

MANCHESTER PACKET

Newsletter from the IWA Manchester Branch



2010 National Rally - Beale Park

No 29

September 2010

Inland Waterways Association – Manchester Branch Committee

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Editorial

Ian Price

Last month's Packet was produced whilst Diana & I cruised on the Sheffield & Tinsley Canal, part of the South Yorkshire Navigations. I apologise to the half dozen of you who received it with tatty address labels – the sheet of labels took a dip in the cut! Labelling and stamping them on the towpath, in the sun, was much more satisfying than slaving at home! It also brought business to two local village post offices.

I hope you all managed to have an enjoyable time whether boating, walking, cycling or fishing on the canals despite an unseasonable August. Our own cruise was modified by the closure of the Leeds-Liverpool Canal and threats of similar closures on the Rochdale and Huddersfield Narrow Canals. The result was another trip up the Trent, always interesting, as you invariably meet a gravel barge at speed! We also diverted to Sheffield and twice met the 600 tonne tanker which plies between Goole and Rotherham. All in all we had an interesting trip visiting and staying a while in places we might not have normally: Droylsden, Kirkstall (Leeds) and Tinsley (Sheffield). The latter two are extremely attractive moorings, one private and the other BW.

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

First a thank you to the branch committee for carrying on the work of the branch whilst I was preoccupied with family matters. I understand that Stephen Broadhead's underground trips have been a huge success and he found time to put on extra trips to help support the Rochdale Canal Festival, an event I always miss due to annual holiday timings clashing. Also thanks to Ian, our Editor for continuing to present an excellent magazine with the minimum of fuss. One of the matters I managed to pass on the views of the Branch was the continuing discussions regarding the proposals to use tar based products on the Rochdale Canal summit level towpath. British Waterways have taken the high ground and become the experts on towpath surface suitability. As an example I questioned the statement that it costs a minimum of £100,000 per

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kilometre to construct a section of towpath, when this is compared to the stated costs of crushed stone at £50 to £60 per meter one begins to wonder if the pixies are managing the budget. Allied to the basics of this argument is the end product of smooth surface encouraging dangerous speeds of cyclists. You will not have failed to notice that the L & L has been in the news over the summer months and I also managed to attend a meeting at BW Wigan to assist in the circulations of the closure decisions that were made by London and Wigan management. From feedback of this it soon became apparent that the “help line” was woefully inadequate and steps have been suggested to improve the quality of advice. It is hoped by all involved that good, solid management lessons have been highlighted and as a bonus British Waterways are beginning to believe that we, the users have a genuine desire to help with the way our waterways are managed.

Region Chairman’s Piece

Alan Platt

We are living in somewhat turbulent times as regards the present and future of the canal system and in many ways what has happened on the political front has been mirrored by the weather during the summer. We have had the pecu-

liar situation where the summit of the Leeds and Liverpool has been closed and the cross Pennine routes in your area have been threatened due to lack of water, at the same time as it has been raining and not too tempting to get out and about on the waterways, be it on foot, boat, bike or whatever.

In the corridors of power there are signs that, if we are to keep our system, we must work together and consult, rather than be confrontational. As regards the future of British Waterways, the idea originating within the IWA of a national Waterways Conservancy including other authorities such as the EA, is gaining acceptance. This new body would replace the former ones, and not be a question of BW 'taking over' other areas, which might allow scope for some much needed reforms and restructuring in the process. We feel that this could help achieve some of the essential savings, and the idea seems to be becoming accepted by the government, who have been holding conversations with the IWA. This is not going to happen tomorrow, but BW's 2020 vision may not take as long as that!

Another welcome sign of increasing consultation is the recent invitation to our National Chairman, Clive Henderson, to sit as an observer on BW's board; this seems to me similar to the role of a non executive director in business. There was anxiety that this may be seen as the IWA colluding with BW but I am happy to say that most of the reaction I have had is that it gives BW the benefit of our views, and that of a boater as well, and we are better working with them, than against them.

