

# ***MANCHESTER PACKET***

## **Newsletter from the Manchester Branch IWA**



***'Roll out the Barrel'  
at the Marple Locks Festival***

**No 25**

**September 2009**

## Inland Waterways Association – Manchester Branch Committee

<b>President:</b>	<b>Vacant</b>	
<b>Vice Presidents:</b>	Jim Ramsbottom, Ben Williams	
<b>Chairman, Navigation &amp; Technical, Exhibition, Planning</b>	Steve Connolly 27 Hooten Lane Leigh WN7 3BY	T: 01942 679310 M: 07710 554602 E: <a href="mailto:steconno@btinternet.com">steconno@btinternet.com</a>
<b>Vice Chairman:</b>	Vacant	
<b>Acting Secretary:</b>	John Palmer 53 Southwood Road Great Moor Stockport SK2 7DJ	
<b>Treasurer:</b>	Barry McGuinness 4 Pole Lane Failsworth M35 9PB	T: 0161 6817237 M: E: <a href="mailto:b.mcguinness1@gmail.com">b.mcguinness1@gmail.com</a>
<b>Editor:</b>	Ian Price 16 Wyedale Close Buxton SK17 9RF	T: 01298 78141 M: 07971444258 E: <a href="mailto:ian.price-buxton@talk21.com">ian.price-buxton@talk21.com</a>
<b>Membership:</b>	Keith Fowler 171 Queens Road Cheadle Hulme Cheshire SK8 5HX	T: 0161 485 2813 E: <a href="mailto:kepf@btinternet.com">kepf@btinternet.com</a>
<b>Canal Society &amp; Cruising Club Liaison:</b>	John Palmer 53 Southwood Road Great Moor Stockport SK2 7DJ	
<b>Event Coordinator:</b>	Sue Day 12 Oakwood View Lower Beestow, Mossley Ashton-under-Lyme OL5 9QL	T: 01457 834863 E: <a href="mailto:suesday_horse@yahoo.com">suesday_horse@yahoo.com</a>
<b>Sales:</b>	Andrew Perry c/o The Boatyard, Worsley Dry Dock, Worsley, Manchester M28 2WN	T: 0161 793 6767 E: <a href="mailto:perry750@btinternet.com">perry750@btinternet.com</a>

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

## **Editorial Comments - Ian Price**

The September issue marks the start of our autumn programme of Open Meetings at Dukes 92 (see list of talks). There were a number of canal related festivals during the summer, notably the Standedge Tunnel, event, Rochdale Canal and Marple Festivals, as well as the Whaley Bridge Water Weekend. Reports on both the Rochdale & Marple events are in this issue.

If you have a story to tell of your experiences on or near canals this summer please send it to me. To start the ball rolling I have written of my experiences on the Rochdale this summer.

Please note the list of our Open Meetings held on the second Monday of the month at Dukes 92, Castlefield. Both to encourage more people (members and non-members) to attend and to reduce costs we are looking for an alternative venue - suggestions would be welcome.

### **Cover photo**

'Rolling Out the Barrel' at the Marple Locks Festival - 155 year old *Maria* is loaded with barrel from a dray.

### **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 15<sup>th</sup> 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**

There seems to be an ever widening ripple of concern regarding British Waterways management of the various schemes that are administered by them. We appear to have the sulking reluctance of a teenager when asked to do some housework in their [BW's] unenthusiastic application of manpower to "assist" boaters on the managed sections. IWA NavCom have already raised the subject of the Ribble Link management, whilst it is suggested that boaters wishing to do certain managed passages that they should book passage in the depth

of winter to be assured a place. This is hardly conducive to the perceived image of freedom to roam that the inland waterways system suggests, and it is a situation that is slowly strangling our inland waterways. One particular problem in our area, whilst not of the same scale, is reducing certain boating activities. I speak of the acquisition by Manchester City Council of the Rochdale Canal towpath along Canal Street in the city centre. For those of you who are unaware of the situation it has become apparent that the requirement of boaters using the Rochdale Nine are of less importance than the wish to have lots of people sitting out at tables on what is the towpath. When this situation allows for those people to impede the progress of a reasonable horse boat passage and also shows up the reluctance of the city managers to improve the matter and in so doing enhance the prestige of our inner city canals it is time to pick up the pen and get campaigning. If any of you out there have any recollections of the changes to passage brought about by the Rochdale Canal Company or of difficulties over booking assisted passages, e.g. Ribble Link, Rochdale summit & 18, please let me know.

