

Mile Post



The Magazine of the West Riding Branch



September 2007

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NOTE: The views expressed in this publication are not necessarily those of The Inland Waterways Association or of The West Riding Branch. They are, however, published as being of interest to our members and readers.

Front cover.

Chairman to chairman at our branch meeting . Peter Scott , chairman of the West Riding Branch, and John Fletcher, chairman of the IWA, at our first meeting of the new season.

Festivals

With attendance at the National, the branch publicity stand has again attended five events (nine days) during the summer months. Our thanks and appreciation go to all who host and organise these events so efficiently and successfully, particularly this year in spite of the weather (the mud at St Ives wasn't quite as bad as Wakefield!) giving us a venue to help to promote the waterways. Well done to the branch members who have been involved on the site teams for the events. They couldn't have done it without you. The small group of committee members, who have manned the stand, have worked hard setting up the stand, making it look inviting and interesting, talking to lots of people, distributing information leaflets and having a good time. It is a great opportunity to meet with a wide range of people who enjoy the waterways in a variety of ways and to promote the waterways and their use to the unenlightened !



Caption Competition



This lady was spotted surveying the sea of mud at the IWA National Festival at St Ives . What do you imagine she might be thinking? Answers to the editors by post, E-mail or hand to us at a branch meeting before Christmas. (Yes, it will be upon us before we know it!) A small prize to the most amusing answer.

Punch. A Long Distance Runner.

The dog was bought from a dog's home, he was a scruffy looking beast with the coat and markings reminiscent of a border collie but he was smaller than that breed and carried his tail gaily, terrier like. He quickly became the constant companion of his master, the skipper of the tanker Lincoln, which was the training boat for John Harkers (Tankers Ltd.). Had it been possible to ask the dog to, I'm sure he would have given his life willingly for his owner, which was very strange indeed considering the way he was treated. He was aboard with us all the time, no, that's not strictly true, as you will see later. He was fed daily, but was never shown one iota of kindness. The only time he was given the shelter of the wheelhouse, was not in anyway a softening of the regime, but was to stop him following his master to the pub. At all other times, hail, rain, snow or blow he spent the hours of the night curled up near the cabin hatch. It was at such times as these that his collie type coat stood him in good stead. It was impervious to rain and snow, and frost bothered him not at all.

York was our regular destination and Lincoln's length prohibited her from going down Selby canal, hence us going out at Goole. Once clear of the port, Lincoln would be taken as close as possible to the eastern bank of the Ouse and, if the tide was out, at any place where the exposed riverside mud was not too extensive, Punch was turfed overboard and left to his own devices. From that point Punch would run to Naburn, sometimes in front of us, at other times behind as he hunted and investigated things he came across on the bank. Selby was an obstacle for him but he always traversed it without coming to any harm.

Coming back down stream loaded, usually the next day, the sequence for Punch was reversed. He was put ashore at Naburn Lock from where he would run to where we could pick him up before the Ouse started to widen at Asselby Island, several miles up stream from

Goole. If we were coming down on the ebb, Lincoln would be slipping along nicely, so before we could try to pick Punch up the engine would have to be eased down so losing most of her forward way, but still maintaining steerage way. When it was deemed we were going slow enough the boats air horn would be sounded, the skipper would whistle and Punch would come crashing through the willows and plunge headlong into the river and would swim out towards the boat. There was however, a problem connected to plucking the dog from the water in this manner, caused by the way we had to load the boat. In common with all tankers, her cargo carrying space was divided by bulkheads which formed several individual tanks, of these only the aft one could be filled right to the top. Cargo had to be carried in all her tanks however, but being only part full was called slack tanks. Due to these slack tanks, if Lincoln's wheel was suddenly put hard over and her engine revs increased a bit to make her turn, the cargo would move a bit to one side causing her to heel over and dip her low aft deck, whichever was on the outside of the turn, into the water. Perhaps I should put it more simply, if the boat was made to turn to port she would list to starboard, therefore putting that side's deck under water. The dog had to be lifted from the water aft, so if this manoeuvre had to be done to shove the boat stern towards the swimming dog, guess who would be kneeling on the deck waiting to pluck him from the water. Yes, you've guessed it, wet through from above the knees down. You should have twigged by now, and be saying, but Lincoln would have listed at a rate of knots around the many sharp corners of the Ouse, and so she did but nobody was obliged to be on her aft decks then.

