

Chairman's Report for the past year (2016)

Welcome back to The Moorfield for this year's Annual General Meeting. We have, sometimes unwillingly, moved around a bit for our Open Meetings over the years, but suitable locations in the area are few and far between and this seems to be generally acceptable. My report this year will ring a note of similarity to last year's (and the year's before) for those who attend regularly, but there are only so many different tunes that can be played along a canal towpath! Now completely upgraded to The Bridgewater Way.

This year we continued the pattern of having just the two general meetings, the one in the spring, the other being our AGM in November; we've carried out our usual schedule of three litter picks along the banks of the Canal and we planned, as usual, to put on Canal cruises in June during Sale Festival.

At our open meeting in May which for the second year running had to be re-located at very short notice to the slightly smaller meeting room at The Volunteer, we had a very interesting talk by Keith Warrender on the subject of 'Underground Manchester' which was supported by first class illustrations and sound which was much to my own relief after last year's mishap. At the conclusion Keith offered a number of books he has written on the talk subject and associated topics at discounted prices.

In the spring we again had just the one litter pick on a Saturday morning early in March which we have found adequate to keep on top of things, to which I will come back later. As in previous years we had another litter pick on the last Wednesday in May – just a week or so before the start of Sale Festival – which repeated the popular scheduling of starting at 7 o'clock and concluding with an opportunity to socialize in the bar at The Bridge Inn. The weather that evening was, thankfully, better than last year's corresponding event. A good many bags of litter were, as ever, removed from the towpath on both occasions. The final litter pick was just a month ago, again on a Saturday morning, and on this occasion we were again fortunate with the weather. The steps and ramp from Sale Plaza down to the canalside path was looking particularly neglected and a big effort was made to get this tidied up at the same time. Our experience shows how much this aspect of our activities is still needed if we are to keep the canal bank attractive for all to enjoy. The Bridgewater Canal Co kindly supports us at all these events and go out of their way to dispose of the litter we collect and to store the necessary equipment between one such event and the next. Whilst most dog walkers *are* conscientious, there is much evidence, regrettably, that there are those who are not. Things are improving, slowly.

Each event has been organised by our Environmental Co-ordinator, Helen Bayliss, who, has not been able to organise her holiday this year so that she can be here today; she departed for another transatlantic holiday ten days ago. She, along with others, is the driving force behind Sale Wombles, the group which does such a fantastic job trying to improve the many eyesores around Sale. All our official litterpicks focus on the west side of the canal bank as far south as Timperley Bridge and north as far as the motorway bridge.

Metrolink kindly support our environmental efforts and let our team travel free from Sale to Dane Road or Timperley in connection with our litterpicks. We accept the responsibility of servicing the two litter bins both of which have already well justified the outlay and have, as previously mentioned, helped to reduce, though unfortunately not eliminate, the incidence of discarded and windswept litter. At this point I must pay tribute to our team that undertakes to service both the litter bins; the established team has been joined by Mark Eaton so each member now has only one month on four rather than one month in three. The other members of the team are Helen Bayliss, Jim Smart and Marion Ball.

As has been our practice for several years now, two Canal cruises were organized in June coinciding with Sale Festival. After the problem encountered last year we had hoped that there would be no problems this year but our hopes were dashed by the questionable booking methods of our charter company and we had to re-schedule the two trips from June to July. I'm relieved to say that the new dates proved every bit as popular as the June dates and we had just about every seat sold on both trips.

After running virtually the same two trips for each of the last eight years, next year we have decided on a slightly different combination of a Friday evening hotpot cruise to Dunham with the second cruise on the Saturday being to Worsley, crossing the Barton Aqueduct and a minibus back to Sale returning to the point of departure. These two cruises will be right at the beginning of Sale Festival, on 2nd and 3rd June. Prices have not yet been foxed so keep your eye on our website for that detail and the departure times.

The general reaction by walkers and cyclists alike to the upgraded stretches of towpath is very encouraging and the figures for enhanced usage levels continue to rise, especially cycling. As previously mentioned, The Bridgewater Way runs in a south-westerly direction all the way to the countryside in the Dunham area and very

recently the extension towards the City Centre has been completed. There is a stretch just south of Cornbrook where a trial is being carried out and some solar powered lighting has been installed for about 1 km. If anybody ventures over that stretch and would like to give feedback it would be very welcome.

The popularity of this ribbon of made-up surface alongside the canal, only 1.8 metres wide, has given rise to incidences of conflict between different user groups; this very difficult challenge is being addressed by a group specifically set up for the purpose. This summer there have been three events to highlight to all users that the Bridgewater Way is a shared space and nobody has absolute priority. These have been a qualified success and a meeting is scheduled later this month to see how this exercise can be carried forward into next year to bring home the message still further.

