

DOUBLE NINE

POCKLINGTON CANAL
AMENITY SOCIETY



AUTUMN 2014
No. 105



THE POCKLINGTON CANAL AMENITY SOCIETY

Registered Charity 500637 www.pocklingtoncanalsociety.org

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Opinions expressed in this magazine are not necessarily those of the Society, unless so stated.

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Front cover – main picture : Coates Lock, CRT's routine contractor maintenance, inset left : <i>Nutwood</i> with John Dickens, inset right : official opening of No.8 Swingbridge
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Paul Waddington's Chairman's column

HLF Bid The bid submitted by the Canal & River Trust to the Heritage Lottery Fund is experiencing some delays. We now understand that a Development Officer is to be appointed by the end of this year, and that it will be that person's responsibility to co-ordinate the production of various plans and documents needed to support Stage II of the submission, which is scheduled for November 2015. Approval of Stage II would enable the physical works to begin, and it is likely that they would take place over a period of at least a year. So we should not expect completion of this project before the end of 2016.

Extension of Navigable length The Society's proposal for works to extend the navigable length of the Canal as far as the Bielby Arm have made a little progress. A meeting was held with CRT engineers in Leeds on 3rd September. Besides myself, Graham Ball, Alistair Anderson, Roger Bromley and Dick Watson were present. CRT were represented by Mike Marshall, who is their Maintenance Manager, and Fred Hartley, who has been assigned as the engineer in charge of the scheme.

The Pocklington Canal is new territory for Fred Hartley, but he had taken the time to walk much of the towpath, and had prepared his own estimates for the work that we have proposed. These greatly exceeded our own estimates, but it turned out that he had assumed the "worst case scenario" throughout, and that he had included many items that may not be necessary. Fred Hartley is going to re-examine the scope of the works, and revise his estimates. We shall find out at our next meeting on 5th November how much the two estimates have converged. I came away from the meeting encouraged, because there did seem to be an acceptance of our point that the Society was entitled to expect value for money when its own funds were being used.

Richard Parry at the Pocklington Canal The Chief Executive Officer of the Canal & River Trust paid a brief visit to the Pocklington Canal on 1st August. He came to perform the official re-opening of No.8 Swingbridge. The event was organised at short notice, but we were able to put on a modest ceremony with Richard Parry cutting the tape, followed by a swinging of the bridge to prove that it worked. The event was reported in both the local and the waterways press. Afterwards, we were able to talk to Richard Parry and other CRT personnel at a buffet lunch which we provided at the Melbourne Arm, where he was also able to inspect our trip boat.

Towpath Works In August, we hosted a week long work camp for the Waterway Recovery Group. Assisted by some of our own people led by Dick Watson, the WRG volunteers levelled and widened more than a kilometre of towpath between Giles and Sandhill Locks. This represents the most extensive project undertaken by the Society for many years, and many of us were impressed by how much was achieved in a week.

Report from CRT's Environment Manager

'Jonny' Hart-Woods, CRT's Environment Manager, North East Region reports: The Canal & River Trust is entrusted with the care of 2,000 miles of waterways. We are committed to further projects on the Pocklington Canal with both PCAS and WRG, Natural England and Fountains our Vegetation and Environmental Services Contractor.

We think the success of both of this year's major tree works programmes one of which was resourced by NE and completed by Fountains and the other carried out by WRG following on site discussions with NE, PCAS and the Trust to decide on scale and approach required, worked really well. Added to this the on-going footpath improvements and excellent hedge-laying project at the Melbourne Arm we have achieved a good range and scale of projects working together and we need to build on this going into 2015.

Grand ribbon-cutting opening

To mark the official opening of No.8 Swing Bridge Mr Richard Parry, Chief Executive of the Canal & River Trust performed the traditional ribbon-cutting ceremony at 11 o'clock on 1st August. Paul Waddington, Chairman, Pocklington Canal Amenity Society gave a short speech, Richard Parry, accompanied by a group of CRT guests, responded.

The opening party visited many areas of the Canal both before and after the formalities an hour later they arrived at PCAS' *New Horizons* in Melbourne Arm where the Committee served a well appreciated buffet lunch. The group then inspected the lower end of the canal, including seeing PCAS' own newly restored Weedcutter boat, the *Sheila Nix*, so named to honour our Society's long-serving Vice-President Mrs Sheila M. Nix, MBE.



All smiles on the bridge. CRT staff, bright life-jackets for the occasion, with Richard Parry, CEO of CRT cutting the tape, then operating No.8 Swingbridge. Paul Waddington, PCAS Chairman, guests and PCAS members with their cameras were photographed for this special event by Roger Pattison.

Official Reopening of No.8 Swingbridge

Richard Parry, the Chief Executive Officer of the Canal and River Trust, formally reopened No.8 Swingbridge on the Pocklington Canal. The occasion marked a further stage in the restoration of the canal. Originally provided as an accommodation bridge for the local farmer, and also carrying a public footpath, the original swinging structure was replaced by a fixed one soon after the canal ceased to be navigable in 1932.

A new steel structure was installed by the Pocklington Canal Amenity Society in the early 1990s, but without a pintle, the bearing on which the bridge swings, as there was no immediate prospect of navigation being restored. With the help of funds donated to the Society by the Pocklington Canal Boat Club, the pintle was installed in 2013, and further works were undertaken to comply with CRT's safety requirements.



Speaking at the opening ceremony, which was attended by several members of the Society, Richard Parry praised the work of the Canal Society's volunteers, and of all the volunteers working on the canal system nationwide. Also present was Peter Slater of Slater Engineering, the local company that manufactured and installed the pintle.

