



### From the Chairman

Some time has past since our September 2023 newsletter and therefore there is plenty to report on. In this edition we cover:

- Fund Britain's Waterways
- Annual General Meeting
- Both our shuttle boats in operation
- Mileposts installed
- HERD Music event revisited
- Huddersfield Narrow Canal - update on operations
- Towpath news
- Standedge Tunnel & Visitor Centre changes

Sadly this last few months have seen the passing of many influential friends of the Canal Society. A number of appreciations appear at the end of this newsletter.

**Alan Stopher**, Chair HCS

### Waterways in Crisis: Update from 'Fund Britain's Waterways'

In our last issue we reported on the reduced funding for the Canal & River Trust (CRT) and the campaign to raise awareness of the matter. Since then the Society has affiliated to the Fund Britain's Waterways (FBW) group which now includes a very wide range of waterways societies and businesses.

Further rallies are planned including a second one on the Thames beside the Houses of Parliament.

In reporting on its recent meeting with CRT, FBW reported that it was reassuring to hear the Chief Executive Richard Parry say that despite the growing funding gap created by diminishing government grant, high inflation and the need to mitigate the impacts of climate change, CRT had no current plans to close any of its waterways to navigation. However, he warned that the government funding announced for the period 2027 – 2037 will be insufficient to safeguard the future of the waterways.

This is why CRT is calling for that planned grant to be reviewed. In the meantime, he said CRT was making every effort to reduce the increasing funding gap by maximising its income from fundraising and other sources, including its property endowment.

The FBW petition has reached the milestone of 50,000 signatures. If any HCS members have not yet signed the petition it is still available on this page:

<https://waterways.org.uk/fbw-members>

## HCS Annual General Meeting and Volunteer Social

Our AGM was held on 9th November 2023 at Marsden Mechanics Hall. 17 members attended which was an improvement on recent ones held via the Zoom application.

A special resolution was tabled to modernise the Society's procedures. It was explained that the Articles of the Society were widely drawn by the founders of the company over 40 years ago to ensure that all the possible activities the Society wished to undertake were set out. In recent years around 80 per cent of the members had shared their email addresses with the Society and that issuing notices and newsletters in bulk was more cost-effective than using an increasingly expensive mail service.

The amendments proposed to the Articles included email as a written form of communication and that the giving of notice for the AGM could include e-mail and display on the Society's website. The resolution was unanimously approved.

The AGM was followed by a gathering of over 50 Huddersfield Canal Society (HCS) volunteers and their invited guests who enjoyed a pie and pea supper, the opportunity for conversation and the inimitable quiz provided by Tony Zajac.

## Shuttle boat operations

Following a successful Easter weekend with live music on board, the e-Shuttle continues to run regularly at weekends and during school holidays.

Following the successful trial at Uppermill last autumn (as demonstrated by the post in the *Saddleworth Independent*, opposite), the d-Shuttle is now based there and runs short trips from outside the Saddleworth Museum & Gallery. We're hoping to run more frequently during the summer when crew availability permits.

If you live in the Saddleworth area and would like to join the boat crew team then please email Mike McHugh at: [secretary@huddersfieldcanal.org.uk](mailto:secretary@huddersfieldcanal.org.uk)



**Saddleworth Independent**  
Suggested for you · 9 h · 🌐

**Canal boat trips may become a permanent fixture in Saddleworth after this summer's success.**

The Huddersfield Canal Society was so surprised by the level of support the excursions received when it made a visit in July, talks have started to make it stay.



saddind.co.uk  
**Uppermill canal boat trips could be here to stay**

## **HERD music event revisited: Full length video at Lawrence Batley Theatre, Huddersfield**

Following the e-Shuttle and HCS boat crew's starring role in the HERD musical event last July, there were two public performances of the full length wide screen video of the HERD event early in 2024. The first was in the Starr Cinema, Tate Modern, London on 30 January 2024. The second was nearer to home and billed as 'A Love Letter To Kirklees' at Lawrence Batley Theatre, Huddersfield on 6 February 2024.

The screening of the film, HERD, by Colm Hogan and Orlando Gough was followed by performances by Extra Curricular and then The Huddersfield Community Gospel Choir.

During the ensuing conversation between artist Orlando Gough and invited guests about art, the environment and the future of the sheep, the e-shuttle appeared once more on the back projection as shown below.



## Milestones installed

It has been a long wait but finally this winter Trevor Ellis's maintenance team in collaboration with CRT staff have installed the 5 replacement milestones which we had made in 2020. Cut to our chosen design at Johnsons Wellfield quarry at Crosland Moor, their delivery was delayed by Covid and installation has been protracted but better late than never. This means that an original milestone or a suitable replacement appears throughout the Huddersfield Broad and Narrow Canals from Cooper Bridge to Ashton-under-Lyne. Pictured here is the 'three miles' post beside the Leeds Road overbridge near to Great Northern trading estate in Huddersfield.