If Punch had a vice, it was his dislike of moorhens, maybe you know these birds better as water hens, and it was his frenzied barking at two of them that caused him to run more miles than normal one day. We had just passed under Heck Railway Bridge at the western end of the long straight, top side of Pollington lock, when Punch spotted the birds swimming across the canal ahead of us and immediately began to bark. I was in the wheelhouse by myself; the skipper was in the cabin possibly having his breakfast. The first thing that I saw come out of

the cabin hatch was the poker followed by the skipper's head and shoulders, for it was he obviously who was wielding the poker. Punch carried on with his barking unaware of the threat behind him. But when the poker was laid brutally across his back the barking changed to a scream of pain and shock and he launched himself straight over the boats head into the canal. Without even checking on the consequences of such a blow to the dog, the skipper disappeared back down below. Fortunately no damage appeared to have been done to the dog for he swam strongly for the bank. The policy of sheet piling all canal banks was still in its infancy so there were plenty of unpiled stretches affording Punch easy access to the hauling bank (towpath). He galloped easily along side us to Pollington Lock where he came sneaking up to the boat, tail down expecting no doubt to be let back aboard. This was denied him and he was made to run to Goole where we went along side at the old timber dock, now the marina, and picked him up. Having already run for about two hours didn't save him from his long distance gallop, for once clear of Goole he was bundled overboard as usual.

Not long after I left Lincoln, she was scrapped and the boat that replaced her was short enough to go down Selby Canal, I never heard about any running he may have done on this route, but I do not think he would be let off too lightly.

I heard later from his owner that Punch had picked up somewhere a fatal dose of poison. What a way for such a faithful, loyal dog with a heart as big as a lion's, to end his days.

Kenneth Burden

Owners and Hirers

Back in 1984 we lived in a village some eight miles west of Shrewsbury not from the Welsh border. In those days the winter showing of TV holiday programmes gave viewers sensible tasters of holiday ideas for the sort of holidays the majority of families would consider, rather than the exotica the programmes show now-a-days.

During one such programme we were struck by the notion of a canal cruise, being able to be out in the countryside, fresh air, exercise, less rushed (even in those days), pub meals, mooring up in the middle of nowhere and being able to observe nature getting on with its business, was appealing. Ideal for a young family and living in Shropshire, it seemed that as we lived so close to one of the outstanding architectural engineering feats, not only in this country but worldwide, that we should have the experience of traversing the Pontcysyllte Aqueduct. We duly arranged our first canal cruise to take place during the school's Easter holidays.

We set out from Bunbury on the Shropshire Union canal where you are immediately into a staircase lock. As the lock was adjacent to the boat hirers base we were initiated in the art of negotiating locks and sent on our way. We recall that it was not long before we ran aground, well before we got to Barbridge Junction. We eventually got ourselves going again, something with which we soon learned to cope and how to quickly extricate ourselves with the minimum of effort.

The turn from the Shopshire Union Canal into the entrance of the Llangollen Canal and the five locks at its entrance was something

of a challenge to us then novices, as was the “about turn” when we had arrived at Trevor.

Well, we were bitten by the bug as we guess all readers of “Mile Post” have been and we have been canal cruising ever since 1984 although we are now in the “Derby and Joan” category. We still seem to get family crew members joining us for sections of our cruises.

The point of all this is to state the obvious that we all start as novices and learn as we go along. We become more proficient as time goes by and by definition “hirers” are more likely to be novices, by nature of the fact that is usually how you become “bitten” in the first place. Not too many people buy a canal boat without having first hired boats, although we have met some on the tow path.

