

Double Nine

The Pocklington Canal Amenity Society Magazine



February 2024

Issue 133



Editorial

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Welcome to the February 2025 issue of your Double Nine.

As we enter the new year it would not be an exaggeration to say that the Pocklington Canal is facing some critical issues, the main one being the lack of water coming into Canal Head that feeds the whole of the waterway. We will cover this in the coming pages..

We also have to address the repairs to Coates Lock, where the wing-wall collapsed during joint works (we previously covered this in the last edition of Double 9). Added to this, we have to replace the rotten upper gates at Gardham Lock. Lots to do.

The PCAS A.G.M. is rapidly approaching. Please try to attend this very important meeting if you can - come along and have a chat to the committee about your canal.

Our Annual 'Pie & Peas' evening takes place on the 21st March. Early booking is strongly advised for this very popular event.

Details of both these events can be found in this issue.

Enjoy the canal!

Malcolm

Front Cover: The scene at Canal Head. The feeder which keeps the canal supplied with water is blocked.

Rear Cover: One of the canals resident swans takes a stroll across the ice.

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Closing date for articles etc for this issue is the
12th May 2025

Submissions received after this date will be held over until the next available issue.

Opinions expressed in this magazine is not necessarily those of the Pocklington Canal Amenity Society, its Chairman or Committee.

Chairman's Column

There are a number of serious issues affecting the Pocklington Canal at the present time, and we are having discussions with the Canal & River Trust (CRT) about how they can be resolved.

WATER FEED AT CANAL HEAD

The main supply of water for the Pocklington Canal is from the Pocklington Beck which runs roughly parallel to the canal, and feeds it at two points. The first, and most important feed is at Canal Head, where water is taken from the beck and through a culvert under the main A1079 road to enter the canal basin at its northernmost end where there is a silt trap. This silt trap has to be cleared from time to time.

During Summer it was noticed that the feed was inadequate and CRT arranged for the silt to be removed from the trap. However, this did not solve the problem, and a contractor was employed to clear the culvert using pressure jetting equipment. This equipment also failed to resolve the matter, and a remote camera was used to investigate. The camera revealed that part of the brick wall of the culvert had collapsed, leaving a heap of bricks that blocked the flow. There is now a risk of a more major collapse of the culvert.

By this time, there was a serious lack of water in the canal necessitating a fish rescue. CRT installed a pump to feed the canal with water, bypassing the culvert. This pump is still operating, whilst CRT's engineers consider the best solution they can come up with. It is bound to be expensive.

Coates Lock

In the last issue, I wrote about the collapsed wing wall at Coates Lock. CRT had suggested a two stage solution, the first stage being the temporary stabilisation of the structure using gravel tipped into the canal to buttress the partially sunken wing wall. Rebuilding of the wing wall would be at a second and later stage. We were concerned that, after this first phase, the rebuilding might never take place, resulting in the restoration of the upper reaches of the canal being set back, possibly by years.

Richard Parry, the Chief Executive Officer of CRT, visited the site in November and we were able to put our concerns to him. The upshot was that CRT would take another look at the problem with views to rebuilding the wing wall in a single stage. We offered to contribute to the cost of the project, provided that the solution did not impede future restoration of the upper reaches of the canal.

Gardham Lock

The lock gates at Gardham Lock have been leaking for a number of years, and the Society has been pressing for them to be repaired. Our tripboat refrained from passing through the lock during 2024 season in an effort to reduce the amount of water loss through the lock. Although CRT have had the replanking of these gates in their forward programme of works, it has deferred for several years running for lack of funds. A recent survey has revealed that the deterioration of the gates is now more serious than previously believed, and that they are in need of complete replacement.

When Richard Parry was visiting the canal, he also went to Gardham Lock, so is fully aware of the situation there. We will have to wait to see how CRT respond to this issue, but my view is that a new set of lock gates is required pretty urgently. Whilst we were at Gardham Lock, we noticed that the brickwork at some parts of the lock was in a poor state, with one of the lower wing walls leaning quite noticeably. So again Richard Parry is aware that major works on the lock chamber could soon be required.

