

Frequently Asked Questions

In these times of 'false and misleading information', here are some real facts about the Manchester Bolton & Bury Canal and its Society, and what we are doing to restore the canal.

The Manchester Bolton & Bury Canal

Q: What is the Society's attitude to rebuilding the canal to Church Wharf in Bolton?

- One of our aims is to restore the canal into Bolton. But we recognise that any such restoration would be extremely difficult and expensive. There are three missing aqueducts, and most of the final length of the canal lies underneath the southbound carriageway of the A666 (St Peter's Way), and there is no room to restore it.

Q: What was the Society's attitude to the sale of Bury Bridges Trading Estate which covers the Bury terminus of the canal?

- We were not informed in advance of the sale; we objected most strongly.
- This does not mean that the possibility of restoring the canal terminus has gone. If the new owner were to redevelop the site then Bury Council has a view of this area as Bury's Western Waterside, and the canal could be reinstated.

Q: What was The Society's attitude to the demolition of the workshops at Nob End?

- The workshops were not original features of the canal; in fact they were built in the late 19th century.
- We had plans for restoring the workshops with a visitor centre and café in 1994 at a cost of £1¼M. However, the buildings became increasingly unsafe; the walls had virtually no foundations which meant that any work on the walls or roof was impossible, and simply entering the building was dangerous.
- We tried to get the workshops listed by English Heritage in 2012, without success.
- We objected to British Waterways' plans to demolish the workshops. Sadly the buildings were demolished by them in 2012, though parts of the walls remain.
- It would be ideal to have a visitor centre and café at Nob End, but it would require a completely new building which would need services (water, electricity, sewage), massive security, planning permission and sufficient parking spaces. To run a centre and café would require a lot of volunteers, hygiene training, and various H&S considerations. At present we have two cabins on site which retain some of the functions of the old workshops.

Q: Why do you not have a trip boat at Nob End?

- The Society had a trip boat at Radcliffe in the 1990s, and lessons were learnt from that experience about costs, vandalism and staffing which tell us that a trip boat is not a good or viable idea.

Q: What action are you taking about the steam crane?

- The crane is a Grade II listed structure, but it is not known who owns it. Bury Council has found sufficient money to repair the boiler and we are in discussion with them.

Q: What was the Society's involvement with the Meccano Bridge?

- Bolton commissioned the artist Liam Curtin to create an artwork for Little Lever. The Society suggested that he look at the site of the old wooden horse bridge at Nob End which had fallen down many years ago, but which was still a public right of way! Liam came up with the idea of scaled-up Meccano.

- The Society was appointed as Principal Sub-Contractor for the building the bridge and the abutments, and we completed this major construction work over the winter of 2012-13.
- The Meccano Bridge was designed as a work of art, and as such anyone is entitled to like or dislike it as they please. That's art for you – and you can't win with colours! In fact most folk like it.
- In canal terms it restored a missing bridge at full navigable height and width and restored a public right of way. As a unique structure it has become the focus of much interest and has raised the profile of the canal both locally, nationally and around the world.

Q: Why does the Society keep around £80,000 in its accounts ?

- The Society has healthy finances. A large proportion of the money in our accounts is specifically set aside for 'restoration'. When Middlewood was opened in 2008 one of our members gave the Society a gift of £42,000. When she died she left the Society almost £7000 in her will. The money is to be spent 'general canal restoration'. Our restoration funds are kept in a separate Deposit Account which currently stands at £50,000.
- This leaves the Society with around £30,000 for its other expenditure. Routine expenditure includes insurance, legal fees, training, the magazine and postage.