

# **Manchester Packet**

**Newsletter from the IWA Manchester Branch**



**Issue 33**

**September 2011**

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### ***Disclaimer***

*The views expressed in this Newsletter are not necessarily those of the IWA or of the Manchester Branch but are included as being of interest to our members*

## **Editorial**

### **Ian Price**

I assembled this issue of the Packet whilst still on our summer cruise. As we have spent a lot of the time wandering around the Birmingham Canal Navigations I read Alan Platt's comments about urban cruising with interest. We were on the BCN for several extended periods from the end of June to the beginning of September and had left the boat there for a week whilst off to a family gathering in Wiltshire (at Cuckoo Wharf where a resident boater was extremely helpful – thanks Mike). We neither experienced nor saw any sign of problems, though one boater said he had been set adrift at 3 in the morning when moored in Gas Street; as this is the Mecca for pubs & clubs not a good choice of location. As Alan says you do need to be careful where you moor and, in some cases, when you cruise. Most boaters we talked to stop briefly and move on out of the BCN which is a shame as we found there are many interesting routes to take, both centrally and around the suburbs.

Congratulations to Steve Broadhead on organising a successful day trip to the Dudley Canal Trust – see his report in this issue.

### ***Cover Photos***

*Front: A Dudley Canal Trust trip boat emerging from the tunnel;*

*Rear: Tunnel Entrance*

## Branch Chairman's Column

**Steve Connolly**

Once again, as I write this, we are approaching the publication of the September Packet, which in its self signals the end of another summer. I can hear you snort at the mention of the S word but I myself have quite enjoyed the weather or the lack of it, and the fact that it didn't seem to put anybody off visiting our northern waters is an indication of the "let's get on with it" spirit. Someone who has "Lets get on with it" by the bucket full is WRG who will have had three work camps in respect of the Inglesham Lock restoration by the time you read this. As the gateway to the Cotswold Canal restoration, may I remind you, that the amount for this stands at £50,000, is still open and that the target is £125,000. Don't forget that as we restore more canals in the south it will give us more room up here in our northern wilderness [yes I have heard that said!]. Joking aside there was a marked increase in the amount of boats about on our patch and I have heard another comment that the Olympic Games will be the fore bearer of hoards of boats coming our way to enjoy the peace and quiet but perhaps not the sunshine.

There was a brief flurry of emails last month when I noticed an assisted passage for the Canal Street locks that had no reason attached but a reassuring word from Barry McGuiness, our man on the spot, reassured us that wet basements were the cause of it all. Thanks also to Stephen Broadhead who has persevered with the Dudley trip and has had a nearly full contingent as a reward. It would appear that later in the year is preferable to people.

I have to apologize for the non event that was IWALK. It had been hoped to organize/revive a trial of the August walks that used to be so popular but due to crossed wires and my thoughts elsewhere it didn't happen. However a trial IWALK is taking place in Shrewsbury Branch area and if the feedback is positive this may be rolled out into national events next year.

I look forward to seeing you all at the first Open meeting in October. Once again Dukes 92 will be our hosts and I would like to take this opportunity to thank Sara and Lauren for their generosity in our discounted fees. It appears we will be back in the Brindley Room as the Line Dancing people have cast a shoe.

# **Barry G. Stanton**

*for*

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## **Region Chairman's Report**

**Alan Platt**

Summer is the time of year when whatever young men's thoughts turn to, many of us are using the waterways rather than talking about them. I myself forsook our region's home waters, except for the Shroppie by going to the National Festival at Burton the long way round via the Midland canals to

Braunston and then via the Grand Union through Leicester to Shardlow and so to Burton, with a few pleasant side excursions.

People seem to be put off going through Leicester as many are wary of big cities. There can be instances of anti social behaviour in any conurbation but my general impression is that, provided one is sensible about when one cruises and where one moors, they are not too bad. All it seems to take is one relatively isolated incident to occur and be blown out of proportion by the less responsible of the waterway media, for undeserved panic to ensue. What I found daunting about Leicester was not the locals but the heavy double locks.

The National itself had been moved to the end of July as an experiment and one result seemed to be fine weather. The longer evenings meant that the illuminated boat show was a late night event. There seemed to be very good crowds and excellent publicity and the general impression was of a very successful event. Many of the stalwarts of the volunteer army that makes it work come from the region and deserve our thanks.

In 2012 there will be no National, and I have heard that the whole national supply of portaloos have been booked for the Olympics! There are however a number of events being planned in the region and the dedicated rally attender will have plenty of places to go.

Politically the official IWA response to the DEFRA consultation was generally accepted to be excellent and I thank those who both contributed ideas for it and commented individually. From initial and informal conversations, the points made have been listened to. There are real concerns about the fledgling New Waterways Charity and the foremost of these relates to the funding; the interim trustees have a major job ahead of them.