For the last five years or so we have taken under our wing the small piece of land opposite The Bridge Inn known as Dane Road Wharf. Nestling up against Dr White's Bridge at Dane Road is our first gardening project which has now matured nicely; we continue to maintain it with regular weeding. For this good work I would again like to give credit to Jim Smart. Our second project, a small raised bed of some 12-15 sq m about 200m along the canal bank, was cleared of well established weeds three of years ago and planted with an attractive selection of hardy shrubs. These have also matured nicely and from time to time Jim and others give it some attention. This will take on extra meaning later on. Very close by is a small triangular bed, only a square metre in area, which was planted up a couple of years ago year and again the shrubs are winning the battle against the weeds thanks to being regularly tended.

For each of the last few years we have planted some bulbs along the canal bank and just twelve months ago received funding to allow us to put in five trees just north of Marsland Bridge; these seem to have taken well but will need a good few years to reach maturity. Our latest project for 2016 has again been very close to Dr White's Bridge (that carrying Dane Road) but this time in the north west corner. Many man-hours were put in to clearing this of weed well established over thirty years or more and it has, again with thanks to funding received from an initiative called Make Sale Smile, been planted up with a number of shrubs, 300 daffodils, a few Bluebells and a substantial amount of grass seed. We will have to await the spring to see the results

Dane Road Wharf is substantially grassed and this needs to be kept under control. The previous contractor proved unreliable but this year a new man on the job has done a good job. We also, in the summer were awarded funds to replace all the timbers with new ones so when they are fitted the bench there will look smarter than it has been for over 100 years.

Thanks to Barry Brotherton, our Secretary, who maintains our website, we've extended our profile by opening a twitter account and have established our own Facebook page so that our followers can keep up with our activities by those means if they choose. Barry himself will be reporting further on this under item 6 on the agenda. Sincere thanks are nonetheless due to Walter Mann who, over the past seven years, has given and continues to give, website guidance and assistance whenever we need it.

I cannot begin the conclusion of this report without a sincere word of thanks to our very own 21st Century Duke of Bridgewater (our Deputy Chairman, Tom Everett) who continues to do excellent work amongst the community with visits and talks ranging from primary school children to groups of ladies such as the local Women's Institute.

We always ensure that a member of the Committee (usually myself) represents us whenever the Bridgewater Canal Users' Group meets twice a year to make sure our opinions and concerns are fully heard. Though the meetings are kept reasonably short they are always interesting and, of course, cover the whole length of the canal. That there are now, at certain times, almost too many people wanting to use the stretch of the Canal from Broadheath through Sale, to Stretford and beyond is now, as previously mentioned, being handled by a separate group. Peter Parkinson, the Manager of The Bridgewater Canal, , has on again this year afforded myself the opportunity to walk with him the length of the Canal with which we concern ourselves in order to address any problems along the way so that the canal path is as attractive as it can be. Chris Wareing, the Senior Maintenance Engineer, again accompanied us, gave us the opportunity for a very pleasant walk on a sunny morning a couple of months ago.

So much for the year behind us – our plans for the year ahead will be covered under item 9 on the agenda.

Chairman's look forward to the coming year (2016 AGM)

Over the next twelve months we are planning that there will again be just two general meetings, the one in May and, of course, the annual general meeting in November. Precise details of these will be covered under item 13 of the agenda.

Unfortunately, litter picks will always be necessary however much we may wish that the day may come when they were not. The general reduction of observed litter is, however, encouraging and at this stage just the one litter pick is planned for the spring with the summer one again in May and an autumn one in October.

At this stage just two cruises are planned coinciding with Sale Festival during the first weekend of June but, as already mentioned will follow a slightly different pattern to that which we have run in the past.. The cruises are our main source of income and without them we would become wholly dependent on such funds as we could obtain from grants.

I'm confident that The Duke of Bridgewater will want to continue his excellent work with both local schools and other groups informing them of the importance of The Bridgewater Canal both in the history of the industrial revolution and in today's environment.

Although I expressed the same hope last year, I am still hopeful that, in the foreseeable future, we may be able to assist in the establishment a sister group adjoining our own. Getting a group going is always the challenge, keeping it going is not so difficult, and that takes up time. Two groups running from Dunham to the Sale/Stretford border would be fantastic for South Trafford. I have good reason to feel that such a group may get off the ground by this time next year.

We will build on our efforts to improve the horticultural appeal of specific stretches of the towpath, both on the east bank as well as along the verges of the Bridgewater Way itself. Seeing one's autumn planting coming to fruition in the spring can be very rewarding.

