

Double Nine

The Pocklington Canal Amenity Society Magazine



June 2025

Issue 134



Exploring the new exiting world below!

Editorial

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Welcome to the June 2025 issue of your Double Nine!

The recent weather has certainly lightened everyone's mood. The sunshine has brought all the plants, animals and birds along very nicely and you should really do your best to get to the canal, even if it's just for an hour or two. If you own some binoculars then bring them too.

We are hearing some more positive news about the water feed into Canal Head. You may remember our reports of the blockage(s) between Pocklington Beck and the upper pound. The culvert may well see some work to unblock it in the next few weeks. All our fingers and toes are crossed.

Our PCAS Working Party members feature heavily in this issue. They tackle many different jobs on the canal and keep it neat and tidy. Our thanks to them all.

We are having our Family Fun Day on Sunday 14th September. Further details will be on our website and you will receive an email nearer the date. Let's hope for less rain this year..

Enjoy the Summer!

Enjoy the canal!

Malcolm

Front Cover: The narrow boat *Charlotte* leaves Gardham Lock en-route to Goole for winter maintenance on the 3rd March.

Rear Cover: *New Horizons* passes through Storwood on its journey to Goole.

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Closing date for articles etc for this issue is the
15th September 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

Regrettably, I have very little that is positive to report at the present time. The issues that I wrote about in the last edition are still with us, with little or no sign of any progress towards their resolution.

Canal Head feeder

Back in September of 2024, it was noticed that the supply of water to the top pound of the canal at Canal Head had become restricted. The Canal & River Trust suspected a blockage in the culvert that carries the feed water from an abstraction point on the Pocklington Beck. CRT engaged a specialist contractor to clear the blockage using high pressure jetting equipment. This was only partially successful, and a camera inspection revealed that a part of the culvert had collapsed. The culvert is quite a long one, passing under the main A1079 road as well as beneath farm buildings.

With falling water levels in the canal, a fish rescue was undertaken in the top pound of the canal, and arrangements made for water to be pumped from the beck, under an Emergency Abstraction License issued by the Environment Agency. This arrangement is still in place, with the cost of pump hire being borne by CRT.

The Society has been discussing with CRT how best to solve the problem. Since the location of the collapse is beneath buildings, it is likely that the culvert will have to be rerouted, and several options are under consideration. All will involve extensive works.

We Are still waiting for CRT to make a decision on which is their preferred option, and it seems that it will be many more months before any works are undertaken to restore the feed. The failure of the Canal Head feed is perhaps the most serious matter to affect the canal since the inception of our Society, and potentially one that will be very costly to remedy.

Coates Lock

Again I have no good news to report in relation to the partial collapse of the wingwall at Coates Lock. In order to advance to advance matters, the Society has paid for a bore hole survey to establish the ground conditions and assist in the design of the replacement structure. Although this survey took place before Easter, at the time of writing, the full results are still awaited.

It is a matter for CRT to decide on the solution to be adopted, and at the moment we are being told that that they do not currently have funds allocated either for carrying out the remedial works, or for their engineering staff to spend time on design of the works.

This is a very unsatisfactory situation, and the Society will be pressing CRT for a decision on how to proceed.

Canal & River Trust

It was announced in February that Richard Parry, will be leaving his position as the Chief Executive Officer of the Canal and River Trust in June. He has served in this role for twelve years. Richard Parry has visited the Pocklington Canal on several occasions, and was always very willing to take the time to meet with us and to discuss the issues that were troubling us at the time.

Our first encounter with Richard Parry was soon after his joining CRT, when he came to the official reopening of No 8 Swingbridge. In 2018, he came to the canal during our bicentenary celebrations to take part in the reopening of both Thornton and Walbut Locks.

Paul Waddington



Above: Your Society paid for a borehole survey at Coates Lock that was necessary for future repairs - one less thing to do..

Donations

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

Working Party Report

We have had a busy few months of maintenance work both on the canal and the boats.

