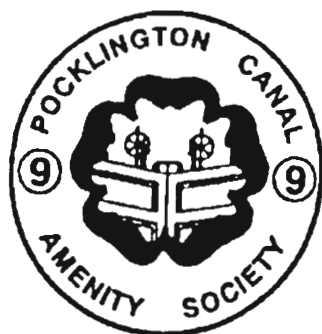


DOUBLE NINE

THE
POCKLINGTON CANAL
AMENITY SOCIETY



MAGAZINE

October 2005

No. 82

CHAIRMAN'S COLUMN

DREDGING

In the last edition of this magazine, I wrote encouragingly about the prospect of carrying out dredging on the canal during the coming winter months. We had in mind two stretches, one below Thornton Lock, and the other below Walbut Lock. The dredging of these two stretches would have allowed navigation to be extended as far as No 8 Swing-bridge and a small amount of work on that swing-bridge would have allowed craft to get as far as the Bielby Arm, where they could conveniently turn. These works would have extended the navigable length by about two miles.

In the spring, the prospects looked very good. There was plenty of time to plan the works. Funding was in place because the Inland Waterways Association had awarded us a grant of £5,000 for dredging work and English Nature was willing to contribute up to £10,000 out of funds reserved for returning the SSSI to a "favourable condition". In addition, the Environment Agency had allocated £5,000 from their Recreation budget for restoration work on the Pocklington Canal and was happy for this to be used for the dredging project. It seemed to us that these funds would be ample to cover the cost of the project, although the Society was prepared to make a further contribution if necessary. The project also looked relatively simple because there is easy access for machinery at the two locations, and it was likely that land would be available for disposal of the dredged material.

Our disappointment was great when, in September, British Waterways announced that the dredging work could not be carried out during the forthcoming winter due to the amount of preparatory work that would be required. We recognise that there has to be sampling and analysis of the silt, and that consent would be required from both English Nature and from the Environment Agency. However, we find it difficult to understand why these cannot be arranged in the time that is still available.

LOCK RESTORATION

Two years ago, we had extensive discussions with British Waterways and others about the restoration of Sandhill, Giles and Silburn Locks. The three locks had been surveyed by BW and costings were being prepared with a view to applying for Lottery funding. These discussions came to a premature end when there was a reorganisation in BW and the people we were talking to moved elsewhere. The discussion then shifted to dredging

and lock restoration was deferred. We are now keen to resurrect the project, although our current thoughts are to deal with them one at a time, starting with Sandhill.

WORKING PARTIES

A few working parties took place on Sundays last winter, although it is some years since we had them at the rate of two a month. We really would like to get back to having regular monthly working parties. What we lack is an organiser. I would be delighted to hear from anyone who feels able to take on this role, or indeed from anyone who would like to get involved. I can be contacted on 01757 638027.

Paul Waddington.

THE INFORMATION CENTRE

The Information Centre and shop at Canal Head has again been open each Sunday and Bank Holiday this year since Easter, starting on Good Friday. We expect to continue at least until the end of October.

We do buy in canned drinks and chocolate bars but everything else we sell is donated. We are really grateful for all the things you bring us. The variety is amazing! Books, especially paperback romances and thrillers etc, and good clean children's books and costume jewellery are always good sellers, also attractive bric-a-brac, china and the like, and garden and house plants in season. It is astonishing how often visitors suddenly spot something we think unlikely to sell but is just what they are interested in and never expected to find!

There is never enough room in the Information Centre but, thanks to Paul Graham, we now have much more shelving, which is a great help. We are also very grateful to Alistair Anderson who is gradually replacing and/or repainting the door and windows etc and updating the information panels.

Trade is not quite as brisk this last year or two - due in part perhaps to e-bay. But many local shops report slower trade too. In any case the Info Centre still contributes a very useful amount to Society funds. What is equally important is that we make contact with so many people, quite a number of whom end up becoming members. The Canal has many regular local walkers and a number of boat owners at Melbourne but it is astonishing the number of visitors from literally all over the world and certainly all parts of Britain, who come most Sundays - and, of course, on other days when we are there. Pocklington Canal is known surprisingly far afield!

Aluminium cans and foil. Thank you very much indeed also to the many of you who bring us cans and foil. Please keep it coming! Heavier aluminium items such as old pans etc are also very welcome, likewise copper and brass if you have any you want to move on. It all makes a very useful addition to funds for the Canal. It can be left at the Canal or in York at my house if that is easier.

Sheila Nix

THE SOCIETY AGM 20th APRIL 2005

We had a good AGM evening at the Steer Inn on 20th April. Following the official business there was a raffle and sales stall and an excellent buffet.