## **NW Region Chairman's Comments - Alan Platt**

Since The summer edition of the Manchester Packet, I have not been totally idle, although I did fit in a holiday and some boating. There seems to have been some progress on the Canal Street situation, although there still remain a number of concerns, and we need to have discussions with the new BW Area Manager when he is in place; of which more later.

I also had a meeting with Marple Civic Society together with Steve Connolly and Keith Fowler of your committee. There are proposals for developments at the wharf by Marple Junction, and these include some aspects which give us cause for concern, including the fate of the warehouse and the future of the sanitary station. We are supporting the Civic Society and I have also written directly to BW setting out our concerns.

The course of BW's restructuring continues. I attended the consultation meeting at Ellesmere Port where Vince Moran and Sally Ash of BW's hierarchy gave us a brief overview and answered questions, or as some would have it, didn't answer questions. This meeting was loosely structured and tended to evolve into a user group meeting, which I gather also happened at other meetings. Trustees and National Committee members were also treated to a similar session with Simon Salem and Robin Evans (BW's Chief Executive) in September. The proposals for BW's future in the 'Third Sector' are still early in the formulation phase but two things are apparent. Firstly it appears that BW feel that their property portfolio is always liable to be raided as long as they remain effectively a government department, and they feel that some sort of con-

tracted subsidy would be less liable to cuts if they were a separate entity. I can follow the logic on the first of these, but am very dubious about the second.

The detailed structuring of BW's area management teams are progressing and, and as they inevitably involve redundancies, I have sympathy with those enduring the process, as anyone must who, like me, has been involved in the process from either side of the desk. The date for the new structure becoming effective has slipped a bit to the beginning of November.

Meanwhile I have started the process of getting to know the branches, now that committee meetings are starting up after the summer recess. I attended a lively and informative committee meeting of your branch and apparently am committed to attending your December meeting and uttering some pearls of wisdom. I hope it doesn't spoil your Christmas and look forward to meeting more of you.

## **Marple Locks Festival 2009**

Each year we have a boat descending the locks with a 'happening' or entertainment which always attracts the crowds. In the bicentenary year, we had the builder of the canal, Samuel Oldknow (aka Trevor Jones) and some of his apprentices travelling from Top Lock to Possett Bridge in the horse-drawn boat, *Maria* which, appropriately, was built at Jinks Boatyard at Top Lock; other years have seen a Jazz band and Handbell Ringers, but this year we decided to revive an old tradition of transporting beer barrels by water. Robinson's Brewery from Stockport, brought some wooden beer barrels, empty I'm afraid to say, to Top Lock by horse-drawn dray. These were then loaded onto *Maria* and Bilbo Baggins towed his loaded boat down to Possett Bridge. Sue Day, his owner, then gave a harnessing demonstration in the park before continuing on their journey home to Guide Bridge, dropping off the barrels at Lock 9.

The whole ethos of the festivals is to show local folk what a lot Marple has to offer in both heritage and activities – it is a great family day out with a lovely relaxed friendly atmosphere. Quite a few people come by boat, but in no way is it a Boat Rally. However, some aspects of boating are very popular, Brook-bank canoes always come and provide free taster sessions to Top Lock and we have local day-boats offering short trips up the canal.

The guided walks that we organize are always very popular, local historian, Judith Wilshaw, takes groups of walkers from top to bottom of the flight, giving them the history of the locks, and we offer a free mini-bus service back to the centre of Marple.

Refreshments are available up and down the flight, including a barbeque run by the Marple Business Forum and a Bacon Butty Boat by the Tudor Cruising

Club at Lock 4. Entertainment varies each year, this year we had local singers, Chris Shaw, Sarah & Barry and the Heartbeat Chorus, the award winning barbershop choir.



We receive a lot of help from various organizations such as the Scouts who lend us equipment, Stockport MBC whose park officers lend a hand and of course, British Waterways, without whose input we could not run the event at all. The next Festival, at which we hope Manchester Branch will have a stall, will be in July 2011.

When we are not organizing festivals, we hold working parties on the flight, oiling lock mechanisms, painting the beams and tidying up the vegetation around the locks. We obtained 'Self-Supervision' status with BW earlier this year and are pleased to work closely with them in the jobs we are able to carry out.