We have cleared several fallen branches that were obstructing the canal - a large willow fell across the landing stage at Storwood and we helped clear away much of the debris before contractors lifted the tree and CRT repaired the landing stage.

At various points we carried out bank repairs and built up the towpath at low lying areas prone to flooding.

With regard to the infrastructure we have cleaned and painted a couple of bridges and cleared vegetation from the 24hr mooring at Melbourne and the steps to the lower landing stage below Thornton Lock. Unfortunately the lock beam at Thornton has had graffiti etched into it and we are currently trying to work out the best way to eradicate it and clean the beam!

CRT requested that we carry out a litter survey along the canal which we duly did only to find that they then had changed their mind and didn't want the result! Frustrating but it meant we did clear the litter and it was gratifying to find that there was not a great deal to clear.

The cills purchased for use at Coates lock are beginning to suffer with the dry weather so we literally moved them into the water at the far end of the basin at the Melbourne arm to keep them wet and to stop them warping.

Work continues on boat maintenance and readying the weed boats for clearing and cutting the rapidly growing weed, although we are hampered by the low water levels.

Thanks again to all the volunteers and especially to Mike for his work on manning Canal Head information centre and his sterling fund raising efforts.

Rob Fouracre

The Mystery is Solved!

Alistair Anderson, has solved the mystery picture featured in the Double Nine issue No.133. The vessel is a weed cutting boat that had lain, for many years unused in the store shed at Canal Head. Alistair says he thinks that the boat was never used and subsequently scrapped.





Top: Working party volunteers painting swingbridge bridge No.1 on the 1st April! Above: There is always time for a group photo call.

Somewhere beneath this lot...!



The lower landing stage steps at Thornton lock are uncovered!



Left:

The lower landing stage steps at Thornton Lock now looking their very best.

Below:

Things don't always go to plan. During one of the Tuesday working days our pusher tug suffered a minor break down and had to be helped back to its mooring in the Melbourne Arm. A repair was quickly carried out and the boat was soon available for use once again.



Just then the trees fell down...



The storms that took place in the latter part of 2024 left their mark on the canal with many trees blowing down. Perhaps the most spectacular was at the mooring immediately next to Swingbridge no.2 at Storwood. A major limb of the the giant willow came down damaging both the fence and the landing stage. PCAS helped remove the tree and repair the fence, whilst the CRT team repaired the upper landing itself. The top image shows working party volunteers removing one of many of the trees that had fallen across the canal.



Above:

Part of the giant willow tree at Swingbridge No.2 came down in the December storms. The tree can be seen in many of the early 1960's photographs in the PCAS archive.



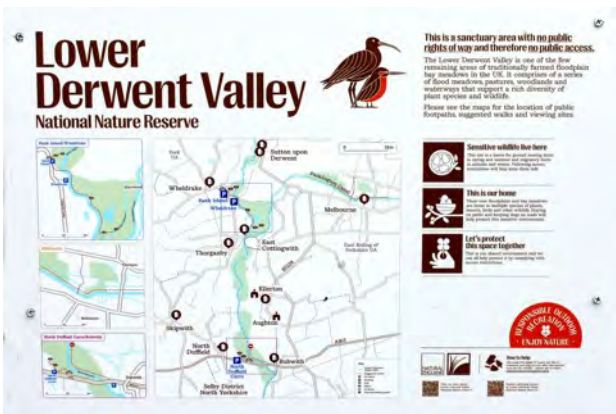
New Gates & Fencing at the cross roads



Two public rights of way cross each other next to Swingbridge No.6. The footpath that connects the villages of Melbourn and Allerthorpe crosses the bridge at this point. Recently “Natural England” have erected a new field gate and a ‘kissing gate’ for walkers and ramblers to use. The field has been completely fenced off to encourage ground nesting birds such as Curlew. Information boards (below) detail the public rights of way and the National Nature Reserve.



