

DOUBLE NINE

THE
POCKLINGTON CANAL
AMENITY SOCIETY



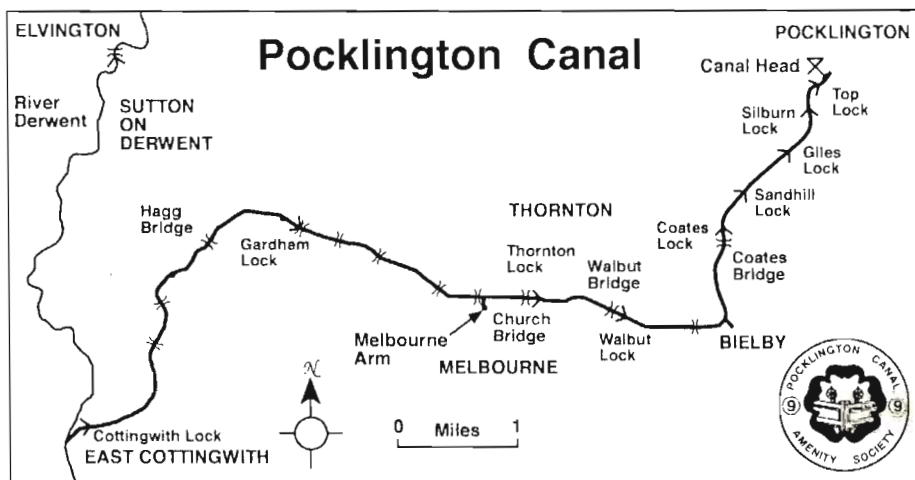
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THE POCKLINGTON CANAL AMENITY SOCIETY

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CHAIRMAN'S COLUMN

DREDGING

In the last issue, I wrote about our disappointment that British Waterways were unable to agree to dredging taking place during the winter of 2005/6. We had a further meeting in January when we pressed the dredging issue again, with a view to the works being carried out in the autumn of 2006. Again the reaction of BW was negative. Their view was that the works would be expensive and quite out of the question unless substantial outside funding was available. As an alternative, weed cutting using specialist equipment was suggested.

We responded by pointing out that weed cutting can only be a very temporary measure and that the canal would be choked again by the end of the next season's growth. A local company had quoted the Society a rate for the hire of equipment to dredge to full dimensions, and that, at these rates, the cost would not be great because disposal sites were available and there were no access problems. We also pointed out that funds were already in place for this work, and that in the case of the IWA their offer of funding was time limited. John Reeve of the IWA who also attended the meeting was able to reinforce this point.

After some very straightforward talking about the lack of progress on the canal and the comments that we hear from the general public, BW thought that there may be justification for some work on the grounds of good public relations; and they agreed to have another look at dredging the length of canal downstream of Thornton Lock. We are now hopeful that this will be done by the end of the year.

LOCK CHAMBERS

Work on lock chambers has also been discussed with BW. Unfortunately the Pocklington Canal occupies a fairly low position on their list of priorities; and so long as this is the case, it is difficult to persuade them to focus their attention on restoring the three remaining derelict locks. One way of raising the profile of the canal is to keep pointing out its exceptional heritage value, and this we do at every opportunity.

BW have recently appointed a heritage specialist for the Yorkshire area by the name of Judith Jones; and we had a site meeting with her and Jonathan Hart-Woods at the end of February. The party walked from Canal Head to Coates Bridge and this gave the opportunity to examine the three locks

that are still in need of restoration. We also visited Church Bridge and were able to put forward the case that this scheduled Ancient Monument is one of the finest canal bridges in the country. Judith Jones was very impressed with the canal which she had never visited before. We are hoping that as a result of the meeting, the heritage value of the canal will get greater recognition within British Waterways. We are also hoping that this might eventually lead to the restoration of Silburn, Giles and Sandhill Locks.

PROSPECTS FOR THE FUTURE

It has become evident in recent years that British Waterways has changed its attitude towards canal restoration. The emphasis now is on the generation of income, and unfortunately the Pocklington Canal is not seen as being much of a money spinner. The fact that it is on the edge of the canal system with the necessity to transit the tidal River Ouse counts against us. Perhaps more importantly the lack of suitable locations for marinas, canalside pubs and housing developments are seen as a negative factor.