Pocklington Canal Amenity Society's Balance Sheet at 31st December 2013

for Double Nine by Peter Wood, PCAS Treasurer

Current assets:		
Stock	£680	£680
HSBC Deposit Account	£50,051	£50,023
HSBC Current Account	£19,532	£18,229
CAF Gold Account	£17,297	£17,297
	-----	-----
Net Current assets	£87,560	£86,211
	-----	-----
	£87,560	£86,211
	=====	=====
Represented by:		
Opening capital	£86,211	£47,330
Net surplus (deficit)	£1,349	£38,881
	-----	-----
	£87,560	£86,211
	=====	=====

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT

Income:	2013	2012
Subscriptions	£1,675	£1,023
Donations	£1,337	£1,185
Gift Aid tax refunds	-	£1,736
Training	-	£295
Newlife	-	£750
Pie & pea supper	-	£540
Canal Head	£277	£384
Legacy	-	£37,213
EYC Chairman's Charity	-	£1,1611
	-----	-----
	£3,289	£44,737
Other Income:		
Bank and savings deposit interest	£46	£42
Miscellaneous sales	£1,204	£505
	-----	-----
	£4,539	£45,284
New Horizons Expenditure:	£5,965	£3,691
Maintenance and equipment	-	£7,372
Double Nine production & issue	£608	£810
Advertising & publicity	£345	-
Materials	£1,972	-
Postage, printing & stationary	-	£463
Subscriptions	-	£95
Insurance	£742	£371
Sundry	£232	£359
Training	-	£590
Annual dinner deficit	-	£34
	-----	-----
	(£3,899)	(£10,094)
No.8 Bridge installation	(£5,256)	-
	-----	-----
Net Surplus for the year	£1,349	£38,881
	=====	=====

Obituary

Ernie Darrell

It is with deep sadness that *Double Nine* reports the death of one of the most enthusiastic members of our Society. Ernie Darrell died on Monday, 22nd September, just one week after his 70th birthday”,

For PCAS our farewell, fond memories and goodbyes to Ernie were at Thorganby Church and afterwards at the Jefferson Arms on Friday, 3rd October. It was Ernie's wish for donations in lieu of flowers to be shared between the Thorganby Church and the Pocklington Canal Amenity Society.

“He loved the canal and never felt happier than when he was crewing *New Horizons*, Ernie will be sorely missed by all of us who knew him”,

– Bob Ellis.

“Very sad news, Ernie was one of life's characters who will be missed by us all. Ernie and Jennifer Darrell first joined PCAS as family members on 10th October 2010”,

– Greg Dixon.

“A real shock to me. I will remember his ever-friendly and helpful nature even more than the hundreds of trips he did during his involvement with *New Horizons*. Ernie was nominated for election to the PCAS Committee at the AGM in April 2013.

– Alistair Anderson.



Ernie spent the early part of his life living in Thorganby and during this time he was a chorister, altar boy and church warden, served on the PCC and Parish Council, - and was secretary of Thorganby Village Show, a position he held for 20 years. He met Jennifer at York and they were married in 1968. Ernie and Jennifer lived in Thorganby until they moved to Wheldrake on 5th November 1977.

Following their holiday at Whitby during Folk Week in 1979/80 and attending a Morris dancing workshop, Ernie joined Ebor Morris with whom he spent over 30 years dancing, attending festivals and holidaying on canal boats around the waterways system. It was these holidays which gave him the experience and confidence to help on the Pocklington Canal.

Ernie's working life of over 50 years was all spent at Rydal Garage, Elvington, initially with John Jacques where he started off as a mechanic, later moving over to the stores side and then the shop.

Jennifer and Ernie both had allotments at Low Moor, Fulford Road, York where Ernie built-up a thriving allotment store, going to car boot sales and auctions for goods to re-sell.

As well as doing all this, Ernie was a member of Wheldrake Bowling Club, especially enjoying the Selby League matches and having success over the years in club competitions as the number of trophies he brought home testify. Both he and Jennifer were members of York Indoors Bowls Club.

Ernie leaves his wife, Jennifer, his daughters Helen and Ruth and three grandchildren.

Written by John Lewis, supported by Jennifer Darrell



“Ernie crewed on our trip boat *New Horizons*, and was a qualified skipper. He was always very keen to volunteer on a regular basis and willing to stand in at the last minute when new bookings came in. It was a big part of his life, he called it his relaxation, and he loved it.

“Ernie had a lot of patience and gave encouragement to crew members, boosting their confidence and helping in any way he could in a calm and gentle manner. He enjoyed talking to the passengers and passing on interesting facts about the canal which, I am sure, helped to bring in generous donations.

“Not only was *New Horizons* a large part of Ernie’s life he was also a Morris dancer, a keen car-boot attender and a fine allotment gardener harvesting many fine fruit and vegetables. He would provide the Trip Boat with many a good find, a teapot, a dustpan & brush, and all at a bargain price.

“Ernie was a massive family man, husband, father and granddad and he talked about them often. We send our thoughts to his wife ‘Jenny’ who visited the boat when Ernie was crewing along with his grandson, Norman.

“I feel we will all greatly miss Ernie, but we must not forget all the good times he enjoyed and we shared with him. We all have our memories, all of them good with Ernie Darrell enthusiastically involved. We will miss him but thank him for all that he gave.”

This reflection by Maggie West

Pocklington Canal Liaison Group

At the meeting on 15th July, Simon Christian for NE (chair); Judy Jones, Phillippa Baron, Jane Thomson for CRT; Diane Green for EH; Paul Waddington, Alistair Anderson, Graham Ball, Roger Bromley for PCAS; David Rees for EA.

Among the agenda were the following:

Under Matters Arising it was thought that the lock gates at Barmby Barrage were being kept open for a longer period each tide to allow the passage of Salmon and Lamprey. The effectiveness of Lamprey passes at other locations is being assessed.

David Rees, Environment Agency, gave a presentation of his work, as part of the joint initiative. He distributed a leaflet focussing on the Derwent Catchment Area, promoting farming practices on good agricultural practice and water quality. The project was started in 2006 and David has been involved for 5 years.

A Restoration Map is being produced which will highlight the restoration schemes that are supported by the Canal & River Trust.

Judy Jones referred to the conservation of three derelict locks on the upper section of the canal where English Heritage would have to be involved.