Left:
Our images show the new gates and fencing, together with the information boards.



The Chairman's Report

to the

Annual General Meeting Wednesday 9th April 2025

The Pocklington Canal Amenity Society continues to have a healthy membership of around 360. This is a small increase although the membership has generally been around 300 to 350 range since its inception in 1969. We also continue to attract committee members which is gratifying when one so often hears of similar organisations closing down due to lack of support.

There are a couple of issues relating to the Pocklington Canal that are very concerning to the Society. Earlier this year, the feed that supplies water to the canal at Canal Head failed. The failure turned out to be caused by a collapse of part of the culvert which brings the water from the Pocklington Beck and under the main A1079 road to the top pound of the canal. The part of the culvert that has collapsed is actually beneath farm buildings, which makes repair almost impossible. A number of solutions have been suggested which all involve diverting the culvert around the farm buildings.

We understand that the Canal & River Trust understands the need for the feed to be restored, and are considering these options. At present there is no indication of when remedial works will begin. In the meantime water is being pumped from the beck at a considerable cost to CRT.

The second major concern is CRT's financial position. With Government funding for the waterways expected to be reduced if not eliminated entirely, CRT will increasingly face difficulties in funding its activities. As a Remainder Waterway, the Pocklington Canal is low on CRT's priority list. This puts into doubt such things as the replacement of lock gates.

The Society has continued to undertake a similar range of activities in 2024, some of which I mention below.

The tripboat operates at weekends during the summer and for occasional charter trips. We continue to attract volunteer crews, and the operation is a significant fundraiser.

Our work parties continue to undertake practical repairs to the canal and its towpath. Activities include such things as the painting of lock gates, the removal of fallen trees and the control of vegetation growth. The working parties also operate our weed cutting boat.

In the last year the Society has organised an open day at Melbourne and public meetings. Also one volunteer opens our Information Centre at Canal Head on Sundays. He is able to pass on information as well as raising funds.

The magazine Double Nine continues to be published three times each year. I know that it is much appreciated by our members, many of whom live far from the canal, and find it a convenient source of information.

I would like to thank all our supporters for the work that they do for the Society, and all our donors for the contributions that they make.

Paul Waddington



This canal is not big enough for the both of us!

**Annual General Meeting of the Pocklington Canal Amenity Society
Held at
Melbourne Village Hall on Wednesday 9th April 2025**

Welcome and introduction

The chairman, Paul Waddington welcomed members of the Society and introduced himself, the Secretary and the vice-chair Tim Charlson.

Present

21 members were present. The current quorum is 19, 5% of membership, and so the meeting was quorate.

Apologies

13 apologies had been received

Minutes of the 2024 Annual General Meeting

The minutes were adopted

Matters Arising

There were no matters arising

Chairman's Report

The Chair's report was circulated (see this edition of 99)

Presentation of Accounts

Copies of the accounts for 2024 had been circulated showing a net surplus of £739 compared to £5744 in the previous year. Net current assets had increased slightly from £165.804 to £166.543. Income from boat trips was slightly down, while donations and merchandise sales at Canal Head had increased. A new weed boat had been purchased at a cost of £12.000.

Member noted that costs needed to be considered against donations both for Canal Head and for the boat trips. Limited sales of merchandise via the website were partly due to the high cost of postage, although the online shop was useful for selling memberships and tickets for events. Sales of mugs, etc on the boat was thought to result in lower donations. With the only gain being the sales margin on the item sold.

Amendment to the Constitution

An amendment was proposed by the Committee. This was to the Aims and would have the effect of increasing focus on the Society's actions to protect wildlife and the built heritage. Although there was some concern that the Society was dependent on the canal's owners agreeing to such actions, it was noted that we were changing the aims, which were not binding, and would stand whether or not the owners allowed action. After discussion the amendment was agreed as presented by the Committee, with a vote of 15 of the 21 present in favour.