This does not in any way emasculate our ability or desire to oppose where opposition is called for. I am very unhappy about the plans for surfacing the summit section of the towpath on the Rochdale. Surfaces must be appropriate for ALL users of the canal and must suit the natural and heritage environment of the area. The present plans seems to give undue preference to cycling fraternity and the reactions of BW and the Waterways Trust are disappointing and imply that whoever pays for it can call the shots. I fully support the local action on this and Steve and I are currently looking at how best to take this forward within IWA.

I referred above to cuts; the government has not specified these but undoubtedly they will fall, and they will be significant. This time I fear they can no longer be kept to the back offices and admin, and real cuts in maintenance

and engineering will result. BW are, at the same time, looking for volunteers to assist with various tasks, and while we welcome this, we must be cautious. There is a role for volunteers and we can all think of instances where we have seen two men standing there watching a third dig a hole. However any redundancies resulting from BW cuts should not be because the job can be done by a volunteer, and volunteering is not, and must not, an alternative to BW jobs, but an opportunity to assist and improve on services.

On a lighter note, I recently went to the National Festival on the Thames and very good it was too; next year it will be nearer at Burton on Trent and hopefully the weather will be as clement. By the time you read this, my home branch will have hosted the National AGM at Market Drayton on the Shroppie and I hope some of you will have made it there. The autumn with its programme of meetings and talks will be soon upon us, and I hope to try and make some of them. And finally you have a small and hard stretched committee who as always could do with some extra members, so if you're tempted to 'put something back', why not come along and join in.



A relaxing National Festival

– a personal perspective of the Tom Rolt Centenary National Festival and Boat Show at Beale Park by John C Fletcher

It must be at least twenty years since I have had such a relaxing national festival!

On the Sunday before I took Kate, Abi and Kai the 21 year-old collie, plus the caravan down to a caravan site south of Birmingham. I wasn't sure how either of the two smaller passengers would have fared travelling all the way in one go and so we used

a Birmingham stop-over to break the journey. The next day we moved to a Caravan Club camping site at Henley-on-Thames. As I knew the roads we cut over the Chilterns on narrow and steep back roads rather than the approved caravan route, and it made for challenging driving.

On the Tuesday we had a quiet morning and were about to have lunch outside when the rains came and so we ate in the awning. In the afternoon I wanted to go to an iron mongers in town and so I pushed Abi there in a buggy and then riverside. She watched cruisers going under Henley Bridge; the ducks and geese coming up to be fed beneath the colourful display of hanging baskets; and I showed her the very straight Henley Regatta rowing course as this was an event I had attended regularly when I was national chairman.

The next day we were having lunch with John and Jocelyn Dalton who have a riverside house on the backwater to Benson Lock. Chris Coburn (Lee Sanitation and IWA National Vice President) joined us. It was not a good day weather-wise and RAF Benson were having a "family day". While we ate lunch the Red Arrows did their display at almost zero altitude and when the War Memorial flight came over the Spitfire and Hurricane were at about a hundred feet, but the Lancaster was blowing leaves off the trees! It rained heavily all night.

Next morning I pulled the caravan to Beale Park – about 15 miles – and, on instruction, we slithered to a halt in the middle of a field with a sea of mud ahead of us – normal national festival conditions! As nearly 500 caravans were expected, a new road entrance to the camping fields was being constructed by WRG, but I decided to attempt the mud crossing and we made it without mishap and we set up caravan and awning again. With a toddler it was great to be able to hook up to mains electricity this year. We had volunteered to help set up and break down the IWA main marquee and one-at-a-time to work on sales, recruiting or "Rolly" toys, so that the other could look after Abi. Kate was rostered for one session on the Rolly toys and otherwise we were put on standby for emergencies.