This demonstrates a fundamental difference between British Waterways' objectives and our own. In their case economic objectives are paramount, whereas we are more inclined to think in terms of heritage, amenity and nature conservation. We fully appreciate that BW have limited funds and these can only be invested in financially viable schemes. For this reason, the Society has always worked on the assumption that restoration will have to be funded from elsewhere. We see the raising of the necessary funds as one of the functions of the society.

Since its formation in 1969, the society has raised more than £250,000 in hard cash, quite apart from the value of the work done by our volunteers. So far, we have only benefited in a very minor way from the National Lottery. If we could come up with a scheme which would attract Lottery money, the restoration could be completed without the need for BW to make any major contribution. In my view this is the way ahead.

Paul Waddington.

TABLE TOP & CAR BOOT SALE

It is our intention to hold a sale at Canal Head on Sunday 21st May commencing at 9.00am and finishing at around noon. We are hoping that this will provide an opportunity to move on much of the stock of books, bric-a-brac and other items that we are currently holding. We shall also be inviting third parties to sell from their table tops or car boots, although commercial operators will not be permitted.

It is intended to limit the number of pitches to about 20 which will be charged at £10.00 each. In order that priority can be given to members of the society, any members wishing to take a pitch should book with Paul Waddington (tel 01757 638027) by 1st May. Stalls should be set up by 8.30am.

SOCIETY DINNER

Although we have a society lunch every year in November, it is a number of years since we held an evening dinner. It has been decided to hold a dinner this year on Friday 16th June at the Steer Inn at Wilberfoss. The cost is expected to be £13.50. **John Fletcher, the National Chairman of the Inland Waterways Association**, has been invited and will be our principal guest and speaker. We will be sending a notice to all members nearer the date but in the meantime please reserve this date in your diaries.

PICNIC TABLES

The picnic tables at Canal Head were provided by the Heritage Coast Project more than 15 years ago. They have done very good service and are still extensively used by visitors. Although they are beginning to look a little dilapidated, they will, no doubt, last a few more years. However, we could do with some more and when the East Riding of Yorkshire Council were offering small grants to voluntary groups, we applied for £250 towards the cost of providing two additional tables. We were successful in our application and the picnic tables have been ordered from the Canal Workshops at Callis Mill near Hebden Bridge. They will be made of hard wood and so should have a long life. Delivery will be in time for the summer season.

GRANT FROM POCKLINGTON TOWN COUNCIL

Once again, we have received a grant of £100 from Pocklington Town Council. Whilst we have not decided exactly what this will be spent on, there is no doubt that we will shortly come up with a suitable project which will be of benefit to the people of Pocklington.

HEDGE PLANTING

Some of the trees and bushes at Canal Head recently had to be removed because they were interfering with the overhead power cables that supply electricity to the Lock Cottage. British Waterways proposed planting replacement trees but we suggested that it would be better to plant a hedge along the boundary between the picnic site and the adjacent field. The former hedge had succumbed to excessive growth of elderberry bushes and had practically disappeared.

BW welcomed this suggestion and lost no time in planting a new hedge. We have undertaken to pay half the cost.

PCAS – NEW WEB SITE

PCAS was one of the first canal societies to have a website, back in 1995, thanks to the Pocklington Town Council. We have had a break, for various reasons, but our new website should be online by the time you read this magazine. Our new web address is: www.pocklingtoncanalsociety.org

ARTICLES FOR THE MAGAZINE

There must be many members, who on reading the magazine, are reminded of some of their own experiences of canals and wild life or, who would like to comment on some of the items in the magazine. Your views and ideas would be most welcome. Please send anything you think would be of interest to the editor, whose details are inside the front cover

**NOTICE OF PCAS 37th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
WEDNESDAY 26th APRIL AT THE STEER INN- A1079 NEAR
WILBERFOSS AT 7.30 PM**

Following favourable comments on last year's AGM the Society committee decided to follow the same format again this year, at the Steer Inn where we had our Christmas lunch last November. Again we intend to start with the actual meeting as near 7.30pm as possible and follow this with a buffet. This has the advantage of allowing people to move around and talk once the formal meeting is over.