*Photos, including cover, from Arthur Procter and Malcolm Melia*

**Alison Allcard**

Secretary – Marple Locks Heritage Society

## Rochdale Canal Festival 2009

An exciting week of leisure, educational and community activities formed the highlight of this year's Rochdale Canal calendar as the annual Rochdale Canal Festival took place between Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> and Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> July.



The Festival aims to raise awareness of both the canal's heritage and the activities that are available to local people on the canal today. For the first time, this year's festival covered the whole length of the canal, from Calderdale to Manchester. This proved to be a hugely popular move, with over 2000 people taking part in festival events.

There was a taste of days gone by as the Horseboating Society spent the festival week travelling the length of the 33-mile Canal with *Maria*, Britain's oldest wooden narrowboat, pulled by Bilbo Baggins the horse. The Festival was opened by the Mayor of Rochdale at a fun day at Ealees, Littleborough and a Festival Finale at Failsworth Basin completed the week with a visit from the Mayor of Oldham.

Hundreds of young people took up the opportunity to try out fishing with a series of angling taster sessions – delivered by Todmorden Angling Society, CARP and the Environment Agency – in Todmorden, Smithy Bridge, Chadderton and Newton Heath. Over 300 people took to the waterways with boat trips by the Calder & Hebble Navigation Society, while over 80 participants tramped along the towpaths on a series of guided walks. Two volunteer events – a tow-path tidy led by the Rochdale Canal Society in South Chadderton and a balsam bash led by Groundwork Leeds and Calder Futures at Luddenden Foot – rounded off the 37 individual activities.

The Festival could not have happened without the support of more than 25 organisations that joined forces to organise, promote and deliver the event. They included; The Rochdale Canal Society; The Horseboating Society; the Environment Agency; British Waterways; Wild Over Waterways; the Inland Waterways Association; Oldham, Rochdale and Calderdale Metropolitan Borough Councils; Manchester City Council; Hebden Bridge Local History Society; The Ramblers; Oldham Active8 and Try-cycles.

The Rochdale Canal Festival received funding through the South Pennines



LEADER programme (jointly funded through Defra and the European Union), the Environment Agency, Oldham Council, Rochdale Council and Manchester City Council.

Next year's Rochdale Canal Festival will take place between Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> July and Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> August. To find out more information or get involved please contact Lucy Rogers, The Waterways Trust on 0161 242 8216 or email [lucy.rogers@thewaterwaystrust.org.uk](mailto:lucy.rogers@thewaterwaystrust.org.uk) {Photos taken by Eric Howard, Karen Wright Photography}.

## **Experiences on the Rochdale – August 2009 - Ian Price**

Early August Diana & I volunteered to help Sue Day bring the historic horse drawn wooden narrow boat 'Maria' down the 'Rochdale 9' to Castlefields and returning up the '9' to the Ashton flight to its home at the Ashton Packet Boat Company. The weather was fine and sunny the day before so we joined Sue, at Newton Heath, as Maria was making her way down the 'Rochdale 16'. We were assigned to specific tasks to work as a team to safely and efficiently traverse the locks aided by BW staff. It was interesting to see how you lock a powerless boat with apparent ease. En route we were met by the children of a nearby primary school who enjoyed seeing the horse and boat. A very enjoyable day ended in Ducie Street Basin where commuters walking home along the towpath were surprised to find a horse in the middle of Manchester; their varied reactions were a source of amusement to us all. The next day I was assigned to steer Maria as she descended the Rochdale 9 to Castlefields. Mixed emotions: the honour of being steerer and the worry over the responsibility for the 155 year old craft.; but all went well despite our inexperienced team into which Sue, in her indomitable style, managed to recruit a number of passers by to assist. Our start was delayed by interviews with a local TV channel & press. Our entry into Dukes Lock (92) was, again, delayed by theBBC as they turned up asking us to take *Maria* out and go in a again. More interviews after we moored in the basin and later that afternoon a live broadcast of the weather on BBC NW News (which Diana & I managed to get home in time for). Two days later, still blest with fine weather, we reported for duty for the return up the '9' and Ashton flights. Again, I was steerer a role which brings home to you the techniques required for horse boating through locks. It is somewhat daunting to find your 'engine' disconnected some distance from the lock as you coast in. On our passage up the '9' we were helped by boaters spending the weekend in Castlefields and it was surprising how many people queried whether or not we had an engine as well as Bilbo (they were equally surprised to be told we also didn't have brakes!).