On Friday we waded through the mud on to site and Abi wore her (size 4) Wellies for the first time. Kate was asked to help lay out the display of IWA branded clothing which was much more extensive this year. I distracted Abi after she had tested the Rolly toys, by taking her round the site and watching the other stands being put up. She found a toy buggy on the SCARS stand and bought it. In the afternoon we went to Tesco in Didcot to fill up with diesel and stock the larder and when we returned we

there was a temporary multi-site Geocaching opportunity on the site and we found the start cache riverside with a list of clues for the next level of caches. However by then it was getting near lunch time so we went back on the main site; had lunch; and returned to the caravan to dress smart once again. As we set off for the show ground there was a deluge. We headed for the boat on the lake to which we had been invited and found it deserted, but enquiry revealed that the tea with Sonia Rolt and Timothy West (both fellow Waterway Trust Vice Presidents) had been transferred to a marquee, not least to facilitate access for Sonia. Both Timothy West and his wife, Prunella Scales, had their photographs taken with Abi. It was a select private affair with around twenty guests. Afterwards we returned to the caravan via the Premier marquee once more – socialising and giving introductions.

After dinner Kate put Abi in her sleep suit; then in a snuggle suit; and then put the leg muff on the pram and put Abi in it. We set off walking towards the river bank just as it got dark. Even though boats were moored four or five abreast we could see the illuminated boats especially through the fire breaks, as they set off towards Pangbourne. We were offered a view from the top of one of the moored narrow boats, but with a baby in a buggy it did not seem the best idea. We returned to a view over the lake from near the bar, and Abi fell asleep for awhile. About 10 o'clock an Environment Agency launch entered the lake leading Chris Coburn at the controls of a tug, pulling a flat with a jazz band on board. Abi woke up! Around twenty illuminated boats then entered the lake in semi-organised chaos but the real joy was the

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the reflection of the illuminations on the surface of the lake. I got some great photographs, but sadly they will look unspectacular in black and white. Abi got to bed at 11 o'clock.

We only just made it on to site by 10 a.m. next morning, but again we were not needed for emergency cover and so we decided to follow up the next level of clues Geocaching. By lunch time we had walked about 1½ miles of Thames Path and found three clues in caches on or near the path. We then crossed a couple of fields including one with a large herd of cows, lifting Abi in her buggy over stiles at all the boundaries. Having reached a field track we looked for the next cache in vain for perhaps twenty minutes before giving up and walking on a park roadway perhaps a mile back to the site for lunch. Afterwards we followed the Geocache clues in the opposite direction through the woods at the railway boundary of the Beale Park Estate; then carried Abi up some very steep steps beside a railway bridge which took us on to the exit road from the park. From there it was a few hundred yards to the field with the cows and this time we better understood the clue and found the final cache at this level.

Kate put all the "finds" into her Garmin which gave us the co-ordinates for the final cache, and once again we had to return about a mile to the traders' car park. We got within perhaps 40m of the location, but it was on the other side of a barbed wire fence. A diversion was made through the stream of cars – visitors leaving the site. Kate found the final cache and took a nominal prize of a ladybird rubber, but there were more co-ordinates to leave your results in a "post box" near the public entrance. Tired out, we socialised and drank tea until the site closed for the final time.

Then Kate cleared the area where the Rolly toys had been and I was one of the two involved in stock-taking for the book sales, also in the IWA marquee. We were too tired to start packing for ourselves, but Abi and I unloaded the car into the porch while Kate cooked us dinner. It took until 3pm to pack ourselves up the following day – there were only 12 caravans after us.

Two nights later we heard by e-mail that Kate had won the Geocaching competition and a more substantial prize was said to be on its way to us.

John' & Kate's daughter Abi meeting celebrities at the Rally: Sonia Rolt and Timothy West.



And having fun



There are a number of important festivals and events coming up in our area over the next 12 months; go along and join the fun. A list is later in this issue. In addition our winter talks programme starts next month (October) and the schedule up to Christmas follows.



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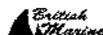
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Winter Talks programme 2010

The talks are open to everyone and are held in the Brindley Room, Dukes 92, castlefields, Manchester starting at 8pm

1. OCTOBER 11, 2010

GLEN ATKINSON
BARTON'S BRIDGES FALLING DOWN

Glen Atkinson with another of his hugely popular local history talks. The saga of how each of the seven bridges built at Barton between 1670 and 1960 fell down during building.