We do hope as many of you as possible will come. You **DON'T HAVE TO EAT!** But, if you intend to, please let our treasurer know by returning the slip at the back of this magazine, so that he can book the correct numbers. **BUT DO COME ANYWAY!** Family and non-member friends are very welcome too but are not allowed to vote at the AGM. We hope to have a raffle and, as always, any prizes are always welcome.

AGM Agenda.

Apologies, minutes of the last AGM, Chairman's report, Treasurer's report and presentation of accounts, Election of Auditors, Election of Officers and Committee. AOB.

Elections

Officers The four officers are elected annually and the present Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Honorary Secretary and Honorary Treasurer are all willing to stand and have all been proposed and seconded.

Committee We may have up to nine ordinary committee members. In order to preserve continuity, the Society Constitution lays down that the four members gaining most votes are elected for TWO years and the rest for ONE year.

Of the present committee Greg Dixon, George Parks, Paul Graham and Dave Wilson all have a further year to serve. John Gatenby has indicated that he wishes to retire this April. Angela Stallard retired last March and Jack Wootten retired at last year's AGM. So, to date, that leaves Alistair Anderson and Vic Randerson, who are both up for re-election and have been duly proposed and seconded.

We are always looking for new committee members and further nominations for committee or officers, duly proposed and seconded, are welcome and should be sent to the secretary – before the meeting if possible. (If in doubt please ring me.)

HELP! We also still hope more members and friends will volunteer to help at work parties organised by our Chairman. We already have some very willing workers but further help would be very much appreciated – as also at our small Information Centre/Shop at Canal Head on Sundays in the season.

ALUMINIUM CANS AND FOIL, STAMPS ETC

Thank you as always to all the many members and friends who collect and save these for us. They all make a very useful addition to our funds. Cans etc can always be left behind the Information Centre. In the season someone will be there on Sundays and in the winter we still do collect them up each week. If you live near my house in York you can also leave them there if this is more convenient. Several lots have been left in recent months and I don't always know who to thank. But please do keep them all coming.

OTHER MONEY SPINNERS!

If you are having a spring clearout, we can also sell pre-Second World War Ordnance Survey maps, also interesting pre-war books; old picture postcards (in albums or loose), Robinsons 'Golly' Badges and Britain, Corgi and Dinky toys etc.

These are in addition to more recent books, attractive bric-a-brac, children's toys etc. Jigsaw puzzles and games are popular, also (in season) home-made jam and marmalade and plants (in pots or trays)

PCAS DISPLAY STAND AT LONDESBOROUGH AMID THE SNOWDROPS

Over some years now Londesborough Park and the grounds of the old and historic church have become well known for the profusion of snowdrops there each February. Mrs Barbara Ashwin, one of our very early members and supporters, has been responsible for opening the Park and the churchyard each year, during two consecutive February weekends, so that the public can wander round and enjoy them. Thanks to a team of helpers relays of home-made refreshments are on sale in the village reading room and all the money raised goes to support the church and related good causes. This year all the proceeds will go to help pay for vital and expensive repairs to the church roof in this beautiful but very small village. Mrs Ashwin has been keen to support other local good causes and, each year, has invited various bodies to have displays in the church. PCAS is most grateful to have been one of those invited this year. We had our table

top display stand on a table in the cross aisle. with a variety of photographs of the Canal and some leaflets etc for people to take away. Despite the first Sunday being very wet all day, hundreds of people came from far and wide on both weekends. PCAS has already had useful feedback from our display. Thank you Barbara from the Canal Society and we hope a substantial sum has been raised towards the vital roof repairs

Sheila M. Nix Honorary Secretary PCAS.

A WARM WELCOME TO ALL OUR NEW MEMBERS

We are very pleased to welcome the following new members who have joined us over the last few months. If there are any omissions from this list, sincere apologies and please do make contact with the Membership Secretary.

Tim and Jenny Ball (Holme-on-Spalding Moor). Tim painted the views of Canal Head which appears on the new letter cards on sale in the PCAS Information Centre at Canal Head.

Pat Ferrand (Fulford, York)

Mrs. D. Phillipson (Pocklington)

Tony and Beryl Wills (Marple, Cheshire), who have been regular past supporters.

Lance Tasker (Pocklington)

Mrs. A. Dansie (Ryton, Tyne and Weir) who has very generously supported PCAS in the past.

