

## **BICENTENARY OF THE STANDEGE TUNNEL** **& THE HUDDERSFIELD NARROW CANAL**

In 2010, the bicentenary of the Standedge Tunnel and the Huddersfield Narrow Canal should start to be celebrated. Two hundred years ago in 1810, the Standedge Canal Tunnel was finally completed after 16 years of hard labour. The first boat went through on December 10<sup>th</sup>, 1810.

However, Standedge Tunnel was officially opened on April 4<sup>th</sup> 1811, with dignitaries passing through the tunnel on boats, with a crowd of 10,000 people at Diggle to see boats enter at the Diggle portal to voyage through to Tunnel End near Marsden. So the bicentenary celebrations of the Huddersfield Narrow, and Standedge Tunnel in particular, begin in December 2010 to run a year until December 2011.

So what was actually happening in 1810, two hundred years ago? Boats had no tunnel yet to use, so they were unloaded, and packhorses and wagon horses took the cargoes overland, right over the top of Standedge, over the Pennine ridge. Below the horses, the tunnel was still being dug out, being worked from several shafts simultaneously.

What's happening in 2010? The Horseboating Society is making its annual return journey on the Huddersfield Narrow, legging Standedge Tunnel. This is Britain's longest canal tunnel at 3¼ miles. So that is exciting enough, but now take note.

It is rumoured that a dragon is living in Standedge Tunnel. So the Horseboating Society will leg the boat through from Diggle to Marsden on Sunday, April 25<sup>th</sup> to lure the dragon out of its lair. The boat horse will be taken over the top of Standedge, and a guided walk is organised for those wishing to follow. At Tunnel End, Marsden St. George will await the dragon. On its appearance, St. George will slay the dragon, to rescue the golden-haired maiden strapped to the towing mast of the horseboat, and to save the trembling villagers of Tunnel End and Marsden. Please be there if you can to give courage to the villagers, cheers for St. George, and boos for the dragon.

About a week later, the boat will be legged from Tunnel End to Diggle on May 3<sup>rd</sup>, Bank Holiday Monday. On that day, the tradition of parading working horses on the May Holiday will be followed. After a long Pennine winter, horses will nearly be in their sleek summer coats. Visitors will be able to see how horses were worked as boathorses, packhorses, and wagon horses before the tunnel opened for use in 1811. Again a guided walk will follow the boathorse over Standedge, to the boat at Diggle.

So dates to be at Standedge in 2010: Sunday April 25, Bank Holiday Monday May 3, Friday December 10, and Sat/Sun Dec 11-12. More event details will follow later.

Crew and leggers are always needed and welcomed by the Horseboating Society. Enquiries: Sue Day, [sueday\\_horse@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:sueday_horse@yahoo.co.uk), 01457-834863, 07711-121-056 Website for horseboating journey details and itinerary: [www.horseboating.org.uk](http://www.horseboating.org.uk)