Diane Green reported plans for a major restructuring of English Heritage to form a new charity with this name and to create a new body named Historic England to take over the conservation role of English Heritage, planned for April 2015.

***New Horizons'* news**

Alistair Anderson, Tripboat Manager and Website

It was a shock to hear that Ernie Darrell had died. Ernie and his wife Jennifer had joined PCAS in 2010 and Ernie joined crew of *New Horizons* in 2011. Ernie was sociable and was familiar with canal boating, having taken many boating holidays with friends. He got on well with other crew members and our passengers. The last time I spoke to Ernie he told me that he had crewed over 40 times this season, a very big commitment to PCAS. I was due to crew with Ernie on 30th September and we discussed this trip on the phone, just a couple of days before he died. Eric Dove volunteered to take Ernie's place, as he often does when we are short of a crew member.



Waterways Recovery Group volunteers photographed alongside *New Horizons*

Here is a recent photo showing Ernie at a picnic with the Millington Ladies. He particularly enjoyed picnics, so this photo is very appropriate. Maggie West (back row, third from the left) is in the photo too and Ivor Nicholson kindly provided this group photo. Ernie's funeral was well attended by our crew members.



Ernie Darrell sharing the good times on a sunny day.

I would like to thank everyone who has helped with crewing and maintenance over the season and to Bob Ellis for looking after everything to do with booking and arranging crew. I would also like to welcome Ed Westerby as our newest member of crew, who joined PCAS after enjoying a boat trip. Your efforts have raised considerable funds and publicity for PCAS.

The start of next season will be Good Friday and I hope that we can get together a group to help to make *New Horizons* clean and tidy for another successful season. Bob is already taking bookings for the 2015 season, so if you know anyone who would like to book the boat, please encourage them to get in touch. Many of our longer trips involve birthday celebrations and we have had a number of successful outings where people who work together take a day off and go for a boat trip.

***New Horizons'* Boat Committee**

Attending on 6th October 2014 were Bob Ellis (Chair), Alistair Anderson, Roger Bromley, John Lewis

Agenda decisions included the following:

Trips to East Cottingwith will normally turn above the lock in future, following closure of the Ferry Boat Inn at the end of September.

Laminated notices will be pinned up at Melbourne if it is necessary to cancel Sunday trips for any reason, e.g. poor weather or lack of crew.



No major work is necessary and it is unlikely that *New Horizons* will be taken to Goole this winter. Crew would be invited to help get the boat ready for the new season as in previous years.

A visit to the *Hugh Henshall* diesel-electric trip boat operated by the Chesterfield Canal Trust had taken place on 6th August. It was useful to learn about this boat and how the Trust manages boat trips but the Boat Committee sees no urgent reason for having a new boat.

To date there have been 70 trips and 1,929 passengers carried, similar to previous years.

PCAS' programme of maintenance & improvement

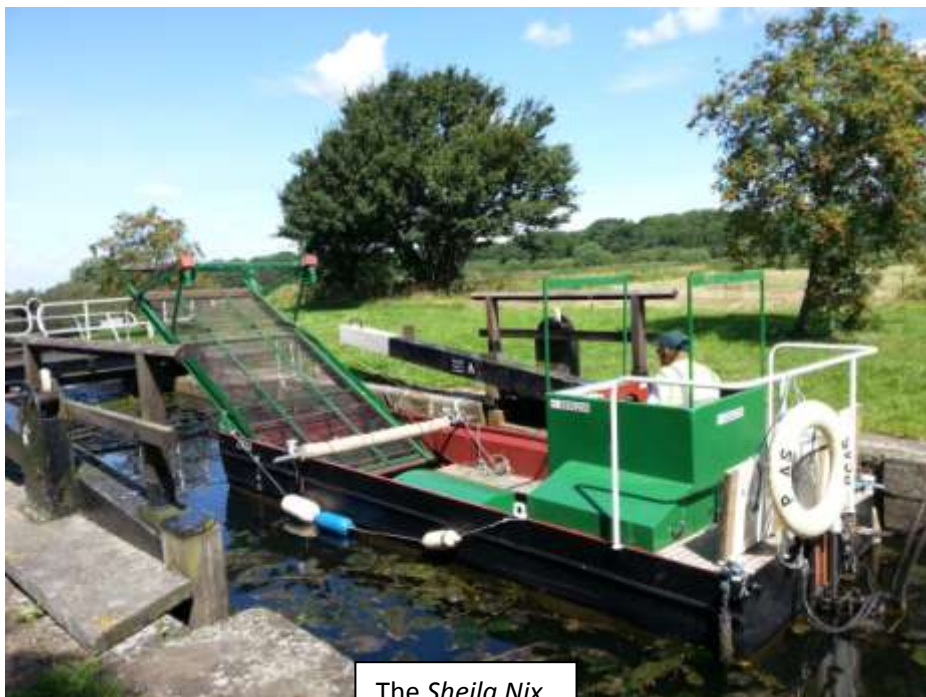
Compiled from work-in-progress notes written by Dick Watson

We have had a very busy period and some very good turnouts of volunteers. PCAS was approached about appearing in publicity by the Canal & River Trust to highlight the role of volunteers. Although not then happening we continued with Geoff Kelly's 20-minute video which is nearing completion, and since then he's been to towpath improvement working days. Weedboat training took place and an inspection trip was arranged to East Cottingwith with Richard Parry, Chief Executive of CRT.



Bank repairs have taken up a lot of time, the piling still remaining below Top Lock had caused erosion and undermined the off-side wing wall. Dogs swimming top-side of Giles Lock required another 4-metres of board and piling. The piling at the waters' edge as part of the new towpath below Giles lock had been damaged and needed strengthening. Three boards high, 12-metres long, needs installing at the off-side of No.8 Swingbridge. Between No.7 Swingbridge and Church Lane Bridge we have been asked to finish repairing the bank. Another request is to bury a 6x3 metre strengthening plate on the culvert in Melbourne Arm road weighing 3½ tonnes.