David Fridlington and Judy Crossley (Melbourne)

Dr. Rob Baker (Thornton)

Miss Sheila Forbes (Market Weighton)

Mr and Mrs Amos (Thornes, Wakefield)

Mr P. Sumner (Adel, Leeds) Who has been a regular past supporter.

NEW HORIZONS

Our tripboat had a good season last year and we were able to run short trips on most Sundays. It is very rewarding to see how much the children enjoy the experience and to receive encouraging comments from their parents. Now that we are unable to have large working parties rebuilding locks, the tripboat provides a new focus for the Society. A few longer trips were arranged and *New Horizons* made an outing to Castleford, reported in our last issue.



'New Horizons'

The Pocklington Canal featured in the BBC2 series *Hands on Nature*. The programme featured dragonflies, filmed from *New Horizons* and pond dipping with PCAS members Geoff and Roma Oxford, plus barn owls filmed in the Melbourne area. The programme was first broadcast in November 2005 and will be repeated in March. The publicity has been useful, generating plenty of enquiries about the canal and boat trips.

I hope that we will be able to run some evening or Saturday trips this season. This depends on having sufficient crew to operate the boat safely. That means one to handle the boat, one to work bridges and locks, and one to look after the passengers. We have a responsibility to the public, so single-handing is not an option! I am particularly grateful to Andrew and Jenny Brett, who gave up a lot of Sundays to run boat trips last season, but they are unlikely to be available this summer and we need more crew.

Please contact me if you would like to get involved with boat trips or you are prepared to help with cleaning and painting to keep *New Horizons* looking smart and a credit to the Society. If you have any certificates for boat handling, first aid, working with children, fire-fighting or brass polishing, that would be even better.

If you would like to arrange a boat trip for a party of up to twelve or have any enquiries about boat trips, please contact Greg – see inside front cover. I hope to put information about scheduled trips on our website.

Alistair Anderson

PLANT DIVERSITY ON THE CANAL

Why are we felling the trees?

Regular visitors to the canal will have noticed that a programme of scrub clearance has been undertaken this past winter. These works can appear drastic and destructive at first glance. However, despite these initial impressions they are being undertaken to improve the Canal both for wildlife and visitors alike.

As many readers will know the Canal has long been recognised as an important wildlife site. It is a nationally important site for its aquatic plants and as such has been notified as a Site of Scientific Interest. Unfortunately in recent years there appears to have been a decline in the diversity and abundance of plant communities. The reasons for this are complicated but are thought to be due to a combination of factors including a reduction in water quality. Water quality issues are currently being investigated by a joint research project commissioned by British Waterways and English Nature. However, perhaps a less obvious factor contributing to a reduction in diversity is the presence of trees and shrubs. Too many trees can result in dense shade covering the water surface and this in turn can lead to a decrease in plant diversity. The aim of the current works is therefore to allow sunlight to reach the water surface and encourage the re-establishment of aquatic plants. It must be emphasised however that the objective is not to remove all trees and scrub since in moderation the presence of trees and shrubs can obviously add to the wildlife interest of the canal by, for example, providing nesting sites for birds.

In addition to the wildlife benefits the scrub works will also allow better access along the towpath where it has become particularly narrow and uneven. It is also intended to undertake the works in such a way as to allow views down to the water's edge for walkers using the towpath, hopefully leading to a more enjoyable visit.

I do hope this explanation will reassure any visitors that the current works are not wanton vandalism but are seeking to improve the Canal for all!

Simon Christian English Nature

Would You Like a Trip on a Humber Keel?

The Humber Keel and Sloop Preservation Society run regular trips on the Humber Keel *Comrade*, and a trip has been booked by PCAS on Sunday 11th of June 2006. There is a strict limit of 12 places which will be allocated on a first come first served basis, at a cost of £15.00 each, (There may be a slight increase if HKSPS put up their charges at their AGM in March).

Please contact Greg Dixon on 07092 1196595 to book your place. If you are successful you will be asked to send your remittance by a specified date. If this is not received your place will be reallocated.