## Towpath consultation and temporary closure

In February 2024, West Yorkshire Combined Authority issued its public consultation on the proposed towpath upgrade along the full length of the Huddersfield Broad Canal and the section of the Huddersfield Narrow Canal from Slaithwaite to Marsden. Your Society submitted a lengthy response which was generally in support of the works but sought improved signage to connecting paths, the need for mooring rings, surface drainage, retention of heritage features such as setted lock ramps and phasing of the work to avoid long lengths of closure. We await the outcome with interest.

On a related issue there has been much consternation at the lengthy closure of the upgraded towpath from Manchester Road, Longroyd Bridge to Stoney Battery. A section of wall below the Longroyd Viaduct had failed and CRT immediately closed the section to users pending investigation into land ownership and access. It eventually transpired that ownership could not be established, asbestos was found in the slope behind the wall and CRT had to find funds to undertake the work themselves. As can be seen from the picture taken this April (*below*), CRT has felled the trees but the towpath remains closed though boat traffic is unimpeded. We are now being told that negotiations are in hand with Network Rail as repair work will be in close proximity to the structure and a start looks unlikely before November 2024.



## Huddersfield Narrow Canal update on operations

HCS continues to have a role monitoring the operation and maintenance of the Huddersfield Narrow under the terms of an agreement signed with British Waterways and the three local authorities in 1999 and varied in 2006.

At our recent annual meeting with CRT involving representatives of both regions (North West and North East) we were appraised of the current reservoir status which is generally good for the start of the season, the completion of planned winter stoppages and the continuing loss of water in two locations on the east side. Regular dropping of the pound above Lock 1E has defied all efforts at a resolution so far and investigations continue. This unfortunately means passages have to be prearranged. The latest challenge has been an increasing leak under the Golcar Aqueduct. As I write there is notice of a short term stoppage to attempt to seal the leak. A temporary pump is being installed at Lock 12E in an attempt to recover water levels between Milnsbridge and Huddersfield.

Currently Standedge Tunnel passages are limited to one each way every Monday, Wednesday and Friday owing to Network Rail working in the adjacent tunnels. It is hoped that this will be reviewed following the installation of a new communications system in the canal tunnel which will enable contact with a boat throughout the length and not just at the 4 cross adits with telephone equipment. The £500,000 investment in new technology is very welcome and we hope that three passages each way a day will once more be possible along with an occasional through trip on the passenger module for those non-boaters wanting to explore the full 3.25 mile long wonder of the waterways.

## Standedge Tunnel & Visitor Centre changes

Following the closure of the Centre covered in our last Newsletter, the various artefacts have been returned to their owners, including the Society. The offering of a 10 year lease to interested parties resulted in local company Hanson's Music being selected to take on the Centre subject to contract. Your Society has had some discussions with Alastair Hanson with a view to our supporting them by bringing visitors from Lock 42E to what is being billed as the North of England Centre for Music and Arts. Contractual negotiations with CRT have been protracted but Hansons are hopeful of securing the lease very soon. Indeed, their first concert in the Thomas Bourne Room has already been promoted.

We're sorry to see our friends Bryan and Lorna giving up the Watersedge café at Tunnel End Cottages. They have been very supportive of the Society throughout their stay and as they move on to develop their catering business elsewhere we wish them well. It is hoped that a new occupant will be found by CRT soon as the café has been an oasis for many.



## **Chairman Alan Stopher concludes the Reports**

*Many thanks for maintaining your membership and your patience in awaiting this newsletter. I hope you find something of interest therein.*

*Finally, thanks to Bob Gough for converting the draft into the finished article.*

*If any HCS member would like to take on the role of Newsletter Editor, I would be very pleased to hear from you; just email me at: [chair@huddersfieldcanal.org.uk](mailto:chair@huddersfieldcanal.org.uk)*

*All text and pictures, Alan Stopher,  
unless otherwise credited.*

## - In Memoriam -

The last few months have sadly seen the deaths of a number of Society members who have been influential in the past or involved until very recently. Appreciations are shared here. Our thoughts have been with their families and friends as they come to terms with their respective losses.

### **Sue Day – Chair of the Horseboating Society**

A Society member and driving force behind the revival of horseboating on the English Canals, Sue Day was an ever present at key events in the restoration of the Huddersfield Narrow Canal and further afield.