Sandhill Lock

Readers will no doubt remember that back in 2018 the Society had plans for a major reconstruction of Sandhill Lock, and that considerable funds were raised for this project. We were not able to proceed with the works for reasons that I will not revisit now. Sandhill Lock is in a very derelict state, and its rebuilding remains the biggest task required to be done before the eventual completion of our restoration project.

It is clear that the full restoration of the Pocklington Canal is still a long way off, with many major tasks still to be tackled. On the other hand, if one looks back on what has been achieved since 1970 when this society first set about its restoration, a huge amount has been achieved. The lesson is that we must continue to be persistent in our objectives.

Paul Waddington

Donations

The Chairman & the PCAS Committee wish to thank all the people who have given donations to the Society.

Coming Events

Friday 21st March

Pie & Pea evening. Followed by a talk by Craig Ralston "The wild-life of the Lower Derwent Valley National Nature Reserve". Melbourne Village Hall Tickets £12.

Please contact: Tim Charlson - 07926 910717 - tcharlson58@gmail.com
Carole Jones - 07800 693756 - carolelouse11@gmail.com

Wednesday 9th April

PCAS - AGM at Melbourne Village Hall 7pm. Members are requested to attend if at all possible. Thank you.

Working Party Report

This Autumn has been interesting with water levels at times being very low and at other times very wet, especially in the lower canal with recent flooding from the Derwent. This has revealed some flooding issues along the towpath, particularly below no 6 bridge. We have endeavoured to build up the canal bank and made several breach repairs along the stretch and at other points along the canal.

We have repaired/replaced benches at Giles, Coates and Church Bridge. As far as lock maintenance, we have carried out painting and wood preservation at both Thornton and East Cottingwith.

The car park and surrounding area at Melbourne was tidied prior to the open day and the potholes in the road repaired once again. The Canal Head compound was cut on a couple of occasions and the area around the information centre kept tidy.

We continued to clear as much weed as possible from stretches of the canal and cut back overhanging branches.

The weed boats were maintained and repaired as needed and the new weed-harvester had mechanical work carried out to the requirements of CRT in order to obtain the necessary licence to operate it.

Rob Fouracre



Left:

Flooding near Gardham Lock.

Lower Left:

Members of the working party disembark ready to repair the canal bank side.

Middle & Right:

Many places along the canal towpath have been repaired.



Pocklington Canal Amenity Society

Annual General Meeting

**Wednesday 9th April 2025, 7pm
Melbourne Village Hall.**

Agenda

1. Welcome and Introductions
2. Apologies
3. Minutes of 2024 Meeting
4. Chairman's Report
5. Presentation of 2024 Accounts
6. Chairman and Committee elections
7. Appointment of Independent Financial Examiner
8. Any other Business

PCAS Annual General Meeting 2025

This year's AGM will be held on the **9th April 2025 at 19:00** in the Village Hall in Melbourne. It would be wonderful to see a good turnout from PCAS members, not least to ensure that we reach a quorum, which on the basis of the current membership, would be **18 people**. Please support the society by attending this meeting, which is required by our constitution and is important to maintain our charitable status and continue our work.

This year is an election year and so we welcome nominations for the committee. It would be great to see someone new joining us. If you are interested the nomination form is included below. If you would like to discuss what being on the committee involves, please contact me or another committee member. The AGM also elects the Chairman and a form is also attached should you wish to stand for that role.

If any member wishes to **propose an item for the agenda**, this should be done at least 14 days before the meeting, such items require a proposer and seconder.

The Committee is proposing a change to the Constitution to enhance PCAS' role in protecting the natural and built environment on the canal. This proposal is also included in this magazine.

We look forward to seeing good numbers of you at the meeting.

Steve Ashby

PCAS Secretary

Pocklington Canal Amenity Society, AGM 2025

Proposed amendment to PCAS Constitution

TO REPLACE:

The Aims of the Society are:

- A) To promote restoration of the canal to a navigable standard for the benefit of the local community and the general public, as an amenity that can be enjoyed by all.
- B) To stimulate public interest and appreciation of the beauty, history, flora and fauna, and Structures of the Pocklington Canal and its environs, with respect for the legal protection its heritage and wildlife.
- C) To support the use of the canal for educational purposes.