The Weedboat is back at Bridge No.5 without a hydraulic drive motor having been pressurised and found to be leaking. The search is now on for a new motor. As if not enough, there are preliminary thoughts to restore the Bielby Arm.



The Sheila Nix

IWA's "Navvies" with PCAS' volunteers achieve impressive towpath

Prior to the IWA Waterway Recovery Group volunteers arriving on site, a planning and organisational visit was arranged for the Friday beforehand to enable work to start on Sunday, 17th August. It was agreed that PCAS' volunteers would have a stump grinder for a day.



Getting physical with towpath restoration
Photo: Roger Bromley

"What a day!" – writes Dick Watson. "500 yards of finely ground-up towpath to physically level with shovels and rakes. Seven 'very happy' but exhausted workers crawled up the towpath after toiling for 7-hours. Sunday saw IWA in action with a digger to help them in their labours. Thursday saw the root cutter return for half-a-day along with five who were still 'living' after the week before. This allowed two teams to work separately to complete the work".

Fully reported in the *Pocklington Post*, this great one week event achieved extensive Pocklington Canal towpath restoration, construction and vegetation clearance from Giles Lock to Sandhill Lock involving a total distance of approximately one kilometre; a tremendous effort by all who were involved. During the week there were various visits from sections of the Canal & River Trust, they came and went with favourable observations and comments but as all the engineers were on holiday, some fine-tuning may be needed after their visits, hopefully not!

Roger Bromley, PCAS Vice-Chairman and Dick Watson, PCAS' Working Party Organiser, have learnt a lot about liaising with the Canal & River Trust and Inland Waterways Association's recovery working methods; a lot of time had been put in to plan and achieve this result and now for future projects we hope to find it easier as we now understand each other better.

This project was part of the Waterway Recovery Group's www.wrg.org.uk *Volunteer 2014 WRG Canal Camps*. These events are a great experience for anyone who loves being outdoors and enjoys meeting new people from different backgrounds and of different ages, together with the chance to learn new skills and restoration techniques. WRG is part of IWA, the Inland Waterways Association.

This year's event was a joint Canal Camp for Pocklington Canal and Driffield Navigation. The occasion was designed to carry out towpath works to create an amenity for the local community and improve access. The joint Canal camp provided the volunteers with the chance, said the brochure, to operate small excavators and other machinery, all for £56 in return for plenty of tea breaks, lunch on site, a cooked breakfast and a substantial home-cooked evening meal!

WRG is based at Chesham and publishes its bi-monthly *Navvies* magazine, full of inspiration and anecdotes for all those interested in promoting the restoration and conservation of inland waterways by voluntary effort in Great Britain.

Training in Leeds with CRT

Organised by the Canal & River Trust the Training Day took place in Leeds and given by the Head of Volunteer Organisers. Including travelling, it was a long 10-hour day, 7 am to 5pm, but worthwhile. The Group primarily consisted of CRT employees with 25% having had regular contact with volunteers, for instance from PCAS. Much emphasis was on young volunteers, safety, working practices and dealing with situations as they arise.

Canal Head Information Centre

Dick Watson, PCAS' Working Party Organiser

For my update I'm pleased with my two assistants as with their cooperation I've been able to do a few other things this year on Sundays. Thanks again to all volunteers who have helped staff the Centre this summer. I feel we need to advertise the towpath improvements, and how these have depleted our voluntary acquired Restoration Funds. The access road is showing signs of pot-holes reappearing in various places, it may be time to apply for a grant? Sales and donations are like the weather, they vary, but are generally slightly better than last year.

Canal Head appears being more popular than ever. On most sunny days shortage of parking space at lunch time requires people to drive onto the grass. Surely if every car paid £1 we wouldn't be short of funds? Visitors' main enquiries are about walks and distances or the boat, and when will it reach Pocklington Canal Head.

The popularity of the area remains very popular 7-days a week. The bottom car park is full most lunch times including the grass area facing the canal. The fishing seems to have improved with decent sized fish being regularly caught.

Sales vary as most people tend to bring picnics; – walkers returning being the ones buying drinks and sweets. A donation of new Christmas Cards has been received and will be on sale at the Annual Lunch, also at Canal Head.

The staff operating the Centre have met a lot of people visiting the area for the first time who show a lot of interest and find it a very pleasant area. Regulars have only expressed very complimentary remarks about the improvements between Giles Lock and Sandhill Lock.

The Information Centre as usual has continued to operate throughout the period of British Summertime, until the PCAS' *New Horizons* trip boat stops for the winter. *Towpath News* will continue to be available in the Blue Box if you are in the area.

Nutwood at Melbourne

John and Sue Dickins, together, have about 60 years' boating experience and a narrowboat for 12 years. Both retired, John was with the Medical Research Council and Sue in NHS finance. When Double Nine visited them on Nutwood, named after Rupert Bear, they were snug inside with drizzle outside, moored at Melbourne Arm. With mugs of tea we swapped stories and narrowboat news. They have family living in Barmby Moor and John crews New Horizons when they are here from their home in Chesham, South Buckinghamshire. They stayed longer to say their farewell to Ernie Darrell at Thorganby Church.

John writes: I have been part of *New Horizons* crew for some time as we have family in Barmby Moor and spend quite a bit of time here each year. We have a 50-foot narrowboat near home in the Chilterns but as she is so convenient we decided not to move her up to Melbourne.

Starting as a vague idea of having a boat at Melbourne developed into a search for a suitable boat and mooring. We looked at several boats but none met our requirements. We wanted a cruiser stern, about 40-foot, an Elsan and an easy weed hatch, - based on experience with *New Horizons*. Then a fellow toy train "mate" mentioned that his daughter had a suitable boat for sale! Five days from the Ashby Canal to Pitstone had her "home". About 7-months saw her painted and fitted out as we wanted and ready to come to Melbourne. We had found a mooring at Thorne with water and electricity within 60 metres of the West Coast Main Line, so we thought no problem.