Comrade under sail

The trip will be from South Ferriby, usually locking out at around 8.00am for the tide. A trip will normally take in a motor around the inside of Reed's Island for the bird watchers before heading east. Distance depends on tide and wind, but generally goes as far as the Grimsby area. Arrival back at the lock is about 5pm, but could be a little later.

On board there are cooking facilities and a basic toilet (volunteers for emptying it at the end of the day are always appreciated).

As much of the day as possible is done under sail, but again, all depends on the weather and the skipper's decision is final. In the event of a cancellation on the part of the ship, your payment will be refunded.

There is usually plenty of opportunity for passengers to take the tiller and try their hand under sail/motor - under the watchful eye of the Sailing Master, Colin Sreeton, of course.

Passengers are free to move around the ship, but they must appreciate that *Comrade* is still rigged as a working vessel - no fancy handrails, open wick gears etc. and a generous helping of black, greasy, wire rigging that has a special ability to seek out good clothing. An eye for safety is needed at all times. If she was sanitised, then it simply wouldn't be possible to sail her. Everyone gets a safety briefing before leaving.

Binoculars are advised for those interested in birdlife etc - there should be a good population of birds on Reed's Island by June - hopefully the Avocets will be back in force again. There must have been 200+ pairs of them last season. There was also a family of seals (7 was the most counted) on the sands at Stoney Creek - two pups last year, though whether we can get that far down is all dependent on wind and water. Believe it or not - salmon have been seen leaping.

In the meantime, should any members want to drop in and pay a social visit, there's usually three or four of members at the boat, with paint brushes and tins of linseed oil every Saturday until the end of April at Beverley Beck. With luck, they'll be taking her back to the Ancholme by the beginning of May, looking as bright and shiny as a new pin - a pity it doesn't take long for the Humber to take its toll.

Some Information about *Comrade**

The Humber Keel *Comrade* was built in 1923, at Warren's Shipyard at New Holland. Originally named Wanda, she was built for Turner Carmichael of Hull. The iron hull was made to Sheffield class size of sixty one feet six in length and fifteen feet six beam, with a hold capable of carrying over a hundred tons in cargo. Initially, she traded in barley and coal between Wakefield and Hull.

Wanda was sold to John "Herrings" Taylor, who renamed her *Ada Carter* after his wife. In 1929, the ship was acquired by Arthur Schofield of Beverley in part exchange, renamed *Comrade* and rigged as a keel; she subsequently



worked the general cargo trade in the West Riding and South Yorkshire, returning to Hull and Beverley with coal.

Sole ownership passed to Arthur's son Fred Schofield in 1958: he continued to work her in general trade, which by then was beginning to decline. *Comrade* came out of service in 1974, when she was acquired by HKSPS.

HKSPS members carried out restoration and rigging work between 1974 and 1976, when *Comrade* became the first keel to sail the Humber in over thirty years.

Today, *Comrade* carries the traditional keel rig of white square main and top sails that characterise the Humber keel. Carried on a fifty eight foot mast, her rig dimensions are mainsail 33' at foot and 25' at head, and top sail 23' at head and 26' at top.

Comrade sails regularly through the summer months.

* Details from the web site of the Humber Keel & Sloop Preservation Society www.humberships.org.uk with their kind permission.

A Summer Flood at Cottingwith

By Pat Jones.

One of the pleasures - and/or regrets - which follow the publication of a book* is being given photographs by friends that its writer would have liked to include in it. One such photograph is reproduced here. In 1981 my wife and I had set out from Ripon aboard our cruiser *Cygnus Vedrae* bound for Lincolnshire, in company with friends aboard *Jupiter*. We planned to visit the river Derwent and the Pocklington Canal on the way, and on Thursday the 23rd of July we arrived at Barmby Lock in very perfect weather. Proceeding upstream, we spent the night at the *Breighton Launch*, and on Friday we cruised gently up to East Cottingwith and moored to the canal bank above the lock. The river was perhaps a little above its normal summer level, but there was no hint of what was in store for us the next day.

After a leisurely breakfast, while we were all surveying a very peaceful scene, to our considerable surprise all four gates of the lock opened



themselves, and the river started to flow *up* the Canal. I launched our rubber dinghy and rowed through the lock down to the river, on which I did not dare venture, since it was flowing very fast. During the day the

flood level continued to rise, and by the afternoon the canal's banks were covered, which was a matter of some concern to us since we had planned to have dinner that night in the village inn, the *Blue Bell* (later rebuilt as the *East Cottingwith Arms*, but alas, not now licensed).