Both Angela Stallard who had resigned in March and Jack Wootton who resigned in April were thanked for their time on the Society committee. Greg Dixon from Melbourne, who was co-opted in March 2005, was welcomed. The Chairman also paid a warm tribute to Simon Stallard who had been our Auditor for many years but had now resigned. Simon was later presented with a gift.

SOME SUMMER 2005 EVENTS

CLASSIC CAR RALLY 29th June

The second Classic Car Rally in Pocklington Market Place, organised by our Treasurer Richard Quinton in aid of PCAS, was a great success - so much so that he has since decided it should become a regular annual event.

BARMBY FEAST SATURDAY 16th JULY

The sunny weather this time made up for last year's downpours. Joan and Gordon Muspratt brought their gazebo again and, whilst Gordon dealt with a constant queue of young and older customers testing their bowling skills at his canal tunnel game, Joan and Sheila ran the stall. An enjoyable and profitable afternoon.

GIFT OF TWO PADDLEBOATS from YORK MODEL BOAT CLUB

We were delighted recently to be offered two paddleboats, once used on Rowntree Park Lake, from the York Model Boat Club. We still use the two they gave us some years ago but these recent ones are much more modern and very welcome. Very many thanks.

THE MILL HOUSE GARDEN PARTY SATURDAY 20th AUGUST

Peter and Diane Cowan and their family came to live at The Mill House, opposite the top basin of the Canal. after Margaret Price left. They soon came and introduced themselves to us and, shortly afterwards, said they would very much like to make use of their large garden to organise a garden party in aid of PCAS funds. We agreed on the date and they promptly produced posters and set about selling tickets in advance. On the day there was live music (but not too loud!), refreshments, stalls, tombola, a raffle, bouncy castle etc. Early evening the barbecue started and many visitors stayed on till quite late enjoying the garden, the bar and the perfect weather. Being August a number of our usual PCAS helpers were away so it was our Chairman, Paul Waddington, committee member, Paul Graham, and Sheila Nix who set up the Canal Society's own contribution. We had a tent - just in case! - a display of pictures and information about the Canal, and a large sales stall which took £76. We also organised the ever-popular small boat rides for the children. There was an excellent attendance and many enquiries about the Society and the Canal. Some of the visitors had come from quite a distance and were most interested.

After all the expenses had been settled the Cowan family presented us with a cheque for the incredible amount of £1,100! (this was in addition to our own stall takings). They (and Pocklington Canal) even made the top of the front page of the following week's *Pocklington and District Post*!

Congratulations to the Cowan family and our very warmest thanks.
SMN on behalf of PCAS

RECENT DAMAGE TO CHURCH BRIDGE

We were most grateful to long-time Thornton member, Mrs Barbara Chamberlain, who alerted us to the considerable damage caused to Church Bridge (sometimes referred to as Thornton Bridge) by a rogue car driver one day in June. Having already e-mailed East Riding of Yorkshire Council's bridge department, she then telephoned the PCAS Secretary. She described the parlous state of the coping stones which cap the two walls of the bridge and noted various holes in the brickwork lower down each side. She was worried that, if action was not taken quickly, the copers might actually topple into the Canal and be very difficult to rescue.

Fortunately, when the original Canal builders had reached the Thornton/Melbourne area in 1816/17 and Church Bridge was built, those builders meant it to last! It was, after all, a vital link between Melbourne and the parish church for all that area.

East Riding Council were quick to send people to assess the problem and reported back that, as the coping stones were securely joined by a solid metal bar, they were not at immediate risk. But it also became clear that, whilst ERYC is responsible for the narrow bridge warning signs etc beside the roadway, the owners of the bridge (i.e. British Waterways) are responsible for work on the actual bridge. BW lost no time re-instating the coping stones but had to acquire suitable small bricks to repair the damaged walls and this was done a week or two later.

This unfortunate damage had caused a number of us to take a careful look at the bridge, however, and at a subsequent committee meeting it was agreed that it would be a good thing to have this, the most important piece of built heritage on the Pocklington Canal, inspected by an expert. The bridge was repaired and tidied up at various times in the past but mostly a good many years ago now. It is an Ancient Monument and a Listed Building Grade 2, and its design is thought to be unique amongst canal bridges, certainly in Britain.

KEEPING IN TOUCH!

PCAS is very fortunate to have member Peter Hardy (who, though he now lives in Surrey, frequently comes up to East Yorkshire where he used to live) as a regular attender at the meetings of the valuable and influential *Parliamentary Waterways Group*.