We approached CRT about moorings at Melbourne. After the refurbishments of the jetties we got one, but of course no electricity. We have fitted a 160 watt solar panel and for two months this ran the fridge without any other battery charging, so we are confident of its ability to keep the batteries up.

Sue and I planned the trip, Pitstone to Melbourne, deciding to do it in two "hops". The first was Pitstone to Anderton. Our friends from *Grebe Canal Cruises* had the first day with us, after that we were on our own. For this part of our journey we were on familiar ground as we had travelled to Anderton before. Ten days travel and then into Anderton Marina. We taxied to Northwich, then train home. We left the boat there, travelled up by car and stayed on her for three days. We returned to Northwich by train, 'emptied' Tesco and taxied back to Anderton.

Not likely to do it again we decided to go to Selby via the "scenic route" and cross the Pennines. We were helped by old friends up the *Wigan Flight* in the wet. Going through the grime of Blackburn and Burnley we wondered why we had come that way. Then we realised, the wonderful scenery of the Pennines was worth all the hassle! We had been warned about the large commercial vessels on the Aire and Calder but there are none now, the nearest we came to any was one moored up rusting hull!

Our arrival at Selby was with Spring tides so we waited a week or so. We read Paul's notes on the River Ouse, and decided to leave our River Ouse bit for two weeks. We put the boat into Selby Boat Centre and got the train home. We drove back to Selby, we went onto the river with our volunteer crew,- John Lewis, Alistair Anderson who have river experience, Andrew, our son-in-law who wanted the experience, and myself. Sue took the car to Barmby Moor to await the travellers' return.

The four of us felt very small as we set out onto the Ouse. The Selby lock-keeper had phoned Barmby Barrage so we arrived at the mouth of the Derwent with the Barrage ready open. The Ouse is large and impressive, my first experience of a river that size, although having boated on the upper Thames. We found the Derwent small and relaxing in contrast. The timing was right, we went to the Ferry Boat Inn, but they don't open for lunch in the week, so we continued.

"Take the turn up to the lock wide here" spoke experience, I did and found the bottom was too close to the top! Best part of an hour of pole, rocking and swearing we arrived afloat in Cottingwith Lock. Come on "Sheila Nix" we need you! I have walked the whole of the Pocklington Canal but this was the first time I had navigated the canal by boat. Now I know why I wanted a good weed hatch! We arrived at Melbourne after about 8-hours from Selby, plus the time sitting on the bottom. I will probably never do it again but boy was it worth it! And as for *Rupert*? Well you can't have a boat called *Nutwood* without *Rupert* can you?



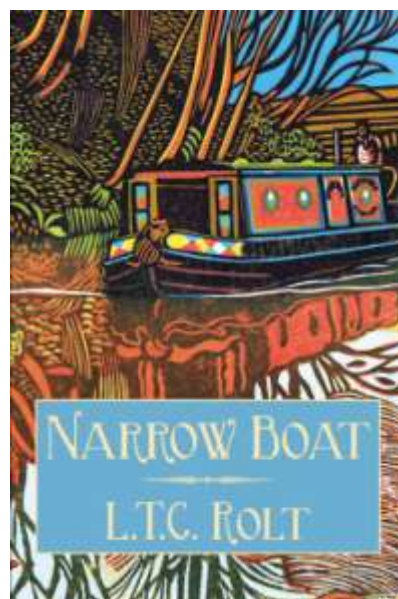
Narrow Boat

Narrow Boat, first published in 1944, re-issued on 28th August 2014 with new black-and-white illustrations and a foreword by Jo Bell, Canal Laureate, this book has become a classic on its subject, and may be said to have started a revival of interest in the English waterways.

The 70th anniversary edition is supported by the Canal & River Trust, in grateful thanks to the countless enthusiasts, past, present and future, who keep our waterways alive.

It was on a spring day in 1939 that L.T.C. Rolt, who trained as an engineer and founded the Inland Waterways Association, first stepped aboard *Cressy*. Sir Compton Mackenzie wrote: "It is an elegy of classic restraint unmarred by any trace of sentiment" for a way of life and a rural landscape that have now all but disappeared.

Narrow Boat, 212 pages, 62 black & white illustrations, 32 black & white plates, paperback, £14.99, reviewed by the New Statesman, The Observer. Published by The History Press. ISBN 978-0-7509-6061-8



Barn Owls in 2014 – back from the brink!

Robin Arundale, BSc (Hons), MSB
Wolds Barn Owl Group
Email: robin@arundale.plus.com



Since the post-war intensification of farming the Lower Derwent Valley has had one of the densest populations of Barn Owls in the country. However; two very cold winters followed by the unremittingly wet summer and spring of 2012/2013 reduced their numbers nationally by about 80%. Visiting our nest boxes last year revealed many of them unused and others where pairs of owls were roosting but not actually breeding as they were in such poor condition. A glimmer of hope was kindled by the ensuing good summer weather and a mild winter which segued into this year's generally warm dry spring.

Early in 2014 our group visited half a dozen or so nest boxes which we had marked down as needing repair work or replacement. To our very pleasant surprise we were unable to take any action as all were occupied by pairs of Barn Owls! I believe that the good summer weather last year enabled surviving pairs to eventually attain breeding condition and produce late broods. These offspring were then able to survive in greater than usual numbers due to the mild winter and the shelter offered by a greater number of nest boxes now available because of the recent high mortality of their previous occupants. This year's good weather was only one factor in the resurgence of our Barn Owl population. 2014 has proved to be a 'peak vole year'. The Barn Owl's main prey is the Short tailed Field Vole and these small mammals tend to increase in numbers over a period of three years followed by a population 'crash'. This year we are at the top of the curve which has ensured that plenty of food has been available for our Barn Owls and their young.

The 2014 breeding season commenced a full month earlier than usual with around two thirds of pairs beginning to lay in late March or early April. The numbers of young in the brood has also been higher than average with five or six chicks being by no means uncommon. Unusually, we have also had a kind of two-tier system working whereby the early layers appear to have been pairs of young birds hatched last year with surviving adults from 2013 taking longer to achieve breeding condition and starting to lay up to eight weeks later.