By early evening only the masonry of the lock was above the water, and there was no alternative but to secure our boats side-by-side at the head of the lock. We could see the *Blue Bell* across a flooded field, and so we all got into the dinghy and rowed towards our dinner. Unfortunately there was a barbed wire fence in the way, a few inches under the water. (Rubber dinghies don't like barbed-wire fences.) We therefore returned to the canal and followed it until we could turn into Cemetery Lane. We soon reached dry land, and tied our dinghy to the gates of the cemetery. I'd not rowed a dinghy up a lane before: dinner was particularly enjoyable that night, we reckoned we deserved it.

By Sunday afternoon the flood level had fallen sufficiently - we thought - to enable us safely to return to the *Brighton Launch*. I led the way in *Cygnus*, saying 'follow me' to John and May in *Jupiter*. The banks of the river were above water at Cottingwith, but they were covered farther downstream, the fields on either side were flooded for a considerable distance, and in places there was no indication of where the river's channel lay. What followed was not without an element of humour; John allowed *Jupiter* to fall too far behind, and despite my slowing *Cygnus* to tick-over, we eventually lost sight of them. We called them on the VHF, but there was no reply. Having turned around and retraced our course, we found they had run aground and were trying, without success, to contact us by VHF radio. Investigation showed their set was tuned to the wrong channel; each of them blamed the other, and recollection of the vociferous altercation that ensued has kept us amused to this day. Nevertheless, we moored to the pontoons of the hospitable *Brighton Launch* in due course, we remained friends, and the rest of the holiday proceeded as planned.

❖ Pat Jones. *Navigation on the Yorkshire Derwent*, Oakwood Press, PO Box 13, USK, Mon., NP 15 1 YS, or from PCAS Secretary (£9.95 plus postage).

THE GRAND UNION CANAL AND ME

By Richard Quinton (Hon. Treasurer)

When people discover that I have never owned a narrow-boat (or any form of boat), and never even been on a canal holiday, I'm often asked how I came to be interested in canals. Part of the answer is that I have a general interest in inland travel during the 19th and 20th centuries, whether it be by road, railway or inland waterways. However, my involvement (albeit very superficial) with canals was very much part of my early life in Middlesex, now regarded as West London.

I grew up in Perivale, situated roughly midway between Wembley and Ealing, where my family home was in an estate built, in the early 1930s by Percy Bilton Ltd. within a loop of the Grand Union Canal. The estate consisted of crossing roads within a curved outer road, creating something like a Norman church window effect, and it was sometimes locally named as "the church window estate". Direct access to the canal towpath was possible from footpaths and alleyways to the rear of properties on the outer estate road, as well as by the main road to bridges at each end of the estate. To complete the situation of total enclosure by water, our area was passed near its lower boundary by the River Brent, on its journey from the Welsh Harp Reservoir near Neasden to the River Thames at Brentford. Normally a very small and tranquil river, it could become a raging torrent at times, with widespread flooding and consequent local road closures, which led the young Quinton to wonder sometimes whether there was a real risk of our estate ever becoming engulfed by water! This fear was heightened by reports that, in 1938 which had been the year of my birth, the IRA had attempted to blow up an aqueduct which carried the Grand Union Canal across the North Circular Road between Park Royal and Stone Bridge Park. This news once sent me speedily out on a recce of the canal to locate the nearest sluice gates (if that is their correct name) in case of a future catastrophe, as there were no locks along our stretch of the canal. But I digress.

With easy access, and often contrary to parental instructions, the fascination of the canal towpath would frequently attract friends and me, although great care had to be taken due to the general appalling condition of the towpath. As I grew older, I was able to ride my cycle along the canal side, which meant that I could then cover greater distances. During and immediately after the War, there seemed to be great usage of our stretch of the canal, carrying coal and timber towards London, and presumably other cargoes back from the

London dockland. To me at that time, there seemed to be a steady flow of traffic, sometimes small convoys, sometimes a number of barges towed by a tug, and sometimes boats tied together in pairs. I was often fascinated to see whole families on the boats, and a friendly wave was often exchanged with the apparently unwashed bargees. I cannot be certain, but I *think* that I recall the occasional horse-drawn barge at that time, as I seem to remember having to leave the towpath clear for its free passage.