Likewise our Vice-Chairman, David Tomlinson, regularly attends the *Northern Canals Association* and reports back to us. Our thanks to them both.

ON SALE:

We are delighted to have some very attractive cards of the Pocklington Canal, with envelopes, for sale. They are reproduced by artist, Tim Ball, from his own watercolours. Tim and his wife came to live in Holme on Spalding Moor some time ago and Tim has painted two excellent views of the Picnic Site area of the Canal, also a view of the HOSM church on the

hill. He hopes to do further watercolours of the Canal in due course. Some of our readers will no doubt have visited his recent exhibition in the Pocklington Arts Centre. Available from the Information Centre on Sundays or, after the end of October, from SMN (see details inside front cover).

Commemorative Plaques

During one of the winter working parties we were able to install two commemorative plaques on the gates of Top Lock.

One is to recognise the major contribution made over the years to the work of the Society by Raymond O'Kelly.



The other is in recognition of a large bequest left to the society by Mary Watson, a long time resident of Pocklington who gave support to many local causes.

NOTES FROM THE TREASURER

Very many thanks to all those members who paid their subs so promptly after the reminder published in the last edition of Double Nine, and to those who completed the Gift Aid Declarations (see below). Except in exceptional circumstances, it has not been possible to acknowledge each individual payment, but please be assured that the excellent membership response has made life somewhat easier for the Treasurer/Membership Secretary, and has also boosted the Society's funds.

Calling **ROBER LTD!** Each January a Standing Order payment is received from Rober Ltd by PCAS. Existing records do not indicate the name(s) of the member(s) whose annual subscription is paid by the company. Please let the Treasurer know about this, so that payments can be correctly assigned to the member(s) concerned and so prevent the unnecessary mailing of a subscription reminder In due course. Many thank

GIFT AID

As PCAS is a registered charity, Gift Aid is a simple scheme which allows PCAS to apply for an Income Tax refund on all subscriptions and donations paid by its members who have provided it with a signed Declaration. Gift Aid does not involve members in any direct contact with their Inland Revenue office, as it is the PCAS treasurer who initiates a combined claim at the end of each tax year. The Society currently receives back 28p for every £1 paid in subscriptions or donations by members who have signed a Gift Aid Declaration, subject to payment by them, in that tax year, of income tax or capital gains tax at least equal to the tax reclaimed by PCAS. Thus the value to PCAS of a £5 subscription is increased to £6.40p, £10 donation becomes worth £12.80p, and larger donations become significantly increased sums. It is an easy way for PCAS to increase its income and members have the pleasure of knowing that at least part of their tax payments to the Government contribute to a charity of which they fully approve.

Signed Gift Aid Declarations are currently held in respect to only a small minority of members, and so **ALL** members are now urged to complete a form; one is enclosed with this issue of "99" If you are not certain whether you have previously completed and signed one, please complete this new one, and the treasurer will ensure there is no duplications of claims, whilst maximising Inland Revenue payments to PCAS.

To increase the value of your subscriptions/ donations to PCAS please complete the enclosed Gift Aid Declaration form and return it to the Treasurer as soon as possible. It is easy to do, and will greatly improve the finances of PCAS. Thank you very much for your co-operation in this scheme.

Richard Quinton Treasurer.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

The South Pennine Boat Club recently commissioned a web site: www.southpennineboatclub.co.uk In its first year this easy-to-use and well laid out web site recorded a stunning 5,283 hits. Designed with links to other organisations, clubs and trusts, which includes BW, the IWA, local canal societies, the Barnsley, Dearne and Dove Canal Trust, etc. it also attracted five new members to the club.

The site even has an events page, where members can log on to the club's latest activities.

If we as a society are going to move forwards, renew ourselves and attract new members surely this is the way? If we are to promote our aims and project our image this is an ideal medium.

D. Wilson

Is there anyone out there with the necessary skills and knowledge who would like to volunteer?(Ed.)

Castleford Riverside Festival



This was the first official engagement for *New Horizons* away from the Pocklington Canal and a very enjoyable occasion for all who took part.

It almost didn't happen as the organiser had gone away on holiday and there were doubts that the Festival was going to take place. Luckily, at the last moment Andrew and Jenny Brett were able to take *NH* to Barmby Barrage on Thursday and Chairman Paul took her up the Ouse and onwards the following day.

Sunday the 11th was one of those grey overcast days with a cool breeze off the river. Despite that, people arrived by the score and patiently queued by

the flood lock, marshalled by a squad of uniformed Sea Scouts. A procession of canal and river boats from various societies and trusts picked them up and whisked them away and up the Rivers Aire and Calder: some locals said it was their first time on the river. One boat went up the short arm of the Aire and Calder Navigation and met a loaded sand barge. This barge was so long it had to reverse on the river to make a right turn towards Leeds.