Barn Owls have a very protracted breeding cycle with three months elapsing between the laying of the first egg and the young finally dispersing from their natal site after fledging. As may be imagined, this tends to result in few pairs attempting a second brood. In 2014 however; second broods have almost been the norm! Many of these have already fledged but others, probably those late breeders from last season, are even now (mid-September as I write) brooding eggs and tiny chicks. It will be around Christmas before these young are fledged and fully independent so we must hope for yet another mild, dry winter with continuing good prey numbers.

The Stockholm Environment Institute invites PCAS members' wildlife observations

Rachel Pateman, University of York and Community Scientist - OPAL Project www.opalexplornature.org



Canals can be fantastic places for watching wildlife, from the everyday mallards and swans to the more elusive water voles and kingfishers and those species it would be a real treat to see such as otters. Many people will make a note of the wildlife they see as they travel along or beside a canal, on paper or just in their head, perhaps observing changes they see from week-to-week or year-to-year.

However, it is possible to do more with these informal records which can help with the understanding of wildlife in the UK. Biological records have been gathered by volunteers and collated by various local and national recording societies for many decades. The National Biodiversity Network, a central repository for these records, now holds over 90 million species records. These records have played a key role in documenting changes in the distribution of species over time and continue to do so. This is crucial for assessing which species are at risk and need conservation action. Waterways are also often home to alien invasive species such as Himalayan balsam and giant hogweed. Records of these species can help track their spread and also help target their management and control.

It is now easier than ever to contribute your records to these databases. Simply visit the iRecord website (www.brc.ac.uk/irecord) to register and add your own observations. And if you're unsure about what it is that you've seen, you can also upload a photograph to the iSpot website (www.ispotnature.org) where lots of enthusiastic people are on hand to help you put a name to your picture.

So when you next visit Pocklington Canal, I encourage you to take a note of the wildlife you see and to spend a few minutes when you get home to enter your records on iRecord, knowing that you are contributing to the understanding of the state of our wildlife.

Water Quality in the Pocklington Canal

By Duncan Fyfe, the Environment Agency's Catchment Coordinator, for the Derwent, Esk and Coast

Pocklington Canal from the village of Pocklington to the confluence of the River Derwent is arguably one of the most beautiful canals in England and one of the best for wildlife. Lying in the Lower Derwent valley the Canal is surrounded by sites that have been designated for their wildlife. The Canal has also been designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest in its own right for its nationally rare aquatic plant species and the diversity of invertebrates such as dragonflies and damselflies.

The Environment Agency has been working with Natural England, the Pocklington Canal Society, Hull University and others to ensure that this stretch of water and the surrounding rivers and wetlands remain special. By monitoring the water quality and working with partners over the last few years we have build up an understanding of

what the main water quality problems are in the Derwent, including Pocklington Canal, and what needs to be done to ensure a healthy water environment.

In recent years the canal has suffered from a range of problems and these have shown up in the Agency's monitoring results. The Agency has 3 monitoring points on the canal - at Canal Head, Church Bridge and Hagg Bridge. Agency data has helped to confirm that algal blooms, poorly oxygenated water, sediment, high phosphate levels and lower than expected biodiversity are some of the issues that have been affecting the canal.

A lot of work has been going on to address these problems and the outlook for the canal is now looking good. The Agency's monitoring has shown for instance that the improvements made by Yorkshire Water at the Pocklington Sewage Treatment Works have reduced phosphate levels in the water and this has helped reduce algal blooms. A number of storm overflows have also been improved over the last 10 years ensuring that less polluting matter enters the water. The Agency has also been working with Natural England through the Catchment Sensitive Farming initiative to address diffuse pollution from agriculture at locations across the Derwent Catchment. These actions have all resulted in improvements to the water quality in the canal.

However, there is no room for complacency and there is still work to be done to ensure that the water quality doesn't deteriorate once more. The Environment Agency, working with Yorkshire Water, the East Yorkshire Rivers Trust and the North York Moors National Park, have produced a Water Friendly Farming Guide for land owners and farmers along the River Derwent. This guide helps to highlight for example how sometimes the combined effect of seemingly minor actions can have a much larger impact on the natural environment.

It's not just sewage and farm effluent that can affect the quality of the water and its ecology. Dredging at the top lock and any future weed cutting for example need to be done in such a way as to reduce the risk of sediment or other polluting material from entering the water and to ensure the work doesn't impact fish and other wildlife. The Pocklington Canal Society have been working very closely with Natural England and the Environment Agency to ensure that best practice is always undertaken when carrying out these and other important maintenance activities.

The Pocklington Canal, the Lower Derwent with its internationally important wildlife sites, the Howardian Hills and the North York Moors all help to make the River Derwent a very special river indeed. Actions on one part of the river system can have consequences somewhere else which makes it important that everyone with an interest in the river continues to work together to keep the river and the canal in the best of health.

For a free copy of the Water Friendly Farming leaflet for the Derwent, visit the East Yorkshire website at Yorkshire Wildlife Trust at www.eastyorkshireriverstrust.org.uk/publications.html

The Environment Agency website has now moved and can be found at www.gov.uk/government/organisations/environment-agency

Balsam Bashing

This year saw another series of IWA Himalayan balsam work parties with volunteers joining the national campaign at different locations. The final Himalayan balsam pull of IWA's 2014 campaign was organised by Roger Bromley of IWA's East Yorkshire Branch. A group met at Melbourne to remove Himalayan balsam from the current limit of navigation.

Invasive non-native species pocket guide – book review

In recent years we've all become familiar with invasive species. Balsam, other plants and animals as varied as Giant Hogweed, Mink and Processionary Moths regularly make headlines because of health, environmental and economic problems. Invasive deer cause more than 74,000 traffic accidents in the UK every year,

Japanese Knotweed added £70m to the London Olympics, and could stop you getting a mortgage. These invasive species destroy crops and forestry, dump silt into rivers, sabotage drains and electrical infrastructure, cut off access to beautiful places, and drive native rare and iconic species to extinction. Invasive species cost at least £1.8bn to the UK economy each year.