With (changes in bold)

1. The aims of the Society are:
 - a) To promote restoration of the canal to a navigable standard for the benefit of the local Community and the general public, as an amenity that can be enjoyed by all.
 - b) **To enhance and protect the native flora and fauna in and around the canal.**
 - c) **To restore and maintain the built structures (locks, bridges, etc) on the canal.**
 - d) To stimulate public interest **in** and appreciation of the beauty, history, flora & fauna, and Structures of the Pocklington Canal and its environs, with respect for the legal protection Of its heritage and wildlife.
 - e) To **promote and** support the use of the canal for educational purposes.

Early morning on the beautiful Pocklington Canal





Pocklington Canal Amenity Society

Annual General Meeting, Wednesday 9th April 2025

Chairman Nomination Form

Nominee:

Proposer:

Secunder:

Date:

Please send the completed form to the PCAS secretary (address below).

Committee Nomination Form

Any members of the Society wishing to stand for the Committee should submit this form. All candidates must indicate their willingness to stand for election. Please send nominations, duly signed by PCAS members proposing and seconding the nominee, to the Secretary: Steve Ashby, 10 Kerver Lane, Dunnington. YO19 5SH

Nominee

Proposer

Secunder

Photo copies of this page accepted



**The Pocklington Canal Amenity Society
Presents:**

Annual Pie & Peas Evening

Including a talk by

Craig Ralston from Natural England

“The Wildlife of the Derwent Valley National Nature Reserve”

Melbourne Village Hall YO42 4QJ

Friday 21st March from 7pm

Tickets £12

To reserve a seat contact

Tim Charlson - 07926 910717 - tcharlson58@gmail.com

Carole Jones - 07800 693756 - carolelouis11@gmail.com

A constant stream..

Some of the water that falls on the Yorkshire Wolds eventually forms a single beck just north of the town of Pocklington. This beck flows through, and under the town and eventually passes beneath the A1079 (the main York to Hull trunk-road), close to the scrapyard next to Canal Head. Before it passes under the road a small tunnel or “feed” controls the amount of water being diverted towards the Pocklington Canal. This has always assured a supply of water to maintain a level beneficial to both wildlife and users of the canal. And everything worked well until the tunnel began to block with silt and gravel..

At the beginning of December the water level at Canal Head was so low that contractors were employed by the Canal & River Trust (CRT) to remove all the fish that were now visible from the bank. They were netted and taken to Melbourne for release into the canal. Water was pumped across the adjacent field from the beck to fill the Canal Head pound as quickly as possible and the situation quickly improved.

Specialist equipment was brought in to attempt to blow the silt and gravel out through the feed but it made little headway and after feeding a camera into the tunnel it became obvious that part of it had collapsed.

CRT are now left with the task of maintaining the water level at Canal Head from the beck, approximately 100 yards away across a field, to supply the canal using an expensive pump.

PCAS is working closely with CRT to find a permanent solution to ensure the water supply to the canal. We will keep you informed of developments.



The blocked feeder into the canal



This Page:

The team from “MEM Fisheries” removed all the fish from Canal Head on the 2nd December. One of the largest was a pike, as seen in the lower picture. All the fish were later safely released back into the canal at Melbourne.





Above:

The silt trap at Canal Head has been cleared of debris.

Below:

A constant supply of water is being pumped across the neighbouring field, keeping the Canal Head pond in water.





Above:
Specialist equipment brought in to attempt to clear the tunnel outside Bridge Farm.

Below:
The extent of the blockage can clearly be seen in these two images.





Above: Richard Parry CRT Chief Executive visited the canal on the 15th November to see Coates Lock at first hand. Pictured are L- R Tim Charlson PCAS Vice Chairman - Paul Waddington PCAS Chairman - Richard Parry CRT, CEO Rik Ingham CRT and Kevin Young CRT.

Below:

Both PCAS Working party members and CRT members held the annual breakfast at Allertorpe Lakes on the 10th December.



New Horizons

2024 was another eventful year for our trip boat and Steve Ashby reported on how it has continued to help PCAS generate funding through donations in the previous issue of Double Nine.