With Paul doing his public relations bit with the passengers, a young Adam from the Sea Scouts, under supervision, helmed *NH* up the river, wined her about and brought her into the quay at the end of the trip: a grand effort for a youngster and he should be congratulated. Another couple of youngsters

arrived on the quay and started to take the mooring lines as the boats came to rest. Once shown how to make a tugboat hitch they did a brilliant job! As they say, catch them young and interested and you have them.

Donations on the day came to about £48.00, less than if *NH* had been the only boat, but still impressive. It was a good day and it was fun to meet so many new people on the water - a must for next year?

Thanks to Bill Clift for the use of his festival poster and to all who gave their help and made it happen.

Skipper Will.

PS. Strange as it seems, and be warned, when Andrew and Jenny lifted the weed hatch to clear the propeller an eel jumped into the bilge! Luckily for the eel, it was gathered up and returned to the murky waters: others might have made a meal of it.

'New Horizons' Running Trips at Castleford



Canals and Real Ale

Canal enthusiasts appear to have a natural affinity with the countryside and appreciate the craftsmanship and inventiveness that made the object of their enthusiasm possible. This appreciation of skill also leads them into other areas of craftsmanship. Hence the fervour with which many of them embrace a pint of real ale – It's a good excuse anyway.

Not really needing an excuse, my wife Lin and I set off on an extended cruise this summer, clutching the latest edition of *The Good Beer Guide*, with the intention to take the opportunity to combine a tour of the western side of the canal system, with the sampling of brews from the independent and micro-breweries in the localities visited.

We were not disappointed. It was a rare occurrence when real cask ale could not be found. There is a strong upsurge in the number of small new breweries opening, and, coupled with the expansion of many of the independents, the real ale scene is undergoing a continuing revival.

The canal system is blessed with the close proximity of good pubs, many of which owe their existence to the canal itself, having been opened to service the needs of the working boat families in the heyday of the canals. Others are within an easy walking distance or can be reached by local transport. Our 17 week journey took us to many of these establishments.

Starting from Thorne, near Doncaster, we travelled over the Leeds Liverpool canal and into Manchester and then down and across country onto the Llangollen and Montgomery Canals. Next we headed north up to Chester and Ellesmere Port. We then travelled south on the Shropshire Union, Staffs and Worcester and the River Severn as far as Gloucester and then onto the Gloucester and Sharpness Canal.

We returned up the Severn as far as Tewkesbury and then took the River Avon and the Stratford Canal. This led us into Birmingham. We left Brum on the Birmingham and Fazeley Canal and onto the Trent and Mersey. We next headed north, taking in the Caldon, Macclesfield and Peak Forest Canals before returning via the Huddersfield, Calder and Hebble and Aire and Calder.

The journey covered 835 miles and included 595 locks.

Despite sampling a fair number of real ales, we returned fitter and lighter than on our departure.

There were many good pubs on our route, serving some excellent beers. The Victoria and Commercial in Leeds, with its beautiful unspoiled interior was serving Anglo Dutch beer, which is brewed in Dewsbury. The Brown Cow at Bingley is also a well worth a visit, serving Goose Eye from Keighley. Copper Dragon from Skipton was available from the Narrowboat and the



Royal Shepherd in its home town.

Other pubs of note were the Anchor Inn on the Staffs and Worcester where beer is served from a jug brought straight from the barrel in the cellar as there isn't room for hand pumps on the tiny bar. The 15th century *Three Kings* (left) at Hanley Castle on the Severn is a gem, in a

beautiful hamlet, it shouldn't be missed. The landlady recommended the Boat at Ashleworth, another excellent pub

When in Birmingham, it is well worth the effort to catch the bus to Aston in order to visit the *Barton Arms* (right). Its Victorian tiled interior and sweeping staircase are spectacular, and when coupled with Oakham Ales and the



serving of Thai food at reasonable prices it is no wonder that it is one of our favourite pubs. I would recommend an afternoon visit, as Aston isn't the most salubrious of places in the evening.

There were many more good pubs, including the Riverhead at Marsden which brews its own beer, the Rat and Ratchet in Huddersfield and the Beartown Brewery Tap in Congleton. Incidentally the brewery's name derives from the fact that Congleton was one of the last strongholds of bear baiting in England.

Nearer home however, don't forget the Wellington Oak at Canal Head serves cask bitter next time you visit the Pocklington Canal.