My home was very close to a number of industrial areas and, at both ends of our estate, there were large wood yards which were supplied with their stocks via the canal. Other local major companies which had their own wharfs were



H.J.Heinz. **(left the Heinz factory as it is today)**, Arthur Guinness & Sons Ltd, Key Glass Works, Glaxo Laboratories, Rockware Glass and J.Lyons & Co. Ltd., to mention but a few within a short distance of my home. Needless to say, much time was spent by me watching the process of unloading raw materials and, sometimes, of

loading manufactured products for transport to the Midlands.

Locks have always fascinated me, but I had to wait until I was a little older and braver to cover longer distances on my BSA bicycle before I could see these in action. There were then easily-accessed locks around the Hanwell area on the canal's arm which branched off at Bulls Bridge Junction towards Brentford and the River Thames, while there were others in idyllic rural locations around Cowley, Uxbridge and Denham, on the canal's main route to the Midlands.

Our own canal loop was overlooked by Horsenden Hill, said to be named after a Saxon King Horsa, which had its own counter-attractions. Apart from an ancient moat at its southern foot, during WW2 the hill was the base for a formidable anti-aircraft gun encampment. Although out of bounds to local residents, it was possible to get quite close to it and to enjoy the marvellous distant views, on a fine day, over London. Nearby, to the side of the hill, was an army camp of nissan huts, presumably as a base for the soldiers who manned the guns, and it was not unusual to see a platoon of soldiers marching along the road and over the small canal bridge, which remains to this day in its original size but now controlled by traffic lights which presumably avoids

the thrill of near-misses which frequently occurred in my childhood, as vehicles rounded a blind bend on the approach to the single-lane bridge to face oncoming traffic. However, I never did see an actual accident there.

Abbey Road Bridge looking towards London

The Grand Union Canal provided a number of questions and adventures for me at the time. Why did all the cast iron information plates on bridges proclaim it as the Grand Junction Canal when everyone referred to it as the Grand Union Canal? What



keeps water in the canal and stops it leaking away? How was the amazing Hanwell triple crossover of canal, railway and roadway designed and built? I spent several hours just admiring that particular piece of engineering, and it was really exciting when a barge, a train and road traffic all crossed at the same moment, albeit at different levels and in different directions.

Another clear memory for me, presumably just after the War, is that of watching Italian POWs working under British military supervision to provide much-needed repair work to the towpaths which had, in many places, simply crumbled into the canal. I won't embarrass myself or shock my readers by repeating the rather unkind verses we local youngsters would sing to the unfortunate POWs as they went about their work! Sometimes, a further interesting spectacle could be offered by the dredgers when they worked to remove debris from the canal, and I would wonder why people should have thrown away what seemed like quite usable bikes and prams which the dredgers often retrieved. On another memorable but distressing day when I was no more than ten or eleven, I watched the removal from the canal of the body of a younger boy who had been missing for a few days. The body seemed very swollen, and I wondered whether his parents were among those present and what they were thinking at the time. I felt very sad for days afterwards, although it must have been some relief to relatives to learn that it

was accidental death and nothing more sinister - unlike the case of a 3-year old toddler who was found murdered in the River Brent, not far away and at much the same time, the dreadful act committed by a local boy, known to me and not much older than myself, who was subsequently sentenced to approved school training for his crime.

Thus, I guess it can be seen why the Grand Union Canal was very much part of my childhood, and my interest at the time prompted me to write to the Canal HQ to request further information about the canal's place in the national network and its role with companies in the London area. I was promptly sent a map, dated 1945, of the country's inland waterways, with an enlarged section indicating all the major wharfs along the Grand Union Canal in the London area. I still treasure this interesting and historic document.