Note - the revised constitution is available on the PCAS website.

Election of the Chair and Committee

The Chair and all members of the Committee were proposed for re-election, leaving one continuing vacancy. No additional candidates were proposed and the meeting agreed unanimously to accept the candidates. The Committee for 2025-26 is therefore as follows:

Chair - Paul Waddington

Committee: Alistair Anderson, Steve Ashby, Tim Charlson, Sue Dickins, Rob Fouracre, Richard Harker, Richard Irwin, Carole Jones, Malcolm Slater, Dave Tong, and Ed Westerby.

Appointment of Independent Financial Examiner

Tony Farmer has indicated that this would be his last year. Although appointing a Financial Examiner is one of the AGM's responsibilities, the meeting agreed that this could be put to the Committee to decide.

Any other Business

Fund raising and Canal Restoration issues:

One member noted that there was nothing reported about fund raising activities. The Chair replied that there were issues with raising funds for specific projects - in respect of the Sandhill Lock appeal it had proved impossible to spend the money because of disagreements over the way forward with CRT. It was not timely to have an additional campaign. The vice chair commented that we had been successful in accessing funds through the East Riding of Yorkshire Council for the Sandhill Project but given issues with CRT we had to say that we would be unable to use the funds. He noted that the Committee is very keen to use funds already raised but we had to do so in agreement with CRT.

Re wildlife could provide some impetus. The vice-chair explained our close working relationship with Natural England (NE) and that we would be initiating work to tackle Himalayan Balsam. The chair noted that NE funds were used for dredging and water sampling. In respect of work to create green corridors using the canal, the vice-chair said we had been contacted about that and had expressed interest but no more had been heard.

A member asked about the cost of restoring the whole canal. The chair said that in the 1970's this had been estimated at £34.000 (someone commented that this would be £467.000 in today's money). The vice-chair said that CRT's policy of using approved contractors and not owning any of their own equipment had pushed up costs considerably.

A committee member expressed concern about the low turnout at this meeting and noted that we were only just quorate. He wondered what could be done to create more interest in the Society's activities - there was a good level of interest in participating in the working party. The vice-chair noted that in any organisation like ours it was difficult to keep people interested, but agreed there was virtue in pushing the environmental side of our activities.

In the absence of further points, the meeting closed at 20:10.
Malcolm Slater then presented a visual history of restoration work on the canal.



The PCAS Annual Pie & Pie evening was held on the 21st March. Our guest speaker was Craig Ralston from Natural England, seen here on the left together with Paul Waddington and Tim Charlson our PCAS chairman and vice chairman respectively.

New Horizons

We started Sunday trips on the first Sunday in April rather than waiting until Easter. At Easter the boat was running short trips on Good Friday and Easter Monday as well as Sunday. By 18th May we had run nine days and carried a total of 447 passengers on short trips, thanks to good weather. Sundays and bank holidays are very popular for families and most children are keen to have a go at steering, under supervision of course.

Now that the good weather has arrived we have some bookings for longer trips. There has been little rain in East Yorkshire and it would be good if someone could do a rain dance, to provide us with enough water to use the locks. Information about boat trips can be found on the PCAS website and it would be good to have more members booking trips this year. You are welcome to bring party food and drink, balloons and other decorations to celebrate birthdays and other events. You are welcome to post photos in our Facebook group.

Before the start of the season, *New Horizons* had been taken to Goole for blacking and an insurance inspection that included thickness testing of the hull. The outward journey was done in three stages because of uncertainties about the state of the canal and water level in the River Derwent. Our boat was accompanied by *Charlotte*, a small narrowboat that also has a mooring on the Melbourne Arm of the canal. On day 1 the boats were moved down the canal, on day 2 from East Cottingham to Barmby on the Marsh and on day 3 from Barmby to Goole. Our swing-bridges can be very difficult to open when they have not moved for months and the Derwent can be in flood early in the season, but all was well. After the hulls of both boats had been painted they made the return journey from Goole to Barmby and then from Barmby back to Melbourne. Some of our crew members took part in moving the boats and gained experience of unfamiliar waters. *New Horizons* was first put in the water in 2003, the year before we started regular trips, and it was very reassuring to learn that the hull is still in satisfactory condition. If we keep up the maintenance it should carry on for years to come. Unfortunately the work was expensive now that our chairman has retired and no longer owns a marina.

