

A Potted History of the Society

- 1987 The society was founded in June. The first newsletter was issued, monthly meetings and informal working parties began. There were 150 members by the end of the year.
- 1988 The committee included Margaret Fletcher, Graham Fielding, John Fletcher and Liz Donlan (Newsletter Editor). There was a small boat rally at Radcliffe and a study into the feasibility of restoration was published.
- 1989 Working parties began. The first *Towpath Guide* was published. By the end of June there was almost £3000 in the bank.
- 1990 The Society's trip boat was built. Victor Tomlinson's history of the canal was re-published. Agecroft Road Bridge was rebuilt at navigable height.
- 1991 The trip boat ('The Bury Packet') was launched. The Society had 8 boats including a dredger and 2 mud boats. The 2nd edition of the *Towpath Guide* was published.
- 1992 Fred Dibnah gave a talk to the Society. John & Margaret Fletchers' *Circular Walks* book was published. Member number 500 was signed up. The trip boat was sunk at Radcliffe.
- 1993 The trip boat was raised. The Society magazine won the LTC Rolt award.
- 1994 A Nob End Visitor Centre feasibility study was published.
- 1995 Member number 600 was signed up. The *History of the Canal in Pictures* was published. The Society became a Limited Company and a Charity.
- 1996 The Society put in a bid for £3.5M for Millennium Lottery money called *Irwell Valley Connections*; it was not successful.
- 1997 The magazine advertised for a new Working Party Organiser.
- 1998 The Waterway Recovery Group had its Reunion Weekend at Nob End. The Society went on the internet. Appleyard Bridge was rebuilt at navigable height. The trip boat was put up for sale.
- 1999 Fred Dibnah became President of the Society.
- 2000 The magazine produced a 'Special 50th edition'. A special newsletter was issued to respond to false complaints made to the Charity Commission about the running of the Society. Fred Dibnah led a walk along the canal.
- 2001 The towpath from Radcliffe to Elton was re-surfaced by Bury Council. [51-53]
- 2002 Work started on the Inner Relief Road in Salford, destroying Lock 2. British Waterways announced the restoration of the canal; there was a launch at The Lowry.
- 2003 The milestone survey was published. Paul Hindle became editor. A new Society logo and map were created.
- 2004 An article on the canal tramroads was published. The canal was excavated at the Middlewood site in Salford.
- 2005 Fred Dibnah died. Whittaker's Bridge acquired its installation: WATER MADE IT WET. The Middlewood restoration was launched at The Lowry.
- 2006 Margaret Fletcher died; John Fletcher became Chairman.
- 2007 The Middlewood restoration finally began.
- 2008 School Street Bridge was replaced. Robert Cornish's *Coal, Canals and Cotton* was published. The Middlewood length was opened in September, with the new tunnel named after Margaret Fletcher. Alan Godfrey maps completed coverage of the canal.
- 2009 A new *Towpath Guide* was published.
- 2010 Creams paper mill was demolished. The Middlewood developers went into administration. The WRG Christmas Dig cleared the canal at Nob End.
- 2011 The Creams shed was demolished. The steam crane was listed (Grade II). The Nob End workshop was in a dangerous state. Paul Hindle became Chairman; John Fletcher was made President.
- 2012 Liam Curtin designed a Meccano Bridge for Nob End. The Nob End workshops were demolished. Salford No 2 Tunnel was refurbished. The Canal & River Trust took over from British Waterways. The Meccano Bridge was built in December.
- 2013 The Meccano Bridge was completed and opened. The magazine went into full colour to celebrate the bridge. A revised *Towpath Guide 2* was published. The Society was granted 'self-supervised status' by C&RT. Member 900 was signed up. *MB&BC Through Time* was published.
- 2014 *Salford Through Time* was published (with 15 pages about the canal). The Ladyshore box boat was rebuilt at the Ellesmere Port Boat Museum. The Meccano Bridge won two national prizes. Graham Fielding resigned as Treasurer after 27 years.
- 2015 The Society formally adopted Prestolee (Nob End) Locks. A memorial Meccano bench was installed at Nob End. Big Dig 1 revealed much of the upper lock flight.
- 2016 Two Facebook pages were created. Big Dig 2 revealed more of the middle basin and the lower lock flight. Over 60 access signs were installed along the canal.
- 2017 Housing developments began at Middlewood. Bury Bridge Trading Estate was sold by C&RT. The Bury Fire & Rescue Service Facility was opened in Bury. Towpath improvements from Radcliffe to Nob End began.
- 2018 Work on the towpath continued from Nob End to Ringley. The first phase of developments at Middlewood was almost complete.
- 2019 Towpath improvements continued from Nob End to Hall Lane. Member 1000 was signed up.

- 2020 Covid halted meetings, working parties and the AGM. A new Restoration Feasibility Study for the summit level from Hall Lane to Bury was commissioned. Watson Homes proposed to build houses in Little Lever, including a plan to repair the breach and the adjoining canal.
- 2021 The Restoration Feasibility Study was completed, estimating a cost of over £6M.
- 2022 Working Parties resumed. Working Party Organiser Ian Astbury died and a memorial fund was started. Work on Middlewood Stage 2 began. Watson Homes appealed against the Bolton Planning Committee decision.
- 2023 Watson Homes appeal was successful. Andy Burnham (Mayor of Greater Manchester) chaired two meetings to discuss restoration. The Vision document was agreed. National funding for the C&RT was to be cut progressively to 2037. Ian Astbury's memorial bench was installed. The Society hosted a very successful meeting of the Northern Canals Association.
- 2024 Plans to install a path along the line of the canal in Salford were opposed. The canal at Middlewood was restored to navigation and a Locks Fest event was held.