The two trial Area Partnerships have held their first meetings and hopefully there is real progress here as well, so there are positive signs here for the future of the new charity. There are still more questions than answers and

the forecasts for volunteers and donations puzzle many. One thing is sure is that the next six months will be both interesting and challenging.

On a personal point two valuable members of the region committee have been on hospital rations; David Smith from N Lancs slipped and broke a hip at Burton and Steve Connolly of Manchester is recovering from having a new knee fitted. I wish them both a speedy recovery.



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## **Manchester Bolton & Bury Canal Update**

Since the opening of the Middlewood length of the canal in Salford in 2008 not much appears to have happened. In fact there is quite a lot of activity going on behind the scenes, though the economic down-turn has halted most developments on which our restoration plans now rely. In Salford the

developer of the Middlewood site has gone bankrupt, and the site is up for sale. Another canal-side redevelopment site at the former Creams paper mill in Little Lever is similarly on hold.

At the top end of the Middlewood site Network Rail is soon going to replace the bridge which carries the Manchester-Bolton line over the canal; it is hoped that their repair will make re-instating the canal easier in due course. Both Salford Council and Salford University have plans for redeveloping the Crescent area, and Salford Council has undertaken to restore the canal at least as far as the soon-to-be-redesigned Salford Crescent station. A substantial length of the towpath around Agecroft is to be improved by Salford Council, and the Society will then be responsible for maintaining it.

Another of our quarter-milestones has been unearthed behind the Horseshoe pub at Ringley; we hope to re-install it very soon. At Nob End the canal workshop is in a very dangerous condition, and British Waterways intends to reduce the building's height; this has yet to take place. On the other hand a new bridge originally proposed nearby at Top o' th' Lodge may now be installed across the top of Prestolee Locks, replacing a long-lost bridge.

Our regular working parties continue, usually held on the last weekend of each month. We have recently concentrated our efforts between Nob End and Ladyshore in Little Lever, but we are going to attack the overgrown towpath at Ringley next. If you would like to come and help then please contact Steve Dent on 07802-973228 to check when and where we are meeting.

At the AGM in October we will say farewell to both John Fletcher and Ben Williams as members of Council, though I am sure they will not disappear entirely. John is a founder member of the Society, and was for some time Company Secretary. He re-joined Council in 2005, and, after the death of Margaret Fletcher, has done a stint of five years as Chairman. His reports in our quarterly magazine have summed up the valuable work he has done. We propose to make him our President, and to make Fred Talbot our Patron. Ben has been on Council since 2002, and has been for some years our Vice

Chairman, ably supporting John; many Council meetings have taken place at his house. I am in the process of taking over as Chairman; for example the Society's official address has already been transferred to my address.

*Paul Hindle*

## **IWA Manchester Branch**

### **5 Hour 2 Tunnels Dudley Canal Tour Saturday**

**3<sup>rd</sup> Sept 2011**

Forty persons travelled from Manchester to the Black Country Living Museum. Four persons were in the Birmingham area and made their own way directly to the museum.

The museum uses electrically powered narrow boats that silently glide their way through the water. The trip is circular, starting at the trust's Tipton premises, into the short tunnel, open air basin, new tunnel 1989, Little Ness Cavern, rock tunnel, Hurst's Cavern and then the Dudley No. 1 tunnel. The Dudley No 1 tunnel is quite small and is 2,884 meters long. The tunnel was completed in 1792. The tunnel was built by a number of different contractors therefore the dimensions vary along the length of the tunnel. Exiting from the tunnel there were several miles of open canal with several locks on the way. We stopped for tea/coffee and cake at the Bumble Hole building which is run by a charity. After our refreshments and a quarter of a mile further on we entered the Netherton tunnel. The Netherton tunnel is vast, the canal width is 15 feet and towpaths either side. Two boats can easily pass going in opposite directions which we did on our tour. The water level to the top of the tunnel is 16 feet which means that headroom is not a problem. The Netherton tunnel is completely straight and is 2,766m long. The tunnel was completed in 1858 and runs parallel to the Dudley No. 1 tunnel. After exiting the Netherton tunnel we sailed a couple of miles back to the Dudley Canal Trust's premises at Tipton

The weather was mainly sunny but with some overcast clouds.

The tour was excellent; I hope that those attending will promote it to other persons interested in canals and an interesting day-out. I intend to organise another 5 hour 2 tunnels Dudley Canal tour next year.

Stephen Broadhead

## **Thoughts of a waterways volunteer**

### **Branch President John Fletcher, OBE**

When we booked for this year's national festival we did not expect that it would be the last national festival for at least two years. I fear that the volunteer momentum lost will not be replaced by a widespread desire to attend the Olympic Games by the majority of waterway users. While I understand the decision, as somebody who has attended the festival every year for nearly three decades, I regret it. With so many other changes on the waterways it is unsettling that another change has become coincidental in its literal sense.

