping water primrose.
- Floating pennywort.
- Water fern.

These plants form dense carpets that block light, warmth and oxygen from the water, affecting other plants and animals, including rare species such as great crested newts and water voles.

Parrot's feather chokes waterways and can lead to flooding yet it is still on sale around the country. Curly waterweed, which forms dense masses in standing water, reducing other plant life and harming invertebrates, although not yet widespread in the wild across the UK, is also on sale.

In 2005, an audit by the GB Non-Native Species Secretariat reported 2,721 non-native species of plants and animals in England. The government body says on its website: 'Invasive non-native plant and animal species are the second-greatest threat to biodiversity worldwide (after habitat destruction). They can negatively impact on native species, can transform habitats and threaten whole ecosystems, causing serious problems to the environment and the economy'. Yet there is no law to prevent the sale of invasive species, only a voluntary code, the Horticultural Code of Practice.

The Government has estimated that invasive species cost the UK economy £2 billion a year.

John Fletcher OBE

Congratulations to John Fletcher Chairman of the Manchester, Bolton & Bury Canal Society and Vice-President of the Waterways Trust on his award of the OBE in the Queen's Birthday Honours list. John was National Chairman of the IWA from 2002 - 2008 and played an extensive role in campaigning for waterway restoration schemes throughout the North West including the Anderton Boat Lift, the Manchester, Bolton & Bury Canal and the upper reaches of the Lancaster Canal. John's OBE was awarded for services to inland waterways.

Most biologists agree that recent human-brought arrivals that significantly out-compete native plants and animals pose a serious threat to healthy ecosystems and biodiversity. As climate change takes hold, niches will open up for invasive species to exploit even further.

The Manchester Bolton & Bury Canal

Paul Hindle

History

The MB&BC received its Act of Parliament in 1791. It was originally conceived as a narrow canal; but during construction there was a scheme to link it to the Leeds & Liverpool Canal at Red Moss (for Wigan), and it was changed to a broad canal. It was opened from Bolton and Bury to Salford in 1797, and later connected to the River Irwell in 1808. Its layout was Y-shaped, basically following the River Irwell from Salford to Bury and the Croal to Bolton; the three arms met at Nob End, Little Lever. The summit level ran from Bolton to Bury without locks, and all 17 locks were on the Salford arm. The main flight of locks was at Nob End (oddly called Prestolee Locks) which consisted of two sets of three-rise staircases. There were two more staircase locks in Salford, each a 2-rise. The total length was 15 miles 1 furlong. Fletcher's Canal (to Wet Earth Colliery) was built in 1791, and was connected to the MB&BC at Clifton by 1800.

Other branches to Haslingden and Sladen (near Rochdale) were planned but not implemented. Had the various proposed branches been built the Leigh Branch of the Bridgewater Canal and the Rochdale Canal from Manchester to Rochdale would probably not have been built, and the Haslingden Canal would

have been the highest canal in the country. Instead the MB&BC remained rather isolated from the rest of the canal system, finally connected across the Irwell to the Bridgewater Canal via Hulme Locks in 1838, and to the Rochdale Canal via the largely underground Manchester & Salford Junction Canal in 1839.

It was essentially a coal-carrying canal, with numerous collieries near the canal. Many collieries built their own tramways to the canal – over the years there were 20 lines totalling over 6½ miles, extending the reach of the canal as an integrated transport system.

In the 1830s the canal company proposed to turn itself into a railway, but eventually decided to keep the canal, and build the Manchester to Bolton railway, which was opened in 1838. The joint canal and railway company passed to the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway in 1847, and eventually to the LMS. The canal had a long period of success, continuing to carry coal and other goods into the twentieth century, but the coal mines started to close after 1900, the last being at Ladyshore in 1947.

The canal was closed in stages; the Bolton branch was disused by 1924, and a major breach at Nob End in 1936 severed the Bury arm, though it continued to see local traffic until 1951. Traffic continued between Salford and Clifton until 1950; the whole canal was officially closed by 1961, though a short length carried coal to Elton paper mill in Bury until 1966. The Bolton arm, closed first, has suffered the most damage; the A666 (St Peter's Way) was built along the line of the canal near the centre of Bolton, and three aqueducts (Farnworth, Fogg's and Damside) were demolished. The Bury arm is still mostly in water, though cut in two by the lowered Water Street Bridge in Radcliffe, and the last mile into Bury is dry; the 1936 breach remains at the start of the arm. The Salford arm is still in water from Nob End to Ringley (it supplied Stoneclough paper mill with water until the 1990s), but the rest is largely dry. Prestolee and Clifton Aqueducts still stand, the former still in water, though the small Clifton Hall (Lumbs Lane) Aqueduct has been demolished.

Restoration

The canal society was formed in 1987, and began to clean up the derelict canal. It dredged the canal from Ladyshore to Bury, ran a trip boat from Radcliffe, and ensured that two bridges were rebuilt to full navigable standards. It continues to have working parties, and has recently cleared the towpath from Ringley to Hall Lane and Mount Sion, including the locks at Nob End. For most of its first 20 years the Society was led by the formidable Margaret Fletcher, along with a strong Council; five of the original Council members are still in post today. Margaret died in 2006, and the new tunnel leading from the River Irwell to the new deep lock in Salford is named after her.

The construction of the Inner Relief Road in Salford threatened to sever the canal close to its connection with the River Irwell, but a tunnel was created to preserve the route in 2001-2. British Waterways announced the restoration of the canal in 2002, surveyed the route in 2003, and funding for Stage 1 in Salford was in place in 2004 with the canal as the focal line of a major redevelopment scheme. Work finally began on this Middlewood site in 2007, and the first length was re-opened on 19th September 2008. Staircase locks 1 & 2 which had been buried beneath the Inner Relief Road, were made into the Margaret Fletcher Tunnel; the new deep lock which replaces them is the third deepest in the country at 17' 8" (depth variable, depending on river level). After two new basins the restored canal rejoins its original line at the rebuilt East Ordsall Lane bridge,



with the original Lock 3 immediately beyond; it has survived in excellent condition. The canal continues to a narrow section which was originally Lock 4, but was later disused and covered as Tunnel No. 1. The restored canal ends just before Tunnel No. 2 (under the Manchester to Bolton railway), and the next staircase locks (4 & 5).

The next stage of restoration is likely to continue through the Crescent and University areas of Salford, as far as Frederick Road. Salford Council is looking to redevelop this whole area with the canal at its centre; however many development schemes are on hold at the moment, and this may affect progress; 2012 might be the earliest start date. Other parties are looking to fund restoring the summit level from Hall Lane (Little Lever) through to Bury. But putting dates on

when these restoration schemes might come to fruition has become rather difficult!

A new *Towpath Guide* was published in May 2009; it is available from Mavis Charnock, 17 Conway Avenue, Bolton, BL1 6AZ @ £6 plus £1 p&p.

Websites: <http://www.mbbcs.org.uk>
http://wikipedia.org/Manchester_Bolton_and_Bury_Canal
http://www.mangeogsoc.org.uk/egm/3_3.pdf

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:

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

IWA Manchester Branch Winter Talks Programme

October 2009 - April 2010

will be in the September issue & on the IWA website

The meetings are held on the 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

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