Two weeks later Diana & I had the opportunity to boat 'Up North' . We were particularly pleased to be traversing the whole of the Rochdale on route to Great Heywood. Our enthusiasm was only slightly dented by the weather: rain often very heavy with strong winds. Even in such weather the Rochdale from Sowerby Bridge to its summit has to be in the top three picturesque canals, if not number one. Before starting this odyssey we had in mind BW warnings of low water levels and potential risk of being unable to cross the summit until levels could be restored. Our journey to the summit was memorable as if boat-



Editor steering *Maria* , Mrs Editor guiding the tow rope during passage through the Rochdale 9  
{Photo from Eric Howard, Karen Wright Photography

ing up Niagara falls, as virtually every lock had a spectacular flow over its gates. The transit of the summit has to be pre-booked as BW only permit two boats a day in each direction because of water level fears. True the summit was not overflowing but as you have to make your booking through 'Customer Services' there appears to be no flexibility taken into account by actual circumstances. Passage is determined on the day by the Lock Keeper and it maybe that he would allow additional boats if you turned up on spec. but I don't know. Having crossed the summit we moored, as advised, in Littleborough. Timing over the next two days was set by the need to reach 'safe' moorings at 'The Rose of Lancaster' (where are they!) and then to be at lock 65 (top of the 'Rochdale 18') by 8:30 the next day to be let onto the '18'. This takes about 90 minutes to guarantee not being late and as we encountered a BW butty and tug set adrift under the motorway bridge we arrived with only seconds to spare!

Apart from being in a powered boat circumstances were very different: no BW help apart from unlocking the locks, but fortunately we had a companion locking down with us and the heavy rain of the previous week meant high water

levels with the by-washes a raging torrent and water flowing over the gates like spectacular water falls. We found the Lock Keeper's advice ironic: "don't fill a lock until both boats are in the jaws as water levels can be low"; advice which proved to be impossible to safely achieve because of the strong flows over the by-washes, likewise on leaving it was like white water rafting! We abandoned this idea and I went ahead setting locks using the water from the one we were leaving. Having another boat made life much easier and we are extremely grateful to our friends Dave & Barbs for coming into Manchester from Buxton at some unearthly hour to help. With a good team we made relatively fast progress despite picking up a large viscose sheet around the props, also having to negotiate locks and pounds full of almost everything and towpaths flooded ankle deep and above. Having reached Ducie Street Basin by about 1 pm we decided to take advantage of our 'team' and carry on to Castlefields. The Rochdale 9 were awash with water and a boat ahead of us spent nearly 2 hours letting water through the first 2 locks in order to equalise levels to get the top gates open; a procedure we repeated down the flight. The towpaths in the tunnels, particularly under 111 Piccadilly and Deansgate, were under more than a foot of water so I went ahead and drained the pounds until you could see the paths; no doubt pleasing the many pedestrians who couldn't use their normal route. Despite this we continued to make good progress and moored up for the night in Castlefields and, after locating the water tap and attempting repairs to the weed hatch made to our favourite bar for a well earned glass of ale.

Two very different journeys; both in craft, weather and water conditions. The Rochdale is a challenging canal, not simply because of the number of broad locks to be negotiated or the shallow draft in places, but because of the need to complete certain stretches to a time table and the lack of mooring sites on the Lancashire side of the summit. The stretch down into Manchester is additionally difficult because of the obstructions; sunken and floating rubbish in the canal and the difficulty accessing several of the locks. We found BW's guide (on *Waterscape*) to be misleading: there are no moorings at the Rose of Lancaster (they've fallen into the canal); the water point at Slattocks is in a private garden, adjacent to one of the locks, so is not obvious; the water point and sanitary facility on the approach to Littleborough is on the off side so if the crew is walking between locks they are unable to help; and, importantly there is nowhere to fill up with diesel from Sowerby Bridge to some way along the Bridgewater canal after Bollington. These and BW's restrictions on the number of boats allowed to cross the summit are discouraging boaters from

using the canal which is a great shame both, because for most of its length, it is one of the most attractive canals in the country and because of the effort that went into restoring it. Please don't be put off by my comments above which are intended to encourage BW and others to improve further the canal.