This year we were invited to Swan Upping on the river Thames at the home of IWA Vice President, Chris Coburn. It seemed a long journey for our younger daughter, then but a few weeks old. We took the caravan down to south of Birmingham, so that the return journey to Pangbourne was much shorter. In the end it was not only a very wet day but there were no swans to be "upped" on the reach. Her Majesty's Swan Marker, David Barber, commented on the effects of disease and poor winter weather on the swan population, at the end of this year's "ceremonial journey with a purpose".

In pleasanter weather we "flopped out" at the caravan site close to the M42 over the weekend. Then we made the much shorter journey to Burton upon

Trent on the Monday before the national festival started. With a young baby it was a delight to have a power supply to which to connect and this provision is one of those changes made to festivals in recent years which I roundly applaud.

We spent four days helping to set up the IWA marquee and in particular the Rolly toys play area for children, at which we were to spend some time supervising each day the festival was open. Older daughter Abigail, all of 2½ years old, was pressed into service, not only testing the afore-mentioned Rolly toys, but also helping to unload the van as it arrived from head office. She enjoyed the volunteering and I hope it will be a pattern she will be able to continue.



It is always a delight to re-meet friends that I made while National Chairman (or even before) and we met a family that came into this category in the local supermarket on the first day in Burton. Although their children, Ellen and Ailsa, were much older than Abi they happily played together and indeed we met up with them on our next holiday just a few weeks later.

That was a very wet week when we again stayed in the caravan, this time near Grange over Sands. Abi had three highlights on that holiday. One was the Aquarium of the Lakes at Lakeside where she was enthralled at the fishes, some of which were bigger than her, and also animals such as otters. The second was the Beatrix Potter exhibition in Bowness, where more than one of the characters is water-based – e.g. Jemima Puddleduck. The third was another great day, although perhaps the wettest of the week, at an Ullswater lakeside campsite with the Sayles family again, with Ellen and Ailsa teaching her to fly a kite because it was too gusty to go sailing safely.

So is our elder daughter getting involved in the waterways? Involved in boats? Only peripherally. Involved in waterways? Certainly. Is she enjoying herself? Most definitely. That is what volunteering should be like for all of us.

Let us hope that the New Waterway Charity think on these things as the management of British Waterways' waterways moves into the "third sector."

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**The Curley Wyrley**

Our wanderings around the BCN started after a two day rest at the top of the Wolverhampton flight which included an enjoyable play at the Grand Theatre. Before heading into the centre of Brum we decided to explore a canal we had not heard about, only noticed on canal maps, the Wyrley and Essington. The Wyrley & Essington Canal gains its nickname from the way it winds its way along 473ft contour from Horsley Fields, Wolverhampton to Huddlesford Junction on the Coventry Canal, near Lichfield. However at Ogley Junction, the current limit of navigation, it had 30 locks to lower it down to Huddlesford. It was constructed in 1797 and several branches were developed. The canal primarily served a number of collieries and a power station at Walsall. It became part of the BCN in 1840.

Initially the canal passes through an elderly and a bit neglected industrial area reinforcing one's preconception of the BCN. However it soon frees itself of this and is flanked by housing states on both sides. Despite the urban surroundings the immediate boundaries of the cut have well established growth of shrubs, bushes and trees which almost succeed in hiding the housing. The water was very clear and I spent much of the journey spotting fish as I steered, the prize being several pike. Don't be too concerned about this lack of attention to the job-in-hand, we only saw one boat moving whilst on the Curley Wyrley and its navigable branches. Now that is what I call relaxing boating! In places the housing gives way to open countryside often the location of former collieries but now inhabited by horses. These interludes to urbanity give a glimpse of what the canal would have been in its hay day as it wandered purposely from colliery to colliery etc. through open country side. I wasn't the only one fish watching as we had the pleasure of an arctic tern fishing in our wake. For some considerable time Diana was able watch as he dived into the cut, though she didn't see him succeed unless the fish had been swallowed as he emerged from the water (unfortunately I could watch and steer). We assumed the turbulence from the wake provided him cover the clear water does not. As well as seeing fish we could also see the many types of weed/reed in the canal which also had many stretches of water lilies. Only one length had the junk and rubbish that I expected to find everywhere.