(running time of illustrated talk is 45 mins, allowing time for IWA Manchester Branch updates since we last met. eg Barton talk can be a reminder to all that it is the Bridgewater Canal 250th anniversary next year, leading to the reminder too that it will be the Standedge Tunnel bi-centenary next year and so that of the Huddersfield Narrow Canal)

2. NOVEMBER 8, 2010

BOB MAY
VINTAGE IMAGES OF MIDLANDS CANALS

Bob May has had a lifetime of working for the Birmingham Post and his canals collection of photos includes photos by Charlie Atkins (Chocolate Charlie) and Henry Robert Hodgkinson.

3. DECEMBER 13, 2010, note likely change of venue for the Xmas Social date

KEVIN DRANSFIELD
THE MARPLE FLY-BOAT AND THE MARPLE LOCKS TRAMWAY
Kevin Dransfield of Stockport Heritage Trust will give an illustrated talk

EVENTS IN 2011

2011 is to be a year for very important dates for celebratory events in the IWA Manchester Branch area

Bridgewater Canal 250th anniversary

Standedge Canal Tunnel 200th anniversary, Dec 2010 - Dec 2011

Mikron Theatre 40th anniversary, in its 40th touring year

Horseboating Society 10th birthday, 10 touring years completed

Marple Locks Heritage Society Festival, 5th, (biannual)

Rochdale Canal Festival, 5th annual festival

1. The Bridgewater Canal will celebrate its 250th anniversary since it was officially opened on 17th July, 1761. eg Worsley Festival, Sale Festival
2. The Standedge Tunnel will celebrate its 200th anniversary since it was officially opened on 4 April, 1811 thereby allowing boats to complete a full passage of the Huddersfield Narrow Canal. Until then cargoes had to be unloaded from boats onto packhorses or wagons to cross the Pennines above the tunnel route on Boat Lane.
eg April 2-4 Standedge Tunnel Festival, Summer Party, September Diggle Festival
3. Mikron Theatre's 40th touring year on the national network of canals taking theatre to canal-side pubs and other venues. Mikron is based in Marsden near the Huddersfield Narrow Canal.
4. The Horseboating Society celebrates its 10th birthday having had its inaugural meeting in January 2001. The majority of the horseboating has taken place in the IWA Manchester Branch area using horseboat Maria built in Marple in 1854, and horseboat Elland which went around the South Pennine Ring in 2002 and again along the full length of the Rochdale Canal in 2010. eg horseboating the Bridgewater Canal and Huddersfield Narrow Canal, maybe the Rochdale Canal and Peak Forest Canal.
5. Marple Locks Heritage Society Festival
6. Rochdale Canal Festival
7. Any other local celebrations? Please let us know

Information & Enquiries to Sue Day, IWA Mcr Events,
suesday_horse@yahoo.co.uk

Canal and Navigation Societies in the North West.

Shropshire Union Canal Society

Contact: Linda Andrews, Secretary. Telephone 07867790195.

Email nbjosephinecollier@yahoo.co.uk ebsite: www.shropshireunion.org.uk/

Macclesfield Canal Society

Secretary: Malcolm Bower, 22 Belfry Drive, Tytherington, Macclesfield SK10 2TD secretary@macclesfieldcanal.org

Hollingwood Canal Societey

HCS Membership, 2 Rock Bank, Stamford Road, Mossley, Lancs. OL5 0BD

Rochdale Canal Society

Mr Brian Holden 3, The Broad Ing, Passmonds, Rochdale Lancashire OL12 7AR. Telephone 01706 646132.

Manchester Bolton & Bury Canal Society

Membership Sec: Dr Paul Hindle, Meadowbank, Ringley Road, Radcliffe, Manchester, M26 1FW 0161 723 1433

Wooden Canal Boat Society

The Wooden Canal Boat Society, 33 Beauchamp Street, Ashton Under Lyne, OL6 8LF

Contact: Chris Leah, Telephone 0161 330 8422 or Mobile 07931 952037

Email: wcbbs@beeb.net Website: www.wcbbs.org.uk/

The Horse Boating Society

Email: enquiries@horseboating.org.uk

Website: <http://www.horseboating.org.uk>

Is your society here? If not let me have details and I will include them Ed.

IWA Manchester Branch