Sue's championing of traditional boating took her all around the network often crewing wooden boats and always with a fine towing horse bringing added colour and interest to the waterways and much pleasure to all. Sue had to give up her favourite activities and move to Suffolk in recent times to care for her mother but sadly we had news of her own failing health and untimely death in October 2023. Thanks for the memories, two of which are shared here:



*Sue relaxing with four-legged friend at Lock 10E near her home, picture courtesy of Martin Clark.*

*Sue opening the paddle to inaugurate the newly restored Lock 22E in the centre of Slaithwaite on 1st February 2001. This was three months before the whole length of the Huddersfield Narrow Canal was reopened to through navigation.*



## Frank Smith – Former Secretary of Huddersfield Canal Society

Republished here is the notice which appeared in the magazine of the other HCS, the Hollinwood Canal Society.

### Frank Smith

We were saddened to learn of the recent death of Frank Smith.

Frank, with his calm manner and reassuring presence, had been Chairman of Hollinwood Canal Society for a number of years before stepping down because of ill health.

Before retirement Frank had worked in the office of the Huddersfield Canal Society.

His colleague Bob Gough pays this affectionate tribute to Frank:



by Ian Bradbury

I met Frank as a work colleague in 1990 at the Huddersfield Canal Society and he became a regular presence in the downstairs back office in Ashton.

Frank was Secretary to a host of sub-groups and his Minutes became legendary; his organisational and filing skills, acquired in the army, kept the Dymo Labelling Company afloat.

He often regaled us with tales of army life and his work for the British Legion is well known.

The Huddersfield Canal Society's restoration work on three locks in Ashton culminated in 'The Three Locks Rally' which Frank organised and, when the canal was officially re-opened in 2001, he was chosen, amongst other Directors, to meet His Royal Highness, the then Prince Charles, who officiated.

When Frank left the Canal Society in 2003, he worked as an archivist for some while before taking retirement.

I like to remember Frank as a good friend and not just a work colleague.

Bob Gough

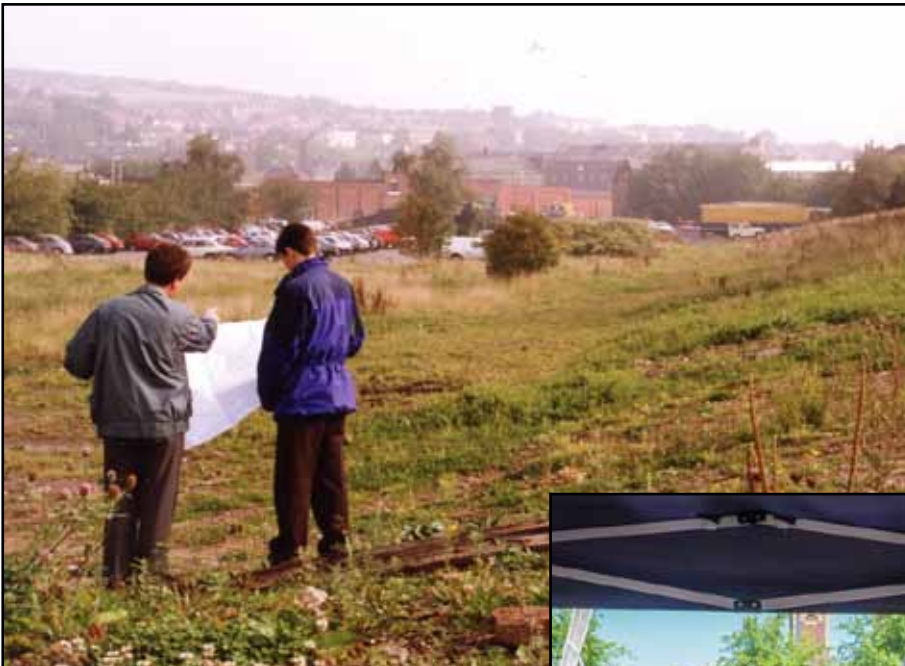
## Peter Rawson – Civil engineer and Trustee of the Society

Peter, a friend of the Society in so many ways, died in October 2023 aged 69 after a period of illness.

As a Senior Civil Engineer at Tameside Metropolitan Council he had worked with the Society throughout the 1990s to ensure that the Derelict Land Grant-funded projects at Staley Wharf and the channel approaching Lock 8W at Grove Road had been successfully delivered. He was the key technical officer at Tameside in supporting the bids for funding to the Millennium Commission and when the second of these was secured he continued his involvement by leading the design and construction of the £8m project to reopen the canal through the centre of Stalybridge from Caroline Street to Mottram Road including two new Locks, two repaired and extended Locks and the central canal feature in Armentières Square.

Following his retirement from the Council, Peter agreed to become a Trustee on the Society's Council of Management in January 2013 and along with colleagues Eric Woulds and Graham Birch he brought a wealth of experience in the workings of the three riparian councils.