We are all aware that “owners” and “hirers” are two different species. We have considered buying outright or shared ownership on several occasions and have always concluded that – for us – hiring was our preferred option. We pay the hire charge, say thank you very much and that is the end of our responsibility. No maintenance, security problems or any other obligations, coupled with not being “tied” to the boat and we have flexibility to take other types of holiday if we so wish.

The perception that all hirers are novices and that all owners are experts is a false premise

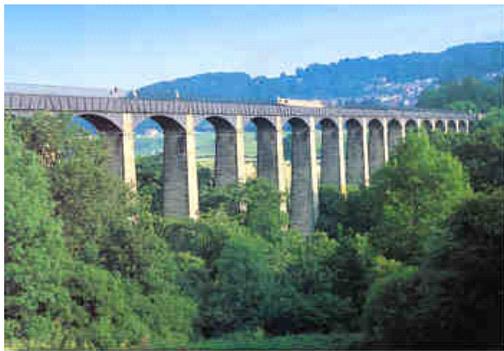
This was demonstrated to us on a cruise not long ago. On approaching an “up” narrow lock we were fortunate that the water was for us although a crew member from a “down” boat was already at the lock. Quite correctly, they kindly waited for us to approach with the gate open, so that we could enter the lock and they could use the water for their down coming, once the lock had been filled and we

had left the lock. On entering the lock we were closely observed by the crew from the other boat who was perched comfortably on the arm of the open lock gate – as one does. It was a perfect entry and the rubbing strips on either side of the boat were not troubled, it was inch perfect. As we stopped, following our thanks and greeting, the comment was heard that “You must have been practicing”, no doubt observing that we were a “hired” craft. Sufficient presence of mind was to hand for the instantaneous response to be made that “Yes – we have been practicing since 1984”.

We were all able to see the funny side of the situation, have a good giggle and cheerfully go in our opposite directions. We leave it for the reader to ponder if the “down” boat was an owned or hired craft.

Happy cruising

Geoffrey and Kate Berry



Welcome to the Four Points Ramble **A walking, writing, and charitable** **fundraising project**

The Project

The Four Points Ramble challenge is to walk to each of the four extremities of England (that is, the northernmost, southernmost, westernmost, and easternmost tips of the mainland), then return to the starting point. The Four Points Ramble is emphatically *not* conceived as a continuous, day-after-day exercise to be started and finished in one go; that would transform a journey that should be enjoyed into one to be endured. Neither is it creating a new Trail or Way. If others wish to undertake the challenge the suggestion would be to walk to the Four Points by whatever route seems best at the time.

A key part of the project is to write books, which are in part a diary of the walk but with additional observations and digressions on subjects related to incidents on the walk or with local connections. The digressions reflect interests in wildlife, history, literature, music, biography, industrial archaeology (in particular canals and railways in the age of steam), genealogy, heraldry, church history, topography and story-telling.

The books will be sold mainly through, and wholly on behalf of, charities which are local to each book. Each charity will keep the full purchase price of any books bought directly from that charity. The purchase price of books that are sold through the Four Points Ramble Association will be divided between the beneficiary charities.

Book One: Ramble through West Yorkshire

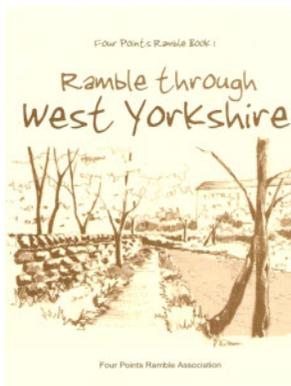
Book One is a diary of the first 54 miles of the walk (from Gargrave to Hollingworth Lake, via Skipton, Keighley, Haworth, Hebden Bridge, and Todmorden). It follows the towpaths of the Leeds & Liverpool Canal and the Rochdale Canal, as well as sections of the Pennine Way, the Worth Way, the Brontë Way and the Calderdale Way.