There was not time to arrange the normal clean up day when all crew are invited to come along for a day to get *New Horizons* spick & span but few people made the boat presentable. Repainting has started and will continue when the boat is unused and weather permits. Thanks very much to everyone who took part in moving cleaning painting and maintaining the engine. I hope we can keep the boat in a presentable state during the season. Thank you too to every one who turns up to crew the boat and helps promote our trips.

It is always good to when families visit the boat periodically on Sundays or book another group trip. The children from Sticky Fingers Tiny School which has just booked two trips and who visit us annually.

In the previous issue of Double Nine I mentioned that we have two new skippers, and Nigel and Tony have already taken charge of boat trips this season and this year we hope that other crew with experience will go for training. This will make life easier for Steve Ashby who has the job of taking bookings and arranging that these and regular trips are properly crewed. That can be a challenging, particularly in the summer months when there is more demand for trips and crew who may be away for holidays. We have two members who have gained experience and should become full crew members soon. If any PCAS member is interested in becoming involved in crewing the boat please get in touch. The main requirement is that you can get on with others and would like to encourage others to enjoy the canal. Previous boating experience is not necessary.

Finally, thanks too to Malcolm Slater our editor of Double Nine who turns out to take photos of boat trips and is tolerant when contributors who wait until the deadline to send in their contribution to the magazine (*I wonder who he means ?M.S.*).

Alistair Anderson

PCAS members help clean and tidy up New Horizons, ready for the 2025 operating season.



New Horizons exits Swingbridge No.7, whilst returning to Melbourne during one of the ever popular Sunday canal trips.

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

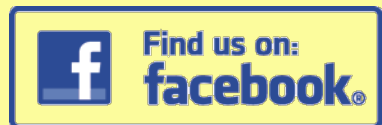
Family Life £200

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 Early Spring Walk

Towards the end of March I decided to do something I have been meaning to do for years. While I had pretty much walked the stretch of canal from Melbourne to Hagg Bridge and beyond to East Cottingwith, I had never gone past Walbut Bridge. So I dropped off early one morning at Canal Head for a wander along the north eastern reaches back to Melbourne.

While water levels were down at Canal Head, I was surprised at the number of trees, small areas of woodland that lined the canal from here to Coates Lock. This was perfect habitat to hear Chiffchaffs singing. One of our commonest summer visitors, which most people can recognise by its song, had been arriving in numbers over the previous weeks. By the time I reached Melbourne I had logged 44 singing Chiffchaffs - a decent number for the overall mixed habitat. A more recent journey along the canal by a fellow birder reflected 54 Chiffchaffs.

As Spring migration was getting underway, I was reminded that some winter visitors were still lingering as a flock of 80 Fieldfare rose from the fields by Coates Lock and flew north, getting the final pickings before moving to Scandinavia for the breeding season. Other songbirds in full voice were Yellowhammers (5), which were more in evidence around the arable fields. Yellowhammers have been hit hard by changes in farming practices where seed bearing winter stubble has all but disappeared. As a result it is harder for them to survive the winter months with less food sources. Despite this they still hang on with a handful of pairs breeding in field hedges.

It was too early for most migrants, but the recording done by the aforementioned colleague totalled: 64 Reed warbler, 50 Sedge warbler, 29 Whitethroat, 21 Blackcaps, 13 Yellowhammer, 2 Cetti's warbler and 2 Cuckoo. Yes, the cuckoos returned once more to their usual haunt around the Thornton Lock reedbed - so far I have seen 2 males and a single female, which is probably a pair down on recent years. However, they still hold on as the general trend is to move northward, with more birds frequenting Scotland than the now deserted south east of England.