Peter's deep involvement in the Stalybridge community resulted in the Society bringing its shuttle trip boat to the Stalybridge Festival every June so that we could provide trips to the folk of Tameside and to enliven the waterfront. He was also the main coordinator for the regular towpath clean-ups in the town centre involving dozens of people and obtaining agreement from Tesco's to provide a container in their carpark for tools. Whenever there was a link which needed making or a job to be done Peter was there and his passing will leave a serious gap in HCS's work. His legacy is the canal restoration throughout Tameside. *Alan Stopher*



*Left: Pre-restoration view from Caroline Street toward Stalybridge with Peter Rawson (L) and Lee Holland. Courtesy of TMBC 533*

*Peter Rawson being interviewed at Stalybridge Festival for a local radio station in June 2018.*



## Eric Woulds – Planning Officer and Trustee of the Society

Eric, a long-term supporter of the canal restoration, latterly a Trustee of the Society, died in February 2024, aged 70, after a long period of cancer treatment.

A career planning officer, Eric's role at Kirklees Council meant that he provided behind the scenes support for much of the Community Programme funded restoration through the Colne Valley during the 1980s and up to 1991. Whilst Eric kept an interest in the restoration he was not involved in the Millennium funded project and instead focused on conservation and development control work. On retirement from the Council he felt free to commit to joining the HCS and in January 2013, I invited him to become a Trustee. I felt that his knowledge of Kirklees Council and planning matters would assist us and so it proved. His enthusiasm for the canals and HNC in particular led him to join the shuttle boat crew, come up with new promotional ideas such as the Scary Shuttle at Halloween and assist with heritage walks.

As a skilled musician and player with Enoch's Hammer folk band and accompanist to the Slubbing Billies Morris Side, he was able to make links with other musicians to the benefit of HCS and CRT events at Standedge Visitor Centre.

Eric, along with Mike McHugh and the late Terry Lomas, made up the team developing the design for the new e-Shuttle. From its inception in 2019 it took until May 2022 for the fruits of their labours to materialise but the wait was worth it and the design team's efforts helped the Society focus on the future.

Eric was a prolific writer of long explanatory emails, a sign of his Local Authority background. His contributions were always thoughtful and based on common sense and experience. He was enthusiastic about the use of social media, a dark area to many of us, and was still posting updates and pictures on the Society's Facebook page in January of this year. In his final months Eric was putting together an application to widen the planning uses of the Transhipment Warehouse to help the Society with the sale. Though his condition inhibited him finishing it, his work will form the basis of our way forward. Thank you Eric. Rest in Peace. *Alan Stopher*



*Above: 'Elf and Safety' Eric Woulds (right) at the Standedge Christmas Fayre 2021.*

*Right: Eric plays the accordion St George's Day at the Standedge VC in 2015.*



## Ken Wright – an appreciation by Keith Gibson



Long standing Huddersfield Canal Society devotee Ken Wright died on the 20th April 2024 at the age of 93. He lived close to the canal in Dobcross. I had known him since we both worked as middle managers for Kirklees Council back in the 1970s. Conscious of his interest in the canal, around the end of 1989, I asked him to join the Canal Society's Construction Group, which I was then chairing, with the aim of finding the additional funding needed to restore the canal after the significant legacy left to the Society by the former Greater Manchester Council. In February 1992, the Society restructured its committee organisation as work on restoring the canal was gaining pace and I was appointed Chair of HCS Restoration Ltd with Ken as the Deputy Chair.

In addition to that, Ken played other significant roles for the Canal Society. In 1992, after HCS Restoration had converted

the Transhipment Warehouse at Dobcross into an office, living nearby, Ken acted as caretaker until more permanent arrangements were possible. A year later, as restoration continued, when Lock 24E in Slaithwaite had insufficient space for a traditional head lock gate, Ken, HCS Restoration manager Steve Whitby & the Society's consultant designer inspected guillotine lock gates on the river Nene, and such a gate was then designed for the Lock. At the time Ken produced the memorable statement that '*without waving one's arms about, describing such a gate is not easy!*'

As work on the canal continued and the application for a Millennium Commission grant to complete the restoration was being prepared in the office, Ken helped the workers on site by taking on responsibility for operating the Society's dredger working between Staley Wharf and Lock 1W and between Mottram and Hartshead. At the same time, working towards the Millennium Commission grant, small groups of the Society's staff and members, local authority and British Waterways Board staff were designing the detailed scheme for approval. We all had specific tasks: Ken chaired meetings with the local authority engineers to ensure that we had realistic designs & costs, at the same time as I was overseeing an environmental audit of the canal. It was entirely appropriate that Ken was one of the few volunteers who were invited to take part in the official celebrations for the reopening of the canal along with Society Chairman David Sumner & me.