Vic and Lin Randerson

Birdlife on the Canals in Spring

Early May is a good time to check out the birdlife on and around the canal. Most of the summer visitors will have arrived by then, they'll be setting up territories and therefore advertising their presence by singing, and generally showing themselves well. Finally, the leaf cover is not too great at this time of the year, which means that seeing the birds is not too much of a problem.

The water birds are usually the ones which are most obvious – many of the Coots and Moorhens by now will have families of young. When first out of the nest, some 3 or 4 days after hatching, the young of these two species look remarkably similar – black balls of fluff with orange-red heads, pushing themselves through the vegetation with their enormous legs and lobed feet. Both nest on the water, on a solid platform of matted vegetation, sometimes out in the middle of the canal, sometimes at the edge under overhanging branches or amongst reeds. Coots and Moorhens are vocal birds at this time of the year, giving loud, metallic calls when disturbed or anxious, often given when they noisily patter across the water from one bank to the other. They are also very territorial, harrying intruders on their patch and aggressively chasing them across open water with their heads down and their necks outstretched.

The female Mute Swans (known as pens – the males are called cobs) will be sitting tight on their five or six large, white eggs, which would have been laid around the middle of April in the bulky stick and grass nests. As their name suggests, these are much quieter birds, although you might provoke them to hiss menacingly at you if you approach too closely. Several pairs nest along the canal, and their nests are difficult to miss at this time of the year when the bank side vegetation is still growing up.

If the spring has been mild and relatively dry, Mallards may well have fledged young in tow, like the Coots and the Moorhens. Britain's most widespread duck, the Mallard is a familiar sight on all sorts of waters from village ponds to huge, man-made reservoirs, from the smallest streams to great estuaries like the Humber, and from park lakes to canal basins. Although they used to be known simply as "Wild Duck", their tolerance of Man has meant that they have been managed and specially bred since at least Roman times, producing entirely domesticated forms such as the Aylesbury. These will occasionally mate with pure-bred Mallards, producing hybrids in

all sorts of strange plumage, some of which can be seen on the canal, especially at Canal Head and around the Melbourne Cut. Those that breed on the canal are fairly tolerant of people, unlike their continental cousins who probably spent the winter beside them at Wheldrake Ings or on the Humber estuary. By now, they'll be doing the same as the canal birds, starting new families or shepherding their youngsters protectively, on some marsh beside the Baltic, or perhaps on the banks of the Volga.

You may well come across other species of duck on the canal, especially at the Derwent end where it comes close to the boundary of Wheldrake: Shoveler, Teal, Widgeon, Gadwall and Tufted Duck are all regulars there in the spring and summer, and sometimes stray onto or over the canal. Geese, too, Canadas or Greylags, may be seen anywhere along the canal, either flying over or



A Male Tufted Duck feeding in the fields alongside. All of these species breed in the Lower Derwent Valley.

Grey Herons are another typical canal bird, easily recognised although sometimes difficult to pick out as they stand motionless in the reeds at the edge of the waterway. They feed on small fish, frogs, newts, even small mammals, which they catch with a lightening stab of their dagger-like beaks. You often hear them before you see them when they fly over with their slow, deep wing beats, because of their loud, harsh “kaark” call. They can be found anywhere along the canal, though for feeding they seem to prefer the more open habitat of the lower canal between the Derwent and Melbourne.

The Grey Wagtail, a handsome bird typical of upland, rocky mountain streams, can also be seen on the canal, where it prefers the areas around the locks where the water flows faster. It nests amongst the roots of a waterside tree, or in a hole in the bank, and feeds on insects and their larvae usually caught on or over the water. Its presence is often given away by its song, a series of short, musical trills delivered in flight, or from a perch on a tree or lock-side fence. The only part of the bird that actually is grey is its back; the male has a black and white face and black “bib”, bright yellow underparts and a long black and white tail which it constantly wags.

Several species of warbler inhabit the canal-side vegetation, and they, too, are often heard before they are seen. Take an early morning walk from



Canal Head and you won't fail to be serenaded by these migrant songbirds, especially if the morning is a fine one. **Chiffchaffs** (left) and **Willow Warblers** (right) are very common in the stretches with well-



wooded banks, where they like to stay in the cover of the vegetation. These birds, confusingly similar in looks, have very different and distinctive songs. The Chiffchaff has a repetitive and rather monotonous song which echoes its name, "*chiff-chaff-chiff-chaff-chiff-chaff*" etc; the Willow Warbler's song is a rather more melodious trill, a descending series of notes once classically described as "a tender delicious warble with a dying fall ... It mounts up round and full, then runs down the scale, and expires upon the air in a gentle murmur". The Chiffchaff is one of the earliest spring migrants, usually returning to our shores before the end of March. It's not surprising it gets back a couple of weeks before the Willow Warbler – the latter, which winters in equatorial or southern Africa, may have up to five thousand more miles to travel than the Chiffchaff, which spends its winters in the Mediterranean or north Africa.