The Cetti's warbler is also a species that have been moving north. Firstly, to the UK from the Mediterranean in the early 1970s, then from the south coast up the country to where we have a resident winter population along the canal. I have no proof of breeding from canal-side habitat but young Cetti's have been ringed on the lower Derwent Valley Nature Reserve at Wheldrake, so it's only a matter of time! Along with Little Egrets, who have performed the same northerly expansion, a consistent appearance of a Great White Egret along the Melbourne stretches over a three week period also added a continental flavour. This species is one of the colonists to the UK and is finding the habitat around the canal much to its liking.

So, as always with nature, you gain some and you lose some, let's hope that for the future we lose less and gain more.

Neil Cooper, Bird Recorder for Melbourne & Thornton Ings NR

Barn Owl Box



A brand new Barn Owl box has been installed near Melbourne Arm. The box materials have been funded by Drax Power station and then built by Western Wolds Men In Sheds under the guidance of a shed member, Bob Morris, who is licensed to do this type of work. Thanks to both Bob & Pat for making this happen. It's located to the rear of the dipping pond & overlooks the open area beyond the drainage ditch.



Then & Now

In this issue, using images from the PCAS Archive and with information published in issues of Double Nine magazine, we take a look at one of the canals structures and in this issue we feature

Gardham Lock



Gardham is the only lock on the canal with a bridge (No 3) across its lock chamber. The picture (*left*) was taken on the 28th February 1970, a year after PCAS was formed.

The lock was designed and constructed c.1818 by George Leather Jnr, an experienced navigation engineer. The canal was sold in 1847 to the York & North Midland Railway. In 1963 ownership passed to the British Waterways.



The lock is constructed using red brick with gritstone dressings and an iron swing bridge. During its restoration the original wooden floor was replaced with steel piles. The lock gates and manual and hydraulic gearing mechanism have been restored to traditional design. The lock was Grade 2 listed on the 15th September 2010.



British Waterways refurbished the original lock gates (*middle picture*), which were to last another 20 years until 1995.

Cleaning out the lock chamber (*left*) revealed many treasures including this set of potatoes scales!



Above: Restoration by British Waterways commenced in 1974. PCAS volunteers removed the old bridge and started re grading the towpath together with its re-seeding. *Below:* The restoration progressed well.





This page: There was a 'hick-up' during the restoration in 1974 when a breach occurred in the lower wing wall. This did not delay the re-opening a year later.



The restoration of Gardham Lock was completed in 1975. The lock was officially opened on the 19th July. Photographs show boats at the lock after the opening ceremony was performed by Lady Halifax who travelled along the canal from Cottingwith lock. Over the weekend of the 19th & 20th a gala of events including a barbeque and entertainment based at Cottingwith lock took place, which was well received by all.





Both these images show the installation of new lock gates at Gardham Lock in 1995.





Above: 'New Horizons' and 'Charlotte' share Gardham Lock on the 3rd March. Both boats were heading out of the canal and forward to Goole for maintenance.
Below: Gardham lock and the picnic area is a popular destination with pre-booked parties.



Canal Head Sales & Information Centre

Doesn't time fly when you are having fun! It is now two years since I moved from the Tuesday morning Working Party to running the Canal Head Information and Sales Centre on Sundays. The original commitment was a couple of hours during the summer months, but this rapidly developed into a core attendance from 10.00 am to 3.00 pm on every fine Sunday throughout the year. The visitors are a mixture of regular dog walkers, other are regular or occasional walkers and a few first timers on most Sundays.

What we have on offer is a range of PCAS themed merchandise (see elsewhere in the Magazine), doggie treat bags, packets of poo bags and drinking bowls, and 12 boxes of second hand fiction paperbacks. In the information Centre, we also offer a number of second hand hard backed canal themed books. The doggie treat bags are especially popular - net income from this source since December 2023 is over £350.