The ongoing maintenance of our website and our social media pages to give up-to-date information to our members will continue to be given the attention that it undoubtedly warrants. A visit to the site will generally give an update of forthcoming events.

We will continue to actively partake in the meetings of the Bridgewater Canal Users' Group, The Bridgewater Way Users' Group and to represent the Group in any event that the Canal Company may hold.

Above all we'll continue, as best we can, to promote The Bridgewater Canal as an amenity for the community.

Thank you, ladies and gentlemen, for hearing me out.

Friends of the Bridgewater Canal (Sale)
Accounts for the Year Ending 30 September, 2016

Income	£	Expenditure	£
Brought forward from 2015: Cheque Account Balance	819.26		
 This year`s receipts*	1547.50 _____	Publicity (website)	104.08
		Cruises	865.00
		Plants and bulbs	383.04
		Dane Road Wharf maintenance	80.00
		Speaker fee	60.00
		Bank Service Charge	18.00 _____
 Total	 2366.76	 Total Payments 2015-16	 1510.12

*Cruise income	971.00
*Make Sale Smile grant	525.00
* Book sales and talks	51.50

Balance on Cheque Account at 30 September, 2016 £ 856.64

Friends of the Bridgewater Canal (Sale)
Annual General Meeting – 1 November 2016

Secretary's Report

1. Membership – We have approximately 113 members on our database of members' email addresses. (80 in 2015)
2. Website – We have had a website www.friendsofbridgewatercanal.org.uk since October 2009. We currently get, on average, about 690 visits per month. (550 in 2015)
3. We have a Twitter account @FoBCSale which has 385 followers. (273 in 2015)
4. We have a Facebook page www.facebook.com/FOBC.Sale with 144 "likes". (72 in 2015)

Regards,

Barry Brotherton – Secretary

1 November 2016

Friends of the Bridgewater Canal (Sale)

Annual General Meeting 2016

Date: Tuesday 1 November 7.30 2016

Location: The Moorfield, 131 Marsland Road, Sale, M33 3NW

Present: Ian Stuart* (Chairman), Tom Everett* (Vice Chairman), Cllr Barry Brotherton*, (Secretary), Jim Smart*, (Treasurer), Marion Ball*, Ken Ball, June Mabon (Ramblers Trafford Group), Carol Everett, Mark Eaton, Jane Eaton, Harry Kretchmer, Cllr Jane Baugh, Mike O'Neill, Geoff Densham

* Committee Members

MINUTES

1. Apologies for absence:

Helen Bayliss*, Peter Parkinson* (Manager: B C Co), Kay & Alan Meredith.

2. Minutes of meeting AGM 2015 - 3 November 2015

It was pointed out that the numbering of the minutes was incorrect – minute '8' had been omitted. Subject to this correction (and the re-numbering of subsequent minutes)

These were accepted and approved.

Proposed: Tom Everett Seconded: Jim Smart

3. Matters arising (not appearing elsewhere on the agenda)

There were none.

4. Chairman's Report on the past year's activities

The Chairman presented his report and a copy of this is attached to the file.

5. Financial Report for year end 30.09.16

The Treasurer presented the annual accounts which had been checked by the scrutineer (Geoff Thompson).

The account balance at year end was £856.64, an increase on the opening balance, but included grant money received but not yet spent and there was an expenditure of £140 for which the invoice had not yet been received.

Proposed: Carol Everett Seconded: Mark Eaton

A copy of the accounts is attached to the file.

6. Secretary's Report on membership

Due to other commitments BB had not been able to prepare his report to the meeting but same would be forwarded for attachment to the minutes; the report is attached hereto.

There was a 15 minute break for refreshments from the bar.

7. Illustrated Review of 2015

Helen Bayliss, before departing on holiday the previous week had compiled an illustrated review of the Group's various activities during 2016.

In her absence the Chairman gave a commentary on the illustrated review and at the conclusion asked for his sincere thanks to Helen be recorded for all the work that she had put in in compiling the review which was a valuable record of our activities.

At the conclusion of the presentation, Cllr Jane Baugh asked for her appreciation to be recorded for all the work that the combined group continues to put in to making the Canal in Sale look so good.

8. Election of Officers and Committee Members for 2017

- a) Members willing to stand as Officers:
- b) Election of members to Office:

Ian Stuart was willing to continue as Chairman.

Proposed: Jim Smart; Seconded: Tom Everett and duly elected

Barry Brotherton was willing to continue as Membership Secretary.

Proposed: June Mabon; Seconded: Geoff Densham and duly elected.