The Whitethroat, (left) which shares its winter quarters with the Willow Warbler, is another warbler with a distinctive song, best described as a brief, staccato, loud, scratchy series of a dozen or so hurried notes. It shows itself more readily than the previous two species, the male often delivering its song from the top of a bush or in a short fluttering song flight. The Whitethroat is quite large for a "British" warbler; the male's grey head and bright white throat contrast nicely with its rufous-brown upperparts. Look out for it wherever there is thick bank-side scrub, especially bramble patches, where it prefers to nest. Like many others, this bird has a number of old country names – I particularly like the North Yorkshire "Nettle creeper", which seems to sum up perfectly the way it moves unobtrusively through thick undergrowth.

The fourth warbler commonly heard and seen by the canal is the Sedge Warbler, a streaky brown bird with a distinctive pale stripe above its eye and an even more distinctive song. This is a loud and varied medley of harsh, scratchy notes mixed in with sweeter, more musical phrases, which can last for many minutes without interruption. The bird usually sings from the cover of reeds or bushes (at night as well as during the day), but will also sit out in the open or perform a short song flight reminiscent of the Whitethroat's. The Sedge Warbler nests in low cover or in the reeds themselves, weaving its nest just above the water attached to several reed stems. *The Sedge Warbler* (below left) is a frequent victim of the Cuckoo, which can be heard from about the end of April until July when he stops singing. The Cuckoo arrives in Britain about the same time as the Sedge



Warbler from its African wintering quarters, and its reputation as the bringer of spring has been celebrated in folklore and literature for centuries. If you're lucky enough to see a Cuckoo, perched on a pylon or power lines with its long tail cocked and its wings drooped, or in swift and direct flight, usually low over the

ground, it is easy to mistake it for a hawk or falcon. Once it calls, however, there is no mistake – the Cuckoo's song is probably the best-known and most distinctive of all bird songs in this country. If you spend any time on the canal during May or June on a fine sunny day, you're almost certain to at least hear a male Cuckoo giving its familiar "Cu-coo" call which, even when at close range, seems to come from every direction at once. The female, incidentally, has a very different, bubbling chuckle, which is sometimes heard when she is being courted by the male. Cuckoos may be mobbed by smaller birds which either confuse them with birds of prey, or simply recognise them as Cuckoos and therefore a threat to their "domestic tranquillity".

Sharing the reeds and canal-side bushes with the Sedge Warbler is the Reed Bunting. The male, an attractive bird with his distinctive black hood and bib and white moustache and collar, usually perches at the edge of a bush or part way up a swaying reed, flicking his chestnut-brown wings or fanning his tail, and singing his brief, unmusical song over and over again. He has the typical jerky flight of a bunting, and his notched, white-edged tail looks quite long as he flies away into cover.

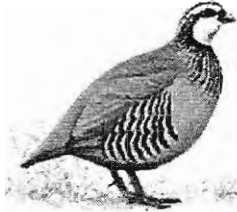
The Yellowhammer is a close relative of the Reed Bunting. It is essentially a farmland and hedgerow bird which can be seen and heard in the vicinity of the canal, especially where there are tall trees which the male uses as song posts to deliver his familiar song, often rendered as "a-little-bit-of bread-and-no-cheese". The male Yellowhammer is another handsome bird in breeding plumage, with a brilliant lemon-yellow head and breast, and chestnut-streaked back. As with the Reed Bunting, the female Yellowhammer is a duller version of her mate, but she shares the rusty-coloured rump and longish, white-edged tail. Yellowhammers nest low down or on the ground in a grass clump or bush at the base of a hedge. The first clutch of eggs is often laid early, before the end of April, giving the birds time to raise two or even three broods in a season.

Sharing the same habitat as the Yellowhammer, the Linnet has a similar breeding cycle. It prefers to site its nest in evergreen shrubs, and has a particular fondness for gorse. It often uses these bushes as song perches too, as well as singing its musical twittering song in flight. Along with the Goldfinch, the Linnet was a popular cage bird in the nineteenth century on account of its song, and its population was greatly reduced by widespread trapping. Linnets feed on the ground on a variety of weed seeds, insects and caterpillars. Like the Reed Bunting and Yellowhammer, the Linnet is found most often in the upper reaches of the canal between Coates' Lock and the Canal Head.