However, the main source of income is donations for car parking, visitors really seem to appreciate what a lovely venue this is to visit and walk along the canal. The gross income from all sources, including donations, sales and Gift Aid, after two years, is approximately £7.500.

During the four months from December to the end of March, I was able to attend on 15 Sundays and one Friday (filling in time before the Pie & Peas event!). I lost two days due to rain and one when a family event took precedence. Gross income, including doggie treats, totalled £1.400, including over £200 on March - a day record. In fact income on Sundays throughout the winter is not much less than other times of the year - the average being £87 per day.

My other important role is to provide visitors with leaflets and pamphlets about PCAS and the Pocklington Canal, which are much appreciated.

I try to make the site look as attractive as possible. In addition to the two tables featuring merchandise and doggie stuff for sale, and a sandwich board appealing for donations, the boxes of books are set out on a bench in front of the Information Centre, with a vertical banner advertising the Canal & River Trust adjacent to it, and a large pictorial display with proclamation "Pocklington Canal - A Gem in the Landscape" is displayed on the fence to the left of the car park. The grass in front of the Information Centre is cut weekly, and the small flower bed in the front of the IC (below the large advert for the boat trips) is kept tidy, with a display of flowers. If you haven't been, do visit Canal Head one of these Sundays.

Thanks as always to Tim Charlson for keeping me supplied with merchandise and other aids, and for his support in general.

Mike Clemson

PCAS Merchandise



**Head of
Navigation
Plaque
£12**

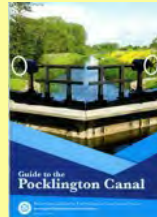


**PCAS Mug
£6**

**Fridge
Magnet
£3**



**Canal Guide
£5**



**Note Cards
With Envelopes
£4**



**Pens
£1**



**Key Rings
£1 each**

(Two different designs)



**Pin Badge
£3**

**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

PCAS Committee

Chairman:

Paul Waddington

Church House, Main Street, Hemmingbrough. Selby. YO8 6QE
01757 841022 07376114405 waddadux@gmail.com

Vice Chairman:

Tim Charlson

62 Hunters Way. York.YO24 1JJ 07926 910717 tcharlson58@gmail.com

Secretary: Carole Jones

Rivendell. Main Street. Melbourne. YO42 4RD 07800 693756

Treasurer: Sue Dickens

22 Nutkins Way. Chesham. Bucks. HP5 2BE.
01494 784571 07970 875939 pcas.treas@gmail.com

Membership: Ed Westerby

16 Hobson Road. Elloughton.Brough. HU15 1JU
07925056382 edward@westerby.karoo.co.uk

Trip Boat:

Alistair Anderson

14 George Lane. Walkington. Beverley. HU17 8XX
01482 801825 07796890009 alistair.anderson@pcas.karoo.co.uk

Engineer: David Tong

Maintenance Coordinator: Ed Westerby

Trip Boat Booking

& Crewing Manager:

Steve Ashby

01904 489593 07955 245193
stevejashby@gmail.com

Fundraising & Merchandising:

Tim Charlson

62 Hunters Way. York. YO24 1JJ
07926 910717 tcharlson58@gmail.com

Social Media officer: Carole Jones

Working Party Organiser:

Rob Fouracre

Engineer: Richard Harker

07842 238485 fouracre.r@btinternet.com

Events: Richard Irwin & Carole Jones

Double Nine Magazine Editor: Malcolm Slater

75 Broome Close. Huntington. York. YO32 9RH. 07932 535665
malcslater879@gmail.com

Website: Alistair Anderson

Publicity: Vacant

New Horizons trip boat Bookings & Enquiries: book.newhorizons@gmail.com



The Pocklington Canal Amenity Society

One copy free to paid up members