Jim Smart had tendered his resignation as Treasurer

Mark Eaton was standing as Treasurer

Proposed: Marion Ball; Seconded: Tom Everett and duly elected.

The Chairman asked if somebody would be willing to take on the role of Minutes Secretary

Harry Kretchmer offered to stand as Minutes Secretary

Proposed: Marion Ball; Seconded: Mark Eaton and duly elected.

Tom Everett was willing to continue as Vice Chairman

Proposed: Barry Brotherton; Seconded: Jim Smart and duly elected.

- c) Members willing to stand as Committee Members for 2015:
Current members willing to continue:

Helen Bayliss

Marion Ball

Harry Kretchmer had indicated that he would be willing to join the committee.

- d) Election of above to Committee

All the above taken en bloc

Proposed: Barry Brotherton; Seconded: Geoff Densham and duly elected

9. Planned Events for 2016

The Chairman outlined the plans for the next 12 months – these will follow the pattern of previous years. There will be three litterpicks, and 2 cruises on the canal which will take place on the first weekend of Sale Festival. There will be an Open Meeting at the beginning of May: an invitation was extended to those present to make suggestions for a speaker for this meeting.

A copy of the Chairman's full report is attached to the file.

10. Update on Bridgewater Canal Operations

The Chairman advised that Peter Parkinson was unable to attend and he would cover this item as best he could.

The whole of the length of the canalside path within the group's remit, upgraded to the standard of the Bridgewater Way is being kept under review to ensure that it meets the demands put upon it.

The extension towards Dunham, completed last year through to a point 500m beyond Seamons Moss Bridge, is still the furthest west point of the upgrade. It is hoped that funding may become available (from other sources) so that it may be completed through to the Trafford boundary at the Bollin aqueduct before the end of this year.

Of the 39½ miles of the Bridgewater canal, 70% of the old towpath has now been upgraded with most of the outstanding length being within the borough of Warrington

There is a 12-month trial taking place in the Cornbrook area whereby a series of solar powered panels have been installed over a 1km length at ground level which power adjacent lights. If this proves a success, additional units will be installed over stretches where they will be most beneficial.

11. Any Other Business

The Chairman invited Tom Everett to inform the meeting about a recently awarded Red Wheel Plaque – he reported as follows:-

A Red Wheel Plaque has been awarded to Barton Aqueduct by the Transport Trust in recognition of the engineering and transport heritage. The wording of the plaque is as follows:-

Transport Trust

BARTON CANAL AQUEDUCTS

Arch from Brindley's masonry aqueduct of 1761
to carry the Bridgewater Canal over the River Irwell.
Replaced 1893 by the unique Swing Aqueduct.

The plaque will be mounted in Pocket Park just to the north of the swing aqueduct.

Mike O'Neill asked if there was any information available about the proposed new bridge across the canal to the north east of Altrincham Bridge.

Ian Stuart advised as follows:-

The proposed location is from a point adjacent to the east end of Viaduct Road, on the north bank crossing at the point where there are the foundations of the old railway bridge (removed nearly 30 years ago). All the design work has been completed and a planning application was submitted and approved this spring. The bridge will form an important connection to the Altrincham Town Centre Cycle Link allowing cyclists to access the town centre avoiding Altrincham Bridge carrying the A56.

He pointed out that, ironically, the cycle route from the south side of the bridge to the town centre has not been finalized and a number of challenges in this regard still have to be resolved. It is very possible, at this moment in time, that those crossing by the new bridge may have to travel west to the A56 along the canal bank in order to access roads. The important consideration is that any cycle route must/should be bi-directional

The bridge will be unsympathetic to the general architecture of virtually all of the Bridgewater Canal. Proposals for a more attractive design were suggested but did not seem to be taken seriously. The bridge will be a pre-fabricated steel structure with a level deck in both planes. Access from each bank will be via an earth ramp needed by both cyclists and wheel-chair users incorporating a platform mid-way to accommodate a 180° turn. The passage of pedestrians under the bridge on both sides is part of the design but there is no flight of steps by which they can gain direct access.

The construction should be within the next four months as the grant money to allow the bridge to be built needs to be spent by the end of the financial year.

No other points were raised under this agenda item

12. Future Meetings

Date of next Annual General Meeting	Tuesday	7.11.17	7.30 pm	
Date of Spring General Meeting	Tuesday	2.05.17	7.30 pm	
Date of the Spring litterpick	Saturday	4.03.17	10 am – noon) To be
Date of the Summer litterpick	Wednesday	31.05.17	7 pm – 9 pm) confirmed
Dates of the Summer cruises	Fri/Sat	2 & 3.6 17	T B A	