Common birds of the hedgerows and woodland alongside the canal, as elsewhere, include Blue and Great Tits, the Wren, Robin, Blackbird, Dunnock (or Hedge Sparrow) and Chaffinch. All have their own, quite distinctive songs, and all are in full voice in early May. Later in the spring, and into the summer, they will be raising their young on a diet of insects such as flies, beetles, caterpillars, ants, spiders, millipedes and so on, all of which can be found in abundance on the vegetation or on the ground. Many of the adults will supplement their diet with seeds, fruit, berries, buds and other vegetable matter.

The canal itself provides a range of habitat (open water, scrub, bushes, reeds, hedgerows, deciduous woodland) and, running as it does through a mixture of arable and pasture land, it attracts a wide variety of birds in addition to the ones mentioned above. On a couple of hours' walk from Canal Head to Walbut Lock and back, I turned up Willow Tit, Goldcrest, Long-tailed Tit, Song Thrush, House and Tree Sparrow, Greenfinch, Goldfinch, Bullfinch,

Pheasant, *Red-legged Partridge*(below left), Swallow, Swift, Tawny Owl, Carrion Crow, Rook, Magpie, Jackdaw, Kestrel, Skylark, Lapwing, Starling, Wood Pigeon and Collared Dove. The lower end of the canal, between



Melbourne and East Cottingwith, with its more open habitat, has some of the same birds, as well as House Martin, Barn Owl, Redshank, Curlew, Snipe, Black-headed Gull and Cormorant - most of these being courtesy of the canal's proximity to the Derwent Ings at Wheldrake.

A number of these species have suffered dramatic declines in numbers in the last 30 or so years, due mainly to habitat loss or its degradation, changes in farming practice and the intensification of agriculture, and possibly the effects of global warming. The canal and its surroundings provide a linear refuge and relatively undisturbed environment for these birds and, of course, for other species of wildlife on which they depend, and with which they share their (and our) world.

Paul Milsom - May 2005

Following on from our previous article (March 2005):

PCAS Members: Andrew and Christine Phillipson:

Third instalment of life on NB ALPHEUS

Back on the boat, we left Nantwich at 9am, travelling north. I have been asked several times in the past if I find continuous cruising boring, my reply is that there is always something to look at if you keep your eyes open. From Nantwich to Hurlleston Junction at the beginning of the Llangollen Canal, I saw two crows attacking a buzzard in flight, a Little Owl sat in a tree overhanging the canal and a kingfisher trying to get his breakfast, and that was all within one hour. Continuing up the Shroppie to Barbridge Junction, we turned right on to the Middlewich Canal, which has some excellent views and, for the time of year, was fairly quiet. A left turn at Middlewich and north along the Trent and Mersey to have look at the *Anderton Boat Lift*, (Below), only a look mind you as the Skipper does not like heights. Arriving at Anderton, we went in to the Visitor Centre, this time we had Mother with us, who wanted to "do the lift". Enquiring at the box-office, there just happened to be a free slot in half an hour. Guess what?

A very interesting white-knuckle ride for the Skipper, 50 feet down on to the River Weaver. I have to be honest; this is a very impressive piece of engineering to say that it was built in 1875. A lot of creaking and groaning goes on as you are travelling up and down the lift, and not all of it came



from the machinery. It is quite un-nerving but definitely worth doing once.

Our original intention of this summer's trip was to go to the Macclesfield and Peak Forest Canals so after Anderton we turned and headed south again. We watered at Middlewich

Junction, but there was no sanitary station, the last one was at Anderton, there seems to be distinct lack of these in the North West, despite an edict from BW a few years ago that they were building 100 new ones. We have found a number of refurbished ones on our travels but no new ones as yet. (Some new ones have now been built since this article was written)

Next we journeyed South on the Trent and Mersey to Wheelock and finally found a sanitary station and an excellent pet-food superstore just across the road. We have to keep the main lookout (Bearded Collie) well fed as we would not be able to do locks or handle the boat properly without his help, or that's what he thinks. It's quite uncanny but when we are moored and boats are passing, he always barks if one is travelling too fast but doesn't bother otherwise.

At Hardings Wood Junction, we went under the Macclesfield Canal and up two locks and a right turn, and then over the Trent and Mersey on the Maccie, another canny bit of Victorian engineering.

The Macclesfield Canal is very picturesque but quite shallow, with good views of Mow Cop and the Cloud, not exactly mountains but quite big hills.