My involvement with the Grand Union didn't end when I left home in 1956 to commence further studies, as I found myself living in a college near the village of Hampton-on-the-Hill, Warwickshire. Within a short cycle ride of it was the fabulous Hatton staircase of locks, and also other single sets of locks as the canal left Warwick itself. Again, many hours were spent in these locations and, although canal commercial usage was then very much on the decline, there was still limited working traffic to be seen, but virtually nothing yet in the way of pleasure traffic. Ever since my youth, and more so since I have come to learn more about and admire the marvellous feats of engineering,

and the tragic loss of life, involved in the construction of our canal network, canals do have a great attraction for me and I can think of little more enjoyable than walking canal towpaths, enjoying the contrasts of their working urban locations and of their peaceful rural stretches. Of course, my ready willingness to walk towpaths has absolutely nothing to do with the fact that level walking is assured, apart from slight and short inclines alongside locks, and that there is no need to expose my poor state of fitness which would be clearly evident in my struggles for breath and wind while climbing hills!

So, the Pocklington Canal has great attractions for me. I have no particular knowledge of boating, nor do I have the practical skills necessary to restore a canal's infrastructure, but I love the peace and the natural wildlife habitats along its course, and am pleased to be part of the preservation of our heritage, even if it's only keeping an eye on the accounts and membership records - and as I was brought up within a busy loop of the Grand Union Canal on the edge of London, canals are very much part of me.

Booking for the AGM

This booking slip has been printed with the reverse left blank so that you may safely remove it without spoiling the rest of the magazine.

Please complete the slip and return it by **Saturday 15th April** to:

Richard Quinton
Andrew's Place
Deans Lane
Pocklington
York
YO4 2PX

Please make cheques **payable to PCAS**

PCAS AGM 2006

Name: _____

Number of buffet meals required: _____ @ £6.00 per head

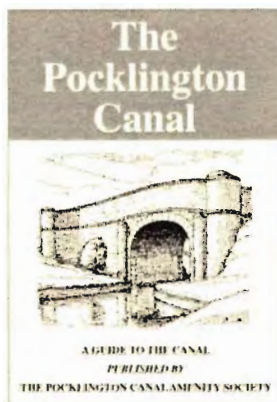
Payment enclosed: £ _____



◆ GUIDE TO THE POCKLINGTON CANAL

published 1993 by PCAS

Its 36 pages contain a wealth of information about the canal and surrounding area, its history, geography, restoration and wildlife, with general maps of the area and strip maps of the canal from the Derwent to Canal Head. The guide also contains attractive line drawings and an up-to-date list of useful telephone numbers and addresses. It is available from Melbourne Stores, Goole Boathouse, or from the Information Centre at Canal Head on Sundays @ £3.50. Copies can be obtained by post from the Society Secretary @ £4.



◆ PCAS T-SHIRTS AND SWEATSHIRTS

We have a good selection of standard poly/cotton T-shirts and Sweatshirts, all with the PCAS logo, in stock; Sweatshirts in Navy, Bottle Green, Burgundy, Red and Grey; T-shirts in Black, White, Navy, Pale and Royal Blue. Other colours, styles and fabrics available to order. All good quality garments and value for money.

Prices Standard Sweatshirts £18.95, T-shirts £10.25. Polo-style Sweatshirts £25 and T-shirts £16.25 also available to order.

All available from the Secretary – see inside front cover

◆ HEAD OF NAVIGATION PLAQUES

Handsome oval brass plaques are available on proof of reaching Melbourne Arm, the Head of Navigation, by boat. They may be purchased from the Huitson family, Rose Cottage, Melbourne (almost opposite the Melbourne Arms), or from the Secretary – see inside front cover. Price £9 collected or £10 by post, while stocks last.



◆ MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTIONS

Subscriptions were due in January. If you have not paid your subscriptions for 2006 please send them to the Treasurer as soon as possible.

| | |
|--|--------|
| Annual membership (single, and also partners and school-age children) | £5.00 |
| Annual membership (concessions, single and also including partner) | £3.00 |
| Life Membership (single or partners and school-age children at the same address) | £50.00 |

**POCKLINGTON CANAL
AMENITY SOCIETY**
Dates for your diary

Wednesday
26th April

PCAS AGM and BUFFET
Steer Inn 7.30 pm
See inside for details

Sunday
21st May

Table Top & Car Boot Sale
Canal Head 9.00 am

Sunday
11th June

Humber Keel *Comrade* Trip
South Ferriby
See inside for details

Friday
16th June

Society Dinner
Steer Inn 7.30 pm
See inside for details