The photo (Right) shows our first passengers in 2003 when the boat briefly visited the canal for an event after being fitted out at Goole. We started running regular Sunday boat trips the following year and took some bookings for groups. No-one imagined that a decade later our Sunday boat trips would be so popular that there would sometimes be twenty or more people waiting for their turn at the side of Melbourne Arm, at least during good weather. When we started, the main rule that we could only take twelve passengers on board but the world has moved on and we have skipper and crew training risk assessments and recently our insurer has required us to do an annual refresher training for all crew. We comply and we can still have fun! We now have two more skippers, who were trained at Wakefield, and the possibility of training more next season.



One reason for the popularity of trips on the attractive Pocklington Canal is that we let children steer, standing on a platform between a parent/guardian and one of our crew. Most of them love it and some families are regular visitors. Some other societies now let children steer their trip boats and properly organised it can be done safely.

Birthdays and combined birthdays are popular reasons for booking a trip on *New Horizons* but we also run trips for groups of children accompanied by two adults. I am grateful to Paula Barker, who runs the *Sticky Fingers Tiny School* with her husband, for sending the photo taken at this year's trip.



It is always good to have return visits and this year Neal Topham (second from the right) of Natural England booked a trip for colleagues after a gap of ten years.

It was good to see Jan & Tony Tiffin back on the boat for a trip with family members this summer. They had been very active crew members before moving



to be closer to their family in West Yorkshire .

Bookings are now being taken for longer trips in 2025 and we are preparing to take *New Horizons* for the hull to be repainted. It was so much easier when we had a chairman who owned a marina.



PCAS members are welcome to join the crew of our boat and being able to get on with fellow crew and passengers of all ages is the top priority. Please get in touch if you are interested.

Alistair Anderson

Interested in helping crew *New Horizons*?

Then please contact: me at: alistair.anderson@pcas.karoo.co.uk 01482 801825 or talk with any of our committee members.

In step!



Two of the resident Swans walk in step over the frozen canal during January's big freeze..

Canal Art - A brief insight

By Stuart Garfoot

With brightly painted romantic landscapes adorning every available surface, crocheted lace hanging in the cabin and everything scrubbed and polished, the boat men and women displayed their pride in their trade and created solidarity with their fellow boaters.

Boat people lived in a closed community. Most boat people were born and brought up on the canals and they tended to marry boat people, possibly nobody else fancied the life and hard work! Some did take jobs on dry land, especially when trading was collapsing in the 'fifties, but few non boat people decided to work the canals.

Designs were applied to the many objects associated with the narrow boats such as water cans (These are not Buckby Cans) dippers, stools, cabin blocks and internal cabin items and in particular the back twin doors.



Other parts of the boat such as topstands, boxmasts, stands and uprights would be decorated with diamonds in lavish colours often in the particular pattern of the boat owners.

Canal carrying companies also had their own particular lettering styles and colours.

It is very important to note that a boat in "Dry Dock" was earning nothing whilst being decorated and thus the emphasis when the boat was being decorated was on speed. The painters had an obvious style of their own easily standing out from each other and very recognisable even today.

They would also mix their own paints from pigments and basic solvents, some that would never be allowed today.

So, What of the painters? Well, without a doubt the tradition was both created and expanded by the dock yard painters in the boat yards. Style, flair and most of all speed were of the essence. "Get it on and get the boat back out" – time is money.

Each painter would develop his own style of flowers and many can be recognised as belonging to particular artists. Here are a few examples of different styles.



Large carrying companies employed their own painters and apprentices now famous in the canal world, The Nurser Brothers, Jim & Isaiah Atkins, George Crawshaw, Bill Hodgeson, Charlie Adams, J. Harry Taylor, Ron Hough and Dennis Clarke.

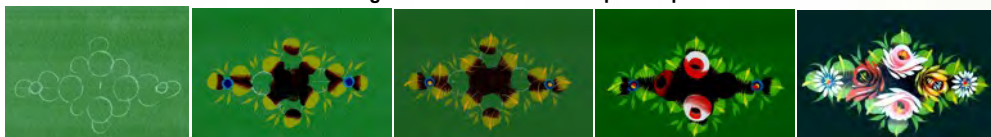
More Modern painters include Brian Collins, Phil Speight, Dave Moore, Tony Lewery, Ian Kemp and Bunny Bunford.