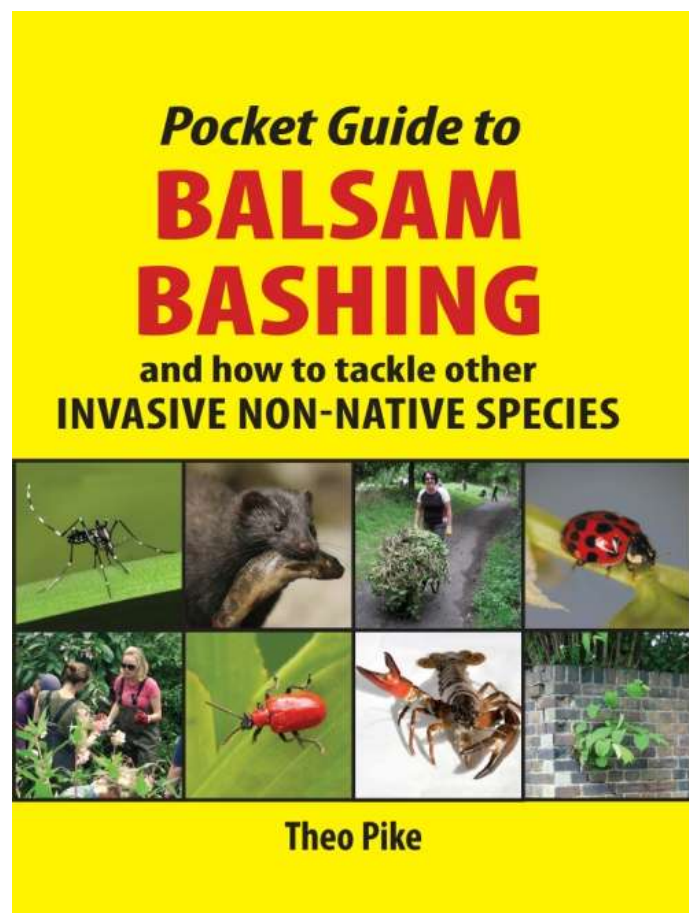
Theo Pike is author of the Pocket Guide to Balsam Bashing, published 8th May 2014, with over 40 different species featured, together with a list of actions you can take. Includes a useful contact list for those getting involved. Pocket sized, colour throughout, 96 pp, price £7.99,

ISBN 978-1-906122-62-1. Merlin Unwin Books Ltd, Palmers House, Corve Street, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 1DB.

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Editor's notes and reflections

Double Nine readers know I'm not a narrowboat owner but I am fascinated by inland waterways and major estuaries. Harnessing water, agriculture and journalism have played a large part in my life. My first canal awareness was Manchester Ship Canal, then the sea-level, lock-free, Suez Canal. After my wedding I crossed Holland's Zeeland Zuid Beveland Kanaal. Then for aerial farm crop reconnaissance the Dutch inspired, unromantic sounding, fenland Middle Level Main Drain and New Bedford River's Hundred Foot Drain near King's Lynn.



The Humber Estuary has been equally important, in agriculture, and journalism linked to the Icelandic and Grimsby sea fish industry. I reported from Brixham the first vacuum landing of fish, from Filton the ice-slush landing trials for Concorde; in previous years, new techniques for irrigating Mozambique sugar cane and frozen protection of Scottish raspberries. Before joining PCAS I was 2nd chairman of the Humber Advisory Group, now the Humber Nature Forum, part of Humber Nature Partnership for sustainable management of the Humber Estuary European Marine Site.

Pocklington's **On your doorstep** feature has aptly published **Autumn Wildlife on the Pocklington Canal**. A great place for a stroll at any time of the year but in autumn there's change afoot and it's arguably one of the most interesting and colourful times to observe wildlife. According to the Canal & River Trust it's one of the five most important waterways in Britain for wildlife, dragonflies butterflies, birds, small mammals, otters, water voles, trees, plants and mushrooms.

On different days in all weathers I have walked much of the length of the Pocklington Canal. On the towpath I've discovered an amazing cross-section of local people, 'walking' boat owners, PCAS members, volunteers, those from the Canal & River Trust, Natural England, Environment Agency, UK and international visitors, retired doctors and teachers, ornithologists and many others. They have all had time to talk and a story to tell, mostly the tranquillity, the peacefulness and naturalness of the canal.

Some walk, some cycle, some bring their dog, some carry their binoculars, some write in their water-proof notebooks, some are groups of students gathering details for a project, some are listening, some are observing, some are looking down at the ground, anticipating a mole will pop out! Even the 'humble' dandelion is of interest, there are thought to be 240 species in Britain, very difficult to identify without a good reference collection. Some chase a butterfly with their camera, and always not far away the iconic Kingfisher and Mute Swan.

If you stand still it is amazing how many invertebrates, the many mammals you can see and how many apparently hidden species of wildlife, birdlife may be watching you! The towpath is of equal importance to the waterway, the canal itself almost entirely being within Sites of Special Scientific Interest. The canal, its milieu, owes much to the constant effort of PCAS's volunteers, the Canal & River Trust and many Agencies.

Hopefully a long time yet to arrive, if ever I hope, on the Pocklington Canal, the Quagga mussel, *Dreissena rostriformis bugensis* can cover boat hulls and smother native mussels and make boats more inefficient. Quagga was found in the River Wraysbury on 1st October.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Sunday, 30th November 2014 – PCAS Annual Lunch, 12.30 for 13.00, Oaks Golf Club & Spa, Aughton Common, Aughton, York YO42 4PW. £17 per person. Reply by 24th November. Payment by cheque payable to PCAS. All details to Mr R. Watson, 33 Browning Road, Pocklington, York YO42 2GN. Menu details included on page 21.