We explored two navigable branches and the former Walsall Branch, now the



Walsall Canal. The Walsall Canal was literally covered in lilies for most of the length to Walsall locks. I felt we were boating in a lily pond. There was a secure BW visitor mooring to the left of the top lock which gave us a good place to leave *Kaynka* whilst walking down the flight into town where they have built a new mooring in the centre. In Walsall we had a fascinating visit to the Leather Museum (I didn't realise that Walsall had a major leather manufacturing centre). Next day we wended and moved on to water at Sneyd Wharf (another safe mooring). The next branch explored was the Cannock Extension Canal at Pelsall Junction. A dog walker warned us that there could be an obstruction two bridges up so we moored and walked the length to Norton Canes where Watling Street (A5) crosses the canal and brings about its termination at the boat builders of the same name. Across the A5 was an excellent farm shop so we set off back loaded and here we met the other boat which had made it to the end and kindly gave us a lift back down the branch to *Katynka* saving us the mile+ walk. Next up was the Anglesey Branch which leads to Chasewater reservoir our next overnight mooring. At Chasewater we managed to find our way up to the reservoir despite the



fenced off building works currently being undertaken to strengthen its earth dam. As a consequence the reservoir was empty leaving us wondering where the BCN was getting its water from as this was the main source.

We finally left the Curley Wyrley at Catshill Junction taking the Daw End Branch south having had a most interesting, relaxing and enjoyable and trouble free cruise along a canal previously unknown to us. We thoroughly recommend it to all.

Ian & Diana Price

## LIST OF EVENTS 2011

September 18th	Diggle Canal Festival at Diggle Tip by the Diggle portal of Standedge Tunnel	Organised by the <a href="#">Huddersfield Canal Society</a> and Oldham Council. Activities on and near the canal, including short tunnel trips, passenger boat trips, horse boat, outdoor theatre performance

		about the canal history. Boat rally, max 20 boats
September 17th to October 1st	<p>Marple Festival</p> <p><a href="#">2010 Festival</a></p> <p>Including Horse Boating</p>	<p>Their 2nd Festival. Held at Marple on the Lower and Upper Peak Forest Canals, and Macclesfield Canal. Marple Festival has a boat gathering, promoting Marple as a canal destination.</p> <p>Visiting boats are welcomed throughout the period of the festival. Two weeks of activities on and near the canal, including passenger boat trips, horseboating, guided heritage and nature walks etc. Many indoor and outdoor events in the town, such as music, theatre, film, art exhibitions, food and drink etc. Celebrating Marple's local heritage, culture, and arts.</p> <p>Friday 16th: Horseboating Guidebridge to Marple, and to Bugsworth and back during the festival.</p> <p>Invite to all: Crew always needed and welcomed. Contact: enquiries</p>
September 18th	Rochdale Canal Society Summit Festival	<p>Organised by the <a href="#">Huddersfield Canal Society</a> and Oldham Council.</p> <p>Activities on and near the canal, including short tunnel trips, passenger boat trips, horse boat, outdoor theatre performance about the canal history. Boat rally, max 20 boats</p>
October 22nd - 30th	Standedge Halloween	Trips into the Standedge Tunnel on a haunted boat, or pumpkin soup at the café! Beware of the spooky characters that will take control of

		Standedge Visitor Centre. See <a href="http://www.standedge.co.uk">www.standedge.co.uk</a> nearer the date
December 22nd Wednesday	Annual Walk	Rochdale Canal Society Walk. Commemorating the anniversary of the opening of the Rochdale Canal in 1804. Meet for mulled wine and mince pies before walking the Summit level of the canal, in whatever the weather, as sometimes the Summit is snow-covered for this short walk. Then after the walk, a festive gathering to eat in a local pub, usually the Summit pub.



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# IWA Manchester Branch Winter Talks Programme

## October 2011 – April 2012

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

10<sup>th</sup> October 2011

**Trevor Ellis**

*Slide presentation: Postcards of the Huddersfield Narrow Canal*

14<sup>th</sup> November 2011

**Liam D'Arcy-Brown**

*The Grand Canal of China*

Liam D'Arcy-Brown first visited China twenty years ago when he was studying Mandarin. His 1,115-mile journey from Hangzhou to Beijing in 2006 made him the first Westerner in more than two centuries to trace the length of China's Grand Canal, the world's longest and oldest man-made waterway, an adventure he captures in this fascinating illustrated talk

12<sup>th</sup> December 2011

**Christmas Social**

Bring and Share Buffet & Speaker TBA

**NB This meeting will be at the Ukrainian Club, Ashton-under-Lyme**

*Up to date information on meetings and directions to the venues are on the Branch Website*

[http://www.waterways.org.uk/regions\\_branches/north\\_west/Manchester/manchester](http://www.waterways.org.uk/regions_branches/north_west/Manchester/manchester)

If you would like a reminder of Branch Meetings, walks & events let us have your e-mail address (HO does not pass any personal information to Branches)

**STOP PRESS: as part of the Marple Festival David Sumner is giving a talk on the Huddersfield Narrow restoration alongside Ian Edgar OB on the Bugsworth Restoration; Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> September. Details Marple Festival web site**



The Inland  
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