Let there be no mistake, these people represent the best there is on the “Cut”, people who not only practice their art with passion but who truly represent the traditions of real canal art.

Painting “Roses and Castles”

The painting of flowers on a boat or object is carried out in several differing stages, one layer on top of another.

The five stages involved to create the perfect picture



A mystery picture from the archives

Raymond O' Kelly, former committee member, stands proudly inside this unusual boat. The photo is one that is held in the PCAS Archives but no details have been recorded as to the boats original use, or whether it become part of the PCAS fleet. Any information will be gratefully received.



Filming “More Geography”

Author Miriam Battye’s short story “*Extra Geography*” is being dramatised for television. Some of the filming took place on the 25th October at Top Lock. PCAS was granted restricted access to see some of the filming. Although Canal Head was closed to traffic, the towpath remained open.



Above: A professional underwater rescue team was on hand.

Below: Film equipment at Top Lock.





This page:
Filming taking place at Top Lock and some of the child actors crossing the lock gates.





This page:

A large gantry crane along with members of the film crew was used to film inside the lock.



Membership Matters

Thank you all for responding to membership emails as maintaining an accurate database is important so please let us know of any changes in memberships, addresses or email details.

Our bank details are:-

Sort code 40-37-01

Account number 20674451

Remember also to keep us up to date with any change to your address, email, telephone etc, so we have your latest details.

For any queries, please contact Ed - his details are shown inside the rear cover of this magazine

The Current Membership fees are:-

Annual £15

Annual Family £20

Individual Life £150

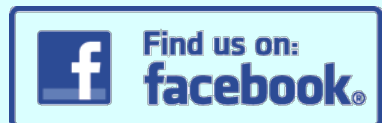
Family Life £200

For all enquiry's regarding membership, please contact the membership secretary:

Ed Westerby, 16 Hobson Road, Eloughton, Brough HU15 1JU 07925 056382
Edward@westerby.karoo.co.uk

Follow us at:

www.pocklingtoncanalsociety.org



An All too Brief Encounter

Most birders (birdwatchers in old parlance), have a local “patch” they spend much of their time visiting. Obviously, mine is the Melbourne reaches of the canal and adjacent Ings. Via frequent visits at various times of the day and year, you get a pretty good picture of the type of birdlife your patch supports and can attract, due to its habitats and food sources. I have written previously of the many surprises I have experienced as less expected birds turn up adding to the excitement and joy of birding.

However, no matter how we birders appreciate the variety of birds our patch attracts, we seem always to be just hankering for that rarer bird to appear and delight. You are familiar with your patch habitat and look on with envy when rare birds turn up in other localities with similar terrain, thinking one day they will appear here. So, you hold in your mind a few target species you desire to encounter given the right conditions. Its is only a matter of time!.

One such target f mine has been the Yellow-browed Warbler (YBW). This is a gem of a bird that is a scarce autumn visitor to the UK, mainly discovered at coastal locations as it tries to head to its wintering grounds. Its attraction is in its reputation as a Siberian rarity, although now it's less rare and being found as much inland as at the coast-but still a scarce bird. It has cache, being tiny warbler, smaller than a Chiffchaff, with greenish upperparts, white underneath, a yellow eyebrow and two pale wingbars. It is in fact a stunner!

It breeds in Siberia and winters in South-east Asia. But despite its diminutive size (it weighs less than an AAA battery), still manages to find its way to the UK- way off its normal course. Earlier in October, I paid my usual visit to the north Norfolk coast for a week's birding during migration season. I was lucky to be nearby when three YBW's were reported. I headed off to try to find one. As well as being striking to look at they also have a distinctive call, being a thin birdier version of the whistle we use when trying to attract attention-described as “tsu-weet”. Well there was plentiful calling but no sightings for me that day. However, I went back the next day and with a bit of luck, less people around and more patience, one emerged from the willows foraging for insects - joy! Even luckier a few days later when birding near my digs, I heard the familiar whistle and discovered my own YBW skulking in the vegetation - more joy!