Thursday, 4th December, 7.30 pm. – PCAS Committee, Red Lion, Holme-on-Spalding Moor.

Friday, 6th February 2015 – Pie and Pea Night with talk on Tall Ships by Adrian Lovett – Ticket £10.00. Contact Debbie Smith for further details and tickets – 01759 306070

Sunday, 24th May 2015 – Tea Party / Art & Craft Fair – Keep an eye on PCAS website for further details.

Saturday, 25th, Sunday, 26th July 2015 – 200th Anniversary Boat Rally weekend to celebrate the Act of Parliament and opening of the canal.

Double Nine publishing guidelines

This *Double Nine* has been set in Microsoft Sans Serif, page layout in Word. The next *Double Nine* is scheduled for Monday, 2nd March, with the copy and pictures deadline on Monday, 2nd February. Text is preferred word-processed as an attachment. Pictures should be sent as high-resolution files, not incorporated into copy, with file names identifying the subject, Please give details of copyright and of photography acknowledgements.



Gift Aid It!

A seasonal Double Nine reminder to all our readers

To greatly benefit the Pocklington Canal Amenity Society, Registered Charity 500637, please individually consider, if not already done so, to make a Gift Aid Declaration, – for past present and future donations.

HMRC allows a top-up on up to £5,000 donations per year, thereby allowing our Society as a qualifying charity to increase our income by up to £1,250 at current rates.

For example, for each New Horizons boat trip we have a record of the total donation and amount covered by Gift Aid. Adding up the difference between these figures over the season would provide a good start to finding £5,000 worth of donations that are not covered by Gift Aid.

Print this page to return your menu selection.

**PCAS Annual Lunch, 12.30 for 13.00
Sunday, 30th November 2014**

**Oaks Golf Club & Spa
Aughton Common, Aughton, York YO42 4PW**

Please select your menu

Name

*Return with payment for £17 per person, Total £
By/before 24th November 2014.*

*Payment by cheque payable to PCAS
All details to Mr R. Watson, 33 Browning Road,
Pocklington, York YO42 2GN*

Menu

Starters

- Fan of Melon with seasonal berries & fresh coulis
- Chef's home-made soup of the day
- Buffalo Mozzarella with Mediterranean vegetables & pesto dressing

Mains

- Roast Beef with Yorkshire pudding
 - Roast Loin of Pork with braised greens & whole grain mustard sauce
 - Poached Fillet of Salmon with light frothy Hollandaise sauce
 - Home-made Mushroom Stroganoff with basmati rice & garlic bread
- All main courses served with choice of potatoes & fresh vegetables***

Sweets

- Chef's Cheesecake with Fruit Compote
- Warm Chocolate & Walnut Brownie & Ice cream & Fudge Sauce
- Home-made Banoffee/Banoffi Pie & Ice cream

Coffee/Tea & After Dinner Mints included

***PCAS ANNUAL LUNCH
MENU £17 PER PERSON***

When booking please indicate if you have special dietary requirements



*“Excuse me, I’m busy with my head
down eating ...
Enjoy your PCAS Annual Lunch –
My menu of the day is nutritious
benthic algae!”*

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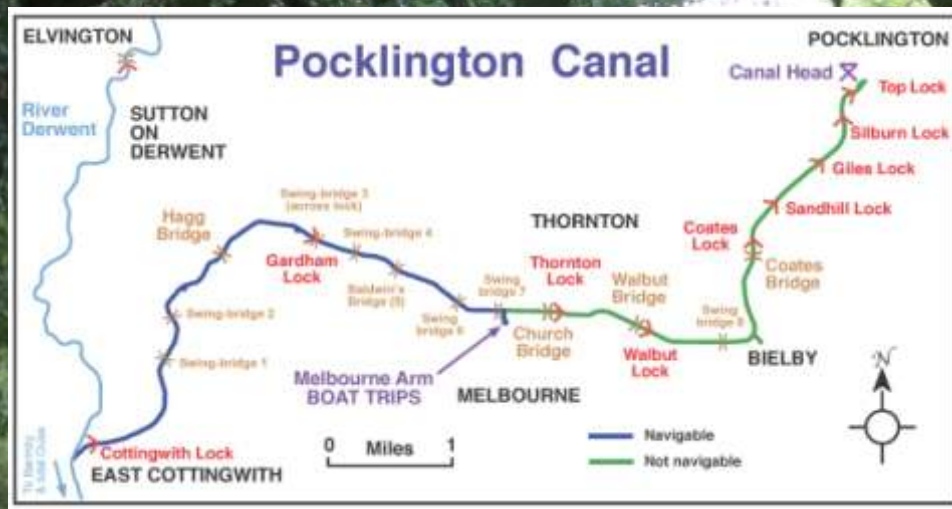
MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTIONS

Membership subscriptions run for 12 months from the date of joining PCAS. Please pay your subscription if it is due. If you pay by Standing Order, please update your payment as shown below.

	Annual	Life
Junior (up to 18)	£5	-
Individual	£10	£100
Individual – over 60	£10	£60
Family	£15	£150
Family Concession	-	£90

Please notify the Membership Coordinator if you change your address.





I was curious to see the restored Towpath. Walking from Sandhill Lock towards Giles Lock it at first looked too pristine. However nature is settling in again, the fallen leaves have nestled in the breeze to soften the edges. I sensed that birdlife was becoming newly accustomed to the surface, but wondering why their feet kept dry. Then a cycling bird watcher stopped to tell me the canal is now so much more accessible.

I quote from Bradshaw's 1904 *Canals & Navigable Rivers of England & Wales*.

"Canal towing-paths vary considerably, from the well-appointed and well-metalled way to the neglected track – often in winter nothing but a slough of mire, and bounded by a hedge so overgrown as seriously to curtail the width necessary for the passage of the horse."

The author would be highly impressed if he were alive today by the recent endeavours of the Waterways Recovery Group and PCAS volunteers.

Well done to all, – Editor