***IWA Manchester Branch Winter Talks Programme***

October 2009 - April 2010

The meetings are held on the 2<sup>nd</sup> 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

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 12th October 2009  | Tom Barkley - <i>New Zealand in Brief</i><br>Its lakes, gorges, geysers and rivers including a boat trip through the Milford Sound  |
| 9th November 2009  | Colin Edmondson - <i>Not so Solid Ground</i><br>A trip from the salt works to Anderton looking at the old salt works, breaches, and subsidence (including some of the worst incidences in the UK) |
| 14th December 2009   | Christmas Social - speaker Alan Platt NW Regional Chairman  |
| <b>Note change of venue: Ukrainian Club, 215 Stockport Rd, Guide Bridge, Ashton-u-Lyne OL7 0NP</b> |   |
| 11th January 2010  | Glen Atkinson - <i>The Underground Canals of Worsley</i><br>52 miles of ingenuity and achievement. A mysterious underworld revealed and explained.  |
| 8th February 2010  | Leslie Brown - Former diver on the Manchester Ship Canal  |
| 8th March 2010 A   | AGM followed by TBA   |
| 12th April 2010  | TBA   |



## PROPELLER AND STERN GEAR SPECIALIST

J. Crowther (Royton) Limited have been in the business of designing and manufacturing propellers and stern gear for over 50 years, so we think we know the business. We design and manufacture propellers up to 42-in diameter and stern gear shafts up to 3-in diameter with all necessary forward and aft glands, seals, stern tubes etc. In fact we take care of everything for you on the stern gear side.

Throughout the marine industry we are particularly known for our special range of propellers including our High Efficiency and 'C' patterns which have proven highly successful for the inland waterways application.

At the beginning of 1991, we decided to apply for BS5750 Part II for Quality Assurance as an added guarantee to our customers and we were awarded our registration in September 1991 and all our propellers and stern gear, including shafts and glands, are backed by this certificate.

In addition we offer a complete repair and refurbishment service for your propellers, shafts and stern gear, etc.

As well as our own manufactured products, we also supply the well known and proven 'C' Grease which has been specially formulated for our company for use in all types of stern gear or any application where there is water present.

Throughout the inland waterways system, our company is well known and we have a reputation for giving a service second to none no matter how large or small your requirements.

**Eden Works, Belgrave Mill, Honeywell Lane,  
Oldham, OL8 2JP**

Tel: 0161 652 4234 Fax: 0161 627 4265

*Marine Engineers & Sole Manufacturers of Tanks Adjustable Bookcase Strip*

# Barry G. Stanton

for

## Your Boat Safety Certificate

British Waterways and Environment Agency Approved  
Boat Safety Scheme Examiner



Pre inspection service at low cost

Free Advice

Special rates to Society Members

**For prompt and friendly service**

**Telephone 01663 762635**



## THE STONE BOAT BUILDING CO. LTD.



For an extensive range of traditional narrowboat and sailing fittings  
ADVICE AND FRIENDLY HELPFUL SERVICE

Brass fittings : Portholes : Windows & Mushroom vents

Tillerbars & pins : Pigeon boxes : Rope : Fenders

Solid fuel stoves and chimneys : Cookers : Fridges & Freezers :

Showerbaths & basins : Water & Shower pumps : Acorn plumbing

FREE DOMESTIC HOT WATER

From water cooled engines by heat transference in our

CALORIFIER

ACCESS-VISA MAIL ORDER SERVICE

Send large S.A.E. for catalogue details & instructions

MAIN HONDA AGENTS Outboards & Generators Parts & Service

CALOR GAS & FITTINGS : DIESEL : D.I.Y. & YARD STORAGE : SLIPWAY

Gifts - Canal Souvenirs - Maps & Books - Clothing

Newcastle Road, Stone, Staffs

Tel: Stone 01785 812688 Fax: 01785 811317



# THORN MARINE

Chandlery \* Gas Supplies \* Boat Hire

---

*For All Your Boating needs*

*164a London Road, Stockton Heath, WARRINGTON, WA4 1TU*  
On the Bridgewater Canal next to London Road Bridge.

*Tel: 01925 265129.*

*Fax: 01925 211370.*

*Email: sales@thornmarine.co.uk*

*Website: www.thornmarine.co.uk*

## FURNESS VALE DRY DOCK

*Covered Dry Dock for DIY  
on Upper Peak Forest Canal.*

Welding services available.

Anodes supplied and fitted.

Suppliers of Bitumastic coatings.

Professional painting and sign-writing service.

Diesel, pump out, Day Boat Hire.

**Phone 01663 742971**