This year there has been a significant influx of YWBs and before I went away one was discovered in Rowntree Park, York. So, what chance of one appearing locally? Well one day after I returned from Norfolk, I paid a quick visit to the canal to see what was about. There was a small flock of about twenty Redwings, already for winter on the hawthorn berries, a pair of Stonechats on seed heads on the Ings and a Little Grebe on the canal - all portents of the changing season. Quite a nice haul. On heading home by the boat dock I heard a familiar “tsu-weet”. No - could it be?! Yes it was - there from an ivy covered Hawthorn a YBW thrust itself into view, fluttering about the branches for merely moments looking for insects, flitting over my head and lost to view - deep joy and all too brief!

Neil Cooper, Bird Recorder for Melbourne & Thornton Ings NR

Invasive Species



Above:

Mink

A widespread misconception is that the UK'S wild mink originated from the mass releases from fur farms by animal activists in the 1990's. In fact the wild population was established back in the 1960's according to MAFF. They eat many small mammals including rats, voles, shrews and birds.



Left:

Mitten Crab

Photographed in the bywash at Cottingwith lock. The Mitten Crab is the UK's only fresh water crab, so called because of the fur on its claws! Unfortunately it is an invasive species from Asia which arrived in our estuaries and has spread inland. It has been reported to the Marine biological authorities for recording.

Canal Head Information & Sales Centre

During the three months from the start of September to the end of November, I continued to man Canal Head between 9.30am and 3.30pm on 10 fine Sundays, with two days lost to rain and a further two days at other locations - the Open Day at Melbourne on 15th September, where the sale of PCAS Merchandise raised £242, despite the weather; and the Annual Lunch at the Golf Club, which realised £86 in sales (and a further £200 from the raffle organised by Tim Charlson). Takings from the ten days at Canal Head totalled £873. It needs to be borne in mind that this figure was largely pure profit from donations for car parking, whereas the sale of Merchandise a gross figure.

The sale of “doggie” items, particularly the bags of doggie treats, continued to go well, and I was able to pay in a further £60 to PCAS, making a total of £200 from this source. The sales of Merchandise and second hand books are steady, but form a small part of our income.

It has been suggested that we should offer refreshments, especially as the two cafes within reach, one at Bielby the other across the road from Canal Head, do not open on Sundays. However, this would seem impractical, given current H and S regulations and the fact that we have no electricity or water supplies.

I continued to give out leaflets and other information about PCAS, which I regard as an important aspect of my work at Canal Head. Hopefully it will result in more PCAS members, but the main thing is that more people are aware of the value of canals in all their aspects, and are vocal when required in their support for funding to maintain them.

As well as greeting visitors when they arrive (and there are usually a proportion of first timers despite the poor signage on the main road), I continue to mow the grassed area in front of the Information Centre, and also the strip at the left hand end of the car park, which then provides another car parking space. Obviously, the more cars we can accommodate, the more donations, so when friends arrive in two or more cars, I encourage them to park nose to tail to make space for the maximum number possible. My record to date is 14 cars taking up 9 spaces!

I shall continue to man Canal Head on fine Sundays throughout the winter. It is encouraging to have visits from PCAS Members and Volunteers, and I always welcome any suggestions as to how we can increase sales and donations and “sell” membership of PCAS.

Thanks as always to Tim Charlson for his consistent encouragement and support, the latest being the provision of a parking sign I erected by the main entrance, making arrivals aware of the car park adjacent to the Information Centre, which is not visible from the main entrance. *Mike Clemson*

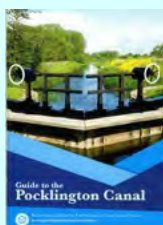
PCAS Merchandise



Pens: £1



Key Rings: £1



Canal Guide £5



Fridge Magnet £3



Pin Badge £3



New design for 2024
Note Cards
including envelopes
£4

PCAS Merchandise



Head of Navigation Plaque
£12



PCAS Mug
£6

All merchandise is available via the PCAS website:
pocklingtoncanalsociety.org

For further details please contact:
tcharlson58@gmail.com
07926 910717

All the above merchandise is also available at the Canal
Head Information Centre (open most Sundays).

The Pocklington Canal Amenity Society

Registered Charity 500637 www.pocklingtoncanalsociety.org

Patrons: The Earl of Halifax & Mr Neil Edwards

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The Pocklington Canal Amenity Society

One copy free to paid up members