We met up with friends on another boat and had a walk up Mow Cop, which has a derelict castle on top, although it is only a Victorian folly. Some of them must have had too much money to construct such things, although I suppose it provided work in the area.

The twelve Bosley locks came next, which are close together, single and easy to use, with the benefit of water and a new sanitary station at the top.

We moored for a few days between Bridges 19 and 20 in the countryside. Nearby a house with three helicopters outside kept us amused with their comings and goings. Also near the canal, the Middlewood Way runs between Marple and Macclesfield. This is a disused railway which has been converted into a cycle-path divided by a strip of natural flower-meadow from a walking and bridle-path.

Marple will be next and then right and on to the Upper Peak Forest Canal. After shopping in Marple we set off towards Whaley Bridge with fantastic views of the Peak District, although mooring to stop and admire them was sometimes difficult due to our 2ft 9ins draught. This canal rivals the Ashby and Pocklington for shallowness, but the views far outclass the other two.

Whaley Bridge has a new Tesco next to the canal and legend has it that the nice people at Tesco put in a gate onto the towpath to allow boaters easy access to their store, but failed to ask BW permission, so the nice people from BW promptly walled up this entrance, but sense prevailed and some nice person, presumably from the boating fraternity, promptly kicked down



the wall and allowed easy access again. Also in Whaley Bridge, very near to the canal terminus is an excellent and highly-recommended fish and chip shop.

Bugsworth or *Buxworth Basin*, (left), both spellings appear locally. is just before Whaley, and was one of the largest inland ports

created on the canal system, exporting limestone throughout the country. This site is worth a visit as restoration is now complete after 30 years.

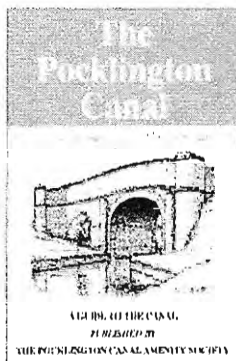
We moored just outside New Mills near Furness Vale Boat Club and walked by the River Goyt into New Mills, passing the now-disused shell of the weaving mill, which was the original New Mill that the town was named after, replacing the hamlet of cottages where wean used to take place in the upper level of the cottages. With a grant from the EU and Lottery funding, a very impressive stainless steel walkway has been constructed high above a curve in the river opposite the New Mill and seemingly in mid-air. Although very modern in design, it does not look out of place at all.

Back eventually on to the Maccie, mooring as often as the shallow canal would allow for our deep-draughted boat. We would have liked to stop in Macclesfield but there are literally no moorings which are safe to alight on, as the sides of the canal are made up of large rocks which no boats can negotiate. To water up at the two water-points, you have to take a leap and hope you land safely. Further south along the canal is Gurnett Aqueduct which gives good moorings and it is either a 20-minute walk or a bus-ride back into Macclesfield, a good shopping centre, but a white-knuckle bus-ride back to the boat with shopping, down narrow country lanes. We are not used to vehicles any more.

At the lower end of the Maccie, we met our friend on his narrowboat, also from the Pocklington Canal, and decided to return to Melbourne via the Bridgewater Canal and the Leeds and Liverpool. As he is single-handed, we intend to tie both boats together for Wigan locks, which will give us an extra lock-wheeler.

◆ 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 Canal Head on Sundays @ £3.50. Copies can be obtained by post from the Society Secretary @ £4.

◆ PCAS T-Shirts and SWEATSHIRTS FOR SALE

Please Note! We have a good selection of standard poly/cotton T-shirts and Sweat-shirts, all with the PCAS logo, in stock; Sweat-shirts 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 (£25.00) 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 Head of Navigation by boat. They may be purchased from from the Melbourne Arms public house (courtesy of the Landlord, Justin Brozenitz), from the Huitson family, Rose Cottage, Melbourne (almost opposite the pub), or from the Secretary (see inside front cover); £10 collected, £10 by post -- as long as stocks last.



◆ MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTIONS

Subscriptions were due in January. If you have not paid your subscriptions for 2004 and/or 2005 please send them to the Treasurer as soon as possible. See page 7 for details of current subscriptions and also the enclosed Gift Aid form that allows taxpayers to increase the value of all subscriptions and donations.

*POCKLINGTON CANAL
AMENITY SOCIETY
Dates for your diary*

Saturday
12th November
in Beverley Minster
10am to 4pm

PCAS Stall at BEVERLEY
LOCAL HISTORY BOOK FAIR
(Any interested volunteers
welcome)

Sunday
20th November
12.30pm for 1.00pm

PCAS CHRISTMAS LUNCH
STEER INN, HULL RD.
WILLBERFOSS