The four charities that have agreed to participate as beneficiaries are:

- The Rochdale Canal Society www.derekparsons.com/society.html
- Overgate Hospice www.overgatehospice.org.uk
- The Yorkshire Wildlife Trust www.yorkshire-wildlife-trust.org.uk
- The Big Issue in the North Trust www.thebiglifegroup.com/charities/big_issue_north_trust.asp

Book One can be purchased from any of the four charities, or from the Four Points Ramble Association at 18, Bullfinch Walk, Manchester M21 7RG. Cheques (£7.99 per book + £1 p&p) should be payable to the Association.

Further details on www.fourpointsramble.org.uk



Tales from the Canal Bank.

We recently went out for the weekend on our narrow boat. Before we set off we planned carefully where we were going to moor for the night. The stretch of canal we were on is used by at least four hire companies and there are several marinas, so it is extremely busy. We therefore wished to moor where there were mooring rings or pilings. There was only one such place on our intended route.

After a pleasant days cruising we arrived at our chosen destination only to find that a boat had already moored there. This was OK as there were enough rings for three boats. As the other boat had chosen to moor in the middle position, we decided to moor stern to stern.

Sometime later, whilst we were enjoying a quiet cup of tea, there was a knock on our window . A lady, (on second thoughts that could be an exaggeration) in walking clothes, said could she ask us a question. Thinking that she wished to ask directions I went outside to speak to her. She immediately launched into a tirade, demanding to know why we had moored at this particular place. At last she stopped to take a breath, and then asked if we moored in a marina? When I said yes, she replied “Well, that explains it then!”

She stormed back to the boat that we had moored next to, and her poor husband was made to untie the ropes and set off , whilst she was chuntering at him the whole time.

She was last seen and heard disappearing down the canal shouting “AND DON’T EVER MOOR NEXT TO ME AGAIN.” (As if we would!)

Is this our first experience of canal rage ?

'A Warm Welcome!'

The West Riding Branch extends a warm welcome to these members who have joined us since the last Mile Post. We hope to meet you at some of our branch meetings.

Mr & Mrs Brockwell	Ripon
Mr Coleman and Ms Simpson	Huddersfield
Mr & Mrs Fennell	Huddersfield
Mrs Armitage	Bradford
Mrs Lane	York
Mrs Little & Family	Holmfirth
Mr & Mrs O'Sullivan & Family	Bradford
Mr & Mrs Bearpark	Brighouse
Mr & Mrs Bolton	Sowerby Bridge
Mr Phillips	Pontefract

The Mile Post.

Is there anyone out there who could help the branch by writing something for inclusion in the Milepost. Have you been on an interesting boating trip? Tell us about it. Is there something waterways related you feel strongly about? Write us a letter about it. Any amusing stories? Tell us all! E-mail us at boblaing@blueyonder.co.uk , hand it to one of us, or post it to any committee member before the end of December. We look forward to hearing from you.

We would like to give a big thank-you to all the people who have already sent us articles for inclusion in the Mile Post. You have made our job much easier and our magazine more interesting.

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Programme of Events for 2007- 2008.

All meetings take place at 8.00pm on the second Friday of the month, in the top floor Social Club, Centenary House, North Street, Leeds, LS2 8AY.

- 26th September.** Joint meeting with IWA North Lancashire & Cumbria Branch. "The Leeds and Liverpool Canal - Where Does the Water Come From" Speaker - Mike Clarke. Starting at 8pm at The Old Stone Trough, Colne Road, KELBROOK. For further details contact Carol ine on 01282 814397.
- 12 October 07** Humber Keel and Sloop Preservation Society
By Brian Peeps
- 9 November 07** "French Waterways & Wine"
By Helen and Chris Davey
- 14 December 07** Christmas Social and Members' slides
- 11 January 08** The Waterways Museum and Adventure Centre –
Goole by Bob Watson
- 8 February 08** Slide show By John Greenway
- 14 March 08** AGM
- 11th April 08** Bugsworth Basin by Ian Edgar

All the meetings organised by the West Riding Branch are open and everyone is invited. Any member of the general public is allowed to attend and members are invited to bring friends.

The Inland Waterways Association campaigns for the Conservation, Use, Maintenance, Restoration and Development of the Inland Waterways, which are part of our heritage, and are there for the benefit of everyone.

For further information please contact 01274-581413